

Professionalisation of Teachers in Work-Oriented Basic Education: Process Orientation as a Special Competence Requirement of Teachers

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Abstract

The pedagogical concept of work-oriented basic education is the result of an increasing differentiation concerning the concept of basic education and adult education as a whole. This article addresses the question of context specificity in the field of work-oriented basic education. This will be discussed within the context-specifics of knowledge and skills of teachers in the field. Certain competencies, such as process orientation and the development of diverse addressee relationships, are particularly relevant in the field of work-oriented basic education, although they are closely linked to general adult education skills.

Keywords: Professionalisation, professional pedagogical competence, teachers, work-oriented basic education, adult education

1 Introduction – professionalisation and competence requirements

In recent years, adult literacy and basic education have become a distinct topic and research field within adult education research. This field is increasingly differentiated (cf. Tröster & Schrader 2016), which raises the question of the characteristics and peculiarities of the respective contexts. A specific, currently strongly promoted and discussed field of research and practice is work-oriented basic education. This concept uses the workplace as an opportunity structure to promote employability as well as to enable autonomy and the ability to reflect in an educational-theoretical tradition (cf. Klein & Reutter, 2014 p. 3). In addition to the participants, work-oriented basic education also focuses on the goals and expectations of the company as a business and learning location. Work-oriented basic education is characterised by a special field reference between vocational and general education and by the interaction of diverse actors (cf. Klein, Folger & Behlke 2015). Consequently, special contextual and structural framework conditions can be assumed for work-oriented basic educa-

tion as a field of action. Starting from this assumption, it is expected that this is also reflected in the professionalisation of teachers, especially in specific requirements for the competencies of teachers in work-oriented basic education. This article examines the assumption through an explorative-empirical approach and poses the question if special competence requirements can be identified for professional teachers in work-oriented basic education.

The multi-perspective research project “Arbeitsplatzbezogene Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener (ABAG²)”¹, on which this article is based, takes a close look at these conditions by the three aspects of participants, teachers and enterprises in the field of work-oriented basic education. A subproject dedicated to the teachers in work-oriented basic education focuses on professionalisation and the professional pedagogical action of teachers. Based on the notion that there are special structural and contextual framework conditions in work-oriented basic education, this article discusses which specific competence requirements for teachers can be identified for the field. This research question is related to a fundamental debate on the professionalisation and competencies of teachers in adult education and in work-oriented basic education. For this purpose, the current state of research on professionalisation and professionalism as well as on the competencies of teachers in adult education and the field of work-oriented basic education will be discussed. The theoretical perspective of this empirical work is the model of professional pedagogical competence according to Baumert and Kunter (2006). We will then focus on the discussion of selected empirical findings: In a multi-perspective study with teachers in work-oriented basic education, company stakeholders, education management and participants, requirements and competence facets are analysed. In addition to a brief overview of all empirically identified competence requirements for teachers, *process orientation in the addressee relation* is presented and discussed as an outstanding competence requirement for teachers in the field of work-oriented basic education. The empirically identified requirements of special competence are also discussed with regard to assumptions about general adult educational competence requirements. The article concludes by offering perspectives on further findings as well as connections to current research. This research contributes to the debate on the competencies of teachers, in particular those related to practical feasibility. The results can stimulate the development of models for the accreditation of competencies as well as the concepts of qualification.

¹ The joint project on Workplace Literacy and Basic Education with the Learning Region-Network Cologne e. V. is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research from May 2016 to July 2020. The research project contains 3 subprojects, which deal with the institutionalisation, professionalisation and competencies of the participants.

2 Professionalisation and competencies of teachers in adult education and work-oriented basic education

In the following, we give an overview of the current state of research and outline the debate on professionalisation in adult education as well as the specific field of work-oriented basic education. In particular, we highlight the close connection with a strongly competence-oriented debate on questions of professional pedagogical competencies of teachers in the school sector. We then present current findings and models that systematically outline competence requirements for teachers in adult education.

