

4. MANAGEMENT, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RESEARCH IN ADULT EDUCATION

4.1. Subsidiary Action in Education Management

For numerous management theories, the interdisciplinary ideas that arose with quantum physics and the theory of self-organisation as well as chaos research, brought about great disillusionment: *The idea of the feasibility, configurability and controllability of organisations, enterprises and social systems was especially relativised with the more realistic notion that “(...) only trivial ‘machines’ (can) be configured and directed through isolated actions. Social systems are (on the other hand, R. A.) complex ‘machines’, which cannot be configured and directed with isolated actions, no matter how brilliantly conceived they might be”* (Probst 1987, p. 13). In this regard, Herbert Jaeger writes in *Kursbuch 98*, which is dedicated to the topic of “Chaos”: “The delusion of the possibility of being able to describe, to dominate, to do” has already exploded “under the pinprick(s) of a clear(er) insight:” “Ahead of us is a marvellous lesson on humility” (Jaeger 1989, p. 163).

This compelling humility also radically challenges the way in which learning is organised and planned in our society. Particularly among managers with a holistic-systematic approach to continuing education in enterprises, there is a growing concern which was already concisely stated by Rudolf Mann in his book “*Das ganzheitliche Unternehmen*”¹:

“The concept of “management” is implicitly linked with an image: being in a higher position (superiority), dominating, keeping things under control, sovereignty, the knowledge of how to command obedience. When we think of ‘managing’, we think of compelling, repressing, taming, subjugating, repressing, keeping on a lead, holding in leash, guiding, directing, commanding, dominating, dictating, holding the sceptre –and standing over, controlling and overseeing things. A manager is someone who has everything under control. But enterprises can no longer be governed in this way” (Mann 1988, p. 63 et seq.).

| 1 Translator’s note: “The Holistic Enterprise”

Now, the question is: What new perspectives, models and interventions should be adopted and “implemented” by senior management and educational management that can take into account a “more modest” claim on dominating the entrepreneurial processes, such as expanded qualification and uniting individual and organisational learning?

The basis for a management system that is sensitive in this regard is, in principle, the “farewell to the didactic illusion of feasibility”. This farewell contains not only a new understanding of the possibility of individual and organisational learning processes, but at the same time, also leads to a new organisational concept. The organisational development and in-company learning are “designed” in a more realistic manner, specifically as open processes that occur in a more or less self-organised way. In view of the development dynamics and interconnectedness of the complex structures of the events at an enterprise, facilitators and managers in enterprises can no longer dedicate themselves exclusively to certain aspects of the system, e.g. to continuing education or individual learning processes or even to individual aspects of learning processes (e.g. learning objectives, methodologies or media). They cannot continue thinking in linear chains of cause and effect, and find for each occurrence, for each problem, one single cause – which is to be eliminated (e.g. an individual qualification deficit). It is far more crucial that they develop the skill of networked thinking and be in a position to recognise the binding patterns. “Gestalt awareness”, i.e. the capacity to perceive the “gestalt” of the systems”, is in demand as a professional skill (Nevis, 1983). This holistic thinking is integrative, connected thinking, that also takes into account the fact that natural and social systems –and cultural development and continuing education “take place” in social systems– are simply far too complex, too varied and differentiated to be able to really “reproduce” them in simple explanatory models. These systems partly follow their own –internal– development rationale. In short, they are –to a certain extent– also unpredictable. Managing such unpredictable systems, therefore, presupposes the capacity of “handling uncertainty”.

This systemic design of entrepreneurial development and learning processes requires competencies other than those of “making” and “having things under control”. In fact, it involves social-communicative as well as didactic skills for the dialogical analysis of the training needs, for promoting groups and for following and assisting the processes of change, as well as a comprehensive “sensitivity” of the inherent social dynamics involved in organisation and organisational changes (cf. Arnold 1996a). Thus, the function of training and managing training in enterprises that are learning, or are capable of learning, is increasingly becoming a task that involves the responsibility of moderating self-organisation.

Carl Rogers pursues this line of thought towards a professional redefinition of the role of those who are responsible for education (teachers and others):

“The more open I am to the realities in myself and in others, the less I give way to the wish to hasten and “straighten things out”. As I try to listen to myself and to the experience processes that take place within myself, and the more I try to extend the same listening attitude to other individuals, the greater is the respect I feel for the complex life processes. I shall thus tend less and less to hasten and straighten things out, to “set objectives”, to form individuals, to manipulate and push them in the direction, where I would like to have them. (...) I am well aware” –states Rogers– “that this point of view might sound foreign, almost oriental. (...) What is the point of life, if we do not intend to make something out of human beings? (...) What is the point of life if we do not intend to teach them things that, in our opinion, they should learn?” (Rogers 1979b, p. 37).

Even other disciplines draw conclusions from the fact that “their” object should be developed in a more self-organised manner than was willing to be acknowledged until a few years ago, and they “say farewell” to their technocratic design models. Instead, the “professional” concepts of “serenity” are enjoying a boom; professionalism is being increasingly equated with the key qualification of “serenity” of systemic developmental orientation:

“The person who has (developed) serenity” –as can be read in a recent article on business administration– “is neither impatient, because he cannot directly change a situation in the sense of his own ideas, nor does he fall into resignation. He takes the world as it is, without necessarily renouncing to the role of a creative actor. He does not act in a hasty nor indecisive manner, but rather waits for the suitable moment and restricts himself to an even measure of action” (zu Knyphausen 1991, p. 57).

The conclusion of our considerations is probably that self-organised learning and the system-oriented promotion of organisational learning require first and foremost, (more) serene individuals in charge of education, i.e. trainers and managers who are in a position to handle self-organisation and the vitality of learning systems (individuals, working groups, seminars, etc.), in a way that promotes development and learning.

In this sense, system-oriented educational managers should also have a “networked and circular” way of thinking (Probst 1991), whereby they are not only concerned about the lack in qualifications of individual employees, but far more about the educational “causes” and “consequences” that are determined by the organisation. Likewise, they no longer think (solely) in terms of seminars and

programmes, but in categories that accompany the whole process. Educational managers also “have a distinct sense of analysis and synthesis” (ibid.) and are therefore aware that their top priority task lies in the organisation of forums for the analysing and synthesising problems in the systemic units of the enterprise. On the whole, system-oriented educational managers also follow a “developmental understanding of the origin of order in social systems” (ibid.) and thus openly approach the transformation steps and training needs of their enterprises. This means that they no longer organise training offers “at any cost”, but feel “responsible” for moderating entrepreneurial self-organisation in a wider sense. Therefore, they offer workshops and consultations on processes and in this way, try to give shape to a culture of discussion, co-operation and decision-making in the different departments and working groups that is “more open” to dialogue. Accordingly, they contribute not only to the development of the enterprise’s culture, but also to the promotion of the enterprise’s learning and development capacity. The promotion of the self-organisation and learning skills of the enterprise is precisely achieved –this is how this “new responsibility” of system-oriented educational managers could be characterised by summary– because the educational managers shift company training back to co-operative practice in the departments and in the project teams. Consequently, the “object” of system-oriented educational management at the enterprise no longer involves “administering” a programme and directing seminars, but rather increasing and making use of the learning effectiveness of daily co-operation at the enterprise. In this sense, educational managers promote a corporative culture precisely through the promotion of a learning culture, i.e. through learning and developing skills in “their” systems. *Their contribution to the development of a corporate culture can be observed in the fact that they systematically “submit” offers for moderating entrepreneurial self-organisation, whereby they gradually strengthen their confidence in their own skills and contribute to intensifying the learning and training effectiveness of everyday co-operation at the enterprise.*

The outlined conceptual and practical changes in the field of educational management in enterprises can be illustrated, among other things, in the area success monitoring or the so-called “education controlling”. In spite of the attention given by the media to this subject over the past years, what can be observed in reality is that educational management considers itself, with growing professional maturity, less and less responsible for “success monitoring”. Case studies conducted at the University of Kaiserslautern (see Arnold/Krämer-Stürzl 1992; Arnold 1996d) support the impression that exactly *those* companies which increasingly conceive and direct their work strategically are the ones that *no* longer assign predominant importance to a central and systematic success monitoring. Success monitoring is being substituted by a general awareness of the success, that also integrates further education at all the levels involved (Total Quality

Management). Detailed success monitoring, which records and computes central data, manifestly contradicts the concept of comprehensive organisational development, as is precisely intended by those enterprises that expect their training to be effective as a strategic contribution to the enterprise's development. These companies "take into account" the often personally experienced paradox that, in the past, the increased differentiation in the control procedures for success by no means automatically increased the success of further education at the enterprises. They instead doubt that the conditions for success can be "produced" and that a central evaluation instance should have to be "responsible" for this. They substantiate this self-overestimation and centralisation with the realism of self-limitation, decentralisation and organisational learning.

