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

Maretzke and Weiss 2009, Bauernschuster 2008
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

Wirthgen and Maurer 2000
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
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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Literature