2.1 Professionalisation and professional pedagogical competence of teachers in adult education

The debate and development towards professionalisation in adult education began as early as the 1960s; numerous recent publications and research activities point to an intensification of the debate, especially in recent years (cf. Gieseke 2015; Scheidig 2016; Schrader 2010a). While initially the development of a profession and an adult education profile was emphasised, the focus shifted towards the professionalisation of the individual and his or her actions (cf. Gieseke 2015, p. 2; Kraft, Seitter & Kollewe 2009, p. 13 f.; Scheidig 2016, p. 74). However, in recent decades, the focus has been primarily on planning personnel, whereas insufficient attention has been paid to the professionalisation of teachers (cf. Bosche et al. 2015 p. 54; Gieseke 2015; Schrader 2010a, p. 31). This is particularly remarkable against the background of the progressive institutionalisation of adult education and the associated demands on teachers to meet minimum requirements (cf. Schrader 2010a). Furthermore, the outstanding importance of professional teaching and the relevance of qualified and professional teaching staff are emphasised (Bosche et al. 2015, p. cf.; Kraft et al. 2009; Martin et al., 2016; Scheidig 2016). However, not least because of a practical necessity, recently a focus on professionalisation and professionalism of teachers has become apparent (cf. Schrader 2010a, p. 31). For example, the “wb-personalmonitor” examines the staff in continuing education, and thus also the teachers, and their qualifications (cf. Martin et al. 2016). The studies on media-supported case studies by Schrader et al. (2010) also refer to interests in the professionalism of teaching and develop a training concept for the competence development of teachers in adult education (cf. Schrader, Hohmann, & Hartz, 2010). In addition, specific further training courses for teaching activities in adult education can be identified, for example, the “Adult Education Qualification” of the German Adult Education Association or certificates such as “Train the Trainer” of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. However, these certificates are not yet recognised across institutions and industries.

The question regarding formalisation and certificates generates a current debate on recognition and certification opportunities for professional adult education competence (cf. Bosche et al. 2015; Gruber 2018). This is stimulated, among other things, by educational policy requirements on the international and national level concern-

ing a transparent and consistent recognition system, which results in the development of concepts (cf. Bosche et al., 2015; Gieseke, 2015; Gruber, 2018, p. 1090; Kraft et al., 2009). In this context, the study “Adult Learning Professions in Europe (ALPINE)”, published in 2008 and commissioned by the European Commission, should be mentioned. The study focuses on professionalisation in adult education and recommends a common “European Qualifications Framework (EQF)”. Subsequently, a follow-up study on “Key competencies for adult learning professionals” was developed in 2010. The study is regarded as an important step towards a consistent reference and qualification framework (cf. Research voor Beleid 2010). However, the adoption of such a framework at the international level has not yet taken place, just as the proposed key competencies have not yet been applied within the national context. In this context and at the national level, the “GRETA” competence model must be mentioned, as it responds to this need for consistent competence standards and related recognition procedures and systems. GRETA compiles the foundations for the development of a cross-institution recognition procedure for the competencies of teachers in adult and continuing education (cf. Lencer & Strauch 2016). The GRETA-model identifies all competencies that teachers should have and it should be applicable as a generic cross-field and cross-carrier model for different areas (cf. Lencer & Strauch 2016, p. 3).

Even though recognition systems of competencies such as the GRETA model are considered to be of central importance for the professionalisation of teachers (cf. Gruber 2018, p. 17), at the same time adequacy and applicability of such models are questioned concerning the heterogeneity and specification of adult education (cf. Schrader 2010a, p. 34; Schwendemann 2018). In addition, it becomes clear that despite the above-mentioned efforts to research professional adult education competencies, the lack of consensual approaches and consistent standards persists. Consequently, these considerations reinforce the interest in identifying which special demands can be made in regard to the competencies of teachers in the specific field of work-oriented basic education.

The debate on professionalism of teachers in adult education is closely related to the discussion of professional pedagogical competencies of teachers in the school sector (cf. Dewe, 1990, 2017; Goeze & Hartz, 2008). However, taking this into account and referring to current research findings, there are hardly any competence models that attempt to capture and depict the professional (pedagogical) competence of adult education teachers in a comprehensive, theoretically founded and empirically tested way (cf. Schrader 2010b). Of course, the GRETA model previously cited should be mentioned here (cf. Lencer & Strauch 2016).

