

Ewald Terhart

Conflicting Concepts of Modernization in Teacher Education: Teacher Education Policies in Germany¹

In my paper I want to present and discuss central themes of the current debate on teacher education policies in Germany. Especially, the the role of the university in teacher education is spotted. This is an interesting and imortant issue not only in Germany but in all countries with a developed teacher education system. To express my central thesis already at the beginning: I think, that in the current debate on teacher education in Germany - and maybe also in other countries -, two different, conflicting concepts of modernity and modernization compete with each other - and it is not yet clear which of these concepts will win. So it is not clear what teacher education in Germany will look like in the future. - But first I briefly want to sketch the german system of teacher education.

1. The System of Teacher Education in Germany

In Germany the process of becoming a teacher has *two phases*: After having gained the *Abitur* (the highest level of general education) which gives immediate access to University (average age: 19 years) a young lady or man enters the first phase of initial teacher education at university. The number of students enrolled in teacher education is not regulated or limited in relation to the foreseeable demand of new teachers in the future. In some places it is limited by the capacities of the universities rsp. faculties. All teachers in Germany are educated on university level. They have to do studies in two (in the case of elementary teacher: three) subjects and in education, didactic (Terhart 1995), educational psychology and - optional - sociology or philosophy of education. This will last three or four years (at minimum). During this study course at best two or three short periods of field-based experience in classrooms and schools are integrated. This first

¹Keynote at the *Conference on Teacher Education Policies in the European Union and the Quality of Lifelong Learning*, Loulé (Algarve), Portugal, 22 and 23 May 2000.

phase leads to the first teacher examination (*1. Staatsexamen*) performed by state examination agencies and regulated by the state ministries of schooling.

After this, each absolvent has the right to enter the second phase of teacher education. This is a more practically oriented two-year preparatory phase organized and supervised by the state ministry of schooling. This second phase runs without any participation of the university. During this second phase the future teachers are paid. They are trained in special „teacher training seminars“ by special teacher trainers, who have to be experienced teachers. They are also trained in schools by experienced teachers (*Mentoren*). During this phase they are - to a certain part - already regular members of a school's staff and give lessons in their own responsibility. At the end of the second phase the second teacher examination has to be passed (*2. Staatsexamen*). The first and the second phase *together* have to be regarded as initial teacher education. After that the examined teacher has to apply for a teacher position. The examination results of all applicants are ranked, and then the administration places them according to the individual rank, their subjects and the needs of the school-districts and schools. Up to now the schools themselves have no 'voice' in this procedure.

If they get a position the young teachers begin their work. After three years they are assessed formally and then - if there are no problems - become civil servants; that means they get tenure. If a teacher does not want to make a career he or she can teach on - in most cases - until 65 without officially being evaluated again. So in most cases - especially in elementary schools - teaching is a profession without a career. Meanwhile the professional life cycle of a teacher is regarded as the *third phase* of teacher education: in-service teacher education. But I must say that this system of continuous professional development of teachers up to now has not been very well developed in Germany (Terhart 1999). Researchers and experts in the field of teacher education constantly stress the necessity of supporting professional development of teachers during the first formative years of teaching, but such an induction phase doesn't exist yet.

This short sketch gives an impression of the standard procedure of teacher education in Germany. But you have to consider an important point: Schooling and teacher

education lie in the hand of our 16 „Länder“, that means: the 16 states Germany as a federal state consists of. There is no federal competence concerning the school system and teacher education. Of course each of our *Länder* follows the basic architecture of teacher education just outlined, but nevertheless all of these 16 have established some „Länder“-specific peculiarities. In general all states do accept the teacher certificates of the others, but sometimes and in certain cases problems show up if a teacher moves from one state to another. For a more detailed description of the German system of teacher education see the paper of M. Krueger in this volume; also Sander 1995).

So one can say that the system of teacher education in Germany is highly developed and needs a lot of expense: To enter teacher education you have to have the highest school-degree (Abitur); during the first phase all teachers are educated at university for in fact 4-5 years; then they enter an additional practical preparation phase (2 years); they have to pass two state examinations, and after a short time of being a teacher they get tenure. Compared to other countries, German teachers get high monthly salaries paid also during vacation time and 13 times a year. So with regard to traditional aims of the different teacher organizations a lot has been reached.

