

The beginnings of state elementary school teacher training in Dresden

With the Reformation, which began in 1539, Dresden's school system experienced a qualitative and quantitative upswing. However, at the municipal elementary schools, which were run as German schools, as well as at the small private schools, any person who knew how to write and was familiar with the catechism was allowed to 'keep school.'



A seminary for preachers, created in 1718 at the proposal of the superintendent, Bernhard Ernst Löscher, is considered the first special institution for the preparation of candidates for 'church and school service' in Saxony. However, due to a lack of financial support and applicants, this attempt soon failed.

Electoral approval of the first state teacher training college in Saxony on November 11, 1785, was the result of an initiative by Peter Friedrich von Hohenthal, vice-president of the senior consistory. In the building of Realschule Dresden-Friedrichstadt (now the 48th elementary school), teacher training began on Easter 1787 with eight teacher training students.

Here, in a very practice-oriented manner 'subjects capable of becoming school teachers' learned the basics of the teaching profession in a single-class system over a period of approx. three years. Training, which was closely linked to the reality experienced in schools, bore highly pragmatic features. Among other things, the teachers in training were also prepared for the part-time work that was still necessary for the financial survival of a teacher's family at that time. Pedagogy and Methodology were established as independent subjects starting in 1791. By the beginning of the 20th century, 23 teacher training colleges had been established in Saxony. They were scattered across the region and far from university campuses, offering training that was segregated by gender and denomination and lasting up to seven years.

Lesson plans of the Dresden-Friedrichstadt teacher training college

Training subject	1787	1791
Religion	6	5
German Language	6	2/4
Reading	2	1.5
Penmanship	4	3
Freehand Drawing	1	1
Secondary Knowledge for the Public Good	3	5
Music	8	8
French	-	1
Latin	4	4
Instruction and Practice in the Catechism	2	5
Practical Exercises in School Classes	10	30
Pedagogy/Methodology	-	2



The Friedrichstadt teacher training college, particularly under the directorship of Gustav Friedrich Dinter (1797–1807), set standards for German teacher training by providing an education that was oriented toward the contemporary professional profile of the teacher and the current state of science. Prospective teachers received systematic instruction following the Socratic teaching method. They held practice teaching sessions at a training school and were able to take a final exam for the first time.

Soon after Dinter's tenure, however, the level of training dropped to the level of a practical school master craftsman's apprenticeship with a simplification of the teaching content. Nevertheless, from 1840 onwards Saxony offered the longest and broadest teacher training in Germany, with four years of education and an elective examination after two years of school service.

However, because of its theoretically unambitious teaching and the fact that it did not entitle students to any further education, the teacher training college was repeatedly criticized. Discussions about reforming elementary school teacher training, which lasted for approx. 80 years, began in the 1840s. Among other things, there were proposals to open universities to teacher training college graduates. In 1848, Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Wander called for university-only education for all teachers in the 'Pädagogischer Verein zu Dresden' (Teachers Association of Dresden).