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Multi-Skilling vs. Professionalization

Theses for a workshop at the conference "Von Bologna nach Quedlinburg - Die Reform des Lehramtsstudiums in Deutschland" ("*From Bologna to Quedlinburg - Reforming Teacher Training in Germany*")

[Übersetzung in Englische Sebastian J. Rechenberger]

On January 23rd and 24th, 2006, the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK, Conference of University Rectors) and the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft (Founders Association for German Sciences) co-hosted a conference at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Academy of Sciences of Berlin and Brandenburg). With more than 300 representatives from universities and the government in attendance, HRK and Stifterverband took stock of the reform process of teacher training in Germany. To this end, eight workshops and a panel discussion critically reflected on the existing reform models with reference both to the objectives of the Bologna Process and to the fundamental objectives of the teacher training reforms with regard to content.

Gerd Kellermann has lectured at the Institut für Waldorfpädagogik in Witten, Germany since 1998. He was asked at the conference to contribute his point of view on free teacher training. The following abstract outlines his theses regarding the multi-skilling/professionalization controversy within teacher training.

The university reform discussed here may well contribute to reducing the difference between multi-skilling and professionalization to a paper difference only, i.e. a merely virtual one. However, this is not the impression left by either the previous speakers or the poster exhibition.

Professionalization and multi-skilling are defined as objective criteria to be achieved by training regulations. This makes the student an object of training – a principle unlikely to find much support among those here present and yet one that dominates all models. I subscribe to an educational concept that views the pupil, and certainly the university student, as the subject of the education process. This doesn't just have didactic and methodological implications but curricular and structural ones, too.

Professionalization and multi-skilling are not really under discussion at this conference. Professionalism is represented by the standards of the KMK (*Conference of the Ministers of Education*). Multi-skilling is represented by the self-evidence of sound scientific university education.

In my view, multi-skilling is a person's availability for a variety of professional contexts, and professionalism the meeting of certain standards or the adhesion to values and rules of professional ethics. Made rigid by tick-boxes, points and credits, the labels 'technical sciences', 'education sciences', and 'subject didactics', in whatever ratio, are no guarantee for either multi-skilling or professionalism.

Thesis 1 Multi-skilling and professionalism are achievable without the training being geared toward this by structure or curriculum.

As an example, I would like to outline key points in my own professional biography. This shows that multi-skilling and professionalism emerged despite a university training whose providers never thought of multi-skilling and, at best, may have intended to develop professionalism in me as a future scientist. My professional experience comprises, in chronological order:-

- Research (2 years),
- Administration - university reform (6 years)
- School (special subject teacher, high-school level, 8 years)
- School (class teacher, elementary school level, 6 years) (co-principal, 12 years)

- Administration (office, school association, 3 years)
- Research and apprenticeship (teacher training, 7 years).

The above show a multi-skilled career with emphasis on research, teaching, administration, and management. Multi-skilling was something I actively pursued, and I pursued it because those around me believed in me.

For me to claim that my career was shaped by professionalism wouldn't necessarily sound right. In my view, to characterize someone's work as 'professional' comprises more than mere specialist knowledge and expertise. While mastering one's craft is obviously a prerequisite, professionalism goes beyond that; it is to do with the fact that the very mastering of skills is also understood and reflected upon and that your presence of mind doesn't fail you in life's tricky situations. The more I think about making professionalism the objective of teacher training the more questionable the notion becomes. Rather, professionalism is something that comes with life-long learning. It would be more appropriate to regard teacher training as vocational orientation. This makes me wonder: The teaching profession is described in great detail. But what other vocational orientation do the 'multi-skilling' bachelor of arts/science courses comprise?

With regard to these experiences, I would like to see a more relaxed approach. Less reliance on diplomas - which, after 7 years of training, finally certify multi-skilling and professionalism - and more trust in the individual who wants to become a teacher.

Thesis 2 A course of studies tailored to the teacher's requirements will not prevent him/her from achieving multi-skilling

As an example, I would like to outline the institution I currently work for. The Institut für Waldorfpädagogik (*Institute for Waldorf/Steiner Education*) in Witten, Germany was founded in 1973 out of the need for a specific type of fundamental training for a specific type of teacher for whom postgraduate training would be either insufficient or too time-consuming.