But this is just the bright side. The German teacher education system is also connected with serious problems.

- When our fully educated teachers enter teaching a position they are much too old: 26-30 years. In many cases they are even older.
- The first university phase is not very closely directed and oriented towards the needs of the later teacher position.
- The contents of the first and second phase are not really accorded to one another.
- The system of pre-service teacher education is very ambitious and expensive in time and money; the system of in-service teacher education („third phase“) is only very poorly developed.
- The system of the different teacher licences is strongly connected to the different school types; there is no flexibility for a teacher to change to another school type and no flexibility for the administration to place a teacher to another school type.

- Because of demographic changes etc. the teacher profession periodically suffers from unemployment. That means that more teachers have been ‘produced’ than can be integrated in the job. As I mentioned, the state does not limit the number of those who want to become teachers in accordance to foreseeable demand. These people - especially teachers for elementary schools - have serious problems to find other jobs adequate to their level of professional training.

The problems inherent in this system are long and well known in Germany. Up to now the formula for solving them has been: an even *longer* professional education, *more academic disciplines* integrated in the study courses, an *upgrading* of the teaching profession in training and salary etc., a *tighter* system of assessment and evaluation etc. This formula fits the classical modernization paradigm which is basically led by the idea of ‘more of the same’: more and longer training, more academic and scientific studies, more state regulations and administration, more evaluation, more money. This pattern of ‘more of the same’ fits the classical concept of modernization in industrialized societies: more science, more administration, more rationality, more money to spend, more social equality, more welfare state etc. It is obvious that this modernization pattern fits a ‘socialdemocratic’ *Weltanschauung* and dominated the social-democratic era in European countries.

This modernization concept worked as long as there was a basic optimism in the possibilities of scientific rationality, a basic optimism concerning the benefits of more education, more administration and more science. And most important of all: It worked as long as there was money to spend and as long as there was a political will to put money in education, schools and teachers. But in the last decades in all highly-modernized countries and also in Germany doubts have come up concerning the value of clinging to this classical concept of modernization: more professional training, more administration, more science. And in fact: the money had gone. So the often-cited ‘limits of growth’ were marked; today they are felt more and more. And they are felt not only in relation to natural resources, but also with regard to the welfare state and its administrative and financial capacities to ensure a constant improvement in society and culture. There is a strong tendency towards a re-structuring of state policy in the opposite direction: *less time* for professional training, *less science* and more practical

wisdom, *less or lean administration* and more deregulation, and - no wonder ! - *less money* for teacher education and teacher salaries.

This in general more neo-liberal view of modernization often is connected with some administration-critical, bottom-up movements growing up from educational practice. You know that there is a long tradition auf state-, school- and profession-criticism in educational thought, especially in the different strands of „progressive education“. It seems strange, but in fact ‘warm’ pedagogical romanticism today coagulates with the ‘cold’ ideas of neo-liberalism and constant competition; *both oppose against classical modernization and its trust in the benefits of mere growth*. In the eyes of pedagogical romanticism and neo-liberalism the adherents of the classical modernization paradigm are traditionalists only interested in maintaining structures they themselves benefit from.

So in Germany we have the situation that the system of teacher education is developed on a very high level - in fact other countries try to reach that level - and at the same time the doubts are growing. There is an intensive search for alternatives to overcome the deficits of the classical modernization paradigm. In the third part of my paper I will discuss some of these alternatives. But before this I would like to spot a certain general problem in the discussion of teacher education policies: the aims, role and function of universities and of academic knowledge in teacher education.

2. The Chances and the Problems of Academical Teacher Education at Universities

Looking back to history the teachers for the higher levels resp. tracks of the german school system (Gymnasium with the final examination of the *Abitur*) have always been educated at universities. The teachers of elementary schools and the lower tracks of the secondary schools did not reach university preparation before 1970. Before that they were trained in Teacher Training Colleges, and even before that during the 19th century until 1925 in Teacher Seminaries. During the 20th century the ‘lower’ teachers got more and more academical education and training, whereas the ‘higher’ teachers kept their traditional high academical standing and additionally were supplied with some more

pedagogical and didactical elements. Looking at these developments it is obvious that the different types of initial teacher education have been integrated and brought to university.

