

A look at the German *Vorbereitungsdienst* program may be instructive for American internship plans for new teachers.

American Teaching Internships and the German *Vorbereitungsdienst*

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Following their completion of a teacher education program and the awarding of a provisional certificate, new teachers should complete an induction period or internship of at least a year's duration for which compensation is provided. **A Call for Change in Teacher Education** (1985)

The second year of the program would consist of residency in a school, with the candidate assuming substantial teaching responsibilities under the supervision of Lead Teachers. **A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century** (1986)

In response to a national call for improving teacher education, many universities will soon implement one-year teaching internships. A teaching internship may be the most significant reform in improving teacher education. However, only a few universities have experience with year-long teaching internships. Even though numerous educational publications recommend a year-long teaching internship,¹ none of these deal with the practical problems of implementing one. Consequently, American universities implementing a teaching internship might profit from an even broader perspective of experience than just American programs.

The Germans have had a teaching internship program, called a *Vorbereitungsdienst*, since at least 1918.² Because of a travel grant from Northeast Missouri State University for summer 1987, I was able to consult with representatives in six German states from every aspect of the German *Vorbereitungsdienst*: teaching interns, university education professors, general internship directors, content area internship directors, a cooperating teacher, school super-

intendents, a principal, an education union official, and government officials. This report examines the operation and philosophy of the German *Vorbereitungsdienst* as it might benefit American teaching internships.

How Does the German *Vorbereitungsdienst* Operate?³

German teacher candidates complete university course work in two teaching subjects and in education equivalent in time and content to at least a Master of Arts degree in America. In a few German states, teacher candidates serve two four-week practicums as part of the university program in public schools, where they observe and possibly teach.

After German teacher candidates have completed their university requirements, they take a comprehensive test called the *Erste Staatsprüfung* (First State Exam), officially administered by their resident state, not the university. The test includes a thesis, written examinations in each subject area, and oral examinations in each subject area and in education. The test is evaluated by a panel consisting of a university professor and two representatives from the public school system.

The *Erste Staatsprüfung* qualifies German teacher candidates to enter the teaching profession as *Referendars* (teaching interns) for one and a half to two years of practical teacher training, depending on the state. Unlike American teaching internship programs, German universities do not participate in the *Vorbereitungsdienst*. Instead, the *Schulverwaltung* (state public school administration) is entirely responsible for the internship experience. The *Schulverwaltung* conducts its teacher training program within *Studienseminars* (teaching internship learning communities), frequently housed in a functioning school. *Studienseminars* place and supervise *Referendars* in the public schools and provide concurrent in-service seminars.

Studienseminars are managed by *Seminarleiters* (learning community directors), who are generally former principals or experienced content-area specialists. The *Seminarleiters* supervise about 50 *Referendars* and 10 content-area directors from about 10 schools. Their duties include consulting with the mentor teachers and content-area directors and observing and evaluating their *Referendars'* teaching. Some *Seminarleiters* also teach a course in didactics at the university. *Seminarleiters* are supposed to provide a global perspective and balance theory and practice for the teaching internship experience.

The other supervisors in the *Studienseminar* are *Fachleiters*, content area specialists, who provide the *Referendars* with training and supervision in their two content areas. *Fachleiters* are practicing teachers with a reduction in their teaching load so that they have time to instruct and guide *Referendars* and keep academically and pedagogically current in their fields. *Fachleiters* are selected by the school districts for their experience and expertise in their academic discipline. *Fachleiters* supervise about 15 *Referendars*. Each *Referendar* has two *Fachleiters*, one for each teaching subject.

Referendars spend about half of their time teaching and the other half, studying. Within at least two public schools during the *Vorbereitungsdienst*, *Referendars* teach classes in both their teaching areas, about a half-load or 12 class hours each week. Most of these hours are under the supervision of *Mentors* (cooperating teachers). However, after the first semester, *Referendars* in most states also have one class of their own in which they can experiment and develop their own teaching style. *Referendars* are paid for their teaching services by the schools as half-time teachers. To augment and direct the *Referendars'* practical teaching experience, *Studienseminars* provide concurrent in-

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service seminars. *Seminarleiter*s conduct the *Allgemeines Seminar* (general seminar) dealing with general pedagogical issues. The *Fachleiter*s teach the *Fachseminars* (subject seminars) focusing on teaching methods and practical problems in the *Referendars*' two content areas.

During the last months of the *Vorbereitungsdienst*, *Referendars* take another teacher-qualifying test, the *Zweite Staatsprüfung* (Second State Exam). *Referendars* write a thesis analyzing some aspect of their teaching experience, demonstrate two lessons, one in each subject, one lower and one upper level, and take an oral exam in their two subject areas and in education. The *Referendars*' overall teaching evaluation is determined by a panel consisting of two *Fachleiter*s, the *Seminarleiter*, a representative from the *Schulverwaltung*, and in some states, the principal of the host school and the mentor teacher.

Comparative Teacher Education Flow Charts:

Germany	USA and Germany	USA
	Responsibilities	
	academic subject training	
	pedagogical theory	
	practical teacher training	
	continuing teacher education	

Key:
University
Public School

What Aspects of the German Vorbereitungsdienst Might Be Useful for American Teaching Internships?

American teaching internships might profit from modeling the virtues of the German *Vorbereitungsdienst*. To ensure that teaching internship candidates have mastered their teaching areas and basic pedagogical principles, American universities might require that they pass a version of the German *Erste Staatsprüfung* before admitting them into the teaching internship. Besides departments of education, other divisions or departments might establish their own standards for admission to the teaching internship.

