

Recent Trends in Teacher Education in Germany

We are faced with an interesting phenomenon in Germany: Seen from the inside, i.e. with regard to internal organisation, structures and curricula, teacher education has not been a very dynamic sector for decades. In the post-war period the major event was the almost complete universitisation of teacher education through the integration of the *Pädagogische Hochschulen* (Teacher Education Colleges) into universities in the late 1960s/early 1970s - and even this integration was described by some researchers as having taken place only on paper. However, on the side of social functions, social uses, orientations and effects of teacher education there have been massive upheavals within the relatively short time of three decades.

1. Major phases of change in teacher education since the mid-sixties

Changes were never isolated movements limited to teacher education alone but were always linked to specific changes in the overall functioning of the higher education system, and through processes in higher education to long-term developments in German society, in particular the labour market. In the long run the development of the labour market has been deeply influenced by the long-term decline of growth rates of production and by recurring crises, tending to take on a more and more dramatic character.

Summarising briefly the changes in teacher education in the post-war period, the following phases might be distinguished:

- Before the mid-sixties teacher education was nothing but a minor, rather insignificant subject area forming an appendix to the then still existing Philosophical Faculties (for teachers of the *Gymnasium*) or to the Faculties of Economics and Social Sciences (for teachers in Vocational Education and Training) within the context of university education; large parts of teacher education (teachers for the *Grundschule*, *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*) were still assigned to institutions outside universities, without any real academic status, although formally being located at higher education level. Even within this separate institutional set-up the ideology of preparing future teachers for professional tasks was generally followed, although with different emphases on subject matter and pedagogical aspects respectively. Higher education was based on an elitist model of rigorous selection which, however, basically took place not at the point of entry to higher education but at the level of (lower) secondary education. At this time roughly 5 to 10% of an age group participated in higher education, indicating a slow but steady growth after participation rates had remained at a level of 2 to 4 percent for something like 150 years. Correspondingly, staff members, particularly at universities, very much tended to adhere to an elitist self-concept and similarly elitist modes of education. Practically everyone surviving this kind of education could expect to be offered a teaching post in schools, after having passed through a second phase of training (largely school-

based) and having successfully participated in examinations for the second phase. This situation in teacher education reflected a general state of full employment in the sphere of production and circulation and public services.

- Then, from the mid-sixties onwards, teacher education became the central factor in the expansion of higher education, while simultaneously all teacher education programmes for all types of schools and all levels of teaching (with the exception of pre-school education and a few remaining *Pädagogische Hochschulen*) were transferred to university. It is important to note the particular form in which this was actually done - in fact it has few if any parallels in Europe. Instead of choosing the relatively easy way of establishing Schools of Education, Faculties of Education, University Institutes, Specialisation Schools, Postgraduate Certificate Courses, etc., teacher education was so to say dispersed into the major faculties and departments. It is not difficult to understand that this radically transformed the situation inside university faculties, particularly inside the large Philosophical Faculties representing the classical core of German universities and their peculiar ideology of education. This was the institutional setup in which university studies were gradually transformed into a mass phenomenon, with corresponding turmoil and upheaval inside universities. It is not exaggerated to say that, jointly with upper secondary education, higher education became one of the most important reserve mechanisms of the labour market, in the face of growing unemployment in successive crises and downturns from 1965 to 1967, from 1970 to 1971 and especially in the first very serious crisis of 1974 to 1975.
- Teacher education (and higher education in general, as teacher education had by now become the most important field of studies in quantitative terms) reached a critical point in the mid-seventies, with student numbers having exploded but staff numbers and general facilities not having grown likewise and with departments and subject areas still struggling with the results and problems of a sudden influx of large numbers of teacher students which sometimes represented a vast majority of all students in particular areas like e.g. German Studies and other parts of Language Studies. It was evident that in the face of increasing demands being put on the budget against the background of a growing crisis of production and a growing crisis of the labour market no additional funding would be forthcoming in order to lessen the burden of universities. At political level it was argued that the creation of additional facilities for higher education would not even be reasonable, as it could be expected that resulting from the decline of birth rates student numbers would rapidly begin to fall after 1983 to 1985 - at least this was the prevalent notion based more on hopes than on serious analysis. Thus, an agreement was concluded in 1977 between Ministers of Education and the Conference of West German University Rectors concerning an “overload” to be carried by higher education institutions for the duration of ten years. Within these ten years universities continued to take on more and more students, and participation rates had reached the level of 15 percent in 1977 and climbed to 19.1 percent in 1987. Later official calculations for the period ranging from 1960 to 1985 had the astonishing result that the demand for jobs was permanently reduced by 2.5 million full time units through the expansion of higher education in this period. Such an expansion was in fact needed as labour market problems continued to increase in a minor crisis of 1977 and a very serious crisis from 1979 to 1982. However, teacher education gradually lost its leading position in the expansion movement, as now the intake of newly qualified teachers by the state was reduced step by step so that by the mid-eighties only approximately 10 percent of newly qualified teachers could expect to find employment as a teacher. Student flows were consequently redirected to other areas of study, in particular economics and law, only to create new problems there within relatively short time.
- It did not really come as a surprise, at least not to sober minds, that all predictions of the development of student numbers based on birth rates proved to be completely erroneous in the

