

Lifelong learning to cope with change: the needs for competence among farmers in north-east Germany

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Rural Resilience and Vulnerability

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North-eastern Germany:

- Reunification in 1990: radical change in policy, economy and social life
- At present: structural change in the agricultural systems and demographic change
- Formerly successful coping strategies are no more appropriate
- Responsibility shifts from the state to the individual
- „New“ learning strategies and possibilities are necessary to act resiliently



Structure

1. Policy and rural development in north-east Germany: Background
2. Doing research on competence needs among farmers: Objectives and methods
3. Specific competence needs, presented on the diversification strategy „alternative marketing“: Results
4. What`s the message? Conclusion
5. Can the scientific system contribute to resilience? Outlook

Questions and discussion

1. Background: North-east Germany

Experience in transition processes since the reunification in 1990: radical changes in politics, economy and social life

Rural regions:

- structural change in the farming systems
- demographic change: ageing and dwindling population: selective migration of women, younger and well educated inhabitants

Educational paths in agriculture (formal learning):

- vocational training
- scientific courses

Obstacle: existing learning opportunities do not „teach“ how to cope with change

2. Doing research on competence needs

Overall goal:

to conceptualise a lifelong learning opportunity within the scientific system

Approach: Qualitative research (semi-structured interviews)

- Which specific competences own persons that have implemented and perform an innovative approach in agriculture?
- By which learning approach can necessary competences be obtained?

Competences according to DQR – national implementation of the European Qualifications Framework EQF:

- Professional competences: knowledge and skills
- Personal competences: social skills and autonomy

AK DQR 2011

3. Alternative marketing strategies

Alternative marketing strategies may be:

- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Farm shops
- Rented gardens (people grow their own vegetables with support from a farmer)

Characteristics:

- Short supply chains
- Building networks (CSA: producer-consumer)
- Consumers take responsibility and get influence
- Regional characteristics become important



3. Alternative marketing strategies: Specific Competences (1):

Professional competence (knowledge and skills):

Basis: Agricultural basic know-how

Additionally:

- Knowledge in business administration and management as
 - resources management,
 - financial planning and accounting,
 - marketing
- Food chain management
- Food processing



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3. Alternative marketing strategies: Specific competences (2)

Personal competence:

Autonomy:

- Discipline
- Ability to make decisions
- Lifelong learning

Social competence:

- Communication skills
- Empathy
- Power of persuasion



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4. Conclusion

- The combination of professional *and* personal competences is the basis for success and enhances the **action skill** of an individual.
- Diversification strategies that aim at building networks or offering additional services for the public require **personal competences on a high level**.
- Especially personal competences are **not sufficiently taught** (neither vocational nor scientific courses).
- **Formal learning** *can* enhance the overall action skill when identified competences get entrance into the curricula.
- **Informal learning** (e. g. as exchange of experiential knowledge or the creation of networks) is of major importance.

5. Outlook: Learning for the future?

Identified competences and appropriate learning formats serve as a guideline to **design new courses** in higher education.

The results encourage to design courses for not only (young) fulltime students but as well **older or employed persons** interested in lifelong learning.

Science can contribute to enhance the ability to act resiliently

- through offering courses as **lifelong learning** and
- **transmitting knowledge** (i. e. learning outcomes) that enables to act according to individual competences, societal needs and regional possibilities in times of change.

Thank you for your attention!



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