

## AN OUTSIDER'S VIEWPOINT OF GERMANY'S TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM: WHAT KIND OF INFLUENCE WAS BROUGHT BY TEACHER EDUCATION STANDARDS?

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**Abstract:** *In this article, teacher education reforms in Germany were analysed from a Japanese outsider's viewpoint. To describe the feature of "Germany" is never easy because of its diversity; however, from an outsider's viewpoint, certain unified features can be made clear. The symbol of today's reform is the teacher education standards from federal level symbolized with content standardisation. Most of all, its influence is radicalized in the first stage of teacher education –university. In the first stage, the framework regularising at a European level through the Bologna Process pushes the reform from behind. Through data analysis as well as field research in different states of Germany, the features of reform influence are described.*

**Keywords:** teacher education reform, teacher education standards, Germany, outsider's viewpoint

### Introduction

Impacts on a country's education policy are not straightforward when this is taken from the country inside because they stand on the country's paradigm that has been taken for granted by insiders. Bray (1999, p. 222) pointed out that the field of comparative education can benefit to make foreign "strange patterns familiar" on one hand, and to make native "familiar patterns strange" on the other hand. This research will attempt to call reform features of German teacher education into question from Japanese viewpoint.

Today, teacher education reform is a common issue both in Germany and Japan. In the Japanese case, "the most serious crisis of teacher education today is that nobody draws up the grand design of it in the future" (Sato, 2008, p. 20). However, the influence of German teacher education reform seems to be surpassing the situation in Japan. In comparison with Japan where teacher training system and its curricula are authorized by one national ministry –

the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) – each of Germany's 16 federal states (*Länder*) has their own authorisation for education areas; consequently, teacher education schematics are highly diverse. Therefore, it is pointed out in advance that the limitations of understanding Germany as a whole.

However, there are certain common fundamental structures from outsider's viewpoint. In addition, the conference of ministers of education from all states (*Kultusministerkonferenz* [KMK]) passed a resolution in 2004 and 2008 for teacher education standards (*Lehrerbildungsstandards*, which is simplified as "TE-standards" below). Both standards were partially revised in 2014. These standards clearly defined the competencies (*Kompetenzen*) desired for teachers in Germany as a whole. In addition to such tendency on federal republic level, teacher education reforms are being sped up with the association of the "Bologna Process"

which is typified by university course structure reform on European level.

In this research influence from TE-standards within the whole stages of Germany's teacher education will be summed. In Germany, teacher education reform is one of the most controversial topics today. Terhart (2011, 2013) is one of the most important researchers in this area. As an international comparative study, Bosse, Moegling, and Reitingner (2012) are noteworthy. Almost all important policy documents on federal level are opened on the official website of KMK (<http://www.kmk.org/>). The website "Monitor Lehrerbildung" (monitoring teacher education: <http://www.monitor-lehrerbildung.de/>) managed by Center for Higher Education Development (*Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung*) et al. is furnishing fundamental data for all states. As related research in Japan, Yoshioka (2007) is a pioneering researcher. Watanabe and Neumann (2010) and Kido (2012) are also important. However, comparative approaches to teacher education system as a whole in Germany and Japan have not been conducted enough yet.

While learning from both Japanese and German previous research, the influence of the reform from pre-service to in-service level as a whole will be analysed from an outsider's viewpoint including the author's field research. The aim of this research is to overcome a country's paradigm and to reach implications for future teacher education.

### **Traditional Teacher Education Schematic and Comparative Viewpoint from Japan**

Germany is a federal republic nation made up of 16 federal states. Each state has traditionally been entrusted with the independent authority relevant to education and cultural administration

(*Kulturhoheit*). Namely, in the area of school education and teacher education there is no authority, taking the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*) which deals with vocational education and scholarships among other things as an exception, instead there is KMK.

From an outsider's viewpoint, there are common aspects in teacher education that are nation-wide in Germany: (a) first stage training at multidiscipline university (*Univeristät*); (b) completion master course (instead of the former first national exam, *Erstes Staatsexamen*); (c) second stage training in the form of practical pedagogic training as trainee teacher (*Referendar*); (d) passing of the second national exam (*Zweites Staatsexamen*); (e) application to each state as successful candidates; and (f) lifetime employment as civil officer (*Beamte*) (see Figure 1 in Appendix A). A part of German teachers today is not *Beamte* but *Angestellte* as contract civil officer.

