

# STUDYING ADULT EDUCATION. A COMPARISON OF MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES ON ALE IN GERMANY AND THE US

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**ABSTRACT:** Earning a university degree in adult education continues to be one prominent way of becoming an adult educator. That is because obtaining a comprehensive academic education is considered essential, especially in conjunction with the aim of professionalising adult education. But how do the contents, structure, and aims of study programmes differ internationally, and how does this relate to different concepts of the professional role? This study compares master's programmes in adult education in Germany and the United States. The findings point at characteristic differences in the relation between academics and practice.

## 1. Introduction

The field of adult education is subject to relatively little regulation, especially compared with other areas of the educational system, such as the school system. Adult education is characterised not only by a broad variety of providers but also by the diversity of adult educators in terms of their educational and professional biographies. As part of the 2019 Würzburg Winter School on *Comparative Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning*, the comparative group *Occupational Structures and Professionalisation of Adult Education* examined institutionalised career pathways in adult education. Owing to the diversity of the field, however, there is no simple answer to the seemingly simple question of how to become an adult educator. As a basis for a systematic international comparison, we have to focus on just one such career pathway of becoming an adult educator. Completing a study programme in adult education can be seen as not only as an empirically significant institutionalised career pathway but also as a particularly informative case for an empirical analysis of career pathways, which should also relate to theoretical debates on the professionalisation of adult education.

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In this paper, we will examine the aims, structures, and contents of master's study programmes in adult education. In comparing the situation in Germany with that in the US, we analyse how these characteristics of study programmes relate to specific academic and professional cultures as well as their relationship to each other. First, we will introduce basic theoretical reflections on professionalisation and academisation in order to point out relevant dimensions for further analysis. We will then describe the underlying methodological framework of comparative adult education and describe the methodology of the study at hand, the data sources, and the analytical approach used. Based on a juxtaposition of the situation in Germany and the US, the findings are then described in terms of their similarities and differences. For each country, we will first take a broader look at the basis of secondary data analysis and then perform a closer qualitative examination of typical examples of study programmes. We will connect these findings to professional and academic cultures to interpret the similarities and differences identified. Finally, we will summarise our conclusions and describe the lessons learned.

## 2. *Professionalisation through academisation?*

The idea of modernity relied heavily on the belief in a steady progress of society with rationality as a basic normative pattern, science and education as important institutions for its realisation, and the professions as its spearhead in social practice:

It seems evident that many of the most important features of our society are to a considerable extent dependent on the smooth functioning of the professions. Both the pursuit and the application of science and liberal learning are predominantly carried out in a professional context. Their results have become so closely interwoven in the fabric of modern society that it is difficult to imagine how it could get along without basic structural changes if they were seriously impaired (Parsons, 1939:457).

Not only the belief in societal progress driven by science and rationality but also the belief that professions play a leading role therein may seem somewhat naive from today's point of view. One could argue that the general decline of the normative power of truth and rationality in public discourses and the corresponding rise of mistrust in science and academia we have been witnessing might indicate a final turning away from basic ideas of modernity (Peters *et al.*, 2018). In the case of the professions, a substantial change in their societal role and importance has been discussed for some time now, and there are theoretically conclusive positions that even see the professions as a purely transitional phenome-

non (Kurtz, 2002; Stichweh, 2006). Nonetheless, since the mid-twentieth century, various occupations have been oriented towards the promising ideal of professionalisation. Academisation is frequently seen as the most important milestone in this process. Not only is the emergence of the traditional professions closely related to the development of their corresponding disciplines in academia and of the university in general (Stichweh, 1994). In the (early) debates on the characteristics of a profession, there also seemed to be a consensus on the importance of a comprehensive academic education or – to put it more accurately – the close relation of the professions to disciplinary bodies of academic knowledge. We should thus take a closer look at the relations between professionalisation and academisation as institutional, knowledge-related, and cultural relations.

