School system and teacher training in Germany

1. Initial Training of Teachers

The teacher training model in Germany is not homogenous in the whole country and is regulated by Land legislation. The relevant statutory provisions include laws and regulations for teacher training, study regulations for teacher training courses, examination regulations for the First State Examination (Staatsprüfung), training regulations for the preparatory service and examination regulations for the Second State Examination (Vorbereitungsdienst). Responsibility for teacher training rests with the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Land which regulate training through study regulations and examination regulations. First and Second State Examinations (Staatsprüfungen) are conducted by the state examination authorities or boards of the Land.

Teacher training is basically divided into two stages: a course of higher education and practical pedagogic training. Teacher training courses are offered at universities, Technische Hochschulen / Technische Universitäten, Pädagogische Hochschulen (colleges of education) and colleges of art and music. Practical pedagogic training in the form of a preparatory service takes place in teacher training institutes (Studienseminare) and training schools. For study courses at universities, in some Land, institutions (e.g. centres for teacher training) have been established which coordinate teacher training between the faculties and guarantee an adequate relationship to teaching practice.

The basic entry requirement for teacher training courses is the higher education entrance qualification (Hochschulreife), which is acquired after attending school for 12 or 13 years and passing the Abitur examination. The higher education entrance qualification can also be attained in other ways in specific cases, e.g. by adults who successfully complete a course of evening classes, or, in certain cases, following the successful completion of a non-university course of training in the tertiary sector.

A pass in the First State Examination is the requirement for admission to the preparatory service (Vorbereitungsdienst) and it even constitutes entitlement to admission. In the area of vocational teacher training, a Diplom examination can replace the First State Examination.

2. Curriculum, Special Skills, Specialisation

The various careers for which teachers are trained correspond to the levels and types of school in the Land. In view of the resulting large number of different designations for teaching careers, the following six types of teaching careers can be distinguished for reasons of clarity:

- Teaching careers at the Grundschule or primary level
- General teaching careers at primary level and all or individual lower secondary level school types
- Teaching careers at all or individual lower secondary level school types
- Teaching careers for the general education subjects at upper secondary level or for the Gymnasium
- Teaching careers in vocational subjects at upper secondary level or at vocational schools
- Teaching careers in special education

In all the Lands training is divided into studies at a university or equivalent institution of higher education and practical pedagogic training (preparatory service).
In addition, teacher training is also to cover issues concerning special education. The agreements on the Reform of the structure of study in teacher training (reached by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Lands in 1995) and the framework agreements on the training and examination for the six types of teaching careers (reached by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Lands in 1994, 1995 and 1997) stipulate set minimum standards for the first two components mentioned in the form of standard periods of study (Regelstudienzeiten) and hours of attendance per week during a semester.

3. Practical training

Having a finished their academic studies the future teachers have to accomplish a phase of education called Referendariat, lasting 1,5 or 2 years when they are paid a small salary. The phase is organised by the school administration of Lands. The teacher aspirants - Referendare - have to attend and to give lessons in a school of their branch under instruction of a guiding teacher and the leaders of the pedagogic and science education seminars. During this phase the teacher aspirant have to pass several examination lessons and at the end verbal examination about pedagogy and teaching methods of their subject. Moreover, they have to write a report about teaching methods and lesson planning with respect of their own practice.

4. Evaluation, Certificates

As with all courses of study in higher education, certain certificates are required for admission to examinations and intermediate examinations have to be taken in teacher training courses. The details are regulated by study and examination regulations (Studienordnungen and Prüfungsordnungen). The teaching courses conclude with the examination known as the First State Examination which entitles the holder to be accepted into the state preparatory service.

The preparatory service concludes with the Second State Examination after the second phase of the teacher education process. The certificate, which teacher aspirants could receive - Zweites Staatsexamen - is the prerequisite for permanent employment in a teaching career, but does not guarantee a teaching position. It has to be taken before a state examination board or a state examination commission.

Individual Lands have already reached the planning or testing stage for the implementation of the consecutive structure of study courses with Bachelor's and Master's degrees into teacher training while maintaining state responsibility for final examinations.

4. Alternative Training Pathways

Bachelor's and Master's degrees in teacher training

In some Lands, the reform of teacher training is to include the implementation of the consecutive structure of study courses with Bachelor's and Master's degrees (BA/MA) which was introduced in Germany with the amendment of the Framework Act for Higher Education of 1998. Currently, some Lands are planning a modularisation of teacher study courses and the introduction of consecutive study courses with Bachelor's and Master's degrees. The degrees obtained by successfully attending these new teacher study courses are mutually acknowledged by the Lands if they meet the standards the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Lands has agreed upon in March 2002.
The revised structure comprises university studies as well as the preparatory service which is reduced to 12 months due to the crediting of practical pedagogic training. Periods of practical training are integrated into the courses of study, whereas the duration of the periods reserved for academic training shall remain unchanged. This is made possible by means of a consecutive and modular structure of study: a three-year Bachelor's study course in two relevant specialised subject areas and in educational science. Students receive training for a particular type of school and general training independent of a particular type of school. For students who have successfully completed the Bachelor's course of study, a Master's study course with contents related to a particular type of school is offered. The duration of the course is 1 year for the teaching career at Grundschule, Hauptschule and Realschule, 1.5 years for the teaching career at Sonderschulen and 2 years for the teaching careers at the Gymnasium and at vocational schools. In correspondence with the efforts to internationalise higher education degrees, by successfully completing the degree courses the students obtain the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science and the Master of Arts or Master of Science respectively. To these degrees a Diploma Supplement is appended which contains detailed information on the main fields of study as well as specifications on the types of school the holder of the qualification is entitled to teach at. In addition to these higher education degrees the two State Examinations are maintained. Courses and examinations that have been passed within the Master's course of study are credited towards the First State Examination which remains obligatory.

**Higher education graduates without formal teacher training**

Although all Lands agree that the recruitment of applicants with formal teaching qualification is to be given priority, the employment of higher education graduates without formal teacher training is deemed necessary in order to meet short-term demands in understaffed subjects (in 2003 3.9% of all newly recruited teachers in the public school sector had no formal teacher training). The individual Lands provide for different and in some cases limited regulations oriented on their own particular demand. The measures include direct employment (predominantly in the vocational school system) either with or without accompanying pedagogical training, or the admission of higher education graduates with Diplom and Magister degrees to preparatory service. The certificates which can be obtained in the course of accompanying qualification measures, as well as the professional status of the persons who obtain them, vary from Land to Land. For the time being, they are valid in the Land in which they were obtained.

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1. EU database: http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/