

Address
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Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs
in the Federal Republic of Germany

Minister for School and Further Education
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Germany

*„Education and Training for European Teachers:
Competence Models, Curricular Objectives and
Harmonising Theory and Practice“*

**German Rectors' Conference
"Project Nexus"**

20 January 2014

Dear Ministerialdirigent Mr. Greisler,
dear Professor Burckhart,
dear Dr. Kathöfer,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today in Essen, in a very special place. A place which, like almost no other, stands for the structural change of the Ruhr: the "Zeche Zollverein", a Coal Mine Industrial Complex.

Up until 1986 coal was still being extracted here; today it is an industrial monument and centre of creative business. In 2001 the "Zeche Zollverein" was included on UNESCO's World Heritage list, and it received Europe-wide – if not worldwide – renown four years ago as the heart of the European Cultural Capital 2010.

In short: the "Zeche Zollverein" is one of the major symbols of the change from the industrial society to the information society, and I am very pleased that you have chosen this location for your major international conference!

A fundamental and deep-reaching change is currently also taking place in our education policy:

A move away from the focus on deficits and towards an orientation to individual abilities, talents and potentials.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Everyone responsible for schools and education has recognised that, to ensure the future viability of our democratic societies and our peaceful coexistence in respect and dignity in our One World, we have to focus on those who are the future of our society – and these are our children and young people.

Today's children will shape tomorrow's world. The attitude and interaction, the respect, appreciation and esteem – of ourselves and of others – which our children experience today will continue to shape their behaviour in the future.

The key challenge for modern education systems over the next few decades will, therefore, be the successful educational interaction with all learners, i.e. with the diversity and difference of our pupils, both in the

interest of the individual learner and for educational justice as a whole.

A decisive key to appropriate teaching and school development is the qualification of teachers, and I very much welcome the fact that today's conference will also be providing a variety of suggestions here.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

"[The] education system is more capable of learning than we academics first thought and than many in the practice believed. [...] Another benefit of the PISA Study is [...], that the importance of school education has grown. This has also increased the motivation to invest in this sector, to take schools seriously. [...] We should become even better in initial and in-service teacher training. The standing of teachers must be improved, and the role of teachers strengthened."

Thus spoke Klaus Hurrelmann, Professor of Public Health and Education at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, in an interview on the latest PISA Study in December last year. And his words are very true:

For the first time, pupils in Germany have performed significantly above the OECD average and Germany is among the – few – countries which have consistently improved. This success is closely linked with qualification development in the teaching profession.

PISA 2012 shows just how important quality development in teacher education is, and it is essential that we ensure the process of quality development in schools significantly through good initial and in-service training of teachers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The initial and in-service training of teachers is crucial to the success of all other reforms in education.

In Germany, the decisive impetus for this finding came from the educational scientist Professor Ewald Terhart and the State Secretary of Hamburg, Hermann Lange, when, on behalf of the Standing Conference, in the year 2000 they presented the Report *Perspektiven der Lehrerbildung in Deutschland* on the prospects for teacher education in Germany.

This Report has shaped the changes in Germany over the last ten years, and I would like at this point to touch on the key points called for in the Report:

1. Teacher education is to be regarded as a process which accompanies the entire professional biography.
2. Teacher education has to be based on a modern guiding principle for a profession which, in the past ten years, has changed considerably. This requirement has currently regained particular significance and is also a great personal concern of mine.
3. Apart from subject-related studies and educational science at a high level, in Germany it is all about strengthening subject-related didactics.
4. We need improved coordination between university training and the preparatory service.

The Report still defines educational debate today. At the same time teacher education has changed decisively, including structurally, through the Bologna Process.

In recent years, the Standing Conference has launched numerous teacher education initiatives. Teacher

education now has a key position in the Standing Conference's seven areas of action and a great deal has changed for the better. But we should not, and will not, relax. The advances made as a result of PISA did not simply fall into our laps. We now have to consistently continue and expand them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Much might be done – did we stand fast together"

Friedrich Schiller wrote in Wilhelm Tell. Schiller is right. We can do a great deal, if we stand together. Quality assurance needs common and long-term strategies and endurance.

Only in this way we can, and we will, succeed in doing justice to the diversity and difference of our children, young people and young adults, and in helping them to achieve suitable and successful educational biographies.

A key point is for me, therefore, that we further develop the comprehensive strategy of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs for educational monitoring with regard to specific solutions and give the Bundesländern more

specific indications on how to effect implementation strategies.

It is also important to me that we identify the dialogue between education research and education policy while maintaining the roles of more intensive and specific questions for more extensive research.