mid-eighties and after. Instead of falling numbers of students, universities witnessed another rapid rise of participation rates from the mid-eighties onwards, although there was only another minor crisis of production in 1987. Together with a growing tendency for students to prolong their studies much beyond the standards set by examination regulations this led to another massive increase of overall student numbers and to a rise of the overall participation rate to a level of 25.9 percent in 1992. Quite evidently the regional and federal state authorities pretended not to be aware of all this, and there was not the slightest move to rediscuss the “overload” from their side. In fact what was once the “overload” (university rectors had agreed to an incredible overload of 100 percent!) had somehow become the normal load. By now universities had moved very far from the times of being elitist institutions. Teacher education itself had moved even further from the times where it could be blindly assumed that it served for educating prospective teachers for professional activities, as the number of unemployed teachers continued to grow and employment prospects continued to be bleak. In the end this fact contributed greatly to reducing the number of applicants for teacher education programmes to roughly one third of what it was in the 1970s.

- Up to the beginning of the 1990s it was still possible - in spite of many legitimate doubts concerning the achievement of universities at the level of professionalisation, not only in teacher education but in other major areas of academic study as well - to point to the very substantial achievements of higher education in relieving the labour market from additional demand, perhaps also in supplying a majority of students with appropriate affirmative, conformist ideologies and generally in coping with vastly increased student numbers without receiving anything like adequate funding for this task. However, the extremely deep crisis and recession of 1990 to 1993, followed by another deep crisis and decline from 1995 to 1997, represents the final breakthrough of a new logic of development, which had been slow in coming and the advent of which was actually hastened by unification and the many unsolved problems which German society inherited from it or which have newly arisen as a result of unification. The crisis of production has led to unification being used as a pretext for one of the biggest, if not the biggest, operation of “blood transfusion” from the state budget and a mass of other sources (mainly linked to manoeuvres of “privatisation” in East Germany) to the leading sectors of capital. In fact this operation has ended up in labour market problems increasing drastically in both parts of Germany, and simultaneously budget problems have grown to enormous dimensions. As a result, freezing levels of funding for higher education, if not cuts in spending for the education sector as a whole, have become a necessity. Irrespective of the negative effects this is bound to have, the function of higher education as a reserve mechanism of the labour market is increasingly coming under attack. As I see it, this new outlook of governmental policy, this new logic of development at the level of higher education is legitimated in terms of an ongoing public debate about “quality and quality improvement”, about “professionalism and professionalisation”, about “accountability” and “achievement”, about “evaluation and assessment”, etc. It goes hand in hand with a complete overhaul of study organisation, finally bringing it closer to the most inefficient models in Europe in terms of successful ideological integration.