### *2.1 Institutional Relations*

The institutional relation between professionalisation and academisation can be analysed in terms of their historical order. Education (and adult education in particular) is a rather young discipline and strongly influenced by the ideas of the enlightenment and the institutionalisation of (formal) education systems. Academisation is based on the practical need to establish a scientific foundation for educational practice and the education of future professionals, especially of teachers. We can thus characterise the development of education as an academic discipline as a process of secondary academisation (Stichweh, 1994). At the same time, academic research may lead to the development of new research areas or even sub-disciplines and (special subjects in) study programmes. As this knowledge is translated into practice, it may lead to a change in occupational profiles or even new professions – which we could describe as secondary professionalisation (Nittel, 2000). Such relations between discipline and profession, as well as their historical formation, will influence current study programmes and are expressed in forms of *institutionalised responsibility for a specific professional practice formulated in educational goals*.

### *2.2 Knowledge Relations*

To describe knowledge relations as a practical application of academic knowledge would be inadequate in two ways: first, the ‘application’ of this knowledge in practice is challenging and makes a core characteristic of professional practice. Unlike ‘recipe knowledge’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), academic knowledge requires professionals to actively and constantly mediate between its generalised and abstract form and the uniqueness of the case at hand (Oevermann, 1996). In analysing study

programmes, we can thus focus not only on *contents* but also on the *forms that define the body of knowledge that is imparted in the study programme and apparently considered relevant for future professionals*.

Second, ‘application’ does not imply a one-way-relationship. Professionals also take part in the (re-)production of this knowledge. Sometimes, professionals also take on positions in the discipline (e.g. in medicine, where a professor may be working as a physician, doing research, and teaching at the university, all at the same time). In the analysis of study programmes, we should therefore also focus on the question of how the *relation between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’* is conceptualised.

### 2.3 Cultural Relations

Study programmes not only impart the knowledge defined by the respective discipline but also represent specific cultural environments, which should be analysed as well. Building on the study of disciplinary cultures (Huber, 1991), Barbara Friebertshäuser analysed study programmes as transitional spaces where different cultures amalgamate: the disciplinary and the professional culture jointly shape the culture of study programmes (Friebertshäuser, 1992). Studying then not only means to incorporate a defined body of disciplinary knowledge; it also has to be analysed as a wide-ranging socialisation process in which students implicitly learn to *be* an adult educator. Such forms of habitualising certain practices and incorporating certain patterns of thinking, perceiving, and acting is a relevant prerequisite for performing in professional practice (Oevermann, 1996). In the empirical investigation of study programmes, we can focus on *how disciplinary and professional symbolic orders are imparted in study programmes*.

### 3. Methodology

In times of globalisation and international networking, both of which also affect adult education, the methodology of qualitative international comparative research is an important approach. While an international perspective allows for a review of the situation in other countries and international organisations, a comparison of individual cases identifies commonalities and differences and searches for justifications (Egetenmeyer, 2014:16).

Our research interest arose in the context of the 2019 Würzburg Winter School, where occupational structures and professionalization – and particularly institutionalised career paths in adult education – were discussed. Although these professional career paths varied widely, interna-

tional comparison did reveal that in all countries, university programmes in adult education played a significant role. This similarity is explored in this article. To limit the scope, the focus is solely on master's degrees.

Egetenmeyer's relationship model for comparative research in adult education forms the basis for our concrete research focus and approach, as well as for the formulation of categories for comparison. This includes three comparative dimensions: provision/effects, the transnational context, and (non-)participants/learners (Egetenmeyer, 2016:85). Based on the findings from the model, the transnational context of *countries* is the focus of our research. Looking at the US and Germany may even enable a cross-continental comparison (North America and Europe). Our research aims for a mix of quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

The first step is a quantitative review of study programmes in adult education at a national level. This provides a first overview and thus a basic understanding of the object of the comparison. For the US, we primarily used data from the National Center for Education Statistics for our analysis. It should be noted that this centre is a federal agency responsible for collecting and analysing educational data. In contrast, a large part of the data for Germany was collected by scientists who focus on the field of education. One example is the *Datenreport Erziehungswissenschaft*, published in 2016. Examples of categories for comparison include the political framework, the number of master's programmes, the titles of these programmes, the degree titles, and formal structures.

