

Cooperation in TEFL Education: Connecting the First and Second Phase

----- Coopération dans l'éducation de l'anglais langue étrangère - relier la première et la seconde phase

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Abstract

Finding ways of enhancing the quality of teaching has also been a long-term endeavour in the field of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). Improving the quality of teaching depends to great extent on gaining motivated teacher candidates and offering them a high quality teacher training program. In this sense, an early confrontation with the requirements of teaching profession plays a crucial role in detecting the “realistic” and “unrealistic” expectations of prospective teachers of English regarding their future profession hereby avoiding disappointments during the teacher training and a burnout in the future. It makes cooperation between the first (pre-service teacher training) and second phase (in-service teacher training) in TEFL education in Bavaria (one of the 16 federal states in Germany) necessary, which differ from each other institutionally and concerning their contents. Based on this goal, two Bavarian universities (Munich University and Augsburg University) and various training schools intend to launch a joint project. In the current paper, the plan and further steps of this project, which aims at developing and proposing a reform concept for teaching training programmes for TEFL in Bavaria, will be outlined.

Keywords: Teacher training; TEFL education; Germany/Bavaria; practical pedagogical training (internship); praxis shock

Résumé

Trouver des façons d'améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement a été une longue entreprise dans le domaine de l'anglais comme langue étrangère (TEFL). Améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement dépend en grande partie de la motivation des candidats à devenir enseignant ainsi que de la présentation d'un programme de formation des enseignants qui soit de haute qualité. En ce sens, une confrontation précoce avec les exigences de la profession d'enseignant joue un rôle crucial dans la détection des attentes «réalistes» et «irréalistes» des futurs enseignants d'anglais au sujet de leur future profession présente en évitant les mauvaises surprises de la formation des enseignants et un *burnout* dans le futur. Une coopération s'impose entre la première phase (la formation initiale des enseignants) et la deuxième phase (la formation des enseignants en service) dans l'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère en Bavière (un des 16 États fédéraux d'Allemagne) qui diffèrent les unes des autres institutionnellement et au niveau de leurs contenus. Basé sur cet objectif, deux universités bavaroises (l'université de Munich et l'université d'Augsbourg) et différentes écoles de formation ont l'intention de lancer un projet commun.

En partant des preuves empiriques acquises, ce projet vise à développer et proposer un concept de réforme pour l'enseignement des programmes de formation pour l'anglais langue étrangère en

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Mots-clés : La formation des enseignants; l'éducation de l'anglais langue; Allemagne/Bavière; entraînement pratique; chocs pratiques

1. Introduction

Despite the efforts to create more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe along with the Bologna process (European Higher Education Area), there are still great amount of differences among countries and even the federal states of some countries in terms of school and higher education.

Investigating the educational system of Germany is a quite complicated issue due to the federal governmental structure of this country. There are 16 federal states in Germany and each of them is responsible for forming as well as implementing its own educational policy. Different educational systems concurrently mean different teacher training programs. Bavaria, the south federal state of Germany, is one of them.

This paper aims to reflect on an on-going research project which is in its beginning stage. Before the importance and objectives of this research project are explained, it would be reasonable to give a brief description of the current teacher training program at Bavarian universities.

2. Teacher Training in Bavaria

Unlike some other states, in which teachers for certain school types are educated at teacher training colleges (*Pädagogische Hochschule*), the teacher training programs in Bavaria are carried out only at universities. It is basically divided into two stages: Pre-service teacher training (a course of higher education) and in-service teacher training (practical pedagogic training).

2.1 The First Phase: Pre-service teacher training

In the first stage of the teacher training, which is also referred as pre-service teacher training, prospective teachers are supposed to take courses at universities according to the school type and subject areas they have decided to take. There are different types of schools: *Grundschule* (primary school), *Hauptschule* (vocationally oriented secondary school), *Realschule* (professionally oriented secondary school), *Gymnasium* (grammar school), *Berufsschule* (vocational school) and *Sonderschule* (special education school).

The teacher training program for primary school, vocationally oriented secondary school, professionally oriented secondary school can be completed in seven semesters whereas it takes prospective teachers of grammar school, vocational school and special education school nine semesters to finish their degree. During the course of their studies student teachers study at least two subjects or subject areas, educational theory and psychology, didactics, sociology or philosophy.

Additionally, they are supposed to gather practical experiences in diverse forms during the first phase. Before the beginning of teacher training, students attend a three-week orientational internship

during which they have an opportunity to observe school life from a different perspective, namely the teacher perspective. This internship also helps students to get more information on the potential school type in which they want to teach in the future although they are not yet allowed to get involved in the teaching process actively. Moreover, students are supposed to complete an eight-week company/industrial internship by the first state examination to be able to gain an insight into a professional area other than the school context, such as a service enterprise or a trading company. A practical training in pedagogy and didactics during semester break after the completion of the orientational internship enables them to get into first contact with an authentic teaching atmosphere to gain experience in the mentioned fields. Finally, a weekly subject-related practical training accompanying their regular training courses during the 3rd, 4th or 5th semester will help put the theoretical information on foreign language teaching into practice in a real teaching context by means of trial lessons.