2. Evaluation of teacher education - some trends in recent years

2.1 The noble (?) historical tradition: Informal mechanisms of evaluation

Evaluation is not really a new phenomenon in teacher education, nor is it in the area of higher education in general. It is by no means superfluous to mention that all higher education institutions, all university faculties and departments always had (sometimes quite elaborate) informal mechanisms of internal assessment. Depending on the degree of these informal mechanisms being operative,

and on the way they were handled, faculties and departments were in a position to develop not only internal standards of quality but also more or less informal procedures of putting group pressure on staff members who were believed not to properly fulfil their duties. Certainly it could not be excluded that under local circumstances standards of research and teaching might be quite idiosyncratic or even absurd. Certainly there was no guarantee that standards resulted from a democratic process of debate and decisions among colleagues, and they might well be based on the autocratic power of individuals or “leading circles” within the larger framework of a faculty or department. However, there could be no doubt about the relevance of these mechanisms within small group situations of university institutions and their (varying) effects on the quality of research and teaching.

It is no less superfluous to point to the traditional role of students in assessing teaching of staff members. For outside observers not being familiar with the classical study organisation in Germany it might not be easy to understand how much the freedom of students to choose among alternatives influences course offer and actual daily course delivery in teacher education and in a few other higher education programmes. The share of compulsory courses is extremely low for teacher students at the level of university studies as the first phase of preparation (this is different in the second phase of school-based training in the *Ausbildungs- und Studienseminare*). Beyond the few compulsory elements students are completely free to choose from the existing offer - although there is now an increasing tendency to destroy this freedom through reforms of the study organisation. Students are completely free to choose specific members of staff in the case of parallel course offers. Students are not obliged to attend a course for the duration of a full semester if they do not like the course or the teacher or both. They do take the liberty to attend from time to time wherever that is possible, if they believe that this is a rational way of dealing with a particular course. There are non-compulsory courses with compulsory attendance for those who want a certificate at the end but again the number of certificates teacher students have to acquire is very low by international standards. Most importantly, students are free to extend their studies beyond the minima set by examination regulations, and actually very many students increasingly have chosen to extend studies for longer and longer periods. Thus, the average duration of teacher education studies lies somewhere between nine and ten years now, including the second phase of education and training which takes 18 to 24 months.

In short, an unpopular or an incompetent or a (sometimes/regularly) not very well prepared staff member would normally very soon be stranded with decreasing numbers of attending students. Quite often students, at least some of them, would not just stay away or change to other courses, if they dislike a particular staff member or the way he/she runs a course, but would not hesitate to complain about it. Except in very large departments and faculties such events would normally not remain hidden from other staff members but would form part of the normal gossip, and it could very well be assumed that the popularity, the efforts and the degree of success of a teacher educator would be quite known to the rest of the department, not to speak of the entire student population which has its own functioning mechanisms of spreading news and rumours. It is on this basis that group pressure again comes into play.

2.2 Formal mechanisms of evaluation - the old administrative system

Turning to formal mechanisms of evaluation, it has to be emphasised once again that neither the assessment of staff members nor the assessment of students are completely new phenomena in teacher education. For a very long time there have been certain standard procedures for evaluating teacher education programmes and courses as well as entire teacher education institutions, and there were also standard procedures of evaluating the overall activities of higher education institutions.

Concerning staff members, specific legislation for public sector employees (except if they are professors) stipulates that their achievements have to be assessed and appraised regularly which so far meant - every five years at the level of higher education. A professor would be charged by the dean of the faculty to write a detailed report about the research and teaching activities of a staff member over the five year period in question, and a negative report would normally not just be taken to the files for a particular person. On the other hand there were no clear rules in the past concerning specific consequences of a positive or a negative report, and thus it could be concluded that this kind of reporting actually formed an integral part of the more informal mechanisms of evaluation prevailing in faculties and departments, in individual cases being translated into specific forms of group pressure wherever deemed necessary.