Nonetheless it is therefore profitable to join the discourse on professionalisation and competencies in school and teacher education research. These are already intensively devoted to the question of professional competence, especially since the modernisation and reform of teacher training and the development of quality standards. The compatibility of school-related models for the field of adult education seems to be ensured despite structural differences. Thus, no significant differences between the requirements of teachers in school and in adult education can be identified (cf.

Schrader 2010b, p.77). The school-related debate produces a series of competence models that range from strongly substance- and content-oriented standards to educational-psychological ones (cf. Baumert & Kunter, 2006 p.469). Drawing on these models from international and national teacher education and school research, and in consideration of standards formulated in education policy, Baumert and Kunter (2006) developed a heuristic model of professional action competence based on the model of professional teacher personality. The authors understand professional action competence as being composed of various components and differentiate between self-regulatory abilities, motivational orientations, convictions and values as well as (professional) knowledge. Accordingly, professional action competence develops from the interaction of

- specific, experience-saturated declarative and procedural knowledge (competence in the narrower sense: knowledge and ability);
- professional values, beliefs, subjective theories, normative preferences and goals;
- motivational orientations as well as
- metacognitive and professional self-regulation skills (cf. Baumert & Kunter 2006, p.482).

Following this understanding as well as the aforementioned study by Schrader et al. (2010), these considerations serve as a theoretical framework for our understanding of knowledge and skills, understood in a broader sense as professional pedagogical competence. The methodological approach therefore follows the interest in knowledge and ability, the declarative and procedural knowledge as well as the practical ability to act and the professional values, convictions and self-control of teachers in work-oriented basic education.

2.2 Professionalisation of teachers in (work-oriented) literacy and basic education

Professionalism is also debated in the field of work-oriented basic education, where it is particularly justified by the high practical need for concrete training and continuing education opportunities for teachers (cf. Nuissl & Przybylska 2016, p.93). The research focus on professionalisation is inspired by internationally comparative research activities and findings, which emphasise the lack as well as the need for professional competence training and consistent standards (Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung 2013). However, the development and implementation of a professionalisation system for teachers in literacy and basic education has progressed differently among the European member states. Nonetheless, professionalisation has led to a focus on the development of continuing education concepts and trainings (cf. Nuissl & Przybylska, 2016 p.93).

In the national context, the practical and scientific necessity of dealing with the subject has been increasingly responded to in recent years. The practical and research field of (work-oriented) literacy and basic education are promoted in particu-

lar by educational policy developments and programmes such as the “National Decade for Literacy and Basic Education”², which came into force in 2016. Within this framework, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research carries out specific funding priorities, including work-oriented basic education, and funds corresponding research and development projects. The project “CurVe II” represents such a project and focuses among other things on the professionalism of teachers and is currently developing and testing a further training course for teachers in the basic education sector (cf. Mania & Tröster 2015). The University of Education Weingarten also reacted in a special way to the practical necessity and social relevance of the subject by establishing a Master’s programme for the training of professional teachers (cf. Pädagogische Hochschule Weingarten 2018). The “Büro für Berufliche Bildungsplanung Dortmund” also reacts to the practical necessity with the “Gruwe” project and offers practical and specific further training for teachers (Büro für Berufliche Bildungsplanung 2018).

Despite the efforts outlined above, there are no consistent and common standards on the competence requirements for teachers in the field of (work oriented) literacy and basic education. Current research activities indicate a high level of activity and promotion of professionalisation, yet the state of research points to the urgent practical need to address the specific pedagogical competence requirements of teachers as well as their professional development. Especially for work-oriented basic education, which is characterised by the peculiar field reference between vocational and general education and by the involvement and interaction of various actors, questions arise regarding competence requirements for teachers. In this sense, Klein, Folger and Behlke emphasise that work-oriented basic education confronts educational institutions and teachers with new challenges. Work-oriented basic education is an “outreach” offer; it is about addressing, informing and sensitising companies; it has to be conceived of customized offers that meet the needs of employees and companies; learning has to take place as close to work as possible; benefit and gain should become as transparent as possible (cf. Klein et al., 2015, p. 5).

