

Deutscher Beamtenbund (DBB)
(German Federation of Civil Servants)

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April 10, 2003

OECD Teacher Study

We thank you for sending us the "National Background Report" (CBA) for the Federal Republic of Germany regarding the OECD Teacher Study.

We would like to make the following statements for the dbb Beamtenbund (Civil Service Association) and the Tarifunion (Collective Wage Union) as well as for the educational service unions organized in the dbb:

Preliminary Remark:

The national background report presented by the KMK represents in broad strokes an accurate description of the present situation of the teachers in the Federal Republic of Germany. Generally, the dbb agrees with this evaluation; in our opinion there are different views resp. supplemental remarks especially with respect to the following individual chapters:

Re Chapter 1.5 Educational Funding

The dbb expressly shares the observation that the expenditures for education in the past years have continuously lost in significance. The dbb regards this development as a dangerous weakening of the effectiveness of the education system. The latest international comparative studies, especially PISA and the national supplementary study to PISA, have shown that an intensive and ongoing advancement, for instance of weaker students or of children with a migration background, is necessary. The latest international elementary school reading study - IGLU - does not justify any other assessment here.

For this reason more efforts are required not only to improve the effectiveness of the education system as a whole, but in addition also to counteract dangerous tendencies of the social background directly reflecting the educational results. Not least must it be taken into consideration that in the past years additional problems of a social as well as of an educational nature were shifted to the school and, with that, to the teachers. All of this leads to the funding for education not having to be reduced, but in the contrary, having to increase it to a scale which does justice to the requirements and expectations.

Therefore, the dbb emphasizes its opinion that a decrease of student numbers to be expected in parts will not be utilized to further reduce the funding for education. In the contrary, it appears to be imperative to utilize the opportunities in the long term, for instance to reduce the class frequencies again to a pedagogically reasonable size.

It also appears to be urgently necessary that the salary conditions, particularly for young teachers, reach a scale again which can compete with the private sector.

Re 2.1.1 Structuring of the School and Education System

Here re No. 31 „tertiary education“: The second, practical educational training phase, particularly for teachers, attorneys and physicians, which is legally structured differently, however, is generally completed with an additional state examination, should also be addressed in these areas. The emphasis of this educational training phase is a structured teaching of specialized practice with supplemental seminars etc. The successful completion of this second educational training phase is a condition for the unrestricted start of the professional life.

Re 2.1.2. Administration, Management and Sponsorship in Public Education Facilities

Here it must be pointed out that according to the express stipulation in the fundamental rights part of the constitution, in Art. 7 Sect. 1 of the Basic Constitutional Law, the entire school system is subject to supervision by the state, and with that, is subject to the authority of the state. Among other things, this is also of decisive significance for the fact that the state is not only responsible with respect to the financing but also for the entire structuring of the education system.

Re 2.1.3. Participation

From the view of the dbb it is expressly to be welcomed that the powers important to the school are actively integrated in the design of the school life. The unions' rights of co-determination addressed in No. 46 generally are, however, the rights to a hearing before decisions are reached with respect to laws, regulations and ordinances and are no real co-decision instruments.

Re 2.4. Teacher's Associations

The teacher's associations organized in the dbb would have to be supplemented by two unions: By the Verband Deutscher Realschullehrer (Association of German Secondary School Teachers), VDR, as well as by the Bundesverband der Lehrerinnen und Lehrer an beruflichen Schulen (Federal Association of Teachers at Vocational Schools), BLBS.

Re 3.3. Principles of Basic Teacher Education

Re partial item 79, studies, it should be additionally noted that the standard period of study in Baden-Württemberg was increased to a total of 10 semesters by the implementation of the practice semester.

Re 3.4. Current Reform Policies

The dbb is concerned that, due to the Bologna Process, concrete thought is given in a number of federal states to the establishment of BA-/MA study courses even in the area of teacher education. As a rule, the dbb declines approaches to change the teacher education to a consecutive system since, after all, this questions the professionalism of the teacher profession. The dbb is thoroughly convinced that the professionalism of the teacher profession is based on an early and continuous interconnection of specialty, expert didactics and educational science. A separation of the training in a specialty part and a "pedagogical-didactic additional qualification" cannot do justice to this requirement.

The occasionally represented opinion to gear the teacher education towards a multiple professional use (so-called polyvalence) from the start cannot convince under this standard. Graduates of teacher study courses today already have become accepted in all areas of the economy with their own professional career opportunities. On the other hand, there is no other study course whose reform is approached from the start with the goal of allowing a utilization unrelated to the area of expertise. Especially the international effectiveness comparisons also prove in addition, that it is necessary more than ever to continue the development of the teacher profession as an expert status for classes and education and not to go backwards. This also applies with a view to the additional social and educational problems the schools are increasingly confronted with and for which the teachers must be prepared as well, which was also addressed in the state report.

Re 4.4. Actions

The dbb, too, is aware of the pressing danger that the presently foreseeable number of young teachers is hardly sufficient to replace the teachers which will leave in the coming years for age-related reasons. It is all the more important to make the teacher profession more attractive. Part of this is most certainly an improvement of the social status of the teacher profession which was diminished in the past years. Here the approaches which are outlined in the joint „Bremer Erklärung“ (Bremen Declaration) of the KMK with the teachers' unions must be realized.