In Japan the most common way to become a teacher is (a) completing the teacher training curricula on bachelor stage at a university or college; (b) acquiring the regular teacher certificate from prefectural board of education; (c) taking the selective examination for teachers in each prefecture; and (d) employment as a civil officer. In 2009 teacher as an occupation of lifetime employment was outmoded by the introduction of the teacher certificate renewal system (every ten years) throughout Japan (see Figure 2 in Appendix A).

In comparison with Japan, teachers in Germany are positioned as a profession with professional training on same level as a judicial officer such as a lawyer. Primarily in Japan, bachelor stage training is the base of teacher training, which is very different to the two-stage professional

training including bachelor-master stage training (first stage) and *Referendar* (second stage) in Germany. However, in comparison with Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon type countries, in general, in Germany and Japan teachers are stable occupations and there are many candidates who want to be teachers.

In Japan where provincial policy does not hold much authority, one central government (MEXT) makes centrally driven reforms nationwide as part of a quality assurance policy in the pre-service and in-service education. On the contrary, each 16 federal states in Germany have the independence in matters of education. In addition, after compulsory primary education there is a connected structured framework of several secondary school types; therefore, the type of teachers for each form of school is various. Because of such diverse school policies and school systems depend on each state, teacher education schematics become extremely varied.

Nonetheless, TE-standards symbolized by the reforms in recent years have been given a united direction. Concerning the teacher classification, the 2005 KMK resolution (*Quedlinburger Beschluss*) classified education stages and school types into six forms (*Grundschule, Realschule, Hauptschule, Föderschule, Berufsschule, and Gymnasium*). Additionally, in 1999 the Bologna Process was introduced to create the 'European Higher Education Area.' As a result, common framework construction in European level moved ahead.

In consequence, a set of teacher education reform influences including TE-standards, particularly in university as the first stage, became radicalized. Simply, the structure was captured as TE-standards that are typified by federal level reforms which are being sped up with the association of the Bologna Process, which is typified by

European level reforms. Furthermore, the resulting reforms direction can be summed up by (a) *content standardisation* by teacher education standards corresponding to teacher training course orchestration and (b) *framework regularising* including items such as bachelor-master degree system, staged course framework, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System [ECTS], universities' own completion examination, and so on (Tsujino, 2010, 2014). On the other hand, because of the continuity of TE-standards to the second and third stages, the influences at the first stage do not stop there.

In Germany the concepts of teacher education (*Lehrerbildung*) includes pre-service training (*Lehrerausbildung*) and in-service training (*Fort- und Weiterbildung*). In this research the overall influence of reform in teacher education was analysed from the angle of TE-standards. In addition to the two staged professional training schematic, teacher in-service training is regarded as the third stage of teacher education. What kind of influence was brought by TE-standards with the various stated competencies into each stage of Germany's teacher education?

### **TE-Standards and Competencies of Teachers**

TE-standards in Germany were designed to rise over different states, one of the reasons being due to the 'PISA shock of 2001' in which the pupils' lack of academic ability in the international academic aptitude tests generated criticism of schools and teachers in Germany. In this regard, prior to the 1990s before the PISA shock, at German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*), KMK, German Science Council (*Wissenschaftsrat*), and so on, teacher education reform recommendations had already been

mentioned (Yoshioka, 2007). However, PISA shock can be seen as the most decisive element that led to today's quality assurance (*Qualitätssicherung*) policies and implementation of TE-standards.

General standards have a goal while the input and the process are clearly specified as autonomous. In the case of TE-standards, however, the input and the process attributes have been defined with the corresponding module formation coupling with accreditation. TE-standards clearly define the competencies that future teachers and in-service teachers should obtain, these come from the 2004 educational sciences standards (KMK, 2004) and subject teaching standards (KMK, 2008). The four competencies areas for the 2004 educational sciences standards are teaching (*Unterrichten*), education (*Erziehen*), assessment (*Beurteilen*), and innovation (*Innovieren*). These competencies are further concretised into eleven competencies.