In the next step, a methodical approach based on a qualitative analysis is employed. In terms of the Egetenmeyer model, we are concerned with the *provision/effects* area of the cube. Internal university policies, such as module manuals, study descriptions, and examination regulations, are particularly valuable sources of information. One adult education master's programme from each country is examined, with the *Education and Adult Education* programme at the University of Oklahoma serving as the example for the US and the *Master of Education* at the Technical University of Chemnitz as the one for Germany. These two master's programmes are examined in terms of their structure, content, accreditation and further employment opportunities.

#### 4. Case Study: Juxtaposition

Heyl argued that studying education with a focus on adult education is the most appropriate method of acquiring adult pedagogical knowledge and necessary competences for the field of adult education (Heyl, 2012: 40). The starting point for our analysis is a quantitative consideration of the structure and content of degree programmes in education. For the purpose of this comparison, it is important to note that 1.00 US college

credit hour is roughly equal to 1.67 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System hours (Pop, 2018).

#### 4.1 *The general situation in Germany*

In the 2017/18 winter semester, 61,323 people studied education in Germany, which made it the 11th-most popular degree programme in the country (Destatis, 2018). Bachelor's and master's degree programmes are offered by many public universities across Germany; however, they all differ in content and structure. According to German educational policy, master's and bachelor's degrees are part of the tertiary education sector, which includes universities and equivalent institutions of higher education (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2018: XIV). It should be noted that, in addition to university degrees, a variety of other types of certification courses are available in Germany. One example is the *Lecturer in continuing education* course offered by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (Industrie und Handelskammer, 2019). However, these certificates are considered part of the quaternary education sector, which represents continuing education (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2018).

The following results are drawn from a 2015 study by Grunert, Ludwig, Radhoff, and Ruberg. On the basis of module manuals and study descriptions, they analysed study programmes in education at bachelor's and master's levels at all public universities and universities of education in Germany. There were a total of 190 subject-specific bachelor's and master's programmes at 63 universities, including 86 bachelor's and 104 master's degree programmes, with 54 universities offering both. As these figures show, there are more master's programmes in education than bachelor's programmes. The master's programmes were usually structured as single-major models, which are most commonly rated at 120 credits. In observing the time structure, most master's programmes take four semesters to complete. Students who passed the master's examination are awarded a Master of Arts. The titles of the master's programmes were found to be diverse. A total of 51 per cent ( $n=53$ ) of universities used names that made reference to *Erziehungswissenschaften*, *Bildungswissenschaften*, or *Pädagogik*, partly in combination with the relevant specialisation (18,3%,  $n=19$ ). Of the master's programmes with specialised titles, nine (13.6%) referenced adult education, further education, or vocational education. In 23 out of 34 master's programmes, it was possible to select a concentration in adult education (Grunert *et al.*, 2016:20).

Information on programme contents was taken from the documentation on adult education and continuing education published by Witt and Müller in 2015. Whereas bachelor's programmes were found to focus on universal foundations of education, the main emphasis of the master's

degree programmes was on more advanced work areas. For example, 55 per cent of programmes addressed organisation and leadership, whereas 31 per cent focused on research and research methods. A total of 28 per cent of the universities offered a master's programme based on the practice and work profile of an adult educator (Witt & Müller, 2015:6).