Our constructive meeting in which the Presidents of both the Standing Conference and the German Rectors' Conference met in December in Berlin was, in my opinion, very promising – particularly for a continuing constructive and sustainable collaboration between the Standing Conference and the German Rector's Conference in the field of teacher education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Particularly with its 2004 "Standards for Teacher Education in the Educational Sciences" [*Standards für die Lehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften*] and the 2008 common content requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics in teacher education which apply to all German Regions [*Ländergemeinsame inhaltliche Anforderungen für die Fachwissenschaften und Fachdidaktiken in der*

Lehrerbildung], the Standing Conference provided clear evidence of how teacher education has improved. The Standards and the common subject requirements were drafted in a broad process of coordination with higher education representatives. They are essential to the accreditation of consecutive courses of study relating to teaching posts or teacher training courses, which lead to a State examination.

The Standing Conference is currently working to update these standards, above all from the perspective of diversity and inclusion.

The decisive factor for successful teacher education is, however, the commitment of the institutions of higher education. They need to regard teacher education as one of their core tasks! The importance of teacher education, especially for higher education institutions, has been summed up very concisely by Professor Prenzel at the event founding the School of Education at the Technical University of Munich. I quote:

“Study qualifications – i.e. the input from the university’s point of view – greatly depend on the quality of the schools. The quality of the schools in turn is shaped by the educational work of the teachers. [...]

A university which is concerned about quality must strive for excellent teacher education. It guarantees the university's next generation of students."

The shaping of the first phase of teacher education is therefore primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions. Hence it is extremely important that the higher education institutions, as in the training of doctors, lawyers and engineers, attach a high priority to the education of teachers. Unfortunately, however, this has not always been the case so far.

Sometimes I also have the impression that the abolition of the State examination and the introduction of consecutive degree courses in teacher education entail the risk of a decline in the importance of teacher education.

To avoid this risk, we need good examples to the contrary. And these exist:

The School of Education at the Technical University of Munich under the leadership of Professor Prenzel is, to my knowledge, the first teacher education centre with faculty status in Germany.

The Institute for Science and Mathematics Education [*Institut für die Pädagogik der Naturwissenschaften – IPN*] in Kiel is dealing with current education issues and projects in mixed teams of mathematicians, scientists, specialist subject teachers, educators and psychologists.

I am also happy, of course, to mention the new teacher education centres here in North-Rhine-Westfalia. These university teacher education centres at our twelve teacher education universities are responsible not only for coordination of the practical stages, but increasingly have their own resources and decision-making powers. This includes in particular promoting up-and-coming academics in subject-related teaching methods and educational sciences.

With regard to cooperation during the different stages of teacher education and improved dovetailing of theory and practice, Nordrhein-Westfalen is also forging new paths with the introduction of a practice semester in the Master of Education. For five months the school is the main place of learning for the students. There they experience, in a long-term placement, the specific requirements of school teaching practice today. They

are accompanied by the school's student teacher trainers, by trainers from the teacher training centres and by lecturers from the university.

Thus networks are developing on a statutory basis, which, with their respective competence profiles, are working together in a coordinated manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Teacher training and education is not just important – teacher training and education is the basis of successful teaching and learning in and with a heterogeneous body of pupils.

Still, far too often this is not recognised. Far too often teacher education remains in the shadows of the more prestigious specialist disciplines. It is postulated that, in the competitive field of higher education, namely research, teacher education purportedly does not bring any improvement in reputation.

We need to start thinking differently here – this needs to change.

To this end, in spring 2013 the Standing Conference, together with the Federal Ministry of Education and

Research, adopted the quality offensive for teacher education [*Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung*].

In choosing the higher education institutions which are to be supported, the focus is above all on the following aspects:

1. profiling and optimisation of teacher education structures,
2. improving the quality of practical relevance in teacher training,
3. improving profession-related advice and support of students in teacher training,
4. further development of teacher education in relation to the requirements imposed by heterogeneity and inclusion, and
5. further development of specialisation, didactics and educational sciences.

Some of these aspects are also found in the May 2013 Recommendations of the German Rectors' Conference on Teacher Education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world heritage site “Zeche Zollverein” is a living example that change can succeed, and how it can do so. My wish is that you let have this place a symbolic effect on your conference.

In view of its responsibility for the up-and-coming generations and in the European context, Germany is open to good impetuses and incentives. This applies specifically and in particular also to teacher education.

On that note, let me wish all of us here an inspiring and productive conference.

Thanks for your attention!