What is the special role and function of university in this first phase of teacher education? What are the benefits, and what are the problems?

Benefits: If we want teachers to fulfill their professional duties in a non-standardized, non-mechanical, and that means: in a professional manner a thorough and solid academical education in their subjects and in education and didactic is necessary. The teacher education toward a reflective practitioner - as D. Schön called it - is especially necessary if we want teachers that are able and competent to meet new challenges: continuous professional development of the teachers, organizational development of their school, continuous self-evaluation and -assessment, integrating new information technologies and media into teaching, supporting self-regulated learning of their students etc.

If we want our teachers to develop these competencies, their professional education and training must have a basis in scientific knowledge. A lot of research has been performed concerning the professional knowledge and development of teachers. Often it has been stressed that teachers' professional knowledge is personal knowledge, that means: it is not just the adaption and application of scientific research knowledge in the field of instruction, learning and curriculum. Surely it is evident that the professional knowledge of teachers is personal knowledge - but that does not mean that scientific knowledge is not necessary in teacher education. Academical knowledge in the subject areas, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge concerning learning, teaching process, classroom management, diagnosis of learning problems, evaluation of learning results etc. is a necessary background for a development towards a competent and professional teacher. It is the chance and the duty of the university to supply teachers with this kind of background knowledge.

Of course it would be possible to organize teacher education in a different way. In fact it is possible to abolish a genuine system of teacher education at all. The minimal model

of teacher education looks as follows: an experienced teacher takes one or two bright students in apprenticeship, and the young ones learn by imitation and by doing exactly those things their master already does. This model of teacher education would lead to a stable, inflexible and tradition-oriented teaching style. To say it again: This strictly school-based teacher training would be possible, but the result, I think, does not fit to the challenges of teaching and teachers in the 21st century.

A sound and thorough academical education, study courses at university supply future teacher with the necessary scientific *information*, with the competence to *reflect* their own actions and with the capacity of *critical thinking*. A tight connection to educational research, to research on learning and teaching can be established at universities, and by this the entrance of newly trained teachers can bring in innovations to the existing classroom culture.

Problems: In Germany the universities have accepted their duty to supply the future teachers with the knowledge in their teaching subjects (Geography, Literature, Mathematics etc.). But there are serious problems in the field of pedagogical content knowledge, in education and in didactic. In these fields the curriculum of teacher education is rather weak and lacks a clear structure. Among other reasons this is due to the fact that educational research and research on teaching in Germany are rather young disciplines at the university and still have to fight for acceptance.

So the problem is that in many universities in Germany teacher education is regarded as some kind of additional burden, a duty not genuine to the culture of university. On the other hand a lot of faculties especially in the humanities only do exist because of teacher education. In other words: These faculties need the high number of enrolled teacher students. They need them, they take them, but then they do not support them.

This problem can only be solved by *comparative evaluation procedures*. That means that in Germany every state should evaluate the quality of teacher education at the universities over several years. If a university or a faculty constantly does not fulfil its duties teacher education should be withdrawn from this place.

To sum it up: Universities cannot and should not try to prepare in a direct and instrumental sense for practical teacher competency, but they can and have to develop knowledge and the ability to reflect and discern; all three are basic elements for later professional competence. For a teacher education according to a modern concept of professionalization the intellectual and reflective backing of teacher competency is crucial: Teaching is not just a craft or a technique but a *profession combining knowledge, reflection, commitment and practical competence* (Terhart 1998). To build up this *mixed competence* it is necessary that the preparation for professional practice also offers chances to win a certain distance to practical needs. Distance is a presupposition for reflection; but on the other hand reflection has to be re-integrated in practical experience to lead to reflective acting. The relation between reflection and action, between theory and practice can be imagined in a form of a spiral leading to higher forms of reflexivity and practical competence (cf. Korthagen & Kessels 1999).