#### 4.2 *The general situation in the US*

In the US, 145,681 master's degrees in education from post-secondary institutions were conferred in 2015/2016. Education was thus the second-most popular field of study, behind only the business sector with 186,834 master's graduates (NCES, 2017). The website of the US Department of Education (USDE) lists programmes in the field of education, some of which produce professionals who train and educate adults in non-education sectors as well. Three of them contain the keyword *adult* in their title and are related specifically to adult education. Another degree programme with a direct connection to adult education is titled *Community College Education*. Ordered from most-to fourth-most frequent title, the labels commonly applied are: Adult and Continuing Education and Teaching, Adult and Continuing Education Administration, Community College Education, and Adult Literacy Tutor/Instructor (NCES, 2019).

There are only twelve universities with a bachelor's degree in adult education, but 140 institutions offer these programs as an advanced degree (i.e. master's and doctoral degrees). All these master's programmes usually take four years to complete.

There are 96 public institutions, 32 private non-profit institutions, and 12 private profit-oriented institutions that offer these programmes. Public institutions with a four-year advanced degree programme thus clearly have dominant position in adult education (NCES, 2019).

In the US, higher education institutions typically offer a Master of Education (MEd) degree with an emphasis on a specialist field. Depending on the university, the master's degree may be a Master of Science (MS) or a Master of Arts (MA). The degrees as offered by universities differ in title from those listed on the website of the Department of Education (NCES, 2019). For example, North Carolina State University offers a Master of Education degree with a specialisation in Adult and Continuing Professional Education, whereas Pennsylvania State University offers a Master of Education degree in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education. Achieving one of these degrees requires 30–64 credit hours. Most universities require between 35 and 40 credit hours to complete their programme, depending on whether the degree will be awarded as an MA (generally requiring closer to 35 credit hours) or a MS (generally requiring closer to 40 credit hours) (College Choice, 2019).

Traditional degree programmes, especially bachelor's programmes, at higher education institutions in the US are taught in daytime classes on a semester basis. Advanced degree programmes in adult education offer a more diverse range of learning opportunities, such as distance learning. Alternatively, more institutions seem to prioritise weekend or evening courses or provide *credit for life experience* (NCES, 2019). The number of alternative degree opportunities available at higher institutions suggests that universities may expect 'non-traditional' students to seek advanced degrees in adult education (College Choice, 2019; NCES, 2019).

While it is of course important to present quantitative data in order to illustrate the diversity of the topic and provide an overview of a country-specific design, a comparison of concrete examples from the US and Germany is equally interesting as it facilitates better understanding of our chosen categories for comparison: the thematic priorities, modular structures, research orientations, and occupational opportunities of a master's programme in adult education.

#### 4.3 A closer look: The case of Technical University Chemnitz (GERMANY)

First, it should be noted that the Master of Education at the Technical University Chemnitz (TUC) in Germany explores education and focuses on adult education/continuing education, making it a master's programme with a specialised focus. This type is offered at 51 per cent of universities in Germany (Grunert *et al.*, 2016:24). That is not the only aspect that makes this programme seem typical of Germany, however. A standard study period of four semesters and a total of 120 credits also reflect German trends. Furthermore, like 85.7 per cent of German university degrees, this programme builds on a bachelor's degree offered at the same university (Grunert *et al.*, 2016:20; TUC, 2016). In this case, the Master of Education follows a Bachelor of Education, which deals with the theoretical and methodological foundations of teaching and learning processes (TUC, 2018).

When examining the content of education degrees in Germany, it makes sense to establish a connection to the recommendations formulated by the German Educational Research Association as the core curriculum of education. The core curriculum serves to compare education at different university locations, facilitate the mobility of students, and aid communication in various occupational fields (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft, 2010:51).

