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University Lifelong Learning to Live a Better Life – Continuing Education for Sustainable Quality of Life in Europe

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Strand: Enabling Livelihoods

Enabling livelihood through guidance and counselling in University Lifelong Learning – the important role of the program coordinator using the example of continuing education at German universities

During the last decade, University Lifelong Learning is getting more attention in research and implementation of continuing education programs (certificates and master degrees) at universities in Germany (Bade-Becker, 2017, S. 171). The implementation of these programs proves to be challenging for the universities on all organizational levels. For example, targeting a different kind of students and charging tuition fees.

Whereas the undergraduate programs in German universities are free of charge and most of the enrolled students are starting their studies directly after high school. The students targeted in programs of university lifelong learning usually have an undergraduate degree or completed education in their field and are working already (sometimes several years) in their job, they are involved in family or care giving responsibilities and have to pay tuition fees (Lewin, Vierthaler & Fraunhofer, 2017, S.160). These conditions result in different requirements and expectations.

Our oral presentation will be focusing on program coordinators, which are mainly in charge of the programs at the universities researched in our studies. Program coordinators have a variety of tasks (Gronert & Rundnagel, 2018). One of them is the guidance and counselling of the students across the whole student life cycle. The program coordinators are the first and foremost contact person and therefore mostly confronted with the above-mentioned requirements and expectations. He or she is part of the program and can be seen as “One-Stop-Office” (Hanft, 2014, S. 116). This means that prospective students consult the program coordinator in order to discuss or consult on different topics, for example:

- the access and/or admission to the program before the application,
- workload of the program and matching to the students’ livelihood before and during the program,
- compatibility of the program with family, work or other responsibilities during the program,
- assistance in academic or other problems,
- guidance a further academic and/or personal and/or professional development during and after the program (Sturm/ Rundnagel 2019, S. 96).

In our oral presentation, we would like to discuss the question on the importance of guidance and counselling in University Lifelong Learning and the tasks and requirements for program coordinators in this field. The discussion will be based on findings from studies within a project, which developed and researched continuing education programs at three different universities. Subsequently we plan to outline the potential of adaption on lifelong learning in general and discuss our findings with the audience in an international perspective.