

ADULT EDUCATION

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Adult education – the concept

One of the major features of professional concepts for adult education measures is their marked orientation to the participants – and the respective situation. In this learning context, the people doing the learning are adults who have already learned to assert themselves in other situations. They should, therefore, not be regarded as inexperienced pupils simply because they are in an educational context.

The focus must be on the competent adult.

Adults learn differently; they bring with them a high level of learning experience and internalised learning strategies.

Adults are not (usually) instructed, not informed, not changed. Instead, adult education can support and accompany processes of reflection, doubting, searching. This is why we define education offers as "impulse systems". Whether and how these impulses are assimilated and put to use is up to each adult to decide for him or herself.

Link between education measures and the participant's everyday life. Through principles such as participant orientation or relevance to day-to-day realities and life, it is intended to repeatedly "establish" this link in didactic terms.

The **principle of relevance to the day-to-day realities or life** demands that the contents and learning processes tally with the participant's everyday existence and that the learning results can be applied in it and/or are of importance to them.

Action and experience orientation are hallmark principles of modern-day adult education.

Action- and experience-oriented education means giving adults the opportunity to attain, re-establish and strengthen their **capacity to act** by attending education events, whereby they are able to draw on the experiences they have already made, review them and modify them as necessary. By way of reiteration:

To act implies:

- autonomy, independence, having a voice, emancipation
- reflection on the conditions influencing the action taken, with a view to assessing principally feasible and viable modifications to the framework for action

However, people are limited in their ability to act, because they always experience an inability to act or at least limitations on their capacity to act.

Education must empower adults to act on their own judgement and initiative whilst concomitantly critically reviewing the external or own conditions for action, modifying them where necessary.

This includes:

- Adult education events have to take account of the concrete situation in which the participants find themselves, both as a starting point for events and as a point of linkage (experience orientation) but also as a target point (relevance to everyday reality).
- Education events have to be open to the general concepts that the participants have always had and that they therefore apply in this learning context.

- The social context in which the participant's action-related problems are embedded has to be thematised and framework conditions looked into that would under certain circumstances enable the identified constraints on action to be modified.

The participant is regarded as someone who always brings along certain conditions and premises to such an event. It is assumed, at least in part, that the participant has certain competences that have been acquired in different contexts of life. Educational work can pick up on these competences, use them to process the ongoing theme, expand them, deepen and consolidate them.

Education as the development of cross-sectoral skills (key qualifications)

Key qualifications refer to the supra-sectoral qualifications, i.e. qualifications that compliment and expand existing qualifications. In the discussion, reference is also made to methodological qualifications (work methods) and social qualifications (communication, team capacity) etc. The essential issue here is that **key and specialised qualifications can only be developed jointly**; a juxtaposition of specialist knowledge and key qualifications is therefore not meaningful. What we are dealing with here is an expanded understanding of vocational training.

Key qualifications: Qualification concept

Relevance to knowledge (contents, specialist knowledge, specialist skills)

Competences (relevance to subject, development of personality, social and leadership competence, independence, communicative competence)

Methods (relevance to action, learning and work techniques)

Qualifications (professional relevance)

Successful qualification alignment only succeeds today if employees are taught more than appropriate qualifications and/or more than just those qualifications that will enable them to adapt to known demands. In addition to designing techniques and work, qualifications involve a relatively independent design dimension. Demands in the world of work create demands on the free development of an individual's personality. Vocational education increasingly has to be general personality development, because it is geared to the demands of the world of work.

Vocational education has to focus on communicating key qualifications.

Personality Promotion

Personality promotion pools those aspects of adult education that deal with questions of personal and human relationships and individual lifestyles. E.g.

- Promoting democratic engagement, civil courage
- Key qualifications of vocational upgrading

Didactics:

Orientation to the participant and the participant's day-to-day reality; activating, learner-related, participant-oriented learning processes.

Participant-centred methods as opposed to teacher-centred lessons.

Educational and methodological design: communicative learning, action-oriented learning, experience-oriented learning.

The methodological design of offers for personality promotion hinges on the way in which the leader and participants are involved in the teaching-learning process:

- Lecture-centred procedures (lecture, demonstration)
- Lecture-oriented procedures (descriptive-developing teaching style)
- Participant-oriented procedures (questioning-developing teaching style, teaching discussion, debate, moderated methods for large groups)
- Participant-centred procedures (working groups, partner work, individual work, role play, management games, case studies, internships)

Tendence: Lecture-type form of communication is increasingly being replaced by motivating, learner-related, participant-oriented learning processes.

The switch from teacher to promoter of learning.

Qualification-oriented offers versus participant-oriented offers: focus on the everyday situation of the participants, whereby for the latter it is essentially a matter of usability.

Types of offers: Purpose:

- Contents-oriented events (infos structured in keeping with scientific findings)
- Participant-oriented lecture (presumed interests and needs of participant at centre)
- Qualification-oriented lecture (usability at the forefront)

Double-sided search: Suppliers have to find suitable offer for interested parties. The voluntary nature of participation is of particular didactic significance.