The 2008 subject teaching standards clearly specify each subject content and didactics. The framework for subject teaching standards is made up of three parts: (a) mission, (b) teacher's professional competence definition related with the subject, and (c) subject profile. Within the subject profile 19 disciplines (not including vocational education) are described. Subject profile is composed of two training parts: (a) subject specific professional competency profile and (b) learning content. However, most of these subjects also remain enumerated only with the minimum points and the quantity for each subject is A4 text length and simply around 1.5 pages long on the average. As a minimum standard, the attributes are strong and competencies are limited to specific procedure levels. However, it is important that the desired competency for teachers without any distinction of school type is clearly specified and that it lays the foundation of the course accreditation.

These two TE-standards are not necessarily laid down from a political top-down system. They were developed from the collaborative work of teachers' unions and educational scientists. In fact, the four competencies in the area of educational sciences standards were created on the base of mutual understanding with the teachers' unions' representatives and the KMK in October, 2000 (KMK, 2004, p.3). Additionally, TE-standards derive from Terhart (2000, 2002). Furthermore, the German Society for Education Research (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft; DGfE*, 2004) has adhered to the statements from the standards draft report set forth by the KMK. The DGfE welcomed the creation of TE-standards by the KMK. This standard can assure that teachers can develop the desired professionalism through their own actions. Comparing this with Japan, it can be said that *consensus formation* among stakeholders was a big feature of German educational policy.

### TE-Standards' Influence on the First Stage

The KMK's resolution itself is legally non-binding; however, TE-standards are placed within legislation and state regulations among each state. For example, the Berlin teacher education law (*Lehrkräftebildungsgesetz*. The English name and text of the law are translated by the author. All below are the same.) stated

...Standards for teacher education as the resolution of the conference of ministers of education from all states in German Federal Republic (*Kultusminister-konferenz*) are foundation for teacher education. (Clause 1, Article 1)

Also, the ordinance about master completion of teacher training in the state of Niedersachsen (*Verordnung über Masterabschlüsse für Lehrämter in Niedersachsen*) prescribed 'competencies in educational sciences and two teaching

subjects according to appendix one to three are to be acquired in the course.’ In the appendix of the ordinance the state standards of Niedersachsen are specified.

Notably in the first stage (university), the joining together of the Bologna Process with TE-standards influence is becoming radicalized. More specifically, TE-standards are structured on module formation within the teacher training course: students learn pre-determined modules in a given time and each university’s own completion examination has been replaced with the former first national exam. An accreditation to teacher training courses is regularly conducted. Course framework regularising from a European level is moving ahead in many federal states. However in the states of Bayern, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Saarland, even now the first national exam used in the first stage of course completion is recognised. Furthermore, the state of Sachsen once eliminated the first national examination and then brought it back. Depending on the state, differences continue to exist. In spite of this, the influence of TE-standards can be seen in these states.

For example, the Saarland University, the only university that conducts teacher training in the state of Saarland, has neither the course structure under Bologna process nor its own exam implementation. Namely, the first national exam is not abolished. However, ECTS and modules are already implemented. Additionally, teacher training course modules are formed on the basis of state TE-standards. This state’s own standards are made up of four competency areas which have 12 competencies below these and are similar to educational sciences standards. The module count is seven and published in a *Module Handbook (Modulhandbuch des Lehramtsstudienfachs Erziehungswissenschaft/Pädagogische Psychologie)*. Each module has a topic name and all of

these topics correspond to four competency areas of state standards. The development of a module handbook has the universities’ items. Also in this governing book, study and examination provisions, subject specific supplements, and study design formulation are included.

Below is feedback from interviews in the first stage (translated into English by the author). The field research was mainly conducted in the states of Niedersachsen located in prior West Germany and Brandenburg located in prior East Germany as earlier reform models and in the state Saarland and Bayern located in South Germany as a traditional model. In these states, qualitative research is being conducted at universities, teacher education institutions, schools, state ministries of education and so on.