The increased opening for „lateral entries“ cannot be supported without restrictions in the opinion of the dbb. The teacher profession requires a continuous training in pedagogical and educational sciences in addition to profound expert knowledge. In many cases this cannot be assured. The doubts addressed in the national background report are generally shared by the dbb. While, due to the particularities in the professional school system, it can be a reasonable way out to cover the demand, a large scale utilization of this instrument in the area of general knowledge is to be declined.

In addition, an improvement of the financial attractiveness of the teacher profession appears necessary for people entering the profession. Due to the repeated cuts of the candidates' salaries in the past years and the other interventions addressed in the report, the salary situation is often no longer competitive with corresponding offers in the private sector. The necessity of keeping the teacher profession attractive, especially to particularly qualified candidates, urgently requires here an improvement of the salary situation, especially for the beginners in the profession.

Re 5. Working Situation of the Teachers

Different from the depiction particularly under No. 123, the working hours of the teachers mostly do not correspond to the working hours of the other civil servants. For instance, a current investigation with the company Mummert and Partner, Nordrhein-Westfalen, should be pointed out, which in the determination of the teachers' working hours in NRW has proven that the average annual working hours of teachers at high schools amount to approximately 1,900 hours - in contrast to

the annual total working hours of other civil servants of the state which amount to 1,760 hours in a 40 hour week.

In addition it should be noted that the compulsory number of hours for the teachers in the past years has practically not taken part in the reduction of the general weekly working hours. On the other hand, a number of federal states is now following plans of clearly increasing the number of compulsory hours unilaterally.

Generally with respect to the pay - and here, too, as a supplement to the foot note 11 to No. 127 - it should be pointed out that the federal council, the states chamber, has presented a legislative initiative which places significant parts of the salary, such as the Christmas bonus and vacation pay, at the disposal of the individual federal states. The group of teachers, which by numbers forms the greatest part of the personnel and for whom reductions are therefore particularly noticeable, is especially taken into consideration.

Proposals by the prime ministers are going even further by taking all regulations regarding the administrative side of service and pay in their own hands.

The dbb has expressly disagreed with these plans: Not only because it involves considerable, and factually unjustified, salary losses, but primarily because with that, the professional and salary conditions would gravely vary from federal state to federal state.

Connected to this is a foreseeable competition between economically strong and economically weaker states which will increase the already existing enticing away of teachers. As a consequence a consistent quality of the educational offers in the individual federal states is in question.

Re 5.2. Problem Areas

The dbb expressly supports the emphasis on the challenges the teachers are facing and which have changed in the past years. Here additional education and care giving tasks, "more difficult student behavior" coincide with a distinctly unfavorable age structure of the teachers.

Re 5.3. Specific Stress on Teachers

Here, too, the assessment in the state report regarding the particular stress situation in the teachers is to be supported.

The dbb has always been an advocate for the fact that the stress connected with the teaching profession is only secondarily connected to the amount of working hours; it is primarily about the problems resulting from the working situation during classes and in the schools.

In order to provide for more transparency the dbb and its teachers' unions promote a study by the University Potsdam, which empirically evaluates the stress situation in this professional area and will then, in a now upcoming second phase, develop intervention instruments which can reduce the problems on the level of the school faculties. In addition, this is a matter of the development of procedures with

which the suitability of candidates for this profession can already be determined at the level of the selection of study courses and choice of profession.

Re 6.1. Continuing and Advanced Training

The dbb views the constant updating of the standard of knowledge as the basis for successful work. Especially when teaching is the professional task, the constant continuing development of one's own competency is essential.

The continuing training for teachers is therefore to be designed as the obligatory third phase of the teacher training for all teachers. This assumes corresponding offers in this area, it is particularly necessary, that the principals make more funds available than previously for every form of continuing training for teachers. In light of the partially tight personnel coverage in the schools, there must be the freedom of being able to take advantage of the continuing training offers without classes not being held at a larger scale. The scheduling of a school internal continuing training plan, as addressed in the report, is not sufficient if the personnel resources are not available.

Finally it must be noted that the "demand for professional support services through teachers' continuing training", although rightfully addressed under No. 154, that however, with the potential improvements of the teachers' continuing training not a single support service, such as e.g. supervision, is addressed.

It must also be noted that additional advanced training offers are also necessary to prepare future personnel for the school administrations for the new and changed tasks.

Re 7. Bibliography

In the bibliography it attracts attention that this national background report refers only to the expertise for the work of the "mixed committee teacher education" of the conference of the ministers of education (Bonn 1999) by Botho Priebe and not to the final report of the committee appointed by the conference of the ministers of education. Just the volume "Perspectives of the teacher education in Germany" is missing in the bibliography, the final report by the committee appointed by the conference of the ministers of education, issued by Ewald Terhard, Weinheim/Basel 2000.

Sincerely,
Geyer
Federal Chairman