The master's programme at TUC is divided into three basic modules, three advanced modules, two in-depth modules, a supplementary module, an internship, and a master's thesis (TUC, 2016). The basic modules focus on qualitative research methods in education and the basics of so-



cio-scientific data analysis. These elements are examples of the study unit *Bildungsforschung and basics of research methodology*, which is part of the core curriculum. Totalling 20 credit points, the modules not only meet the requirements of the study unit but in fact exceed them by two credit points (TUC, 2016; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft, 2010: 53). The advanced and in-depth modules focus on aspects of pedagogy, with an emphasis on the analysis and design of educational and learning processes in the fields of adult education/further education and general education. These modules are based on the core curriculum, as is evident from the module descriptions, which mention theory, research, and framework conditions, as well as references to professional competencies in adult education. The core curriculum recommends the establishment of a teaching-research project. This type of project requires students to work on a research question from the field of adult education under the supervision of a tutor (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft, 2010:53). This recommendation is implemented in the Master of Education at TUC in an in-depth module titled *Analyses of adult education*. At this point of the study programme, the focus on adult education becomes evident for the first time. Research methods and scientific knowledge, as well as methodology specifically related to adult education, are now explicitly mentioned in the module descriptions. These modules are developed and taught by the staff of adult education professorships. Altogether, the adult education/continuing education modules provide a total of 21 credits, fewer than the 24 credit points required in the core curriculum. This is because of the lack of a supplementary module in the study programme, which means that students have to select a lecture and a seminar from other fields. Depending on the lecture and seminar chosen, a direct connection to adult education is not always ensured. Instead, students are given the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary approach (TUC, 2016). In addition to thematic focus areas and a research project, the core curriculum includes an internship in the field of adult education in order to gain professional competences (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft, 2010:53). The importance of an internship is also recognised in the master's programme at TUC, which requires a six-week, full-time internship (i.e. eight hours a day, five days a week). The choice of field is up to the students, however, and they may choose not to intern in adult education, as recommended in the core curriculum. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that any field can provide insights into the field of adult education if approached from the right perspective. The same applies to the master's thesis, which is the last component of the programme (TUC, 2016). After passing the master's examination, TUC students are awarded a Master of Arts degree (TUC, 2016). As for the professional applicability of the master's programme: according to the advertising brochure for newcomers to the programme, which out-

lines possible professional careers, graduates gain access to a variety of employment opportunities in the German and international job market. Examples include education management, programme planning, personnel development, education policy, and teaching (TUC, 2017).

#### 4.4 A closer look: The case of the University of Oklahoma (US)

The University of Oklahoma (OU) offers a Master of Education Degree in Adult and Higher Education. Students from all undergraduate and graduate disciplines can participate in the programme, which is why the university itself considers it interdisciplinary. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme is further expressed through modules which include concepts and competencies which pertain to a variety of disciplines connected with the field of Adult and Higher Education, such as management, evaluation, programme planning, and human relations (OU, 2019). Students choose from five emphases, all of which require 36–39 credit hours to complete: *Community College Administration*, *Higher Education Administration*, *Intercollegiate Athletics Administration*, *Student Affairs*, and *Workforce, Adult and Continuing Education* (OU, 2019). Owing to the option of full-time or part-time study, the duration of the programme ranges between 2.5 and 4 years. Any Master's Degree in Adult and Higher Education at OU, regardless of programme emphasis, requires the same four major core/required courses. These mandatory, inflexible courses are four credit hours each. At this point of the programme, the direct connection to adult education is already evident in the titles of the courses, which include *The Adult Learner*, *Administration of Adult and Higher Education*, and *Introduction to Research in Adult and Higher Education* (OU, 2019).