- “Students can learn from regular and clear courses.” (Prof. Dr. Heidemarie Kemnitz, Technical University of Braunschweig, March 6, 2012)
- “The freedom at university is strong therefore the acceptance of standards is slow. Under university professors’ feeling teacher training remains a ‘voluntary service.’” (Prof. Dr. Ewald Terhart, University of Münster, March 8, 2012)
- “Modulation of the courses as a form of learning makes students extremely busy.” (Former Prof. Dr. Hans-Werner Bederfsdorfer, Teacher Education Centre of Saarland University, February 19, 2013)

From the students’ angle, it is difficult to compare the new course with the old one because the new framework is taken as given and fixed. In spite of that, a student who completed the new teacher training course, and rather than become a *Referendar*, choose to go on to a doctoral program expressed as follows:

- “... from having the first national exam as a one shot thing to the current layering where each module

examination becomes part of the university completion examination is good.”

- “In contrast to the new course, the students in old diploma course looked like they had more free time. The students who study the new master’s course are frantically studying for their module examinations at the end of each semester.” (Quotes from a student at Flensburg University, October 25, 2013)

The reactions to the set of reforms were various; however, there were only a few negative opinions regarding the standards themselves.

### TE-Standards’ Influence on the Second Stage

The influences on the second stage (as *Referendar*) will be addressed. In Germany there is a training period from one to two years as a *Referendar* after university completion. A *Referendar* must pass the second National Exam to become a teacher. The training takes place at schools and state *Referendar* training institutions. These institutions are not classified as higher education; therefore, the Bologna Process does not have any impact. However, influence from TE-standards can still be seen. Although KMK resolved the new standard for the process of *Referendar* and the state examination in 2012, the concrete contents still depend on the former two standards (KMK, 2004, 2008, 2014).

In the state of Niedersachsen, for instance, it is stated in ordinance about the training and examination of *Referendar* (*Verordnung über die Ausbildung und Prüfung von Lehrkräften im Vorbereitungsdienst*).

The aim of the preparatory service is that *Referendar* obtain competencies prescribed in appendix on the basis of seminar program and curriculum in a

close connection with school practice’ (Article 2).

In the appendix of this ordinance, standards that come from five competency areas are specified. Below is feedback from interviews at the *Referendar* training institution in the state of Brandenburg.

- “*Referendar* training institution has taken KMK’s subject teaching standards and making up of our own standards...”
- “subject teaching standards have only a generic description of subject content. Therefore more concretization is necessary. However, this would be a huge amount of work to do for all subjects ...”
- “KMK’s TE-standards have made training at *Referendar* training institutions visible ...”
- “the Bologna Process has strengthened universities autonomy and this has made the connection with the first stage difficult, however, there is communication with the universities teacher education center.” (all quotes from Dr. Angelika Horeth, director of the *Referendar* training institution, May 11, 2011)

The teacher education reforms at the second stage do not end by influence from standards. Reforms that are shortening the preparatory service time in each state are progressing from the pressure of the state financial administration who administers salary payments to *Referendar*. Such time shortening reform coupled with the simplification of the second National Exam.

In interviews from the GHR *Referendar* training institution in Braunschweig in the state of Niedersachsen;

- “The competencies of TE-standards become training goals in the institution.”
- “The focal point is intensive training however, the recognition gap between

the mentors at schools that accept *Referendar* and the teacher educator at *Referendar* training institution has become obvious.” (quotes by Heike Coordes, deputy head of the *Referendar* training institution, March 6, 2012).

In the second stage, while framework regularising of course structure such as the first stage cannot be seen, content standardisation by the TE-standards are partially progressing with coming with the shortening of the preparatory service timeframe on the training course.

### **TE-Standards’ Influence on the Third Stage**

In Germany, teacher training is equivalent to that of a judicial officer as a two staged professional training system as mentioned above. It follows the logical structure of being a full profession once they enter the workforce. Therefore the third stage as in-service education is voluntary for each teacher. This is different to the structure in Japan where in-service education is compulsory under central and local government initiative. In Japan, in addition, school based in-service trainings, such as lesson study (*Jugyo-kenkyu*), are also very common. On the contrary, under the German voluntary structure for each teacher, applying the competency mentioned in TE-standards to actual in-service education is difficult. Standards are not always fit for the needs of individual teacher.