We assume that there are certain requirements in the field of work-oriented basic education and that these have a certain relationship to competencies in adult education as a whole. Based on this initial assumption and the scientific desideratum of research, the article discusses the initial question regarding the context-specific competence requirements of teachers in work-oriented basic education.

2 It is in this context that the ABAG² project, on which this contribution is based, should be seen.

3 Methodical notes: A multi-perspective analytical concept

Next, an overview regarding the empirical design of the multi-perspective study is given. A multi-perspective research design was developed for the empirical survey of the pedagogical competence of teachers in work-oriented basic education, which is achieved by the analysis of four different perspectives on the research object as well as by the entanglement and contrast of these perspectives with regard to the research question. The emphasis is on the perspectives of teachers, educational management as planning actors, company stakeholders and participants in work-oriented basic education courses. Accordingly, the methods of the guideline-based expert interviews and questionnaire surveys were applied triangulatively in the procedure. The perspective of the teachers was recorded via a guideline-based group interview and four expert interviews with trainers of work-oriented basic education courses. The focus was the assessment of important competencies and requirements, especially in contrast to teaching activities in other contexts. Regarding education management, three expert interviews were analysed, focusing on selection criteria for teachers. The perspective of the company stakeholders was analysed in 13 expert interviews which particularly focused on expectations and experiences of competencies of trainers. These interviews address the conditions for success and institutionalisation of work-oriented basic education in the company, which is the main topic of another subproject (cf. Koller 2018). The interviews were transcribed and analyzed on the basis of the structuring qualitative content analysis (cf. Mayring 2015). The category system was sharpened in a deductive and inductive coding process based on the 6-eyes principle; the inter-rater reliability is at a satisfactory Cohens-Kappa value of 0.68 (cf. Krippendorff 2004). The fourth perspective relates to participants' feedback on the seminar situation; the collected data comes from a third subproject which uses a quantitative longitudinal section to survey the competencies of participants (cf. Schwarz & Klinkhammer 2017). Within the questionnaire open questions for feedback were given. These short text documents were also used for content analysis. The participants' written statements cannot be directly compared with the data from the expert interviews, as they provide insights into the requirements from the participants' point of view.

4 Findings – Process orientation as a special competence requirement for teachers in work-oriented basic education

By analysing the data, various facets of pedagogical competence can be identified. Thus, in the 23 categories for example specialised didactics, specialised knowledge, didactical knowledge and ability as well as methodical competence, self-organization up to customer acquisition are analysed. Figure 1 shows the variance and wideness of the competence facets which were conducted in the data.



Figure 1: Facets of competencies in the field of work-oriented basic education

The facet of process orientation will be emphasised in the following. In the analysis, the category of process orientation turns out to be differentiated in a remarkable way, since it appears to have a certain contextual specificity. Process orientation refers to the competence to adapt quickly and efficiently to changing situations and to be able to flexibly access various facets of professional action. Learning from participants and in particular to understand work-oriented basic education as a process and to stimulate it through flexible reaction is the characteristic of this competence facet. The thesis can be put forward that process orientation as a competence is relevant for teachers in work-oriented basic education in a twofold manner:

1. *It addresses a variety of competencies and thus formulates the profile of the pedagogical competencies of teachers in work-oriented basic education.*
2. *It structures the variety of addressee orientations in the field of work-oriented basic education.*

In the following, we will empirically illustrate and elaborate how the competence of *process orientation* is reflected in the various perspectives of the actors. In addition, this competence is shown in its intertwining with other competence facets and with a specific addressee relation.

The overlapping of *process orientation* and the categories *participant orientation*, *didactic knowledge and skills* and *self-organisation* is particularly striking. These overlaps show the dimensioning and leading function of *process orientation*. The following quotation³ from the data material of the teachers illustrates this link:

Much more important, because the just yes, it is (short break) from the format, those are full days, so mostly from nine to three. You're already together a lot more intensively. Didactically, this has to be approached in a different way, it's also a big material abundance, whereby I always see, leave a lot of free space for my own impulses and my own experience and so on and that also works quite well. (I_T1, L. 164–168)

