

Academic elementary school teacher training at the Pedagogical Institute Dresden

Under the politically favorable conditions of the Weimar Republic and thanks to the open-mindedness of Technical University of Dresden, new regulations for elementary school teacher training, legitimized by law in 1923, became a reality in Saxony.

On May 2, 1923, the Dresden Pedagogical Institute with an institute school and a boarding school was opened in the building of the Friedrich August Seminar on Teplitzer Strasse, which had been built in 1910. In 1924, the Pedagogical Institute was officially affiliated with the General Science Department of the technical university. Under the directorship of Richard Seyfert, the PI carried out training that was closely intertwined with the reality of schooling, with teacher trainers who were predominantly oriented toward reforming education. In addition to practical pedagogy (school pedagogy, subject methodology, school practice), the subjects of Music, Drawing, Handicrafts, and Physical Education were compulsory for all prospective elementary school teachers.

From the beginning, the newly established program was able to utilize the scientific potential of the technical university for studies in Theoretical Pedagogy, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, as well as German and a scientific elective.

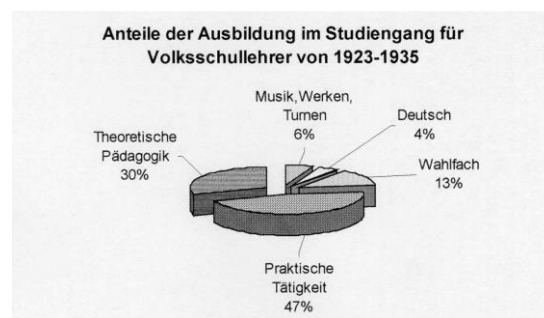
The teacher trainers working at the PI were also elementary school teachers at the institute school. Thus, they practiced a remarkable congruence of teaching content and schooling reality.

There were also internships lasting several weeks at city and country schools. Hundreds of elementary school teachers across Saxony volunteered for unpaid mentoring.

In addition, German teacher training at the PI included innovative types of courses such as: 'Experimental Didactic Exercises' and 'Material Preparation Exercises.'



Teplitzer Strasse main entrance



Ceremonial hall in the building on Weber Square

Both types of training promoted methodological awareness among students by simulating teaching activities and providing in-depth reflection on age-appropriate and subject-specific learning processes. Starting in 1928, PI graduates had the opportunity to earn a doctorate at the technical university's Department of Cultural Studies. The Teachers Association of Saxony and the city of Dresden both supported the new degree program through scholarships, loans, and leaves of absence. Both the Pedagogical Institute and the Institute School enjoyed such great popularity that a capacity of 633 students (grades 1–8), 996 elementary school teacher students, and 60 teachers was reached in 1931, making the structural extensions started at Weber Square in 1930 a matter of urgency.

Reduction of academic elementary school teacher training

Immediately after the National Socialists seized power, 'staff cleansing' began at the Pedagogical Institute, as it did throughout Germany's system of higher education, with restrictions on admissions and a ban on teaching for 16 of the Institute's teachers. In addition to this reduction in capacity, the partial use of teaching for compulsory courses with a National Socialist and racist orientation, as well as the separation of the Pedagogical Institute from the Technical University of Dresden ordered on November 1, 1935, led to an abandonment of the academic level of elementary school teacher training achieved during the Weimar period. Starting on August 5, 1936, the Pedagogical Institute continued its work as a 'College for Teacher Education' with only four semesters of training and no studies at the technical university.

The rapid decline of elementary school teacher training far below the level of Saxon teacher training colleges continued in 1940 with the introduction of advanced courses for graduates of eighth grade to prepare them for teacher training of only three semesters. In 1943, the 'College for Teacher Education' was transformed into a 'Teacher Training College.' By March 1945, around 1,000 schoolgirls wearing compulsory uniforms all day underwent a three-month introductory course in 'units' of 35 participants, followed by a maximum of two years as school assistants, and a nine-month course to 'enhance professional skills.' The, in the history of teacher training in Saxony, unprecedentedly short, totalitarian and professionally as well as ideologically undemanding training was maintained in the last days of the war in a Dresden school building on Friebeistrasse as a 'training course vital to the war effort.'