

Teacher training and teaching jobs in the U.S.A.

In this short seminar I would like to talk very briefly about the teacher training and teaching jobs in the USA.

1. HOW DOES THE „ART“ OF TEACHING WORK IN THE U.S.A.

First of all I would like to present in general terms how does teaching work within U.S. territory and to begin with we need to see the proces of teaching in a broader sense that is Teacher education.

The term Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in schools and classrooms¹.

Teacher education is often divided into three main periods:

The first period or initial teacher training / education (a pre-service course before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher)

Induction period (the process of providing training and support during the first few years or of the first year of teaching in a particular school)

Teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD) period (an in-service process for practicing teachers).

Mentoring, supporting and encouraging teachers to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, is also relevant.

There is a long and ongoing debate about the most appropriate term to describe these activities. The term “teacher training” (which may give the impression that the activity involves training staff to undertake relatively routine tasks) seems to be losing ground to “teacher education” (with its connotation of preparing staff for a professional role as a reflective practitioner)

2. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO BECOME A TEACHER

Initial Teacher Education or what do you have to do to become a teacher.

Initial teacher education may be organized according to two basic models.

In the 'consecutive' model, a teacher first obtains a qualification (often a first university degree), and then studies for a further period to gain an additional qualification in teaching; (in some systems this takes the form of a post-graduate degree, possibly even a Masters).

The alternative is where a student simultaneously studies both an academic subject and the ways of teaching that subject, leading to a qualification as a teacher of that subject.

Other pathways are also available. In some cases it is possible for a person to receive training as a teacher under the responsibility of an accredited experienced practitioner in a school.

Teacher Education in many countries takes place in institutions of Higher Education. An example of a traditional, comprehensive teacher education unit in the United States would be the Bradley University Department of Teacher Education located in Peoria, Illinois.

3. CURRICULA (THE WHAT TO TEACH AND HOW TO TEACH ISSUE)

The question of what knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills teachers should possess is the subject of much debate not only in the U.S., but in many other cultures. This is

understandable, as teachers are entrusted with the transmission to children of society's beliefs, attitudes, understanding the correct moral duties, as well as of information, advice and wisdom.

Generally, Teacher Education curricula can be broken down into these blocks:

a) Foundational knowledge and skills--usually this area is about education-related aspects of philosophy of education, history of education, educational psychology, and sociology of education.

b) Content-area and methods knowledge--often also including ways of teaching and assessing a specific subject, in which case this area may overlap with the first ("foundational") area.

There is increasing debate about this aspect; because it is no longer possible to know in advance what kinds of knowledge and skill pupils will need when they enter adult life, it becomes harder to know what kinds of knowledge and skill teachers should have. Increased emphasis is placed upon 'transversal' or 'horizontal' skills (such as 'learning to learn' or 'social competences', which cut across traditional subject boundaries, and therefore call into question traditional ways of designing the Teacher Education curriculum (and traditional ways of working in the classroom).

Practice at classroom teaching or at some other form of educational practice--usually supervised and supported in some way, though not always.

4. TEACHER PRACTICE AND TRAINING

Practice can take the form of field observations, student teaching, or internship which is variant of supervised field experience.

a) field observations--include observation and limited participation within a classroom under the supervision of the classroom teacher .

b) student teaching--includes a number of weeks teaching in an assigned classroom under the supervision of the classroom teacher and a supervisor (e.g. from the university)

c) internship--teaching candidate is supervised within his or her own classroom for a period of time.

Most teacher education programs in North America (though not necessarily elsewhere in the world)--courses, modules, and other activities are often organized in a way that fits the above mentioned. The organization makes the programs more rational or logical in structure. The conventional organization has sometimes also been criticized, however, as artificial and unrepresentative of how teachers actually experience their work. Problems of practice frequently concern foundational issues, curriculum, and practical knowledge simultaneously, and separating them during teacher education may therefore not be helpful. Feedback on the performance of teachers is integral to many state and private education procedures, but takes many different forms.

3. 'NO FAULT' APPROACH

The 'no fault' approach is believed by some to be satisfactory, as weaknesses are carefully identified, assessed and then addressed through the provision of in service training.

It is important to say that the 'no fault' approach needs to be encouraged and should be valid for all involved teachers equally (Maxwell 91).

The 'no fault' approach consist in the following: teachers who have made a mistake or think they have made a mistake while teaching, can approach a designated person (or staff) and tell them about the mistake, the mistake is analysed and an eventual solution is given. This system requires both sided confidence and trust, for many teachers would feel embarrassed or may fear punishment for the mistakes. This systems tries in the long run to troubleshoot all problems that may arise throughout teaching and make teachers confident professionals.

¹Maxwell, Franklin. Teachers and Learners . 2. Duluth: Muff & son, 2005, 68