3 The interviews were conducted in German and translated for this essay as close as possible to the original.

It can be seen here that the teacher uses a modified or unusual teaching format as a starting point for didactic decisions. The question of “material abundance”, which addresses competencies from the field of *subject didactics*, is placed in an area of tension with *participant orientation* in the sense of “one’s own impulses” and “one’s own experience”. Flexible action becomes obvious here when speaking of “differently raised” and “free space”. This is underlined by the fact that in preparation and in the concrete teaching situation adaptations must be made which require competencies from the field of *didactic knowledge and skills*, *participant orientation* and *subject didactics*. Obviously, there is a repertoire, which is prepared in a special and modified way due to the format, but then flexibly adapted in favour of orientation to the impulses of the participants. With regard to the entire data material, it can be seen that the processing of questions of e.g. *subject didactics*, which and how much content is to be processed, is often decided or adapted in the situation and then aligned with the process. In the learning situation and ad hoc, *participant orientation* is usually given preference over prepared planning.

The following quotation points out the role of *self-organisation* as a competence connection with *process orientation*:

[...] that the goals, the learning goals are perhaps clear but the way to get there is not the same as in the traditional course. You first have to work your way through it, you have to develop it [...] so in my courses there have been some needs from which new course offers have been developed and implemented. Which I developed together with the participants [...]. (I_TG, L. 213–218)

First of all, a difference between work-oriented basic education and other formats becomes obvious here. The statement is not trivial, as the interviews show, that the actors allocate the activity in work-oriented basic education context a special position and apparently assess the requirements as specific. It is made clear that the didactic concept of work-oriented basic education is to be developed and carried out in *self-organisation*. The learning objectives, i.e. the required *specialist knowledge*, have been formulated explicitly and in coordination with the respective company and the educational management.⁴ The didactic knowledge and skills are adapted in a flexible manner while taking teaching and the learning process into consideration. In this context this aspect is extended by the meaning of the addressee relation: *also the company*. *The company also has an interest, which is now being added as a third partner (GI_L_1, L. 58)*. The *process-oriented* handling of *didactic knowledge and skills* in coordination with the *participant’s orientation* is additionally brought into harmony with the “third partner” company. This entanglement of *addressee relation* with the competence of *process orientation* is a particular challenge. As already discussed, the context of work-oriented basic education shows a special relation between in-company and

4 It should also be mentioned here that in the case of the ABAG² project, educational management is an external actor financed by project funds, which initiates work-oriented basic education in the companies and determines the topic and content with the company’s internal actors. The trainers are recruited and financed by the educational management.

general education in the interaction of various actors. This requirement is also met with flexibility by renegotiating, coordinating and adapting *didactics* and the content of the course.

If the perspective of this “third partner” company is integrated, it can be seen that the flexibility in dealing with *didactic* questions is seen as a unique selling point of teachers in the field of work-oriented basic education and the specific offer:

In particular that we even switched over the course content at short notice and it was then adapted so quickly and I don't think every provider is necessarily in a position to do this. (I_B_RVG, Z. 134–136)

The given example illustrates the importance of cooperation and the customisation of offers within the respective business contexts. In cooperation, pedagogical competencies that affect the *ability to cooperate* become relevant. This shows that process-oriented action is not only relevant within the context of teaching and learning. As well as addressing competencies in the area of *didactic knowledge and skills* and *participant orientation*, it is also important in cooperation with additional addressees.

In addition to competencies that are central to the teaching situation and focus on the participants, this multiplied addressee relation seems to mark a passage on which routines and familiar concepts are questioned and reoriented. In the data material, not only the companies as partners but also the educational management as addressees become visible. The following excerpt depicts the perspective of the educational management. It portrays the relationship between the teacher and the respective partner in regard to coordination:

[...] that doesn't necessarily have to be what we negotiated, I'm totally willing to say, if someone comes to me, just look, we tried it today, they can, they're much, much better, they're much, much worse or it's about completely different things, they have huge conflicts, they can't concentrate on it at all, I just talked to them about it for four hours. Then I say yes, great. You did exactly right. (I_BM2, Z. 394–399)

