

Peter Kalkowski, Gerd Paul Soziologisches Forschungsinstitut Göttingen, Friedländer Weg 31, D – 37085 Göttingen, Tel. 49 551 52205-28, e-mail: peter.kalkowski@sofi.uni-goettingen.de and gpaul@gwdg.de

Professionalisation in new and old health-related jobs in the wellness-sector in Germany

More and more tourism and other sectors providing personal services mark them with a wellness-label. The wellness-business has a broad range of offers, either stressing the passive side of relaxation and well-being or concentrating on active prevention and health and body management. For the latter, the “second” health sector, often traditional health professionals like physiotherapists and masseurs are providing independent health-services (without a physicians prescription). For these professions there is a tendency for increasing academic formation in Germany. There were, too, a few successful efforts to create new wellness-related study subjects like wellness-manager, outmatching the enormous variety of courses and specialisations offered mostly by commercial schools. It can be doubted that for old (the case of physiotherapists) and new jobs (wellness-manager) the background of an academic study is a step forwards to further professionalization. The first obstacle is the plenitude of rarely related courses, which have at most an introductory quality. Second, self-reflective and evaluative competences in both studies call for practical and theoretical approaches of social sciences. Both, a reflection and supervision of practical experiences and the systematic introduction to concepts of social sciences (e.g. analysis of systems, symbolic interaction) and research techniques (e.g. statistics, impact analysis) are not implemented in these studies. They are prerequisites for the assessment of a successful treatment within the frame of evidence based control and for the understanding of each individual case. The interpretation of the patients needs in a scientific frame and within his/her personal life-world horizon is a necessary condition for further professionalization, not yet reached by first generation health and wellness employees with academic training. Our preliminary results of interviews with suppliers of wellness-services seem to show that for most of them a positive patients-feedback and the experience of the effectiveness of their treatment is the core of their self-image as “health-experts” - regardless of their professional background. A systematic reflection of their practices and accompanying supervision is neither delivered by professional associations nor by vocational training institutions.