Assessments of academic achievement and of other types of activities are also made (and have been made for a long time) whenever the promotion of a staff member is being discussed. In former times, up to the end of the 1970s or so, promotion would be more or less a formality for all except to the level of professorship, with faculty being entitled to promotion and higher pay at regular intervals, and thus related assessments were not really taken very serious. However, right now promotion has become the exception in teacher education and there would be rather stiff competition inside a faculty or department if any better post becomes available. Similarly, if new staff is to be hired - which has also become the exception in teacher education - academic merits of applicants would be carefully assessed by a selection committee and a limited number of applicants would then be invited for an interview with the committee. In more recent times there has been some criticism that traditionally selection procedures were focused too narrowly on academic reputation and research activities of applicants but not on teaching competence. Hence there is now a tendency to widen the scope of assessment and even offer regular courses in order to provide younger researchers with more knowledge and competence at the level of course delivery.

Concerning students, the major occasion for assessment of their general academic knowledge and their general level of reflection (not of teaching competence!) in the past were of course final examinations at the end of university studies. At least in the area of educational studies the final examinations had an overriding importance as students were not required to take any other major examination before that. In the subject areas a slightly different situation prevailed, with intermediate examinations after two to three years of study and regular testing at the end of a semester playing a much greater role. Apart from that students could be assessed for written or oral contributions to seminars and other types of university courses but very often certificates would be handed out to students without any particular comment on the nature and level of the achievement. There is no particular catalogue of qualifications which prospective teachers have to acquire during their university studies in order to be admitted to the second phase of training.

Formal mechanisms for the assessment of students were always more elaborate and more intense in the second phase of training. Fundamentally, students are regularly assessed for their activities at the level of teaching practice but also for their contributions in seminars with a theoretical orientation. Examination regulations contain a short and not very much differentiated catalogue of competencies which educators are expected to use in assessing the qualifications of prospective teachers for the teaching job. At this level the emphasis would indeed be on teaching competence, not on academic knowledge. However, the procedure of measuring success or failure of students is completely unclear, and this is left more or less to the individual judgement of teacher educators and mentors at school level.

Concerning teacher education institutions and teacher education programmes, there are mechanisms of evaluation which have been operational for a very long time as well. In the past they have been linked to budget planning vis-à-vis the university administration and indirectly the regional Ministry

of Education as well as the obligatory annual reporting about activities within the context of the usual public administration hierarchies of which teacher education institutions form part. If a department or a faculty had a specific problem or specific needs, then this had to be explained in detail to the Ministry through the university administration, and the Ministry would then decide whether permission would be granted to introduce new measures, or whether additional funding would be forthcoming or not. In taking decisions the Ministry would be in a position to draw at least limited comparisons with other similar institutions under its authority and thus judge on the well-foundedness of claims being made.

2.3 Formal mechanisms of evaluation - a new policy model

For many decades these formal mechanisms of evaluation, completed and supported by traditional informal mechanisms, have worked in more or less satisfactory ways and there have been few complaints about it from any side. It was governments which increasingly demanded in recent years that the old system be replaced by a new one, also introducing a number of important new elements. The new elements include above all

- a much wider range of factors to be considered in evaluation;
- a much more systematic and coherent framework for evaluation;
- a greater density of evaluation activities;
- a new combination of external and internal evaluation; and, still looming on the horizon but most certainly to be introduced in the near future,
- new links between evaluation, accreditation and funding.

Such initiatives are not standing in isolation but form part of a much wider context of higher education reform shifting more and more problems to institutions but reserving the right of decision-making and control in all fundamental aspects for government. The key words in higher education reform are “autonomy”, “global budgets” (lump sums) and “professionalisation” as well as “individual profiles” and “competition” between institutions, and study reforms on the basis of “modules” and “credit points”, allegedly contributing to the “internationalisation” of institutions, or being demanded by it. Although some elements of the old administrative system of evaluation and reporting are retained in this context, reform initiatives clearly reflect the transition to a new policy model intending to reverse developments in higher education in the last decades or, if this proves to be impossible, to drastically reduce costs.

