

Development of a new teaching and learning culture in the professional education of farmers

Karin SCHMIDT*

Humboldt-University of Berlin, Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture,
Department of subject related Didactics

INTRODUCTION

Requirements for the professional education of farmers

The whole agricultural sector has transformed on account of economic, technical, social and political conditions. As a consequence of the quickened change tasks farmers need to deal with become ever more demanding. Therefore professional education of farmers faces new challenges like topicality, efficiency and flexibility. Due to structural changes and the political frame conditions the farmer is permanently forced to keep him up to date. Agriculture has to be developed into an efficient, consumer and market orientated as well as ecologically sociable part of the national economy in order to save its future. That is why the farmer should adapt to these changed requirements preparing for the new structures of organization. The structural diversity of the farms and their complex work procedures demand a high level of qualification to fulfil the professional work. Consequently the first professional training and further professional courses only represent a base for a career as a farmer. For we experience a transition into an information and knowledge society concerning public and private life lifelong-learning is a necessity. It will be necessary to develop competences to acquire knowledge independently in order to meet future work and life conditions. The arrangement of teaching and learning is in urgent need of reform. Therefore one has to check educational conditions in all educational institutes. The vocational training has to teach the competences of learning, in this concern it is highly significant to obtain key qualifications and social competences. A new culture of teaching and learning is a necessary condition and a way to implement the above mentioned requirements for the vocational education of farmers.

“A new teaching and learning culture” – what does it mean?

A new culture of teaching and learning stands for a fundamental reorientation of the conception of teaching and learning based on the idea of a lifelong-learning. It emphasizes active learning and encourages self motivation and cooperation. Self-motivated learning represents a central paradigm of the new culture of teaching and learning. This culture

needs to become an integral characteristic of the everyday professional education, it aims at diversified and lively new forms of teaching and learning. We need practical concepts to implement former reform efforts. For this reason it is necessary to know the hindering barriers.

Such barriers are for example:

- existing curricula
- the structure of education
- general educational directives.

Possibilities to overcome these barriers could be for example a more flexible organization in educational institutes, teamwork of teachers and an introduction of more cooperative work methods.

The vocational schools have to create a climate where students und teachers enjoy the lessons. The possibilities for an improvement of the quality of professional education depend decisively on sufficient investments into the educational sector. Overcoming financial and other above mentioned hindrances the new culture of learning and teaching can be realized with its aspects that are for example:

- a new understanding of learning as a necessary, self motivated and progressive process
- students who are themselves responsible for their studies
- a new role of teachers acting as planers, advisors and moderators
- applying various methods and modern media.

Requirements for a new teaching and learning culture

The organization of a new culture of teaching and learning is a topic within the educational discussion in general, but also within professional education of farmers. The implementation requires the following conditions:

- to centre vocational learning processes and to be open for ones social environment
- to find out individual possibilities supporting students
- strengthening their talents
- using different learning prerequisites
- supporting curiosity
- creating space that makes emotions and the development of creativity possible
- flexible organizational and time concerned structures
- creating learning competence and learning motivation as an essential condition for a lifelong learning
- change of vocational education and further training of teachers.

A teaching and learning culture has to be developed,

- dealing progressively with present-day professional problems

*Correspondence to:

Karin Schmidt*
Humboldt-Universität Berlin,
Landwirtschaftlich-Gärtnerische Fakultät, Arbeitsgruppe Fachdidaktik
Land- Gartenbauwissenschaft, Luisenstr. 53, 10099 Berlin, Germany.
Tel.: +49 351 26 10 251,
email: Kerstinwackwitz@aol.com

- showing interesting learning possibilities covering different parts of life
- integrating modern information and communication technologies for the lifelong learning
- that mediates learning partnerships as a help for self motivated learning after the first professional education.

Protagonists of a new teaching and learning culture

The protagonists are the students and the teachers.

The new requirements for the farmers need to form the following competences:

- learning competence as a condition for a lifelong learning that means acquiring knowledge to deal with new information and their utilization
- social competences
- moral values as a guide and condition for a personal development.

Taking these facts into account professional skills and abilities can be permanently renewed and completed.

To the students:

The young farmers need to acquire knowledge and need to organize self learning processes during their professional training.

- The students have to be included in the lesson actively
- they have to be aware for their own learning process
- the students plan the learning process, organize, would go through and evaluate.

Learning happens in a social environment and acquiring knowledge always includes social processes that enhance social competences expected in professional life.

To the teachers:

- Teachers will have to find a new definition of their profession
- teachers become studying planners and moderators of learning processes
- they advise the students about studying contents and learning ways
- they organize an action oriented teaching and learning arrangement
- the learning processes are changing from direct to indirect leadership.

Teachers will have to put more effort into didactical work.

The development of a new teaching and learning culture requires a willingness of the teachers to permanently freshen up their knowledge. Teachers and students have to get a changed view of learning processes. The responsibility of both partners will be enhanced and contribute to an open and on mutual respect based learning atmosphere. Conditions concerning the contents, organization and technical possibilities have to be create.

DISCUSSION

Possibilities for the implementation of a new teaching and learning culture in the professional education of farmers

The implementation of a new culture of teaching and learning demands a suitable environment for the development of a new self-understanding of didactical actions in the professional education. The Professional Pedagogic and the Division of Specialty-Related Didactics for Agriculture

and Horticulture have to present scientific based and practical useful concepts in future.

The acquisition of professional competences instead of theoretical knowledge has to be centred in professional processes. The conception of action-oriented learning has to be implemented in vocational schools.

With the learning field concept in the professional education of farmers becomes these requirements. The learning field concept is a modern one and relevant to practice aspects. It contains learning fields. They integrate complex professional tasks which existing in the professional training. The processing of the professional tasks is carried out into concrete learning situations. They imitate concrete work situations. A learning situation represents a complex teaching and learning arrangement.

A modern teaching and learning arrangement is a didactical prepared learning material to acquire professional contents independently and action-oriented. Teaching and learning arrangements consists of a unit of tasks, information- and media supply as well as learning consultation.

Regulation aspects of action-oriented teaching and learning arrangements are for example:

- creation of a professional learning situation by taking a case example taken from the practise or a real professional situation
- self-learning process by using methodical help
- using modern, activity promoting methods and new media
- promotion of independent learning by learning advice of the teacher
- to encourage the students to think and to act in complex connections and to support the creativity of the students
- developing team and method competence
- to present actively and to evaluate the results by the students.

As a methodical guidance for teachers preparing a modern teaching and learning arrangement in the lessons the following questions are suitable:

- Which problem or learning situations are suitable?
- On which actions a learning process should be oriented on?
- What are the tasks?
- Which information should be provided?
- Which learning methods should be applied?
- Which media should be provided?
- How should the learning advice be done?
- How to arrange the learning situation?

The aims of such teaching and learning arrangements are to create best frame conditions for an active learning process of the students and to realize a new teaching and learning culture in the agrarian professional education.

REFERENCES

1. Bräuer, M. Handlungsorientiertes Lehr-Lern-Arrangement im Fachunterricht von Gärtnern und Landwirten, Beiträge zur Fachdidaktik Land- und Gartenbauwissenschaft Verlag Dr. Kovac in Hamburg 2004, S. 18 - 23