

The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2010/2011

**A description of the responsibilities, structures and
developments in education policy for the exchange of information in Europe**

- EXCERPT -



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8. ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

8.1. Introduction

Adult and continuing education institutions offer a variety of courses and subject areas covering general, vocational, political and continuing academic education. The aims, content and duration of courses vary accordingly.

General objectives

The original objective of *learning for learning's sake* increasingly gave way to the task of responding to the educational needs arising from the demands of the state, society and industry. Since 1970, a more vocational slant, an emphasis on formal qualifications, systematisation and a new understanding of continuing education have been gaining importance.

With regard to the further development of the sector of continuing education within the scope of lifelong learning, the aim is to provide a foundation for the individual to

- develop the willingness for lifelong learning
- acquire the competences necessary for lifelong learning
- use institutionalised as well as new possibilities for learning in his or her life and work

Guiding ideas are

- reinforcement of self-responsibility and self-guidance
- redress of unequal opportunities
- cooperation between providers of education and users
- reinforcement of the relations between all sectors of education

Specific legislative framework

Continuing education in Germany is regulated by the state to a lesser degree than other areas of education. The justification given for this is that the diverse and rapidly-changing demands on continuing education can best be met by a structure which is characterised by diversity and competition among the institutions and the range of courses and services on offer. A central principle of continuing education courses is that attendance should be voluntary.

The activities of the state in the field of continuing education are, for the most part, restricted to laying down principles and to issuing regulations relating to organisation and financing. Such principles and regulations are enshrined in the legislation of the Federal Government and the Länder. State regulations are aimed at establishing general conditions for the optimum development of the contribution of continuing education to lifelong learning.

The joint responsibilities of the Federation and the Länder include research and pilot schemes in all sectors of continuing education. In addition, Federation and Länder are responsible for statistics on continuing education and for drawing up reports on continuing education in their respective areas of responsibility.

The responsibilities of the LÄNDER include in particular the following powers to regulate and promote:

- continuing general education,
- continuing education leading to school-leaving qualifications,
- continuing academic education at higher education institutions,
- continuing cultural education,
- some elements of continuing political education and
- some elements of continuing vocational training.

The prerequisites and principles for the promotion and funding of continuing education are laid down in continuing education legislation [R169-170, R172-173, R176, R178, R180, R182, R184, R186, R188-189, R192] and employment release legislation [R171, R174-175, R177, R179, R181, R183, R185, R187, R190, R191]. Continuing and adult education legislation describes continuing education as an independent education sector which incorporates continuing general and political education and continuing vocational training and the development of which is the responsibility of the public sector. Continuing education legislation guarantees a diverse range of institutions maintained by a variety of organisations and lays down a state approval procedure for such institutions. All Land legislation includes regulations which recognise their freedom in the preparation of curricula and independence in staff selection.

In addition to continuing education legislation, school legislation at Land level [R85, R87, R89, R91, R93, R96, R98, R100, R102-103, R105, R107, R113, R115-117] contains regulations on continuing education within the school system [e.g. the attainment of school-leaving qualifications] and higher education legislation [R126, R128, R131, R133, R135-136, R139, R141, R143, R145-146, R148, R149-152, R154, R157, R162] regulates the development of academic continuing education. Regulations regarding continuing education offers at *Berufsakademien* are contained, if necessary, in the *Berufsakademie* legislation [R126, R138, R140, R144, R153, R156, R161, R164].

In 11 of the 16 Länder legislation allows employees to attend continuing education courses [paid educational leave - *Bildungsurlaub*] for several working days per year [usually five] with no loss in earnings, provided that certain conditions are fulfilled.

In addition to the above-mentioned responsibilities, which are carried jointly by the Federation and the Länder, the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S responsibilities include in particular:

- continuing vocational training outside the school sector,
- regulated further vocational training,
- basic regulations for the protection of those on distance learning courses which are offered under private law,
- some areas of continuing political education,
- international cooperation in continuing education, including within the European Union.

Therefore, regulations for the continuing education sector have been adopted at national level in the following legislation in particular: the Social Security Code III [*Sozialgesetzbuch III* - R165], Upgrading Training Assistance Act [*Gesetz zur Förderung der*

beruflichen Aufstiegsfortbildung - R168], Vocational Training Act [*Berufsbildungsgesetz* - R80], Handicrafts Code [*Handwerksordnung* - R81], Federal Training Assistance Act [*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz* - R83] and Law on the Protection of Participants in Distance Education [*Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz* - R167].