In this quote, educational management and teachers negotiated a concept for a concrete offer, which was rejected after the beginning of the offer in the teaching situation. The need for change is determined by the teacher on the basis of the competence of *participant orientation*. For example, it is determined that *it's about completely different things*. In addition, an assessment of the participants which had been conducted by the education management and the teacher in advance, could not be maintained in the teaching situation – the participants' competencies were underestimated. Another aspect becomes clear: the didactic concept of the subject is abandoned in favour of an empathetic, understanding approach. The emphasis on *socio-emotional sensitivity* as a facet of social competence is recurrent in the data material. The orientation and objectives of the offer, which have already been negotiated and recorded, are again open for discussion and must be adapted by the teachers in relation to the addressee of education management. Cooperation with education management also shows that *process orientation* in alliance with (among other things)

participant orientation and *socio-emotional sensitivity* is given priority over coordinated goals and concepts.

By taking a final look at the perspective of the participants, the emphasis on *socio-emotional sensitivity* is reinforced. One can interpret it as a starting point for a flexible course design:

The trainer has patience with us and she explains to us if we have not understood correctly. She is very nice. (TN 22)

It should be remembered that the statements of the participants do not originate from a comparable survey context, but are part of a comprehensive long-term study based on questionnaires (see methodological notes). However, in relation to the question posed by this article, it becomes apparent that the participants value the teachers' change of perspective and their emphatic approach. The teacher obviously uses these social competencies to adapt the course concept to the situation. Having patience with participants also means being able to make new didactic and methodological adjustments over and over. The feedback of a participant emphasizes exactly this characteristic: *trainer X, who has adapted wonderfully to the respective situation* (TN 19).

5 Conclusion: Facets of competence and requirements in the field of work-oriented basic education

A synopsis of the various perspectives showed that *process orientation* seems to be a key competence demanded of teachers in the field of work-oriented basic education. It was shown that the competence facet of *process orientation* is reflected in many other facets, e.g. the importance of *socio-emotional sensitivity*, *didactics* and *didactic knowledge and skills* was highlighted. *Process orientation* can thus be understood as an overarching and dimensioning competence towards which other competencies are aligned. It was also explained that the special addressee relation between participants, the company and the educational management, requires the ability to cooperate in a particularly process-oriented manner. It is noticeable that this ability is not only relevant in teaching-learning interactions – as demonstrated here by the competence of participant orientation – but also in cooperation with the other addressees. This threefold addressee relation represents a criterion against which routine *didactic knowledge and skills*, *methodology* etc. are measured and made more flexible accordingly. A model of pedagogical competence of work-oriented basic education teachers, would not only have to integrate the much-discussed participant orientation (cf. Lencer & Strauch 2016), but also the orientation towards other addressees, such as companies and education management.

The question posed in this article puts into focus the specifics of the requirements of work-oriented basic education field for discussion. The statement that

teachers have a special relationship to process orientation does not yet say anything about the special nature of work-oriented basic education. It can therefore be assumed that flexibility and situativity are essential to the pedagogical competence of teachers in general and of teachers in adult education in particular (cf. Baumert & Kunter 2006, p. 488). A multiple reference to addressees is also inherent in various – but not all – fields of action in adult education. For example, Seitter, Schemmann and Vossebein have shown this for scientific continuing education (cf. Seitter, et.al. 2015).

The characteristics and requirements of work-oriented basic education, which is related to multiple addressees, obviously require a certain ability to deal with flexibility. Although this can also be seen in other fields. Based on our analysis we conclude that the special connection of *process orientation* and *addressee relation* is particularly distinct in the field of work-oriented basic education. It becomes apparent through the demarcation that the interviewees draw from other contexts of teaching. This certainly does not mean that a specific competence model can be assumed. It can be stated that certain competence facets become relevant in a special way and in a combination with other facets. For the determination of a competence profile of work-oriented basic education, a generic structural model of professional adult educational competence with a certain orientation for the field of work-oriented basic education could be useful.

This also points out a politically relevant issue of the possibilities of professionalising adult education as a whole and work-oriented basic education in particular. In a specific field characterised by a great heterogeneity of access to professions, low regulations and standards and a great variety of topics, questions arise concerning the limits of certifications and consensual approaches. Nevertheless, these results can stimulate the development and extension of concepts of teacher training in the field of work-oriented basic education. In this way, the empirical findings address the practical need to offer training opportunities for actors.

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