In the state of Bayern, as a specific example, the teacher education law (*Bayerisches Lehrerbildungsgesetz*) regarding training obligations states, “Teachers are under obligation to their own further education and attending official in-service education events as a line of duty” (Clause 2, Article 20). By the public announcement ‘Teacher In-service Education in Bayern’ (KMKBek vom 9,

August, 2002) from the state Ministry of Education (*Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Unterricht und Kultus*), compulsory in-service education is for four years and 12 training days (one training day if converted is around five hours) and at least one third is conducted within the school (“II. Training Provision and Training Obligation,” paragraph 2).

In-service education is correlated into four areas: central training, provincial training, area training, and school-on-campus training. ‘In-service education for schools in Bayern’ (*Fortbildung in bayerischen Schulen*, FIBS) is the database (<http://www.fibs.schule.bayern.de/>) including from state enforced/supported program to outside collaborated program in which teachers can participate. It is highly important that teachers have freedom to not only attend established programs but also hold new programs on their own. This has resulted in vast numbers of programs by themselves (Sakakibara & Tsujino, 2014).

From the side of the teacher education department at the State Ministry of Education remarked as follows:

- “There is no standardization of the teacher in-service education within German states and commonwealths. Kind, spectrum and contents of teacher in-service education is heading toward in each state depending on the needs of teachers, school types and latest themes.” (Alfred Glasl, head of the exam office, November 12, 2012 [e-mail interview]).

The then chief of the former state institution for teacher education and school development in the state of Niedersachsen (Niedersächsisches Landesamt für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung; NiLS) stated:

- “... Inside in-service education, two professional actors engage in each other. ...If the needs from university

professors and the needs from school teachers are combined each other, then it works well...This is an important philosophy that in-service education and pre-service education are to be distinguished as completely different things.” (Werner Niermann, chief of the institution, October 5, 2006)

Under such situations, influence from TE-standards and competencies-oriented policy was not under observation.

Conversely, the branch office of Germany’s largest teachers’ union (*Die Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* [GEW]) in the state of Nordrhein-Westfalen criticised the actual situation of the in-service education. The GEW requires quality standards and indicators for in-service education. After actual analysis of teacher in-service education, there were 28 items recommended: clear concept, budget, quality analysis, guarantee, training institutes, supplier roles, and so on (GEW-NRW, 2011). The structure where state governments oppose standardization and teacher unions want this is opposite to the structure in Japan.

From this outlook of Germany’s in-service education, its diverse ways – rooted in individual teacher’s needs – are more important than standardized competencies. To follow recent research tendency in Germany, the author attended DGfE symposiums in 2011 (Berlin, May 12-13) and in 2012 (Dresden University of Technology, September 20-21), and the German Society for Educational Administration (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Bildungsverwaltung; DGBV*) symposium in 2013 (Flensburg, October 25-26). Even here radical criticisms toward TE-standards themselves did not seem to be discussed enough by insiders.

## Conclusion

In this research, the influence of the overall three-staged teacher education in Germany from the angle of TE-standards was examined. In conclusion, it can be pointed out from the outsider’s viewpoint that continuous reform trends are forming some common aspects as Germany: (a) the first stage, the joining together of the Bologna Process with TE-standards influence is getting radicalised; (b) the influence in the second stage is partial but has impacted contents; and (c) the influence in the third stage cannot be seen because it is held depending on the needs of teachers and standards do not harmonize with them.

Germany’s education policy can be formed on the premise of consensus among the stakeholders whereas Japan’s education policy is developed on centralised reform such as a flat regulation to university training, legal in-service education, teacher certification renewal system, and so on. There are few chances to choose in-service programs depending on the needs from teachers. Furthermore, there are few chances for teachers either to hold their own program in Japan. Moreover, situations, such as German teacher unions themselves demanding standards regarding in-service education, are not heard of in Japan. However, the influence of German TE-standards at the first stage is surpassing the situation in Japan. For, not only content standardisation at a federal level by TE-standards but also framework regularising at a European level by the Bologna Process are progressing. These, according to each state, have become reform pressures from “above.” On the contrary, in Japan, there are neither national TE-standards nor reform pressures above the national level. That is to say MEXT as the central ministry of education has strong authority. However, it makes more and more difficult in Japan, which has around 1.5 times bigger

population compared to Germany, to function blanket reforms for the whole country. The actual influence of Japan's reforms has been diversely seen in each area and at each university, too.