4.2. Quality in Adult Education

The issue of "quality assurance in continuing education" is a "hot issue"; there is room for so many spectacular neologisms (mostly Anglicisms), and many of those who, until recently, did not understand anything about adult education and training are now using the issue of quality in order to participate in the discussion as "education controllers" or "TQM (Total Quality Management) specialists". The state of adult education knowledge on the opportunities, contingencies and structural insecurities of adult learners' success (see Arnold 1997a) are all too often ignored; there is a predominance of technocratic concepts on the feasibility and controllability of the effect of training. Last but not least, the concept of "educational controlling" (v. Landsberg/Weiß 1992) is one of these.

What is good quality in continuing education?

Taking the lexical meaning of the word "quality" as a basis, this term is used to describe the "most immediate perception of the composition of an object" (Aristotle). Those who speak of "quality", therefore, always refer to the "composition" of something, whereby it is typical for it to be "compared" to something else. "Quality" is not understood here merely as a composition that is *inherent* to "the object". Rather, the *standardisation perspective* focuses on a concept of quality that presupposes definitions, criteria, expectations – an aspect that in quality assurance is equal to evaluation (literally: "valuation").

If one looks at the current practice of quality assurance, three procedures can be distinguished with respect to quality assurance:

- (1) *Certification*: Education providers try to optimise their quality management both with the aid of the DIN EN ISO 9000 et seq. complex of standards as well as with the aid of quality seal issuing bodies. Thus, for example, the umbrella organisations of the economy (BDA, DIHT, ZDH²), merged with the *Wuppertaler Kreis* (Wuppertal Association) and founded the CERTQUA certifying body. Enterprises and vocational training institutions can be “certified” by this institution, and this implies that the institutions are monitored to ensure they have a quality assurance system in place.
- (2) *Inclusion of all involved*: Another approach assumes that all those involved should define and guarantee the quality of the “product” of their respective area of responsibility. This concept of total quality management is, in short, a dynamic concept, which substitutes external monitoring with the clarity of the internal provider-customer relationships. These should be permanently redefined and optimised in a “continuous improvement process” (CIP).
- (3) *Professionalisation of staff*: This approach assumes that the educational quality of continuing vocational training can only be assured in the long-term if the staff has an adequate degree of pedagogical professionalism. To this effect, apart from the didactic and methodological skills of respecting the criteria for adult-appropriate education, one should certainly also consider the capacity to reflect on one’s own practice with the aid of pedagogical categories and the didactic methodological competencies for actively designing participant-oriented teaching-learning processes in continuing vocational training.

Often overlooked: The Nature of Adult Education

Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences between the quality assurance approaches in terms of the production of goods and services and making these available on one side, and the planning and implementation of continuing training on the other, whereby two aspects should be particularly stressed:

- a) A key difference is that in learning processes, a clear distinction between the “end product” and the service provider cannot be made.

2 Translator’s note: BDA: Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Arbeitgeberverbände (German Federation of Employers’ Associations); DIHT: Deutscher Industrie- und Handelstag (German Association of Chambers of Industry and Commerce); ZDH: Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (Central Association of German Craft Unions)

Whereas quality in an automobile has to be produced and guaranteed by a third party, the manufacturer, in the case of training processes, it is altogether questionable whether their “product” can be produced and guaranteed *at all* in a quantifiable measure by a third party, e.g. by a teacher. The *distinctive feature* of further training/continuing education processes is based precisely on the fact that the learning subject and the “product” are identical, and that the quality of the product “training” cannot, therefore, be simply defined separately from the acquisition process. The “customers” or “buyers” –in order to use these inadequate concepts– in the field of education are themselves intimately involved in the production of quality; they are part of the product and, therefore, part of the quality thereof. *The quality of the product and the buyer therefore overlap.* Consequently, participants in continuing education and training are not “consumers”, but at the most “prosumers” (Stahl 1995, p. 88).

- b) Another difference can be observed in the fact that quality in adult education and training goes beyond “customer orientation and satisfaction”. Due to the fact that participants –in contrast to, e.g., the automobile market– are involved with their learning efforts in the quality of what is taking place in adult education, further education should enable self-activity, it should “insist” on self-activity, even against the deeply-rooted experience, leisure and consumer expectations. In addition, knowledge, capacities and skills cannot be “transferred into their heads”, as is foreseen in the simple didactic input-output models. In order to be able to learn and to achieve a lasting acquisition of knowledge, qualifications and competencies, didactic approaches are necessary that *collaboratively* contribute to the design of the contents, while at the same time grant participants the highest degree of sovereignty to configure their respective and specific acquisition routes. In order to achieve this, *self-organisation didactics* are necessary, which design learning programmes as learning arrangements; these learning arrangements are prepared with an exploratory concept and activate learners’ self-activity. *This means that quality is not only evidenced in the “end product” (“participants who receive continuing training or education”), but already during the didactic design of the acquisition process as well.*

Quality is Quadrangular

Quality is, therefore, more than “customer satisfaction”. However, quality is also more than mere “legitimation”, an aspect that, in the case of many insti-

tutions and education departments, is still in the forefront of their efforts to control success and quality assurance: "Evaluation" takes place in order to document the success of further education in the face of sponsors, demand and "public opinion". A comprehensive understanding of quality can be based, in my opinion, on the concept that *quality is "quadrangular"*, i.e. that it encompasses four "success types" which can be individually gathered and documented in different contexts: *learning and acquisition success as well as transfer success should be added to satisfaction and legitimisation success*. All four types of success constitute a *complete model*, i.e. "good quality" is present *when*, based on certain criteria, all four success types receive a "positive" assessment or results, whereby the criteria are to be determined for each specific case on a dialogical basis ("dialogue with the agents and also with the participants").

However, the four types of success are not easily "quantifiable", so that apart from the *criteria*, there are also *biases*. Thus, according to what we know from the research on teaching and learning, the participants' satisfaction also facilitates their effective and long-lasting learning, although one can also be satisfied even when one has not learnt anything (Gieseke 1997). The opposite also applies: dissatisfaction can also be "triggered" by group dynamic processes or by personal projections (over-estimation, fear of failure, etc.) and this need not automatically be evidence of "poor quality". Similar biases can also be detected in the other types of success. For example, in the case of company training, it is becoming less and less common to send participants to external seminars, without previously ensuring that they will be able and "allowed" to later apply what they learn at the external training in their professional environment. In regards to legitimisation success as well, the lack of a criterion-oriented strategy in quality assurance (QA) can imply that the data that were collected could be by chance not very "relevant" from the standpoint of company policy (e.g. satisfaction assessments), so that they cannot be adequately evaluated either. In my opinion, a polished quality assurance strategy should decide *what* types of success it analyses, on the basis of *which* criteria (or objectives) and with *what* evaluation methodology, and for *whom* the results are to be documented.

Figure 13
THE “QUADRANGULARITY” OF QUALITY

	Biases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgement without criteria • Selective reactions • QA strategy (“learning by crisis”) 	Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval • Acceptance • Expressions of well-being (“happiness sheets”) 	
Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-out quota • Costs • Image effect 	Legitimation Success QUALITY	Satisfaction Success QUALITY	Biases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group dynamics • Dissatisfaction with one’s personal performance • Projections
Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention, problem-awareness, etc. • Valid performance evaluations • Reliable measurements 	QUALITY Learning Success	QUALITY Transfer Success	Biases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally inappropriate framework conditions for application • Non-acceptance by colleagues, etc. • Insufficient practical orientation
	Biases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of validity • Lack of reliability • Limited to accumulation of knowledge 	Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of what was learnt • Long-term • Sustainability 	

How can one assure, support and monitor quality in a sustainable and non-bureaucratic way?