Responsibility for the promotion of continuing vocational training under the Federal Government's Social Security Code III lies with the Federal Employment Agency [*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*]. Promotion under the Social Security Code III includes the following measures:

- Further vocational training: schemes to assess, maintain, extend or adapt the vocational knowledge and skills of adults who have a vocational qualification or appropriate work experience.
- Vocational retraining leading to a qualification in a *anerkannter Ausbildungsberuf* [recognised occupation requiring formal training]: targeted mainly at unemployed people with no vocational qualifications.

With the coming into force on 1 January 1996 of the Upgrading Training Assistance Act [*Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz*], a new comprehensive funding instrument was created in Germany for financing training designed to lead to promotion at work. With the coming into force on 1 January 2002 of the first amendment of the Upgrading Training Assistance Act, the promotion of professional career advancement was further improved. The amendment led to an increase in participation in continuing education and a significantly higher number of business start-ups. Within the scope of the Qualification Initiative for Germany "Getting ahead through education" [*Aufstieg durch Bildung*], promotion under the Upgrading Training Assistance Act was further extended in 2009.

Under the Vocational Training Act [*Berufsbildungsgesetz*] and the Handicrafts Code [*Handwerksordnung*], responsibility for examinations in further vocational training generally rests with the chambers [e.g. chambers of handicrafts and chambers of industry and commerce]. Where there is a national regulatory interest, examinations in further vocational training are regulated by ordinances of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* - BMBF]. The content of examinations is laid down by regulations of the *competent bodies* or by ordinances passed by the Federal Government. Further vocational training communicates, amongst other things, the vocational knowledge, skills and competences that enable individuals to assume middle and sometimes also higher management responsibilities within companies.

8.2. Institutions Providing Adult Education and Training

Under various continuing education legislation of some Länder [R172-173, R175-176, R179, R181, R183, R185, R187, R189-191, R194], it is mainly the task of the VOLKSHOCHSCHULEN, the local adult education centres, to take care of basic provision of continuing education courses in the field of general continuing education, in other words to provide a regular and comprehensive range of courses which meets the most diverse social requirements and individual needs.

The Federal Agency for Civic Education [*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*] and the respective bodies of the Länder hold events in the field of continuing political education and promote private sponsors of continuing political education.

It is usually possible to acquire school-leaving qualifications later in life at evening classes [*Abendhauptschulen, Abendrealschulen, Abendgymnasien*] and in what is called *Kollegs*. *Abendhauptschulen* prepare adults in a one-year course [two semesters] for the acquisition of the *Hauptschulabschluss*. *Abendrealschulen* take adults through to the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* in evening classes [four semesters]. *Abendgymnasien* allow suitably capable adults to obtain the *Hochschulreife* [higher education entrance qualification] usually in a three-year period. *Kollegs* are full-time schools where adults can obtain the *Hochschulreife*.

In the course of the Qualification Initiative for Germany "Getting ahead through education" [*Aufstieg durch Bildung*] a legal right to funding is to be introduced for young people and adults seeking to obtain a secondary general school certificate [*Hauptschulabschluss*]. In parallel with this, the Länder offer qualification courses for young people and adults to obtain school-leaving certificates. These measures are designed to give young people with migrant backgrounds in particular the opportunity to obtain a school-leaving certificate.

As institutions of continuing vocational training, FACHSCHULEN offer courses lasting between one and three years [see chapter 7 for a more detailed description of this institution].

DISTANCE LEARNING offers adults in employment the opportunity to take up continuing education on a flexible basis while remaining in employment. Distance learning courses offered by private organisations have required state approval in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1 January 1977 under the Law on the Protection of Participants in Distance Education [*Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz - R167*]. The decision to approve a distance learning course is taken by the Central Office for Distance Learning [*Staatliche Zentralstelle für Fernunterricht - ZFU*] of the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany. Under an approval procedure checks are carried out not only on the factual and didactic quality of the teaching material in relation to the course objective, but also on advertising and on the form and content of the distance learning agreement which has to be concluded between the student and the distance learning institute. More than 223,000 people were registered on distance learning courses in 2008. The range of subjects is wide and comprises social sciences, education, psychology, humanities, languages, business and commerce, mathematics, natural sciences and technology, leisure, health and housekeeping, school leaving qualifications - e.g. *Hauptschulabschluss, Realschulabschluss, Abitur* -, qualifications for state-certified business manager, engineer and translator, computer courses. The most popular subject area is *business and commerce* which accounts for about 23.8 per cent of all students.

