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**Relationship between research and practice:**  
Concepts from the German Institute for Adult  
Education and current developments in  
Germany

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German Institute for Adult Education  
Leibniz-Centre for Lifelong Learning, Bonn/Germany



**The German Institute for Adult Education (DIE)**

- Extramural research institute which serves as a partner for all institutions in the field of adult education and lifelong learning.
- Research activities contribute to the development and networking in adult education national and international.
- The socio-political focus is on the development and advancement of adult education in order to improve personal involvement, social participation and employability for the adult population in Germany.



## The German Institute for Adult Education (DIE)

- one of 86 member institutions of the “Leibniz-Gemeinschaft”
- 1997 founded as association
- funded by government (Bund and Länder) ca. 75%
- evaluated in 1997, 2004, 2011
- 2011 staff in total: \_\_\_ 76  
 Directory: \_\_\_\_\_ 2  
 Research and Development: \_\_\_\_\_ 28  
 Data and Information Service: \_\_\_\_\_ 25  
 Administration and supporting facilities: \_ 21



The DIE in Bonn, Germany  
[www.die-bonn.de](http://www.die-bonn.de)

**DIE**

## Dialogue between research and practice at the DIE

- **DIE Forum on Adult and Continuing Education:** Promoting dialogue between research, practice and policy-making
- **Innovation Prize** in Adult and Continuing Education: International jury with university professors in adult and continuing education
- **Publications:** Self-study materials for students and professional practitioners in adult and continuing education
- **(Guest-) Professorships and teaching assignments:** Dissemination of research results in study courses and trainings for professional practitioners



### Concept of use-inspired research in the DIE

„**Theoria cum praxi**“ (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz 1646<sup>greg.</sup>-1716)

- Research which benefits humankind

### Research combining scientific excellence and social relevance

- Bridging basic research and applied research
- Applying research methods according to generally recognised codes of scientific practice
- Developing and implementing **research which benefits the learner** in adult and continuing education
- Producing research based **knowledge which serves the improvement of professional practice** in the field of adult and continuing education

### Designing research projects in the DIE

- “Discovery” of research questions through assessment of needs of research (e.g. workshops, focus groups, inquiries)
- Close cooperation with universities, education institutions and experts (e.g. establishing research related advisory boards)
- Validation of research by user groups (e.g. professional practitioners, managing specialists, professors in adult and continuing education, decision makers)
- Dissemination of research results in universities and professional practice

### Research on ULLL in the DIE

- Evaluation of distance learning degree programme “European Master of Adult Education” (EMAE) (2004-2005)
- Evaluation of policy driven pilot programme “Open University in Lower Saxony” (2012)
- EU-Project “Opening Higher Education to Adults” (Grundtvig, Lifelong Learning Programme) (2012-2013)



### Central questions of DIALOGUE:

- How can the **link** between academic research on ULLL and professional practice on teaching and learning in ULLL be **strengthened**?
- How can the link between research and practice and the **exchange** be **organised** in such a way that reciprocal benefits and mutual learning is likely to take place?

See: <http://www.eucen.eu/current/DIALOGUE>



## Strengthening the link between ULLL research and practice

Facilitating factors:

- Bologna process and developments in EU adult learning policy: Focus on opening higher education to heterogeneous student groups
- “Third Mission”, universities as regional actors



- Cooperation between universities, economy/employers and educational institutions (VET, adult education) at **regional level**
- Assessment of **common interests and goals**
- Recognition of **specific responsibilities and capacities** of partners
- Working on **concrete research and development projects**

## Example: Pilot project “Community of Learners”

- Cooperation between Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg and the educational institute of industry and commerce in Lower Saxony; supported by a regional bank as one of the major employers of the region
- Cooperation with enterprises in the U.K. (Liverpool), hosting heterogeneous groups of German trainees and students of economy and law
- Project is funded by ministry of education and cultural affairs in Lower Saxony (programme “Open University in Lower Saxony”) and European Regional Development Fund

Sources: Hanft, A./Brinkmann, K. (eds.) (2013): Offene Hochschulen. Die Neuausrichtung der Hochschulen auf Lebenslanges Lernen, Münster et al., pp. 117-118; <http://www.oh.uni-oldenburg.de/57135.html>

### Example: Pilot project “Community of Learners”

#### Overall aim of the project:

Improving permeability between VET and higher education; supporting mobility on European labour market

#### Specific aims of different actors:

Research: Development of education modules within the context of international orientated vocational education

Practice: Improving learning outcomes; enhancing inter-sectoral group learning

Employer: Improving competencies of trainees in working in heterogeneous groups

#### Core-concept

- Cooperation between research, professional practice, stakeholders
- Intensifying exchange between practice orientated education and training and continuous higher education

### Organising exchange between ULLL research and practice

#### Facilitating factors

- Universities take their role as **regional actors**; universities are engaged in regional development.
- A **common interest** of policy making, universities, adult education institutions and stakeholders exists.
- Educational **networks** have been established (e.g. “Learning Regions”).
- A **responsible body** to organise exchange between ULLL research and practice exists.

### Example: Development of a regional service centre

- Evaluation of programme “Open University in Lower Saxony” revealed the need to establish a service centre for ULLL; service centre was founded in the beginning of 2013
- Funded by the ministry of education and cultural affairs (Lower Saxony), organised as limited company operating as public utility; supervisory board is built by representatives from universities, policy, adult education institutions, regional economy

#### Tasks

- Information on continuing education programmes at universities
- Organising research / needs assessment (inquiries of students and stakeholders)
- Development of counselling structure for universities and stakeholders
- Coordination and Organisation of exchange (e.g. working groups with researchers, practitioners, stakeholders)



### Perspectives

- Agreements between policy making and universities on ULLL objectives
- Regional networks to improve exchange on experiences in ULLL
- Involving regional economy/employers and adult education institutions in the development of continuous education programmes and provisions
- Institutionalisation of support structures for universities engaged in ULLL and stakeholders
- Promoting competitions and awards to visualise “good practice” of exchange between research and practice



**Thank you for your kind attention!**

**DiE**