Quality development and assurance does not only require clarity and optimisation of the process, but also, and mandatorily, criteria concerning contents, on the basis of which it is possible to assess learning offers, impositions and processes. These criteria for contents were clearly elaborated in the adult education debate on the theory of professionalism. The results of this discussion cannot be “pinpointed” in a handy 10-point outline. Nor can a mechanism be defined that makes it possible to “produce” quality. However, guiding questions can be defined to provide the framework for a continuous didactic and collegiated “self-ascertainment” on the part of the professionals. This indication clearly shows that quality in continuing education cannot be “guaranteed” externally by means of fine-meshed surveillance systems and checklists, but only via the “standpoint of responsibility” in the sense of a “continuous improvement process” (CIP) by the relevant occupational programme planners and the trainers. Accordingly, a “self-organised quality assurance system” based on the organisation’s process (Arnold 1995) should always be preferred to the expertocratic training-controlling approaches (see Landsberg/Weiß, 1992). A major objective for the further education and training of facilitators and planning staff is therefore “sensitisation with respect to success and quality”, which is a requirement for starting and designing continuous improvement processes.

Guiding questions for a corresponding continuous didactic “self-assessment” (CDSA)³ (see Arnold 1994; Severing 1995) could be:

- **Input Quality**

What do we want? What are the models for our action? What objectives do we wish to achieve in the next five years? etc. (= *Conception*)

How do we plan? How can we verify the demand and the scientism of our measures? Do we reach all the target groups we want to reach? What three activities could we introduce (annually) in order to obtain feedback to these questions? etc. (= *Planning*)

Is our offer understood? Are we creative or monotonous in our forms? How can we obtain external feedback to these questions? (= *Offer*)

3 This model is the expression of a stronger process-oriented approach of quality assurance, although it also includes result-oriented guiding questions. Overall, this model is strongly focused on the technical and didactic quality of the employees, according to the KAIZEN-principle: “Guiding employees towards quality means helping them develop quality awareness” (Imai 1994, p. 67).

- **Quality of Execution**

How do the participants feel at our premises (or in the facilities where we carry out our actions)? Does the “environment” support and facilitate learning? etc. (= *Infrastructure*)

Do we work with professional instructors, facilitators, coaches, etc.? Do they dedicate themselves intensively to the participants and provide advice? (= *Professionalism*)

Do our measures and actions enable live and reflexive learning? What is the role of the participants’ experience and activities in our actions etc. (= *Didactics*)

- **Output Quality**

What are the drop-out and failure rates of our measures and actions? Can the graduates apply what they have learnt in/from our measures actions in their personal environment or occupations? Is our diploma/degree/certificate recognised by the economy, by society? etc. (= *Diploma/Degree/Certificate*)

Are the participants satisfied with the planning and implementation of our actions? How do we perform continuous monitoring of this satisfaction? What factors are particularly relevant for the participants’ satisfaction? etc. (= *Satisfaction*)

Do participants also learn extradisciplinary issues in our actions? Can participants acquire key qualifications and develop their personality? What systematic “efforts” should we undertake in order to intensify extradisciplinary learning? (= *Personality Development*)

Continuous Didactic Self-Assessment (CDSA) substitutes the rearview mirror perspective of result-oriented management (Slogan: “Were we successful?”) with a foresight perspective (Slogan “What can I do to ensure that I do not have a detrimental effect on the overall success?”).

A Summary in Five Theses:

(1) The uniqueness of quality assurance in continuing education and training processes is based on the fact that the learning subject and the “product” are identical. In addition, “quality in continuing training” encompasses more than customer satisfaction. From the viewpoint of adult education, this rather involves the learners’ *self-action* and *activity*. This should be facilitated in the framework of self-organisation didactics (“facilitation didactics”) by means of adequate learning designs.

Prospective reference for possible “application” with continuing education providers:

- Development of a quality assurance concept that takes into account both the uniqueness of the “product” of continuing education as well as the learners’ self-action and activity.

(2) “Good quality” can only be determined from multiple perspectives. In this sense, quality is “quadrangular”: Success monitoring and quality assurance are generally related to one, several or all aspects of the four types of success: legitimisation, satisfaction, learning or transfer success. “Good quality” can only be assumed when “positive” assessments or results are documented for all four success types.

Prospective reference for possible “application” with continuing education providers:

- Breakdown into a four-dimensional quality assurance approach, which enables the assessment of the success in legitimisation, satisfaction, learning and transfer.

(3) A non-bureaucratic strategy in quality assurance comprises two dimensions:

- a) assuring and optimising processes (process optimisation)
- b) promoting sensitisation to success and quality awareness among those who hold the responsibility

Prospective reference for possible “application” with continuing education providers:

- Development of a *two-dimensional* approach to quality assurance, which aims at process optimisation and sensitisation to success.

(4) For the purpose of *process optimisation* it is useful to clearly state the objectives, identify processes, define interfaces as well as clearly determine both the customer-provider relationships and the measured variables (see example: Development of Distance Learning).

Prospective reference for possible “application” with continuing education providers:

- Development of a systematisation of the normal processes (with interfaces, customer-provider relationships, etc.).

(5) Quality assurance is based on the quality and quality awareness of the educational planning and teaching staff. In order to promote sensitivity to success among these staff members, it is useful to implement *continuous didactic self-assessment (CDSA)*, that repeatedly “raises” issues for collegial discussion and systematic self-reflection that include “aspects that have to be assured in the introductory stage of the ‘actual’ action/measure (input)” as well as “aspects that have to be assured *during* (execution) or *after* the ‘actual’ action/measure” (output).

Prospective reference for possible “application” with continuing education providers:

- Displaying, specifying and applying the three-dimensional quality assurance model to the specific situation of the providers (types of programme, target groups, conditions for implementation, etc.).

Quality and professionalism are reciprocally related to one another: quality is unconceivable without professionalism, and professionalism would be unable to maintain its long-term credibility without quality assurance.

4.3 Theoretical Considerations and Autobiographical Reflections on Educational Management

The following considerations link two argumentation levels together: on one hand, an attempt will be made to establish the outlines of the issues and the state of knowledge pertaining to a theory on educational management, on the other, this argumentation line shall be illustrated, contrasted and articulated by utilising practical experiences in management that have been compiled by the author in different adult education contexts⁴. This ensures –or so that is what is expected– at least in the initial stages, that the issues of educational management that were approached theoretically (see Arnold/Siebert/Krämer-Stürzl 1999), also become issues that are applied in practice, and conversely, that many of the transformations that arise from practical experience also find their expression in the concepts and theories on educational management. At the core of this consolidation of perspectives are aspects linked to professionalism, since one of the key practical experiences is the 80-to-20 paradox, i.e. the contradiction between a strong microdidactic education and a predominantly macrodidactic professional practice. This means that adult educators who have obtained a degree in adult education have, as a rule, become familiar in over 80 percent of their training with issues related to educational theory, learning psychology, didactic and other topics directly related primarily to the courses and to learning. Issues regarding subsequent professional practice such as decision-making or planning, however, are still assigned an inferior position in the curricula.

One of the consequences of these circumstances for adult education is that “teachers are trained to become headmasters”, a regulation we are all too familiar with in our school management and direction practices, also with respect to its negative consequences. Because “teachers” or –in the case of adult education– educators with a strong learning-process and subject-oriented approach–view the world “with their own eyes”, and when they have to face issues that involve directing, co-ordinating or decision-making issues, they still depend on the knowledge and strategies that they acquired during their career studies. Of course there is always the phenomenon of certain individuals who “reveal” themselves as veritable organisational talents and devote themselves fully to their management functions. However, this does not the general rule. For the most part, education professionals –who are not management professionals– resort to mud-

4 These areas of experience comprise a five-year period of employment at an international adult education institution (management of international further education programmes) as well as the organisation and direction of a further education institution at the university level during the last ten years (development and implementation of several distance learning courses). In addition to this, the assistance and consulting work performed over many years at educational institutions in Germany and other countries represent a significant area of experience.

dling-through strategies, which initially are very similar to survival strategies. Whereas in the debate on school management and direction it is sometimes discussed whether or not it would be better if school principals were not educators, which is a widespread common practice in the United States, but to the best of my knowledge, this issue has not yet reached adult education. The predominant approach here still is that professionals are trained for microdidactic action, well aware of the fact that their practice will be in the field of management.