The original envisioning of TE-standards was that they were not only teacher competencies but standards for regulating system (Terhart, 2002). In short, it was assumed that quality assurance of the state ministry of education and municipal and local school administrations by drawing a line from the influence of individual teachers' competencies. However, TE-standards are missing these perspectives and as a result, the limited teacher competencies are focused on. Teachers' union criticised as follows:

- "The competencies of teachers and quality of pre-service and in-service education should be understood as the matter which is related with central challenge to be overlooked too little resources." (GEW, 2013, p. 7.)

In TE-standards, educational sociology, educational psychology, and didactics are made important. However, teachers in Germany have to play important roles

within a huge public education system; they are required to keep a balanced relationship among the state supervision of school, school autonomy, educational participation by teachers, parents, and students, and pedagogical freedom of teachers as legal concepts. Therefore, teacher education exactly for these purposes is not enough with only competencies at practical level. If the teacher education reforms are maintained with committing to limited specific fields, the diverseness of teaching profession in the long term will come close to a crisis.

Finally, in an era where there is a desire for school education to be internationalised, it has become necessity to internationalise teacher education. The PISA regime has opened up competition between nations as a quality assurance policy and has caused reforms. This direction leads to holding issues of education within the nation and makes it harder to internationalise. However, with direction with short-term achievement orientated subjects under the name of quality assurance policy, the situation will be a problem that both Japan and Germany have.

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**Appendix A**

Figure 1. Germany's Teacher Education System

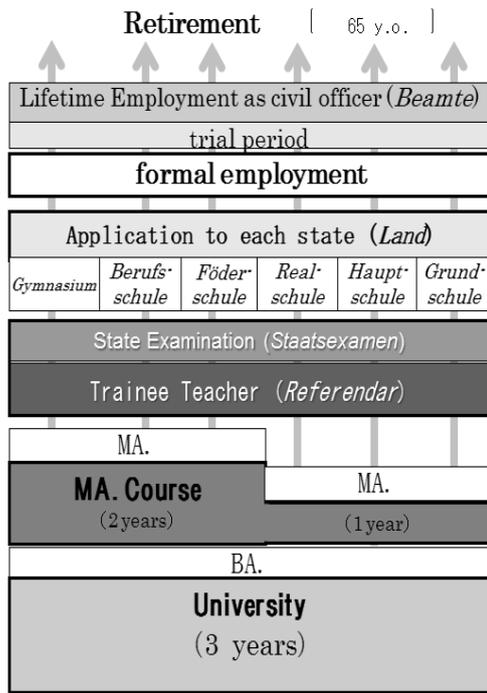
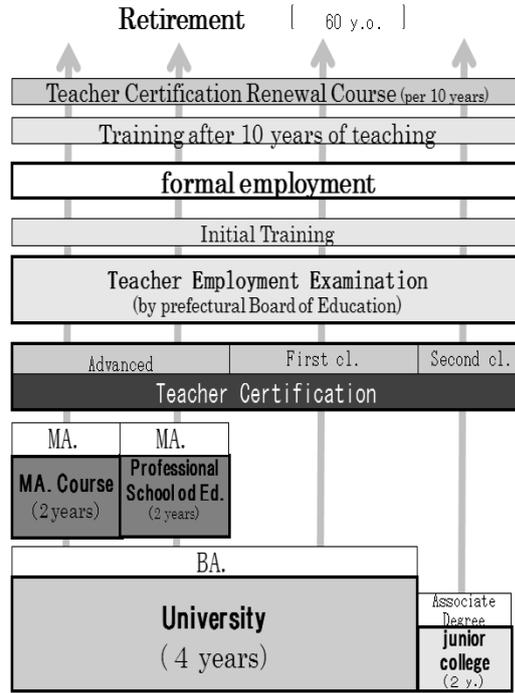


Figure 2. Japan's Teacher Education System



(Resource: drawn by Tsujino making reference to Yoshioka, 2007, pp. 312 & 328.)