It is required to pass the First State Examination for admission to the in-service teacher training (preparatory service). The First State Examination includes several components such as a written thesis in the first or second subject or in educational science; a written and oral examination in all of the subjects studied and an examination in educational science. In some cases, a practical examination in art, music, physical education, or in technical fields for a performance evaluation can be applied.

2.2 The Second Phase: In-service teacher training

The prospective teachers who pass the First State Examination complete their university studies and become eligible to begin the second stage of the teacher training program, that is in-service teacher training or in other words preparatory service (*Vorbereitungsdienst*).

Bavarian Ministry of Education appoints certain training schools at which the preparatory service is to be carried out. The programs during the preparatory service are referred to as “pedagogical seminars”. Future teachers are assigned as a student teacher to one of these training schools and required to deliver guided and independent teaching for two years in Bavaria, during which they undertake classroom observation, design lessons and conduct studies in educational theory and subject-related didactics at seminars. The task of the seminar teachers includes to train the candidates on the teaching methods of the subject field concerned and to supervise closely the student teaching process.

Students complete their preparatory service with the Second State Examination which is the prerequisite for a full time teaching position. It usually consists of four parts: A dissertation on educational theory, pedagogic psychology or the teaching of one of the subjects studied; a practical teaching involving trial lessons in the chosen subjects; an examination on the fundamental issues of educational theory, educational and civil service legislation and school administration.

3. The Importance of the Research Project

Upon finishing the first phase (pre-service teacher training) with a successful pass of the first state examination, future teachers of English becomes qualified to carry out a practical pedagogic training at a school in the second phase (preparatory service). However, according to a study by Rauin et al.

(1994), two out of three students who begin a teacher training program do not take the First State Examination. Furthermore, a big number of students who have already passed the First State Examination do not begin the student teaching phase (Rauin et al. 1994).

The results of a recent research (Özkul 2011: 115) brings to light some more crucial facts on the occupational and subject field aspirations of English-teachers-to-be as well as their stability of career decisions. This study was conducted with 1709 student teachers of English, majority in their first years at 19 German universities in ten different states. It demonstrates that nearly 70% of the participants who were not certain about their occupational decision as an English teacher justified their hesitation with the fact that they do not have enough practical experience to decide whether they have made a reasonable occupational decision, or not. Moreover, these respondents criticized the lack of balance between theory and practice in their studies since they had to take many courses of a theoretical nature.

Like some other fields such as medicine or law the occupational pathway of a person who pursues a teacher training program is predetermined to a specific professional target. Apart from this fact, the teacher training program takes a longer time in Bavaria to complete in comparison to other European countries which makes a revision of the occupational decision more difficult. Therefore, an opportunity to get more idea concerning the requirements of teaching profession by means of a new internship concept and an opportunity for a self-reflection on one's own occupational choice through a research instrument at the early stages of the pre-service teacher training program become salient.

4. The Objectives of the Research Project

The main target of the project is to design a new internship concept which allows students to gain a clear understanding of the main fields of teaching English as a foreign language during the first phase of the teacher training program. The underlying reason to follow this aim is rendering the pre-service teacher training during the higher education more real-work-life by integrating practice-oriented implications to close the gap between the theory and the practice.

Accordingly, the teacher training programmes for TEFL in other countries, particularly in a European context, will be firstly analysed to gain a broader overview on the different types of teacher training programmes, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, an empirical study, containing both quantitative and qualitative research methods, will be conducted at Bavarian universities and teacher trainee institutions (grammar schools: *Gymnasien*) to investigate the relationship between the first and the second phase of teacher education. To reach this goal, lecturers of TEFL at universities representing the first phase and seminar teachers of English at training schools as representatives of the second phase will be focussed on to create a more beneficial and efficient internship model.

Some of the concrete applications which are planned to be used during the first phase include creating an audiovisual material (DVD) with videography of sample lessons to offer future teachers of English as a foreign language practical teaching implications and methods. Moreover, an aptitude test (questionnaire) containing open and closed questions about their occupational choice as a teacher of English will be developed to serve as a tool for a self-reflection.

By means of this cooperation a balance between the theoretical and practical parts of the teacher

training will be achieved. Additionally, prospective teachers will be provided with a more competent supervising during the early stages of the preparation for their future profession.

5. Conclusion

It is a well-known fact that satisfaction in professional life plays a significant role in one's general satisfaction in life. Therefore, the role of a conscious professional decision making process should not be underplayed.

It should be kept in mind that the objective of excellence in education can be reached by gaining highly-motivated candidates for the teaching profession and providing them with a high quality teacher training program. Hence, more attention should be paid into creating opportunities to reflect on one's own reasons that motivate them to select teaching occupation and English as their school subject, as well as to become familiar with those factors which render teaching profession less attractive and therefore evoke uncertainty among the student teachers of English. Moreover, becoming aware of the working conditions, requirements and challenges of a profession at the early stages of its training by means of well-structured internships is one of the most beneficial ways to plan a professional career.

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