This paradox also leads to interpretation patterns and rationalisations that attempt to explain in verbosity, that education has nothing (!) to do with the usual products, and that accordingly, adult education is not targeted at “clients”, but at participants –a market-distant way of thinking, to which I shall be returning to later. It cannot escape notice, however, that education and management have taken opposite sides in adult education, and we should not be deceived by the fact that “(...) there is less and less receptiveness for the traditions of educational sciences, (while) the concept of organisational and planning sciences in the research on adult education and further training are (becoming) increasingly relevant” (Diekmann 2001, p. 94). In the introduction to his book “*Systemisches Wissenmanagement*”⁵, Helmut Willke writes the following:

“Knowledge and management, according to what managers and scientists believe, do not match very well together. One could write whole books on the details of the reciprocal prejudices. In the extreme cases, managers view scientists as ponderers who are incapable of decision-making, and conversely, scientists view managers as impetuous pragmatists” (Willke 1998, p. 1).

A similar antagonism can also be observed with respect to the relationship between education and management in adult education: professionals in the field of “education” substantiate their professional identity on the basis of an enlightened impetus or of idealistic demands on education, or at least taking into consideration the inherent laws of the subject development that have to be promoted with adult learning, and it is often hard to persuade to them to become acquainted with modern demands such as quality assurance, marketing and controlling. As detected in a “survey” on the topic of quality assurance among religious adult educational providers (see Arnold 2000 b), the justification of their own practice is still quite trapped by the specificity of adult education events, and they generally scrutinise with ingrained dislike many of the market and management related requirements placed on adult education institutions and on the people who work there. Their guiding standards are the internal conditions of the adult education process, and not so much the external general conditions (organisational,

| 5 Translator’s note: “Systemic Knowledge Management”

financial, human resources). For many of them, the central issue is generally the question of:

“(...) how can educational support be provided to learning adults, who have totally different biographies, learning requirements and current life situations, and who wish to capably cope as active subjects in their personal environments” (Meueler 2001, p. 293).

Although this guiding standard is the core of adult education professionalism, it is by itself not yet in a position to sufficiently substantiate the criteria and action strategies in terms of process reliability, quality of services, etc. Thus, subject-oriented professionals often remain “speechless” when the issue involves developing an ideal, programme marketing or quality assurance. In addition, the knowledge provided to them for many years by “their” reference science, adult education, has often contributed more to increasing the distance in knowledge than to linking and integrating it, in order to be at all able to convincingly incorporate the success criteria of “effective education” (Siebert) and the criteria of successful management into the descriptions of their own practice and concepts of action, as should be expected from an adult education management theory with a truly strong explanatory essence and which also serves as a guide for practice.

In addition, the numerous wordplays and even mystifications, from which the education discourse –in adult education as well– is not totally “free”, contribute to making this link between education and management more difficult, also with respect to another comparison. Theory and practice work with different relevance systems, they use different forms of expression and ratings, although it should not be overlooked that adult education, on the other hand, with its theories and concepts, is also used as a quarry, from which practice “helps itself” in order to continue describing its self-interpretation and self-observation and “legitimise” its work in the face of public opinion, sponsors, etc. However, upon closer observation, adult education is only partly suited to this, since it is both things: “Keyword provider for the practice systems” and at the same time a kind of “self-referenced system”, which refers to itself, to its own descriptions of the reality and not only to reality itself. For a long time, adult education only “supplied” education-centred interpretations of practical experiences, which are used by those who have the main responsibility for managing education institutions and for co-ordinating programmes; their predominant management reality remained without conceptual guidelines, except for some relatively early publications on programme planning in continuing education (Arnold/Wiegerling 1983) and the efforts to develop a theory on continuing education management (Merk 1992; Nuissl 1998) that really only began in the nineties. On the other

hand, the dual context reference of adult education often confuses practice, and this confusion also contributes to the fact that the breach between the educational aspirations and the concrete practice and management obligations and expectations cannot be really bridged in theory.

Episode 1: Communication Difficulties between Educational Theory and Management Practice

Within the scope of my work at an international adult education and human resources development institution between 1984 and 1989, I was also responsible for the further training of the staff who performed “programme development tasks”. In this context, I also planned seminars on subjects such as “Evaluation in Adult Education”, “Didactics of Adult Education”, etc., and invited renowned representatives of German adult education as lecturers. I will never forget a preliminary conversation between one of the most inspiring adult education theoreticians and my staff of managers in the historical building of the old Swedish embassy. Whereas the institution I represented had the simple expectation –which, naturally, also sounded like the search for formulas– to optimise the quality and effectiveness of the programme development work performed by its staff and their assessment functions, the guest lecturer on adult education first endeavoured, in principle, to fully clarify the knowledge and action rationale of what was being transmitted in the programmes. Furthermore, he also resorted to the strain between scientific knowledge and empirical knowledge in regards to professional didactic action, and also referred –for my sake– to the approach of the interpretation patterns and the insight developed therein on the difficulties of learning that transforms reality and action, which were topics that neither the managers of my staff nor the targeted group had ever encountered before. They were concerned about arming themselves with formulas on how to reduce the complexity and the uncertainty of action, whereas the discussion with the guest speaker brought up new issues which, up to that point, had not yet appeared in the “problem horizon” of those in charge, and which left behind a great amount of confusion.

What had happened here? At a first glance, this encounter has the characteristics of a cultural shock: two cultures that could not really communicate. It is evident that they were speaking about the same thing (possibilities for improving the didactics and management of education programmes), but this was done on the basis of different relevance systems, with different conceptual systems and approaches. The theoretician’s problematisations, which were aimed at the contingency of achieving education and the necessary work for reaching an understanding between offer and acquisition, did not fully meet the expectations

of the educational managers, which were mainly aimed at the feasibility, applicability and verifiable effectiveness. Their thought was marked rather by input-output considerations, whereas the theoretician's questions problematised the issue of the criteria of real achievement in the educational processes, with the full intention of deriving from there, in a second or third step, reliable indications for the didactic design and management of the programme development tasks. However, it was this difference in the decision on the access and the different ways of reflecting on the "feasibility" of learning that really endured, that hindered communication. It became clear to me, on the basis of this example, that the management approach to continuing education is a "first step view", whereas the theoretically developed approaches are more likely to open up "second or third step views". However, the consequence of this is the impatience and blocking the way of those who are supposedly, or in fact, under action or decision-making pressure.

Conclusion 1: The relationship between education and management is characterised by a double rejection. On one hand, adult education in theory and in training practice at university is marked by a predominant micro-didactic focus, whereas subsequent professional practice of its graduates is generally a macro-didactic management practice. On the other hand, the tense relationship between theory and practice is generally a relationship between an educational view ("second or third-step view") and a management view ("first-step view"). An educational management theory that guides practice should overcome the obstacles resulting from this double rejection between communication and professionalisation. To this effect, it should convincingly link the success criteria of "achieved learning" and the criteria of successful management with its own descriptions of practice and action programmes.

Episode 2: Evaluating Whom?

In my practical work in international adult education, I also had experience with evaluation. Within the scope of my responsibilities, I had begun to make systematic surveys on the users' satisfaction of the standard programmes, in whose implementation several German institutions regularly participated (see Arnold/Friedrich 1988). Due to the fact that these were standard recurring programmes, this enabled us to cumulatively survey the evaluations made by several "generations" of programme participants and quite reliably identify trends that became stable over time. It came to light that it was always the same institutions whose programmes were rated "poorly" in the participants' feedback.

However, the obvious management consequence was not implemented, i.e. to break away from these implementing institutions. Instead, protective explanations were brought into play that denied the users the competence of really being able to evaluate what they “needed” and what would really be useful for their future occupations in their countries of origin. At the same time political pressure was exerted in order to torpedo the “annoying” evaluation practice, and this was finally achieved. For the educational management, the negative evaluation was therefore not a reason to take the participants’ evaluation “seriously” or to persuade the implementing institutions to improve their programmes or even to change to other implementing institutions. Instead it was preferred to “do without” this form of evaluation so that the programme development work would not cause a negative impression.