Taking the example of the *Land* Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) in which the university I am working at is located, the new mechanism of evaluation is not based on a combination of inspection, assessment and corresponding levels of funding, as in other European countries, but on systematic and comprehensive self-evaluation by higher education institutions as well as close monitoring by the Ministry and a new evaluation agency respectively. The Central Evaluation Agency of Higher Education Institutions in Lower Saxony was founded in 1995. It forms part of the philosophy of self-evaluation, as this is not an appendix to the Ministry of Education or any other governmental institution but an independent body being created by higher education institutions themselves in close cooperation with the Ministry. The scientific coordination of activities of the Central Agency is a matter of higher education institutions. The work of the Central Agency is directed by a Steering Committee having five members, among them only one representative of the Ministry, the rest being representatives of higher education institutions. Actually the Central Agency does not undertake

evaluations itself but only organises and coordinates them, and it is responsible for summary reports on the evaluation of specific institutions.

In October 1995 the Central Agency presented a draft version of a „Leitfaden für die Selbstevaluation von Lehre und Studium an den niedersächsischen Hochschulen“ (Guidelines for the self-evaluation of higher education institutions in the area of teaching and studies) which has been widely discussed and which is now used as a basis for evaluation procedures. The guidelines propose a combination of internal and external evaluation (peer group review). Under the heading of internal evaluation two different processes have to be considered. a) Faculties and departments are now obliged to deliver each year what is called a „Lehrbericht“ (report on the situation in the area of teaching), b) Faculties and departments will have to provide a „Bericht zur Selbstevaluation“ (report on self-evaluation) delivered in the context of regular evaluation procedures where “regular” could mean at five-year intervals.

Annex 2 of the guidelines lists in great detail on a total of 14 pages the questions and items to be considered in the self-evaluation report, plus a list of 7 pages of basic data to be provided by the reporting institution. The areas which reporting has to refer to include

- the framework conditions for teaching;
- the course offer including aims and objectives of studies, study programmes, plans for course offer and examinations;
- the management and organisation of teaching including employment of teaching personnel, student counselling, measures for implementing study reforms;
- the teaching and learning process from the perspective of all participants;
- careers of students at university including career options, student choices, concrete behaviour of students in using available opportunities;
- the formation and recruitment of new qualified staff;
- the promotion of women in the institution;
- the labour market situation for university graduates and initial situation of new entrants to professional jobs.

Under the heading of external evaluation, it should be emphasised once again that this refers to peer-group evaluation only. Peers are nominated after names have been discussed with the institution and the subject area/the study programme to be evaluated. Evaluation never refers to a specific subject at a specific institution but always to a specific subject at all higher education institutions in Lower Saxony. Dates for a visit of a peer group evaluation committee are communicated in time to the respective representatives of a higher education institution and the departments/subject areas concerned. External evaluation will result in recommendations for the improvement of the quality of teaching which will be addressed to the responsible departments or faculties. Institutions have the right to respond to the recommendations and make suggestions for the implementation of proposals. Following this general model, teacher education programmes were evaluated two years ago.

If anyone wished to conclude that this new mechanism of evaluation of higher education institutions - including teacher education - looks like a relatively positive, acceptable and painless procedure being under the full control of academic institutions, then this is of course completely wrong for

several reasons. First of all, higher education institutions are doing exactly what governments expect them to do - they provide governments with an endless mass of data and information which governments need in order to improve monitoring and control of higher education. Secondly, against the background of historical developments described in the introduction the collection of information in the context of new evaluation procedures only makes sense in one respect - if funding is made dependent on the "quality" of institutions, as "proved" by the "hard facts" of evaluation data and reports. Wherever governments still proclaim they do not intend to do this, it is hardly advisable to believe every word they say. In fact teacher education could very well be regarded as an exemplary case of how even before the introduction of new formal mechanisms of evaluation the funding of study programmes could be slashed without any consultation, if governments see a necessity for doing so. I would go as far as saying that the fate of teacher education represents the very model for the development of higher education institutions in the near future. From being relatively efficient instruments of labour market policy they will be transformed into objects of nothing but austerity policy. Thirdly, the slashing of funds for higher education will become a very simple matter in the future, as decisions have already been taken and legislation has already been passed for increasing what some euphemistically call the "autonomy" of higher education institutions. In a few years, the regional government of Lower Saxony will no longer provide funds according to the specific needs as expressed in budget proposals and applications of higher education institutions but will start operating on the basis of global budget, i.e. lump sums. Such lump sums have three basic advantages for governments: They could be cut at will. The internal distribution within specific institutions would be a matter of university or department administrations, and if there are any problems this would at best create internal antagonisms (in this context the position of university presidents and deans has been greatly strengthened through recent legislation!). Governments could claim that they are completely innocent, if specific subject areas or study programmes are run down through decreasing funding.

