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## **New Initiatives on Teacher Education in Germany**

Teacher education in the different Bundesländer of Germany is traditionally well established: primary and secondary teachers get their initial education at the university (since the academies and teacher colleges became merged in the 80<sup>th</sup> – except in Baden-Württemberg); after the university exams they are in a two-years-period of practical experience in schools, the “Referendariat”, supervised and regularly controlled by the “Studienseminar”, which is organised in the state’s responsibility separately from the universities. They finish the so called “second phase” by the final teacher exam. If they get an employment afterwards they might teach as they were taught until they retire, not to mention any further professional development or quality control. Actually, there is a rich variety of different inservice institutions run by the states or state agencies, churches, teachers and independent organisations to offer inservice courses on a volunteer basis (so called “third phase”). Most teachers feel a professional obligation to take part in inservice courses, but not all do. Since about ten years there are school development policies in several Bundesländer to promote school autonomy, accountability, self-evaluation and to supply these developments by school based inservice courses.

The most important push towards innovation came from the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, published in 1997, which gave evidence to the fact that the achievement-results of German pupils tend to a meagre average in international comparison. The well established teacher education system apparently did not lead to a higher range of quality of schooling.

Since then many associations, boards, commissions and university advisor groups have analysed the system of teacher education and published recommendations to change. Two of them are of major importance:

- (1) the negotiation results of the Kultusministerkonferenz (Board of Ministries of Culture and Education) dated 1999, based on an expert research commission (Terhart 2000), and
- (2) the recent recommendations of an expert commission in North Rhine-Westphalia, dated February 2001, which is under discussion but will lead to a new policy.

### **Expert Commission of the Kultusminister-Konferenz (KMK) 1999**

The commission ends up with recommendations to change in the three levels of teacher education:

- **Teacher Initial Education at the university**
  - elaborate a core-curriculum in educational science in order to end the arbitrariness
  - promote research (classroom research) in the subject studies
  - establish centres for teacher education and school research within the universities
  
- **Induction Phase**
  - qualify the personnel in the induction phase
  - better match between initial and induction phase
  - more self-monitoring of beginning teachers in professional learning
  
- **Professional learning**
  - establish a system of induction including obligatory inservice course work
  - inservice plans at the individual school as a basis of personnel and school development
  - elements of competence-based teacher salary in career development

These recommendations were considered as balancing a reasonable relationship of innovation and conservation in the teacher education system, leaving initiatives of change to the three different institutions. The University of Hamburg will be the first to restructure the teacher education according to the recommendations of the KMK.

### **Expert commission in North Rhine-Westphalia 2001**

The commission came up with a more critical assessment of the quality of the teacher education system in general. The recommendations subsequently are more radical, based on the opinion that the system cannot be innovated but has to be changed. Even insiders cannot get a sufficiently informed overview on the teacher education policies in the different universities.

During these days (March/ April 2001) there are discussions about the experts recommendations in the educational departments of the universities in North Rhine-Westphalia. The ongoing discussion has a certain relevance to the other Bundesländer because NW as a Bundesland with the largest number of inhabitants has the most universities and could become a predecessor to the other Länder.

The experts criticise predominantly the long-lasting times of teacher-education (5-8 years) and the lack of orientation on professional prerequisites. The experts advice to change aims at the following:

- strengthening the educational part of teacher education,
- closing the gap between theory and practice, which means e.g. to add more school experience to the education of natural science teachers,
- strengthening the classroom related qualification of natural science teachers on the Secondary level.

The recommendations follow these aims by making use of different teacher education systems in the European countries:

- (1) Polyvalence of initial teacher studies, which means to establish more flexibility in the first study years, to open different professional options to the students and to help teachers to find a job outside of schools.
- (2) Consecutive organisation of teacher studies: install the BA exam after 6 semester, and after a postgraduate period the MA graduation in education. The curriculum has to be organised in modules which promote subsequent teacher inservice qualification.
- (3) Integration of the second phase into the postgraduate modules.

In general there is a significant approval to the recommendations from the education departments of the NW universities, especially to the needs of shortening study times and professionalism in teacher education.

The most different assessment concerns the primary teacher education which is regarded as not be separated from university related scientific standards.

### **Teacher inservice development**

The recent experts report in North Rhine-Westphalia is not dedicated to teacher inservice developments. Traditionally from the university point of view the inservice development is regarded as a minor important task.

However the perspectives to change by consecutive modularisation of teacher education will have severe influence on teacher and school development.

Apparently the policies of school development and teacher development are not yet integrated. In the most Bundesländer school development is promoted by means of

school programmes of the individual school, assuring quality and evaluation processes, and implementing a system of schools advisors to monitor the change.

The beginning of a new journal on teacher education (Journal für Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung. Studienverlag Innsbruck/ Austria, First volume 2001), including initial teacher education and continuous professional development, is an indicator for an urgent need in German speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) to implement scientific dialog and communication about research and development in teacher education.