Provided that the *Berufsakademie* laws at Land level contain the necessary provisions, the BERUFSAKADEMIEN may also offer continuing education courses.

According to the Framework Act for Higher Education [*Hochschulrahmengesetz - R121*] and the legislation on higher education of the Länder [*Hochschulgesetze - R126, R128, R131, R133, R135-136, R139, R141, R143, R145-146, R148, R149-152, R154, R157, R162*], in addition to providing research and study courses, the main responsibilities of higher education institutions is to provide continuing education in the academic and creative field. Continuing education courses offer people the opportunity to specialise, to extend existing knowledge or to obtain an additional vocational qualification. Courses last from a few weeks or months to several semesters, with modular courses also being offered

increasingly in the area of continuing education. Through continuing academic education, higher education institutions also contribute to regional development in cooperation with partners from industry.

8.3. Continuing General and Political Education

Admission requirements

In terms of size general and political further education remains an important continuing education sector with an especially broad range of subjects. There are usually no entry requirements for continuing general and political further education courses.

Teaching Methods and Approaches

As in the school sector, the teaching staff take responsibility for teaching in their classes, taking the background and aptitude of each participant into consideration.

The use of new information and communication technologies as an effective tool in self-organised learning is also becoming an increasingly important aspect of adult education/continuing education. The majority of distance learning offers are supported online, either in full or in part. Many initiatives and projects have been launched to promote the use of these technologies.

8.4. Continuing Vocational Education and Training

Admission Requirements

Continuing vocational education and training is targeted at groups with the widest possible range of educational qualifications, from unemployed people with no school-leaving or vocational qualifications to executives.

Certification

Only some of the courses for continuing vocational training are designed to lead to qualifications which are recognised by law or awarded by industry's self-governing organisations [chambers].

8.5. Second-Chance Education

Admission requirements

Applicants for evening classes for the acquisition of a higher education entrance qualification [*Abendgymnasien*] must provide evidence of a vocational qualification or evidence that they have been in employment for at least two years. They must also be at least 19 years old and have obtained the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*. Applicants who cannot provide evidence of the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* or an equivalent qualification have to complete at least a half-year preliminary course teaching mainly German, a foreign language and mathematics. The Länder may adopt special provisions on examinations for admission to and on the qualification for the preliminary course. Course members must be in employment except during the last three half-years. The admission conditions for *Kollegs* are the same as for *Abendgymnasien*. Those attending such schools are not allowed to combine their study with work.

Learner assessment/progression

The principles and objectives for the assessment of performance and the examinations in courses leading to school qualifications are comparable to those that apply in the secondary sector.

Certification

For information about how adults can attain school-leaving certificates through the so-called *Zweiter Bildungsweg* [second-chance education], i.e. evening classes and *Kollegs*, see chapter 8.2. The *Volkshochschulen* also offer courses in this area.

8.6. Continuing Education in the Academic and Creative Field

Admission requirements

The entry requirement for continuing education in the academic and creative field at higher education institutions is usually that participants have a degree, though sometimes continuing education courses are also open to applicants who have achieved the necessary skills through a period of employment or another means [see also chapter 7.3.1.]. Master's study courses providing further education require, as a rule, a first higher education degree followed by relevant skilled work experience of at least one year.

Learner assessment/progression

For continuing education in the academic and creative field, the amendment of the Framework Act for Higher Education [*Hochschulrahmengesetz* - R121] of 1998 provided for the introduction of a credit point system at German higher education institutions. In the future, credit points may also be obtained outside the sector of higher education, e.g. through non-formally obtained competences and further vocational training. For this, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs [*Kultusministerkonferenz* - KMK] has laid down the conditions by adopting a resolution on the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside the sector of higher education in June 2002. In November 2003, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, the German Rectors' Conference [*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* - HRK], and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* - BMBF] in a joint declaration appealed to higher education institutions to recognise credits for, by way of example, qualifications achieved in further vocational training in respect of higher education courses of study if they meet certain standards.

Certification

Continuing education in the academic and creative field leads to certificates and, in the case of study courses, higher education degrees as well.