3. Current Policies in Teacher Education

In the last years all the long-known problems of teacher education have led to a new and intense discussion about reforms and new models. The fact that this discussion has been growing more and more does have its origin in educational considerations concerning the quality of the teachers but - in my view - primarily has to do with certain general themes and issues, changes and initiatives not especially and in first place related to teachers and teacher education:

- Teachers and teacher education is part of the public sector organized by state agencies. In Germany - but I think everywhere in the high-industrialized world - the size, the efficacy and the efficiency of the state services are in discussion, if not: in doubt. Teacher education is only one example or one element in this general discussion about the future of state services.
- The financial crisis of the welfare state leads to an intense search for possibilities to save money, to reduce expenses and to get rid of those things whose efficacy and importance are not clearly proved. Teacher education is one of these things, because

the effects of teacher education are difficult to evaluate and show up many years later.

- Germany suffers from the fact that the young people with academical education are much too old when they enter job-life. When they have their *Abitur* they are nearly 20 years old, and when they leave university they are about 25-28 years old. Compared to other countries this is a much too long period of education. Especially in teacher education with its two phases this problem is even more serious.

These general problems and issues lead to ideas of an institutional degradation or downsizing of teacher education, often wrapped in a vocabulary of 'robust, school-based models with clear orientation towards practice'. There are four proposals to do this (3.1 - 3.4). But the 'mainstream' wants to maintain university teacher education - but also wants to develop it further (3.5).

3.1. Replacing teacher education for elementary school teachers from universities to Fachhochschulen (Technical Colleges, Colleges for Special Domains).

In general the portion of students visiting technical colleges in relation to all students in higher education is growing, and policy strives to enlarge this portion. The technical colleges themselves look for possibilities to 'take over' study programs from the universities. And as universities have big problems organizing the education and training especially of elementary teachers the technical colleges want to take over this part of teacher education in their study programme. Studying at a Technical College lasts three years only, and the study courses are strictly directed towards occupational competence. The staff of the Technical Colleges is not paid a lower salary than the staff of universities, and also the later career chances and salaries of students from Technical Colleges are not as high as those of students from universities.

So transporting teacher education to technical colleges would make it shorter, cheaper, and it would strictly be oriented towards practice. A second phase of teacher education would no be necessary any longer.

3.2. Reducing the time/costs of the second, seminar phase of teacher education

During the two-year-long second phase of teacher education the future teachers are paid, although it is possible that during some periods only 30- 60% or even less of them get a position as a teacher. This has led to the idea of shortening the two-year phase to one-and-a-half-year and concentrate it on practice-oriented training. This would reduce the costs and shorten the total time of teacher education.

3.3. Adopting the anglo-american model of Bachelor/Master-Degrees

The very long time of studying at university in general led to a discussion about reconstructing the study courses and adapt them to the Bachelor-Master-system well known in the english-speaking world. This in fact means a complete revolution of the german university system. If this study-structure gets installed the current teacher education system with its two phases and two state-examinations won't fit in. The tendency to install the Bachelor-Master-Structure is strong and has already been realized in several places. This enforces the development of a new structure of teacher education. A solution for this problem has not been found yet.

3.4. Concentrate teacher education on the second phase

Some experts suggest that teacher education should not be a part of university studies but should start after having passed university. On the basis of their university degree those who want to work as teachers should apply to the institutions of the former second phase, which in fact then would be *the only* phase of teacher education. These institutions enrol people according to the foreseeable demand of teacher recruitment. This model of teacher education *after* having passed university studies would reduce the problem of periodical teacher unemployment, because the number of enrolled persons

could be related to the demand. But this model would also mean that the teacher qualification is not a genuine but a mere additional qualification to study courses not directed to a teacher qualification from the beginning on.