In order to focus on specific needs, our concept has the following limitations:

- The training focuses on a specific type of school, i.e. the Waldorf/Steiner school.
- The training focuses on a specific age bracket, i.e. 6 to 14-year olds.
- The training is for teacher students only.
- The training is to be financed by the 'customer', i.e. the parents of the Waldorf/Steiner schools who have a vested interest both in the enrollment of suitable students and in a high percentage of leaving graduates actually working as teachers.

And yet this is only achieved by some 60 percent. The remaining 40 percent pursue careers as journalists, physicians, entrepreneurs, bankers, therapists, etc., following additional training, where appropriate.

We frequently need to remind our financial supporters that a training course is not a one-way street to the teaching profession.

In my opinion, multi-skilling is inherent in any kind of scientific training. Whichever career path is chosen by the graduate largely depends on their own self-image.

Whichever career path can be chosen by the graduate largely depends on society's acceptance. Studies enable a multitude of professions while specific degrees, e.g. a first, only give a graduate access to a much narrower range of professions than his/her abilities would allow. Why not leave the judging of a graduate's abilities to their 'customers'?

Thesis 3 To orientate the teacher training to the teaching profession means to put the development of the individual, the development of education, the development of the school, the development of society at the core of the quest for knowledge. Professionalism becomes the source of multi-skilling.

It seems odd that, at a conference whose theme is the reform of teacher training, institutions that should and want to be responsible for the training of teachers one minute demand from the ministers for education a definition of professionalism, while complaining about too much interference the next. I would like to describe, in more detail, the teacher training toward which I feel an obligation in responsibility and freedom.

In the beginning, there's the recognition that there is no such thing as the teacher. Teachers are active in three realms which I will define with regard to teacher training. In the context of this ad-hoc paper, this can only be achieved to a somewhat limited extent.

Realm 1 Children

With what type of children will the teacher work? It makes a difference whether children are to be taught cultural techniques or whether Faust's relationship with Mephisto is to be discussed at high-school level. Our Institute trains a special type of teacher for children between the ages of 7 and 14 years. This teacher accompanies his/her students from their first day of school through to puberty. It is his/her task to unfold the world for the children. He/she progresses from a holistic world-view to a spectrum of scientific subjects, eventually teaching German, mathematics, history, geography, economics, astronomy, biology, chemistry, and physics in 8th grade. To limit teaching to two specialized subjects at this stage would be a mistake.

To this type of teacher, professionalism means: An interest in the world, the ability to change, and the ability to 'read' the children. This teacher is generalist, developer, companion, and counselor.

Realm 2 Education

Like Professor Harm Paschen, I differentiate between three types of education: Conveyance of knowledge, development of concepts, and organic development.

Waldorf/Steiner education endeavors to let knowledge and abilities serve the human development. The objective is organic development, i.e. the formation of the sense organs and organs of perception, thinking, feeling, and willing.

To this type of teacher, professionalism means: To perceive, to form, to perceive, to form, to perceive. This teacher is an artist.

Realm 3 Schooling as a social subsystem

Today's schools are designed to be institutions for socialization and entitlement, deriving their objectives from the existing social system. In my view, a school is first and foremost an educational institution, and its task is to support people in their ontogenetic and phylogenetic developments. This has far-reaching implications.

This school must be free: It must be free for the exploration of the child, and free from economic and social constraints.

To this type of teacher, professionalism means: To be able to 'read' the children, to develop and support the curriculum, and to practice cooperation and self-management. This teacher is an explorer and entrepreneur.

Training the teacher, based on these objectives (ideals), as an explorer, artist, and entrepreneur in order to stimulate the development of professionalism will also engender the potential for multi-skilling. In my view, stimulation and availability is really all a university education can achieve.

Summary:

- Multi-skilling and professionalism are personality traits. They form and develop during a teacher's working life.
- The formation of multi-skilling and professionalism requires appropriate attitudes and moral concepts on the part of the subject, and freedom and responsibility as key professional characteristics.
- To operationalize multi-skilling and professionalism as the objective of teacher training may well be detrimental to life-long learning and development.
- The excluding nature of a first degree as a 'permit' feigns a level of professionalism that can only be achieved on the job.
- I propose that schools are opened up. It should be up to the school's faculty (and its parents and supporters) to decide who is to be teacher.
- In terms of his/her training, it makes a big difference whether a teacher is to teach subjects or children. Multi-skilling is not achieved by a distinct course of study alone.
- The currently foreseeable length of training (3+2+2 =7 years) is not conducive to the attitude of life-long learning.
- I therefore propose a teacher training model that accommodates the requirements of university and school and opens both for one another.