For me, this experience was also evidence of the schism between education and management. It became clear that educational management very often follows its own rationale, which is sometimes difficult to bring to terms with a participant or subject-oriented approach to adult learning, especially when the predominant systemic context is bound to a business, bureaucratic or political functionality. In these cases the relevance systems of management practice and educational aspirations are particularly divided. However, even in institutions that are “closer to pedagogics” (i.e. educational theory), the reliability of the processes, the continuity and the external acceptance are generally the guiding criteria that determine everything for the practice of educational management. Conceptual aspirations, in the sense of a guiding ideal based on adult education or subject orientation, are seldom added as action-oriented measures. As a facilitator among technicians, economists and engineers who “organise” continuing education programmes in their respective fields of expertise, one has often the feeling that one cannot really clarify what the specific contribution of a professional trained in adult education comprises, especially when that person –precisely because he/she has been trained differently– lacks the privilege of “belonging” and vehemently clashes against the immunisation strategies of non-educational or lay educational further training practice.

These are the immunisation strategies that many adult education graduates perceive as “narrow-minded” when they start their professional practice, and are not infrequently confronted with the “greeting” of “now-you-can-forget-everything-you-learned-at-university”. Upon closer examination, however, the questionable nature of such self-confident extrapolations of years of practice comes clearly to light. Already after a few months “as an educator in a strange land” one recognises that an education management system that is centred on the reliability of the processes and on continuity inquires too little about what actually “occurs” at the subject level in the education programmes being man-

aged. This kind of education management generally also “lacks” the concepts that enable research into these internal dimensions of adult learning. The competence-developing effect of learning, on one hand, and on the other, the perception of the learners as autonomous subjects who pursue their own learning projects (Holzkamp 1993) and invest time in learning for that purpose, and for that reason their “points of view” are of utmost importance for the “success” of the educational process, are all aspects that threaten to escape the management-centred perspective. On the other hand, education management often tends to consider programme participants as “cases” and approach the issue of success or failure exclusively in its legitimating dimension (in the face of sponsors, public opinion, etc.). For this is the only way that one could account for the fact that the evident dissatisfaction of the participants does not automatically lead to corrections in the programmes, whereas the threat of losing the acceptance of the financial backers is far more likely to do so.

Conclusion 2: An education management system that is not bound to any guiding concept based on adult education runs the risk of a one-sided definition of its success scale, in terms of the criteria of reliability of the processes, continuity and external acceptance. Such a view remains largely “blind” to the internal dimensions of the educational event that are of utmost importance for the sustainability and competence-development effect of the learning process. Thus an education management system that does not follow any pedagogical guiding criteria might, for example, outwardly appear to be successful, while the sustainability of its learning and the satisfaction of the programme participants might be extremely low, and this is either because these are downright not focused on, or only marginally addressed –and my impression is that this is a situation which is characteristic of many of the seminars being offered, as well as of part of in-house company (further) training.

From this we can infer that an education management theory requires an integrative approach. The one-sidedness of the current practice of “training educators to become managers” is, consequently, as unsatisfactory as the idea that to direct adult education institutions, it is enough to be “versed” in management theories, as can be observed in modern entrepreneurial contexts. The fact is that both views should be consolidated. Only the leading staff that is “aware” of the contingency, the dependence on the subject and the unavailability of individual learning processes is also in a position to define adequate strategies, indices and control parameters for developing an education institution. However, in order to prevent this pedagogical aspect of professionalism from “coming to a stand-

still” in the market-distant idealisation of education, it is equally necessary to design education institutions as complex systems, marked by multiple internal and external interfaces. The concept outlined in Chapter 4.2 of “continuous didactic self-assessment” (CDSA)⁶ becomes crucially important. Insofar as the education managers have theoretical competence in education and management, they are also in a position to guide adult education institutions with a customer and user orientation, bearing in mind the fact that education is a special “product”. Compared to other markets, the offer and implementation of educational or learning processes is applied to a market where suppliers and users jointly produce the “product” (e.g. education, competence); for this reason it was repeatedly suggested not to talk about consumers in education, but rather about prosumers. Whichever way, education management is related to a special kind of services market. Due to the fact that the users of the offers which are made and compete in this market are themselves, to a certain extent, the “product” or level of implementation of the services they take up, the education providers cannot really design a product management, but only a facility management.

A fundamental feature of education management is thus approached: *the fact that it is impossible to have a direct product management*. Although many – especially private – training providers speak of product management, what they are referring to is their programme, their offer, their participant days or their total volume of hours, in short: the manageable and “controllable” input factors of learning processes. However, for training to succeed, in the sense of sustainable competence development, the acquisition process of learners themselves, and the conditions thereof, should also be observed. Vocational training management should therefore encompass more than the mere management of input factors. Rather, it should guarantee the implementation conditions, with the learning design constituting a part of this – and this is an aspect that is still being left too much to the discretion of the hired teaching staff. In my opinion, the development of the educational profile plays a key role in this. Adult education institutions should base the development of their organisation on an ideal rooted in adult education and guarantee its implementation through targeted and systematic strategies. At the same time they should bear in mind both the knowledge on adult didactics regarding “achieved education” and competence development as well as the current requirements for present day management. The major trends in this context are (according to Arnold/Krämer-Stürzl/Siebert 1999, p. 129 et seq.):

6 CDSA (KODIS: kontinuierliche didaktische Selbstevaluierung) is the name given to a quality assurance system developed at the University of Kaiserslautern for adult education institutions, which is characterised by the fact that it first reconstructs the “traditional” notion of the quality of the actors themselves, and which serves as the basis of a quality assurance system (ideal, criteria, tools) to be developed jointly with professionals in the field.

- Process systematisation and institutionalisation
- New conception of teaching and learning (lifelong learning, orientation towards potential, reflexive learning, etc.)
- Realistic working contexts or problem orientation (situational learning and learning that facilitates transfer)
- Decentralisation of responsibilities
- Further training as a service
- New concept of leadership
- Interaction of strategic, operative and functional further training management

In my experience, apart from the clarification of the educational profile, it is particularly the aspects of “decentralisation of responsibilities” and of a “new concept of leadership” which are of crucial importance, especially in adult education institutions. The resultant management structures will also require a management learning process on the part of the top management, which is a learning process that involves very personal control, fear and identity dimensions and which, in turn, can be described as an adult education project, as is demonstrated by the following experience.

Episode 3: Managing Scientific and Academic Further Training

Over the past ten years, together with colleagues at the University of Kaiserslautern, I took part in the organising and developing a scientific and academic further training institution, the *Zentrum für Fernstudien und Universitäre Weiterbildung (ZFUW)* (Center for Distance Studies and Continuing Education (CDSCE)), which in the meantime has become the largest provider of distance learning postgraduate studies in Germany at the university level. The origin of this institution can be described, on one hand, as one that took place in different stages of the organisation’s development; on the other, however, it was also a learning process for all those who were involved in the issues of education management –and both processes, in addition, took place “on a difficult ground” of internal and external “markets”.

Regarding the development phases of this institution, these were characterised –given the dimensions of the institution– by a continuous differentiation in the areas of responsibilities and functions, as well as by a continuous change in the educational management functions. The development and

organisation phase –with a manager, scientific associate and an administrative assistant– primarily comprised the development and organisation of the process and operational structures, routines, finance controlling modalities, set up of the hardware and software facilities, as well as by the development of market development strategies and the internal and external marketing activities during the development and organisation of the first offers, with a clear predominance of the “all-in-one-hand” management pattern. This pattern then changed with the increasing size of the institution and with the growing number of activities and offers.

Today the institution “functions” with a manager, ten scientific associates, numerous secretaries, scientific assistants, correctors, proofreaders, mentors, instructors, and study guide writers, in a largely decentralised and self-organised manner. The different programme managers have far-reaching direct responsibilities for the further development and updating tasks (including the development of multimedia offers), whereas the directors and managers are “in charge” of the innovation management (discursive surveys of new contents and offers), human resources, funding as well as the necessary policies with respect to the university departments, Senate and Ministry. At the same time, specialised responsibilities are systematically developed, such as is clearly demonstrated by the professionalisation of an assistant for issues related to educational marketing.