3. Conclusion

The meaning and effects of governmental policy appear to be changing dramatically, or at least elements which so far only played a very subordinate role are now massively coming to the forefront. It is extremely difficult not to interpret governmental policy in the sense of a gradual destruction of present labour market functions of higher education institutions. However, these functions represented a major element of (relative, though decreasing) stability in the overall context of the development of German society, counterbalancing effects which were produced by a relatively high level of productivity and relatively high rates of productivity growth. Instead of traditional efforts of reproducing itself the state appears to be moving more and more towards negating itself, towards destroying some of its major supports. It could be assumed that there are not too many alternatives for governments: The system of production and circulation is spiralling downwards in a long-term perspective, the labour market situation is deteriorating almost continuously in spite of massive countermeasures and demands from the side of big business to increase support mainly through direct transfer of funds are stepped up more and more. There is no end in sight for this development - and it seems relatively easy to draw the corresponding conclusions for the future of teacher education.

Bibliography:

Behrendt, B./Stary, J. (Hrsg.) (1993) Evaluation zur Verbesserung der Qualität der Lehre und weitere Maßnahmen, Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag

Bildungskommission NRW (1995) Zukunft der Bildung - Schule der Zukunft, Neuwied: Luchterhand

Ermert, K. (Hrsg.) (1992) Lehre an Hochschulen. Über Kriterien und Instrumente zu ihrer Evaluation und Förderung, Rehbürg-Loccum: Evangelische Akademie Loccum

Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (1992) Konzept zur Entwicklung der Hochschulen in Deutschland. HRK Dokumente zur Hochschulreform 75/1992, Bonn: HRK

Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (Hrsg.) (1994) Qualität von Studium und Lehre. Schritte zur Umsetzung des HRK-Konzeptes „Zur Entwicklung der Hochschulen in Deutschland“. HRK Dokumente zur Hochschulreform 91/1994, Bonn: HRK

Holtkamp, R./Schnitzer, K. (Hrsg.) (1992) Evaluation des Lehrens und Lernens. Ansätze, Methoden, Instrumente, Hannover: HIS

Rau, E. (1993) Kommentierte Bibliographie zur Evaluation der Lehre, Hannover: HIS

Reissert, R. (Hrsg.) (1992) Dokumentation „Evaluation der Lehre“. Aktuelle Aktivitäten an deutschen Hochschulen, 2 vols., Hannover: HIS

Sander, Th. (1995) Quality Improvement and Austerity Measures in Teacher Education: lessons from Germany, in: European Journal of Teacher Education, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 97-113

Sander, Th. (1996a) Market ideology, autonomy and competition between institutions in the field of education, in: Sander, Th./Vez, J.M. (eds.), Life-Long Learning in European Teacher-Education, Osnabrück: COMPARE-TE, pp. 264-281

Sander, Th. (1996b) Dynamics of Teacher Education in Germany in the context of social change, in: Sander, Th./Buchberger, F./Greaves, A.E./Kallós, D. (eds.), Teacher-Education in Europe: Evaluation and Perspectives, 2nd ed., Osnabrück, pp. 163-204

Webler, W.-D./Otto, H.-U. (Hrsg.) (1991) Der Ort der Lehre in der Hochschule. Lehrleistungen, Prestige und Hochschulwettbewerb, Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag

Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz (Hrsg.) Leistungsbeurteilung und Leistungsvergleich im Hochschulbereich. WRK Dokumente zur Hochschulreform 65/1989, Bonn: WRK

Zentrale Evaluationsagentur der niedersächsischen Hochschulen (1995) Entwurf: Leitfaden für die Selbstevaluation von Lehre und Studium an den niedersächsischen Hochschulen. Stand: 20. Oktober 1995, Hannover: ZEvA