3.5 The mainstream: Improving teacher education at universities

As one important result of the currently intense discussion about teacher education at university some of the institutions show reactions: The Conference of all Presidents of Universities (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz, HRK 1998/2000) has published a paper stressing the important role of teacher education in universities and the important role of universities in teacher education and has made some concrete suggestions for improvement. The Standing Conference of all Ministries of Education in the 16 *Länder* (Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK) has produced an expertise on the *Perspectives of Teacher Education in Germany* and in that paper also has stressed the role of the university and the necessity to develop university teacher education further (Terhart 2000). Several concrete and pragmatic suggestions have been developed and have found the agreement of all 16 *Länder*. In several *Länder* and in several universities efforts are made in different ways to develop e.g. core curricula for teacher education, to build up Centers for Teacher Education and School Research, to find a better coordination between the first and the second phase, to establish new ways to examine student teachers and to integrate them into school practice. So in fact there is a clear will to react in a constructive way to the criticism of university teacher education - and I hope that these efforts are more than just a straw fire but will sustain and lead to better results.

4. Concluding Remarks

Except for these just mentioned mainstream suggestions of the KMK to come to improvements step by step and within the university system (3.5) all other proposals (3.1 - 3.4) have two things in common: (1) They reduce or low down the current level of

teacher education in respect to time, costs, status and payment. (2) In combination with this all these proposals in fact lead to a reduction of the academic or intellectual basis of teacher education in favor of a stricter orientation towards the practical need of teachers' work.

So the current discussion about teacher education policies is characterized by conflicting concepts of modernization in education: After some decades of continuous growth and upgrading the voices claiming a reduction of the state-expenditures in education, schooling in general and especially in teacher education have become more and more urgent. As for me, I am convinced that the current high level of teacher education in Germany - on the one hand - has to be conserved. On the other hand I am also convinced that Germany urgently has to make strong efforts in all parts and elements of this formal framework towards a more reflective teacher education aiming at a professional competence of teachers. Maintaining the current formal framework makes only sense in combination with constant efforts for improvement. And with regard to universities as places for teacher education I want to add: This can only be reached if the universities fulfill their duties in this field more seriously and on a higher level than they do today. The next years offer a chance for university teacher education in Germany. I am afraid that it may be the last chance. But I also must say: If the universities do not take this chance and change things to improvement, then a fundamental restructuring and replacing of teacher education might be an adequate reaction.

References

HRK (= Hochschulrektorenkonferenz; Standing Conference of the Presidents of the Institutions of Higher Education): Empfehlungen zur Lehrerbildung. 2. November 1998. In: D.Schulz & H.-W.Wollersheim (Eds.) (2000): *Lehrerbildung in der öffentlichen Diskussion*. Neuwied: Luchterhand, pp. 163-176.

KMK (= Kultusministerkonferenz; Standing Conference of the Ministries of Education of the *Länder*) (2000): *Perspektiven der Lehrerbildung in Deutschland*. Abschlußbericht der von der Kultusministerkonferenz eingesetzten Kommission. Im Auftrag der Kommission herausgegeben von E.Terhart. Weinheim: Beltz.

Korthagen, F.A. & Kessels, J.P.A.M. (1999) Linking Theory and Practice: Changing the Pedagogy of Teacher Education. *Educational Researcher* 28(4), 4-17.

Sander, Th. (1995) Quality Improvement and Austerity Measures in Teacher Education: Lessons from Germany. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 18(1), 97-108.

Terhart, E. (1995) Didaktik/Curriculum in Teacher Education: Some German Complications. In: St. Hopmann & K. Riquarts (Eds.): *Didaktik and/or Curriculum*. Universität Kiel/IPN, 289-300.

Terhart, E. (1998) Formalised Codes of Ethics for Teachers: Between Professional Autonomy and Administrative Control. In: *European Journal of Education* 33 (4), 433-444.

Terhart, E. (1999) Developing a Professional Culture. In: M. Lang et al. (Eds.): *Changing Schools / Changing Practices. Perspectives on Educational Reform and Teacher Professionalism*. Louvain: Grant Publishers, 27-39.

_____ *Author Address:*

*Prof. Dr. Ewald Terhart
Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Institut für Pädagogik
D-44780 Bochum/Germany
email: ewald.terhart@ruhr-uni-bochum.de*