This development process from the initial stage of an “all-in-one-hand” educational management to a decentralised management system that “functions” in a networked and largely self-organised manner, including co-operative task distribution, is linked to a fundamental shift in the roles of the institution’s top management. The board and management should be “purposefully” committed to undergo the change in their responsibilities, they should permanently strive, wherever possible and fitting, to delegate responsibilities, in order to create through this permanent “letting go process” real conditions for the learning of the organisation—a process that especially in a university-hierarchical environment is anything but obvious. This willingness also involves a personal learning process on the part of those responsible, whereby the traditional concept that is taken for granted by the top management, with all the more or less unconscious or unpondered narcissistic burdens, will have to “stand the test” a necessary and also indispensable step for the personal maturity of those who have the responsibility. During the institution’s development and differentiation process, I became increasingly aware of the fact that “directing” an organisation that is going through a learning process is characterised by the unrestricted confidence in the colleagues’ potential and that the “management” of institutions undergoing differentiation should be necessarily geared towards the potential and the staff. This means that the central education management of complex institutions

should take place from a meta-perspective: the central issue is no longer merely "What should I do to guarantee that the institution functions down to the last details?" -which in truth is already placing an unrealistic excessive demand on oneself- but rather "What conditions can I create so that colleagues can fully develop their potential and ideas?". In my experience, in complex institutions that work professionally, the education management is distributed on several shoulders, and the top management are increasingly "responsible" for a meta-management or facilitation management (see Arnold 2000a), whose main tasks are the development of human resources, promoting potential as well as the continuous involvement of everyone in the strategy development.⁷

In regards to the development of an education management theory, the described "Episode" is first of all "instructive", because it becomes clear that there is nothing such as "education management" -a point of view that, to my knowledge, has not yet even been considered at all in previous debates on this concept. That is why it seems necessary to distinguish between management concepts with different "scopes" and "degrees of complexity", and also to study how these change -or rather- are "revealed" in the context of an organisation's growth or transformation process. In terms of the professionalisation of further training, a more intensive preparation for management functions appears to be as important as developing skills for delegating responsibilities and configuring a top management that depends on acceptance. This defines a management role whose acknowledgement does not arise from what is ascribed to the position, but only from the fact that the internal and external organisational environments also consider that its actions are supportive, that they encourage processes and consolidate potentials. In my opinion, much speaks in favour of the fact that such a subsidiary leading role (see *ibid.*) has to be "learnt". "Subsidiarity" does not imply here that by being in a top management position a person should withdraw from all central areas of responsibility, which is not even possible due to the responsibility and liability regulations in many organisations. This implies, rather, that although the top management should certainly fulfill their main responsibilities, they should allow the members of the system to design their organisation and development to the greatest extent possible. Specifically, this means that the ideas, proposals, suggestions, etc. of the on-site experts - as the staff members who are working in the programme area can be jointly characterised- can be articulated in a favourable atmosphere and that they

7 Thus, for example, in Spring 2001, the ZFUW conducted a strategy workshop, during which the scientific staff, with the help of an external moderator, defined the strategic plan for the following years -a process that shall be repeated every two years in the sense of an ongoing strategy extrapolation.

can count on having them examined and implemented. Although in spite of this atmosphere, the subsidiary top management will sometimes have to reject proposals or make “difficult” decisions, they have to be “accountable” for them (e.g. by disclosing relevant university or educational policy limitations). It is only within the framework of subsidiarity such as this, centred on the acceptance and the potential, that an organisational culture can arise which is also “suited” to adult education and is capable of creating innovative strategic development dynamics.

Conclusion 3: A strong explanatory theory of education management should release itself from a central responsibility. In adult education institutions that are going through a learning process, there are no education managers; education management is an integrated function and has to be based on the division of labour. In the development process of education institutions that are characterised by the decentralisation of responsibilities and a participative and potential-oriented leadership, the education management functions inevitably take shape in different ways, depending on and in line with each stage. While most education management approaches implicitly still strongly respond to the “all-in-one-hand” model, there is a lack of concepts for subsidiary education management for more complex and flexible systemic contexts. So far in the debate on management in the education field, the aspect of management learning remains masked to a great extent, i.e. the issue on how the top management can also develop personal resources, in the sense of developing competencies for a subsidiary role that are more strongly related to meta-management. This would most likely not be achieved by merely incorporating management issues into the curriculum (in the sense of “expanding” the scope of the topic in the study and course regulations), because in order to manage authority in a way that guarantees acceptance, both internal and external experiences have to be incorporated reflexively.

4.4 The Status of Research and Research Issues in Adult Education Research

Development and Key Focuses of the Current Debate

The concept of “lifelong learning” (LL) –or better said: “life-accompanying” learning– from the perspective of adult learning, is based on a two-fold approach: On one hand we have a *continuing education policy category* (institutional focus) and on the other, a *didactic category* (subject focus). Whereas the concept of LL

already being used in the English-language literature towards the end of the 1920s (see Cropley 1989) was a clear expression of a didactic orientation, this was not the case in the discussion that began much later in the Federal Republic of Germany: here, in the 1960s and '70s, there was initially a predominance of a (further) educational policy orientation that "(aimed) at institutionalisation forms and organisational reforms of the learning work on the part of adult learners" (Dewe 1997, p. 96). A clear adult *didactic* orientation was not evidenced until the mid-1980s (see Tietgens 1992), which finally led in the 1990s to the attempts at approaching and discussing issues concerning earning strategies for lifelong competence development (see Dohmen 1997a). The prevailing *continuing education policy* orientation was expressed in the requirement on the part of the German Education Council to raise "continuing education" of individuals to the category of a "principle":

"More and more people have to acquire new knowledge, skills and capacities through organised (!) learning in order to meet the growing and changing professional and social requirements" (German Education Council/Deutscher Bildungsrat 1970, p. 51; emphasis by R.A.).

This perspective which is focused on the institution and that, as has from the 1970s on, ultimately triggered and favoured an unimaginable social institutionalisation of continuing education (Jagenlauf 1995) was already radically criticised in its early stages: among others, particularly the misgivings expressed by Dauber/Verne should be mentioned, that a continuing educational policy of LL would lead to lifelong schooling and instruction of adults (Dauber/Verne 1976), as well as the more recent repeated warnings stated by Geißler or Geißler/Orthey against "perpetual continuing education" and the unproven "presumption of a 'learning society'" to which they ascribe the four "illusions", that 1. "Through learning one becomes intelligent", 2. "One could become more independent if one attends classes", 3. "Through adult education/further training one can rise socially", and 4. "With more education, one can find a job" (Geißler/Orthey 1998, p. 35). These statements –which at a first glance appear quite basic and somewhat irrelevant to practice– refer, however, to the *systemic contexts* into which LL has "moved into" in modern societies (see Lenzen/Luhmann 1997; Harney 1990) and which have been long overlooked in the international adult learning debate. This tends to cloud the naïve view on the –often only asserted– possibilities and feasibilities of LL, which frequently guides the current debate on continuing education policies, and raises awareness to the fact that because it is exactly the area of learning in times of crises and adjustments in life, continuing education is exposed to multiple (social, entrepreneurial, subjective) *instrumentations*, that by no means have as their standard sustainable learning which is relevant for one's personal history and that promotes the individual's autonomy.

A critical theory on continuing education should clearly highlight these functionalisations in a system-referred examination, if it expects to prevent its analytical view on the empirical facts of LL from appearing superficial and therefore blurred.

If one examines the German debate on adult education over the past two decades with regard to its main issues and what it is genuinely focused on, in my opinion, three *central considerations* can be identified:

- a) adult education as a “knowledge process related to one’s life world” (Schmitz 1984);
- b) adult education as an acquisition achievement (Kade 1989; Kade/Seitter 1996, among others);
- c) adult education as a self-guided competence development (among others Dohmen 1996; 1997).

a) *Adult Education as a Knowledge Process Related to One’s Life World*

It was not until the 1980s that adult educational science in Germany started to develop a profile of its own, which went further and beyond the “intersection” of general educational theory, learning psychology, sociology and didactic concepts, which is typical of the initial stages of educational science. Essential for the establishment of this discipline were the contributions of the socialisation theories, phenomenology and sociology of everyday life to the internal perspective of those addressed and the users of adult education programmes. These contributions helped to constitute an educational concept based on social sciences (see Siebert 1983) that identified the interpretation patterns (Arnold 1985; Tietgens 1989) as the thematic-cognitive core of each learning or search movement (see Tietgens 1986) of the learning adult. Adults –and this was also the significant perspective of numerous empirical research studies⁸ – live and learn “in the interpretation mode” (Arnold/Kade/Nolda/Schüßler 1998), and thus adult education research has to find its real starting point in the reconstruction and interpretation of these interpretation patterns. In this regard, Tietgens states that:

8 Particularly the BUVEP (=Bildungs-Urlaubs-Versuchs und Entwicklungsplanung – Educational Leave Test and Development Planning) research of the 1980s should be mentioned along with some studies on qualitative adult education research (e.g. Nolda 1996; see Gieseke et al. 1992).