Needs assessment: Relevance to thematic area and to participants/target group (experience, everyday reality)

Course leader

- Experience and action-oriented learning aims to build up, develop and re-establish the participant's capacity to act
- The learning process is a procedure in which existing experience and competence are newly or re-structured.

The course leader has the task of executing his/her role in keeping with these principles.

The course leader must empower the participants to articulate their experience (methodological knowledge). Supportive, moderating, motivating function.

Action- and experience-oriented events are based to a great extent on participant activity.

Methods and methodological approaches behind action and experience-oriented education work:

The central goal of action- and experience-oriented education is thus: reflection on the structure of own experience and the framework conditions influencing own action. This calls for indirect means of access that lead only gradually to an explicit reflection of own experience and action.

1. Action- and experience-oriented methods

Example: **Picture file**

Select picture from file you consider linked with the theme. This facilitates initial reflections on ideas on this theme.

Example.: **Sentence completion or metaphor game**

I consider a partnership to be good when....

For me, a partnership is like....

2. Project method

Project processing is designed to communicate skills needed to overcome concrete situations. In addition to specialist know-how, this includes skills such as organisation, information, cooperation and analytical skills.

3. Quality circle

Methodological concept, especially in company upgrading. Employees review their own action critically with the intention of eliminating identifiable disruptions in the work process or of searching for options to optimise work and communication processes. Rounds of discussion. Gives employees a chance to participate at the work place, too. Allows them to take on responsibility and gives them scope for their own creative design.

4. Expert learning

Method links up with traditional apprenticeship training: the individual doing the learning has to learn from knowledge and skills of the experts, has to learn in a concrete application context; learning process is within a social field which the learner shares with other apprentices and the expert. Objective: learning expert knowledge. Learner and experts have a colleague-like relationship.

5. Case method / Case analysis

Here the principles of action- and experience-oriented education inputs are implemented in their more or less purest form.

How do specialist inputs relate to general inputs?

Orientation to principles: structured access to most complex case history; cases represent a piece of concrete reality.

What does the participant require by way of specialist information so as to arrive at theoretically sound conclusions about the relationship of the individual elements in an action context?

Performance potential of case work:

- Case allows a relevant problem, situation or fact to appear concrete and graphic. The participant recognises elements of his or her everyday life, sees a direct link to his or her own experience which can then be activated.
- Promotes capacity to create analogies, an ability to transfer insights to other cases

6. Role play

Roles of others are assumed; the objective is to determine how the interaction partners perceive each other, how they regard the motives, attitudes and intentions of others, how they present their identity and protect it in the case of threat.

7. Recounting experience as a method

Recounting own experience, making it accessible to others and jointly working out which political, social and economic constellations have helped characterise own experience. Reflection, assessment, networking of individual and general

Scope and limitations of action- and experience-oriented education:**Limitations:**

- only educational inputs geared to everyday life
- thus making it difficult to deal with macro-social themes
- not very suitable for acquiring systematic knowledge
- risks not advancing beyond the level of activity and mere recounting
- contribution to seminars that solely wish to satisfy the intellectual interest of the participants in a certain theme

Scope:

- thematises concrete situations in which the participant is faced with concrete action-related problems
- this relevance signal generates a high level of motivation to take part
- participant sees him or herself and his/her experiences are taken seriously
- close connection between thinking and doing
- reflective-analytical access to participant's experience
- sociable education – everyone can learn from someone else
- condition: everyone is regarded and accepted as an expert in his or her everyday context

Consultancy:

Client-centred consultancy:

Consultancy model in which the person doing the actual consultancy is in the background and which regards the person seeking advice not only as the source of the problem but also as its solution. The consultant has the task of applying a suitable consultancy technique to help the person seeking advice to develop an own solution. The consultant has to restrict his or her influence to a minimum.

Consultancy has an important role in upgrading. Namely, to bring together specific upgrading interests and the most appropriate offers possible.

Status of consultancy in the field of personality promotion.

Consultancy discussion:

- Consultant's interlocuter explains his or her need for advice and concretises wish for upgrading. Motives and problems are expressed.
- Possibilities elucidated
- Decision reached

Consultancy's task is to provide help for self-help. It is not the contents of a curriculum or personal interests on the part of the consultant that determine the nature of the assistance given, but the joint understanding of the interests of the person seeking advice gleaned through a process of working together.

The aim of consultancy is to advise the person concerned in connection with the decision to be made; the actual decision itself still remains the onus of that person. At all costs, the consultant must accept and take seriously the way in which the person seeking advice depicts the problem, even if he or she deems the problem to be structured differently. Consultancy is ultimately about creating a more favourable decision-making framework for the person seeking advice and not about formulating advice that will dictate the outcome of the decision.

Generating quality management systems and using them to make self-steering instruments for ongoing quality control is a central theme in companies today.