We will focus on the study emphasis of *Workforce, Adult and Continuing Education* (WACE). The close thematic connection to adult education is particularly evident in the choice of courses. Flexibility in the coursework is designed to allow learners to tailor some courses to their academic interests and professional goals. Options include *Program Planning for Adult Education*, *Management and Administration of Training Functions*, and *Evaluation Strategies for Learning and Performance* (OU, 2019). As these few examples indicate, the courses prepare students for the practical work of an adult educator. In the following part of the study programme, the students again have some flexibility in choosing a course from a selection that includes *Transformative Learning in Adult Education*, *Neuroscience-based Learning and Adult Development*, and *Issues and Trends in Workplace Learning* (OU, 2019). These examples show a focus on learning theories. A practicum experience is also required to further connect theory and practice, which in the master's programme takes the form

of a 90-hour internship in the field of adult education. At least 60 hours must be spent in the field, the rest of the time can be used for individual reflection. In the WACE specialisation, the practicum requirement may be substituted for 'one year of experience working in the WACE field' (OU, 2019). This is considered equivalent to the practicum experience. No matter the area of emphasis, all students of this Master's programme are required to take a comprehensive, take home exam once they complete all other requirements.

The structure of the Master of Education degree in Adult and Higher Education at the University of Oklahoma is designed to prepare students with skills that are transferrable to a variety of roles, for an assortment of audiences, and for various levels of responsibility and leadership. Graduates compete for work positions as, for example, trainers, adult educators, programme planners, or distance education specialists (OU, 2019).

### 5. Comparison and Interpretation

As we can see from the juxtaposition above, both Germany and the US provide many different ways of becoming an adult educator by earning a university degree. In general, education degrees are popular in both countries and offered by a wide variety of higher education institutions. But even comparing only the general situation in Germany and the US already highlights some major differences.

Studying adult education in Germany usually requires specialisation in a study programme in education or pedagogy. Despite the growing variety in degree titles as a result of the Bologna Process, they all stand in the tradition of *Diplom-Pädagogik*. A common foundation in education with the option of specialisation in various educational fields is reflected in the general structure of the study programmes and in the internal differentiation of the German Educational Research Association (GERA, 2019). Adult education plays an important role as one of the 14 subdisciplinary divisions of the GERA and is one of the most common specialisations in education degrees, both at bachelor's and master's level.

In the US, there is a much broader range of study programmes concerned with adult education and involving different thematic concentrations (e.g. literacy education or workplace learning), which even lead to different degrees (MEd, MSc, MA). This can be linked to the fact that, in the US, adult education is not institutionalised as a subdiscipline of education (e.g. it is not a division within the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2019)). The structure of the discipline of adult education seems to reflect the fact that adult educators work in various areas of educational practice. Bachelor's degree programmes in adult education are also much less common than advanced degree pro-

grammes. Thus, a master's degree in adult education in the US is much more likely to be combined with an undergraduate degree in a different subject, which might define the subject area in which an adult educator eventually works. Lastly, the basic data showed that study programmes and the options for completing them are much more diverse than in Germany. The availability of opportunities in the US such as distance learning, weekend or evening courses, and especially the idea of credit for life experience suggest that 'non-traditional students' play a much more important role in master's programmes in adult education than they do in Germany.

Our comparison of the general situation in Germany and the US shows similarities and differences. Not only does the structure of study programmes in education differ between the two countries, adult education is also defined as a subdiscipline in Germany, whereas in the US it is not. The structure of study programmes in Germany reflects the status of adult education as a subdiscipline of education insofar as a master's degree in adult education usually follows a bachelor's degree in education. Master's degree programmes in the US are tailored more to the individual students and are thus geared more towards professional practice.

A closer look at one selected master's programme in each country allowed us to better understand and interpret the differences. The first step was to compare the structure and contents of the courses. As a similarity, it could be noted that compulsory basic modules provide an introductory overview of the subject matter. At TUC, every student follows a prescribed sequence of modules, over the course of which specialised topics such as adult education are addressed in advanced and in-depth modules. In contrast, the master's programme at OU is more flexible. Students have to make two choices: which working field in adult education to pursue and which learning theories to study. Whereas the OU programme is practice-oriented, the focus of teaching at TUC is on theoretical knowledge and empirical methods. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, master's programmes at both universities prominently feature an internship. At six weeks, the internship at TUC is longer than the one at OU (90 hours) and thus allows students to gain more practical experience. OU further offers the opportunity to replace an internship with a year of practical experience in adult education.