“It is not only the anthropological premises that argue in favour of an interpretative paradigm in adult education research. It is the structure of reality itself. The dependence on the situation, the dependence on the participant and the dependence on the institutions leads, each in its own way, to the path of the interpretative approach. Wherever adult education takes place, it is part of an interpretative processing” (Tietgens 1981, p. 134 et seq.).

In Germany, this interpretative orientation set the basis for relatively extensive qualitative research on adult education. (see Kade 1994). In comparison, there is a quite relevant, but clearly lesser amount of empirical-quantitative research which, as research that is focused on the target groups, obtained important findings on the factors that condition the development of continuing education offers and the utilisation thereof (see Eckert 1994)⁹, through the evaluation of statistics, both official and specific to private institutions, through the observation of adult education lessons, through surveys among participants as well as through individual longitudinal studies.

b) Adult Education as an Acquisition Achievement

Against the background of the dependence of adult learning on the interpretation, and consequently on the biography –which has already been elucidated in different contexts– the main features of a learning theory were already developed in adult education at an early stage, which clearly differentiated from the “teaching-learning short circuit” (Holzkamp, 1993) of behaviourist-oriented learning theories. Adult learning was interpreted –in clear anticipation of the newer constructivist learning theories (see Reinmann-Rothmeier/Mandl 1996, among others)– as a situational and subjective acquisition of experiences through a complex “learning action” (Achtenhagen 1992). This acquisition perspective of adult learning inquires about the forms, patterns and inherent laws of the acquisition of knowledge, interpretations and experiences through which adult learners, on the basis of their biographical and life world experiences, strive to transform their existing interpretation patterns and constructs, well aware that this cannot be generated technocratically, but can certainly be promoted with the corresponding methods and adequate learning support. In the American debate, this concentration on the acquisition activities and the “construction” or trans-

9 In this context, special importance is assigned to the triennial surveys on the development of the participation in further education, on the factors that have an influence on such participation, as well as on the structures of the further education scenario, which have been conducted since 1979 on behalf of the BMBFT (Federal Ministry of Education, Research and Technology), and the results of which have been presented now for the sixth time with the title “*Berichtssystem Weiterbildung*” (System Report: Further Education) (BMBFT 1996).

formation, i.e. the change, differentiation as well as the objectification and further development of knowledge and competencies, also plays a key role (see Cranton 1994, among others). In this sense, American Mezirow defines “learning” as the “creation” of and “reflection” on meaning (Mezirow 1997, p. 9) and particularly stresses the reflection on the premises, as that is what “opens up the possibility for us to transform perspectives” (ibid., p. 91):

“The reflection on the premises leads to more completely developed perspectives of meaning. We are referring here to perspectives of meaning that are broader, more clearly differentiated, more patent (open) and more willing to integrate new experiences” (ibid. p. 92).

With this concentration on the acquisition activities, adult education research adopted, already at an early stage, a theoretical perspective that is currently increasingly determining the discussion on organisational learning. Organisational learning is namely also basically referred to the adult education issue of the possibility of transforming interpretations, experiences and competencies, even when the learning of organisations and systems encompasses more than the sum of individual developments, as is often asserted. Experience teaches that organisational learning is totally inconceivable without a targeted change in the “mental models” –this change “offers the strongest leverage for transformation” (Senge et. al 1997, p. 276), as Peter M. Senge says– and conversely, mental developments can only become “active”, i.e. transformed knowledge (see Argyris 1997) if the general framework conditions for practice are included, i.e. for the organisation and the system (see Arnold 1998a).

c) Adult Education as Self-guided Competence Development

The international debate on the lifelong learning discussion, which has been going on for decades (see Dohmen 1996; Francis 1997; Fryer 1997; Boswell 1995; Jarvis 1995; Lovett 1997; Tippelt 1997), reached a temporary peak in 1996 during the “European Year of Lifelong Learning”, and in the associated activities and announcements on the part of OECD, UNESCO, the European Commission, Nordic Council and the ELLI (European Lifelong Learning Initiative). In particular, the “UNESCO Report for the Twenty-First Century” submitted by Jacques Delors et. al under the title “Learning: the Treasure Within” should be mentioned here (Delors et al. 1997). In this report, the fixation on institutions has been clearly overcome and there is a stronger plea for a more intensive promotion of informal competence development. If the Faure report of 1972 had already brought forward the argument, among other things, that extra-institutional learning from experience makes up about 70% of the adult’s learning processes, and thus the

learning environments of the “learning society” should initiate and optimise this type of learning from experience, the Delors report also uses percentage values to support its arguments. As is already expressed in the title “Learning: The Treasure Within”, the Delors Commission sets its main focus on the possibilities for better utilisation of the idle and unused competence potentials of individuals, considering that so far, only about 50% of this potential is used (quoted in Dohmen 1997a, p.11) –which is an estimation that is also taken up (and modified) in different ways in the German debate on the competence-oriented shift in continuing education.¹⁰ In general terms, the Delors Commission outlines an image of LL that underscores both the continuing education policies and didactic aspects. It argues in favour of a change in adult learning aimed at self-guided learning which, as is summarised by Dohmen, should be characterised by the following tendencies:

- “from knowledge-imparting learning to competence-developing learning,
- from stressing the right to receive an education to assuming the personal commitment for lifelong learning,
- from receptive learning as a reaction to being instructed to self-guided learning on one’s own initiative,
- from the supply-driven orientation to a demand-driven orientation in further education work,
- from examining and selecting to motivating and promoting,
- from a learning promotion monopoly on the part of educational institutions to an open learning society,
- from acquiring special skills and capacities to developing general key competencies (“from skill to competence”), and
- from a one-way street of achieving promotion and entitlement in education to the open multiplicity of equally valid learning paths” (Dohmen 1997a, p. 13).

These demands for placing LL in the perspective of competence development clearly correspond with the “debordering” tendencies (Kade 1996) identified in adult learning research and with the “dissemination” of adult learning into the society (see Axmacher 1987). Continuing education –according to the findings– has “abandoned its institutional reserves” (Wittpoth 1997, p. 29 et seq.)

¹⁰ Thus, for example, Staudt/Meier report that adults acquire about 80% of their competencies “outside the institutional adult learning setting” (Staudt/Meier 1996, p. 290).

and is currently presented to us as “lifelong learning” in non-institutionalised forms with stronger autodidactic features (“learning at the workplace”, self-guided learning”, “telelearning”, etc.) (see Albrecht et al. 1997; faulstich-Wieland et al. 1997) –forms that the American adult learning research had paid more attention to up to now than the German research, which was more concentrated on institutionalised adult learning (see Reischmann 1997).

Conditions that Favour or Hinder Lifelong Learning

With respect to the learning capacity of adults, the psychology of adult-aged learning (see Löwe 1970; Sarges/Fricke 1986; Weinert/Mandl 1997) had already detached itself in the 1970s from the hypothesis of maximum-learning potential in adolescence, and in recent years has strengthened the differentiation hypothesis that also indicates which conditions promote lifelong learning and which do not. It became quite clear already at an early stage, that age and learning capacity by no means have a decreasing interrelation; however, individual learning differences within the same age group turned out to be much greater than the differences between the members of different generations. If we inquire about the conditions that sustain learning capacity at adult ages and favour learning success, we can observe:

- that continued activity throughout the course of life and being given activity and design opportunities during one’s occupational career are a condition that favours LL (activity theory) (see Löwe, already back in 1970, p. 170),
- that learning capacity varies according to the context (Skowronek 1997, p. 359), whereby adult learners have greater learning success when dealing with situation-oriented tasks (that relate to their life and work situations) (theory of situational learning) and that they require the constructive use of their own background of knowledge and experiences (see Reimann-Rothmeier/Mandl 1996),
- and finally, that a “favourable atmosphere learning at an adult age” (Skowronek 1997, p. 359) exists when individualised and self-guided learning are possible.