Whereas the *Erste Staatsprüfung* is an entrance examination into the *Vorbereitungsdienst*, the *Zweite Staatsprüfung* determines whether *Referendars* have met the requirements of the *Vorbereitungsdienst* so that they can be entrusted with a regular teaching assignment without supervision. German educators maintain that the *Zweite Staatsprüfung* sets high standards for all *Referendars* and guarantees a broad, objective, and fair evaluation. American universities might consider formalizing their teaching internship evaluation procedures in a similar fashion. A panel consisting of the university supervisor, mentor teacher, principal, and possibly someone at the district level would observe an early lesson, a mid lesson, and a late lesson. From the early lesson, the panel would provide the teaching intern with specific instructions for reinforcing strengths and remedying deficiencies. From the mid lesson, the panel would evaluate the teaching intern's progress and perhaps make further recommendations. The late lesson would constitute part of a final examination. A teaching intern would present a model lesson in two different types of classes to demonstrate pedagogical and subject matter proficiency. After these model lessons, a teaching intern would be examined by the panel on all aspects of teaching including subject matter, teaching methods, and teaching philosophy. Finally, the panel would jointly decide upon the grade and the written evaluation for the teaching intern based on the total teacher experience, a portfolio of lesson plans, and the final examination.

The German public school system takes complete charge of practical teacher education with no university participation. This model is perhaps impractical and undesirable for most American universities. However, the public schools that employ teaching interns must take more responsibility for training and evaluating teaching interns.

... the key to success lies in creating a profession equal to the task—a profession of well-educated teachers prepared to assume new powers and responsibilities to redesign schools for the future. **A Nation Prepared**

In order to encourage and assist the public schools in assuming more responsibility in teaching training, American universities might consider a mentor teacher development program. For example, in some German states, some of the university education courses are taught by either *Seminarleiter*s or *Fachleiter*s, insuring that education students get a practical view of teaching. Likewise, American universities could appoint public school teachers as adjunct professors so that they could teach some of their education courses, perhaps initially as team teachers with its regular university staff. American universities could also involve mentor teachers in educational research projects to explore theoretical issues and solve practical school problems. Such cooperative research could promote better communication between the universities and the public schools. Finally, mentor teachers appointed as adjunct professors should ultimately replace university supervisors. Instead of expensive, external, and sporadic supervision, universities would gain economical, constant, on-site supervision.

We also believe that the connections between colleges and schools should be significantly improved, because it is in the schools where practicing teachers serve the primary instructing, modeling, planning, and monitoring roles in teacher education. **A Call for Change in Teacher Education** (1985)

Most importantly, American universities could easily and dramatically improve teacher education by establishing regular in-service, on-site training programs for teaching interns modelled after the German *Studienseminar*, called teaching internship learning communities. Master teachers, district representatives, university professors, and others would provide instruction in the content areas, didactics, and community relations in a cooperative effort to better prepare future teachers. Instead of teaching six classes, teaching interns would teach only three so that they would have time to attend the teaching internship learning community and implement what they learn there into their actual lessons. In other words, teaching interns should have both the time and opportunity to integrate pedagogical theory into their teaching practice.

In addition to the advantages of on-site, in-service teacher training, the teaching internship learning community could provide teaching interns with the broadest possible educational perspective by using master teachers, school administrators, educational consultants, university professors, community leaders, and parent representatives as instructional staff. Currently, most practical teacher education programs in the United States involve only a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor.

Indeed, we suggest assigning prospective teachers to a "teacher team," even as a prospective doctor, during residency, is assigned to a medical team. In this

way the student would have occasion to work closely with more experienced teachers skilled in different methods of instruction.

An additional activity for the fifth year of teacher education would be a series of one-day Common Learning Seminars in which students would meet outstanding arts and science scholar-teachers who would relate the knowledge of their fields to a contemporary political or social theme. The goal would be to help prospective teachers move across the disciplines, and better prepare themselves to teach the core of common learning to students in the schools. Ernest L. Boyer, *High School*, (1983)

The feasibility and desirability of teaching internship learning communities in America have already been established by the university supervisors in the Language and Literature Division at Northeast Missouri State University. With a grant from Union Electric, teaching internship learning communities have been organized in Hannibal, Unionville, Macon, Chillicothe, and Kirksville, Missouri. The results are impressive. Together with the university supervisors, the public schools in these cities have organized in-service seminars providing practical solutions to teaching problems. The students, cooperating teachers, and school administrators have valued these in-service seminars much more than the traditional sporadic classroom observations from university supervisors.

Besides serving teaching interns, schools and school districts might discover that a teaching internship learning community could also serve regular teachers. Some states presently require in-service training for beginning teachers. Ultimately, a teaching internship learning community should evolve into a teaching seminar for all teachers. Teacher training should be on-going and continuous. A teaching internship learning community would serve this end and thereby dramatically improve teacher education in America.

Teaching Internship Learning Community: Comparative Operational Structure

Conventional Student- Teaching Program

one cooperating
teacher

student
teacher

one
university
supervisor

*A student teacher receives input from only a cooperating teacher and an university supervisor.

Proposed Teaching Internship Learning Community

school district
administrators

parent
representatives

professional
educational consultants

10-15 student

teachers in an
in-service, on-
site seminar

state
educational
officials

university
consultants

master
teachers from
school & district

*Teaching interns receive formal guidance and instruction from representatives and experts in every area of public education on a weekly basis.

Notes

1. Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, **A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century** (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1986), 69-78.

National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, **A Call for Change in Teacher Education**. (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1985), 16.

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2. For a history of the German teaching internship, see Hartmut W. Frech, **Studien und Berichte: Empirische Untersuchungen zur Ausbildung von Studienreferendaren**, vol. 34a (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1976), 26-33.

3. This is a general summary of the German teacher education system, especially indicative of the **Gymnasium**. It does not reflect the variations from state to state nor among the different school systems.

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