Academic education takes on a mediating position between discipline/theory on the one hand and profession/practice on the other. This requires forms of teaching and learning that enable students to acquire scientific knowledge as well as practical experience (Schüßler & Egetenmeyer, 2018:1080). Both courses feature different structures and content to try to bridge the gap between the two. However, there are differences in focus: OU follows a practice-oriented approach, whereas TUC highlights the theory of the discipline.

Future employment opportunities were another category for our comparison. Remarkably, despite differences in their structure and content, the descriptions of the two master's programmes indicate similar employment opportunities. Special emphasis is placed on the area of leadership and management as well as teaching. No reference is made to adult education institutions. Instead, the wide variety of employment opportunities in different sectors of the job market is highlighted. The case studies show that within adult education there are attempts at academisation as a form of professionalisation, which is mainly apparent in the fields of leadership, teaching, and planning. The relationship between academisation and career goals is particularly clear at OU. The flexible structure of the master's programme enables students to specialise in the working field of adult education. In contrast, the programme at TUC focuses on general academic education in the field of education. The various specialisations afford students a range of employment opportunities, including adult education.

One possible reason for the differences in orientation of the master's programmes is that structural differences can be assumed to arise because of the orientation of the programmes towards different target groups: The master's programme at OU is aimed at 'non-traditional' students, whereas TUC focuses on recent college graduates who will enter the workplace once they complete their degree. The situation is different in the US, where college students are parents, caregivers, full-time workers, and retirees (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2015). The difference between these study programmes in terms of target groups raises questions about opening up higher education institutions as places of lifelong learning. This process of opening up is one of the goals of the Europe-wide conversion of study structures in the course of the Bologna Process. Steps in this direction have been taken in Germany over the years but continuing academic and vocational education are usually not part of the university sector but of the free market (Dollhausen, 2015). The conditions in master's programmes must change if 'non-traditional' students are to be integrated into universities, which must include flexibility in terms of time and location (evening courses, online courses) and flexible forms of exams. Some of these aspects are reflected in the structure of the master's programme at OU, such as part-time study that allows for time flexibility, an exam that is completed from home, and recognition of relevant experience as equivalent to an internship.

## *6. Lessons learned*

In this paper, we examined one institutionalised way of becoming an adult educator. Theoretically, we conceive of academisation as one im-

portant part of a professionalisation process. This led us to the assumption that study programmes can be analysed regarding underlying institutional, knowledge-related, and cultural relations between the academic and the occupational field.

In comparing the situation in Germany and the US, we were able to more closely examine the relation between science and practice. The juxtaposition shows that master's study programmes in Germany and the US explicitly promise to prepare their students for professional roles in the field of adult education. The results show that in Germany, study programmes in adult education are very much shaped by the structure of disciplines and subdisciplines and by the order of general studies being followed by specialisation. In the US, the discipline and its institutions as well as the study programmes are much more oriented towards the needs of the working field and the demands of the emerging professionals.

In the US, there is greater openness to a range of disciplinary approaches and practical orientation of master's programmes. Programmes are more accessible to students with diverse disciplinary backgrounds and 'non-traditional' students who begin the master's programme already having practical experience from different areas of adult education. Practical experiences can even be credited as academic performance. In Germany, the focus is still clearly on 'traditional' students who have completed an undergraduate programme in education and immediately continue with the master's programme – preferably at the same university.

The different academic and professional cultures, along with the different levels of diversity of students, may also strongly influence cultural relations. But in order to further investigate these cultural relations, other empirical approaches and more in-depth qualitative data sources are needed, which was beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, how institutional and knowledge relations are reflected in daily study practice and how they form a specific study culture that is relevant for the socialisation of future professionals are core questions for further research. The relation between different study programmes and the structure of the field of adult education should also be examined on the basis of a greater number of examples.

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