Figure 14
LEARNING AND THE LEARNING CAPACITY OF ADULTS
ON THE BASIS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM
 (according to: Reinmann-Rothmeier/Mandl 1996)

Criteria for Achieving Sustainable LL	
Active	Learning is only possible through the learners' active involvement. This implies that the learners are motivated to learn and that they are interested in or develop an interest in what they do and how they do it.
Self-directed	Learners are in charge of the direction and control processes in each learning situation. Even though the extent of self-direction and control varies according to each learning situation, learning without any self-guidance whatsoever is quite unthought of.
Constructive	Learning is always constructive: without the individual experience and knowledge background and without the individual's personal interpretations, in principle, cognitive processes do not take place.
Situational	Learning always takes place in specific contexts, so that every learning process can also be considered as situational.
Social	Finally, learning is always also a social process: on one hand, learners and all their activities are always exposed to sociocultural influences, and on the other, learning is always an interactive event.

The fact that adult learning capacity cannot be considered out of context, but that requires a differentiated analysis of the corresponding degrees of occurrence of the above-mentioned criteria in a specific learning situation, is however, only one of the aspects of a realistic evaluation of learning and the learning capacity of adults. In addition to this, an equally differentiated analysis of the learning behaviour and the learning strategies of the different types of learning among adults should be considered. Finally, the capacity for LL can only be adequately assessed if a differentiated analysis can be performed, in the sense of a "contextual-dialectical paradigm" (Skowronek 1997, p. 359), of how the characteristics of the tasks and the characteristics of the respective types of learners are interwoven. Preliminary studies on such a multidimensional approach are already

available¹¹. But the more recent adult education research on the learning environment (Tippelt et al. 1996) also provides suggestions and incentives for a differentiated consideration of the participants' existing structure in regards to their learning capacity or the conditions that favour or hinder LL.

“Autonomous Learning” and “Learning autonomy” in Adult Education Research

“Autonomous learning” has already been a central concept for quite some time, particularly in the North American adult education debate (see Moore 1972). In this context, special attention should be paid to the classic work by Malcolm Knowles on “Self-directed Learning” (Knowles 1975), which he defines as

“(…) a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (ibid., p. 18).

If one analyses the German debate on adult education, it can be observed that the concept of “autonomy” is hardly relevant, except in the field of distance learning didactics, which has always focused its concepts more on the Anglo-American approaches. Where similar concepts are discussed, one encounters the above-mentioned concepts of self-directed, self-organised or self-determined learning or in earlier contributions– the “didactic self-choice” (Raapke) or “participant orientation” concepts (see Breloer et al. 1980); whereas even today, one can search in vain in adult education reference books for concepts such as “autodidactics” or “autonomous learning”¹². This finding is yet further proof of the previously described strong German –but also European– fixation on institutionalised and “organised” adult learning.

“Autonomous learning” is more than self-directed learning; it also contributes to the development of a broader autonomy of individuals. This context was repeatedly observed in the development of distance learning, because its models are based on the “achievement” of the learner’s autonomy. This autonomy occurs if the learners –as Otto Peters states:

11 Compare the five adult learning types by Schrader in Ch. 2.1. At the University of Kaiserslautern, within the scope of an analysis conducted in conjunction with distance learning studies, the following types were identified: “the practical application learner”, “the distance learner”, “the learner who then forgets”, “the teacher-learner”, “the independent learner”, and the “the occasional learner” (Arnold/Lehmann 1997).

12 This applies, e.g., to the *Handbuch in Grundbegriffen* (Handbook of Basic Concepts) by Sarges/Fricke (1986), and also to the book published by R. Tippelt “*Handbuch Erwachsenenbildung/Weiterbildung*” (Handbook on Adult Education/Further Training) (Tippelt 1994)

“(…) assume and independently undertake the functions of the educators, if they formulate learning objectives, select contents, design learning strategies, obtain teaching materials and media, identify additional human resources and materials and utilise them, as well as independently organise, direct, control and evaluate their learning” (Peters 1997, p. 76).

Such a comprehensive learner autonomy does not only involve the competence of possessing learning techniques and methodologies – an aspect that is described by the recent continuing vocational education as “methodological competencies”. “Learner autonomy” also involves the capacity to reflect on one’s own learning process and reorganise it on a continuous basis. The prerequisite for this is that the learners themselves are the subjects of their own learning processes, but also that they can approach these from a meta-perspective, in order to be able to observe and evaluate them, so to speak, “from the outside”.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Specific Development and Research Projects

In the accelerated or “reflexive modernisation” (Beck 1996)¹³ societies, the development of LL is accompanied by an extensive need for clarification, which is related to both the basic theoretical issues as well as the practical aspects. This dual perspective should also be stressed, since only a theoretical positioning with respect to the modernisation processes of continuing education and LL can prevent the detailed empirical analysis from becoming the image creator and thus the legitimiser (see Arnold 1996d, p. 55 et seq.) of the mentioned extraneous implementations of LL (see Lenzen/Luhmann 1997).

In this sense, in a summary that highlights some aspects and is inevitably incomplete, the following areas and issues can be identified for forward-looking research and development projects:

1. Theoretical and Systemic Positioning of LL

In this context, and in my opinion, the following issues should be addressed, among others:

- What expectations (manifest and latent) do the actors of the continuing education market “hope for” with respect to LL?

| 13 See Chapter 1.2

- What are the underlying interests, demands and needs of these expectations?
- What (manifest and latent) functions does LL “promise” to the individual, the enterprise and the society?
- What happens with the realisation of these “promised” functions as well as with the “real” effects of LL?
- How can comprehensive and universally applicable standards and quality assurance systems be defined and implemented within the framework of the “functional symbiotic” (Luhmann) integration of continuing education?

2. *Overcoming the “Fixation on the Institution” Perspective*

In this context, and in my opinion, the following issues should be addressed, among others:

- What *en-passant* forms and informal strategies of competence-developing learning are already being applied by adults in extra-institutional LL processes and with what results?
- How do these informal LL forms correlate to previous education, previous learning experiences, the background of professional demands and experiences, as well as to sex and age?
- Through what “measures”, “supporting structures” as well as concomitant forms can these informal LL forms be optimised in a sustainable manner?
- What consequences does the issue of the facticity and the evident effectiveness and expansion of informal adult learning (coaching and facilitating concepts) have on the institutions and professionals of continuing education organisations?

3. *Acquisition and Application Research Based on Constructivist Learning Theories*

In this context, and in my opinion, the following issues should be addressed, among others:

- What learning types, learning strategies and learning attitudes are typical of “autonomous” (autodidactic) learning?
- How do the types of learning activities and the types of learners “interact” in adult learning?

- What learning arrangements correspond, and to what extent, to the criteria for sustainable adult learning?
- How can these criteria be effectively integrated to the varying forms of continuing education offers, programmes and applications?
- How sustainable is the learning achieved by different participant groups in learning arrangements for self-directed learning (away from the “one best-mode” concept)?

4. *Research on the Transformation of Mental Models (Interpretation Learning) and Organisational Structures (Organisational Learning)*

In this context, and in my opinion, the following issues should be addressed, among others:

- Through what didactic arrangements can reflexive and transformation processes (of premises) be initiated and supported?
- How can the corresponding learning opportunities for learning at the workplace be implemented or arranged?
- How can virtual (multimedia) arrangements be designed for reflexive and transformative learning processes?
- What professional requirements arise for company continuing education and further training as well as for human resources management or for executives on site (in the different departments)?

5. *Empirical and Analytical Research on Motivation, Demand and Effects*

In this context, and in my opinion, the following issues should be addressed, among others:

- What conditional factors constitute motivation for further training and “decide” about participation in continuing education?
- How do the members of different social environments utilise the opportunities of self-directed competence-developing learning?
- In which topic areas and fields of competence is the need for LL particularly marked or even increasing?
- How do continuing education providers determine the demands which serve as the basis for planning their educational offers and programmes?
- How do continuing education providers “guarantee” the quality as well as the effectiveness and sustainability of their offers?