Ideas and Implementation of an Internet-Based System of Qualification for Teachers in a Federally Structured Education System: Using the Example of Economic Education Online (Germany)

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ABSTRACT

Making an internet-based system of qualification available for teachers at general education schools within a federally organised education system poses a variety of challenges. Based on findings of pedagogical professional research, further and advanced teacher training needs to impart specialist scientific competencies and (simultaneously connected with these competencies) subject-didactic ones as well as providing support for curricular implementation on the one hand. On the other hand, there needs to be a broad portfolio of modules leading to specialist and didactic qualifications which can take heterogeneous curricular requirements into account. On the basis of pedagogical as well as systematic requirements, the article formulates the essential cornerstones of such a qualification-based online training system, using the example of the Economic (General) Education. Subsequent attention turns to a specific project with whose help more than 2500 teachers in eleven German federal states have gained qualifications since 2002. The focus is centred, in this regard, on the question of how the aforementioned objectives were pursued, aided by determining and developing numerous variant and invariant learning objects as well as linking them via a specific metadata system. This is followed by the presentation of further existing needs in research and development.

KEYWORDS

Economic Education, Federally Organised Education System, Metadata, Modularisation, Qualification for Teachers at General Education Schools

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INTRODUCTION

Alongside university education and preparatory service in Germany, on-the-job further and advanced training forms the third pillar in staff qualification in the general German school system. Courses addressing new content to be integrated into school curricula are particularly significant. At the time when a subject is launched on the curriculum, there are usually no trained members of staff, meaning that non-specialist staff must be given the necessary skills and competencies to structure an appropriate lesson. These skills and competencies do not just apply to the subject-specialist knowledge, but also to the didactic implementation and course design in particular. In view of the provisions of corresponding systems, the absence of a uniform standard of staff in federal education systems presents a particular difficulty. Occurring in sixteen German federal states in varying intensities and forms, the implementation of Economic Education in Germany affords an example of the general requirements for design of vital internet-supported systems of qualification.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Developing a system of qualification for staff in Economic Education within the general education system of a federally organised education system, like that of the Federal Republic of Germany, brings with it special challenges that can only be met with the help of specific strategies.

Education Policy Framework

There is far-reaching curricular heterogeneity in the German system. The relevant curricula in the school context and framework requirements in the area of Economic Education, but also in other areas, differ (at times strikingly) between the German federal states. This applies to both the hours allocated to the subject and also the content characteristics and priorities. This means that a centrally required system of qualification needs a high degree of modularisation to be able to meet the different demands of the teaching staff.

At the same time, the establishment of appropriate systems of further education and training in the framework of implementing new content in schools are very important. Graduates of programmes of study that are set up parallel to curriculum incorporation are usually available after about 6 to 8 years. Therefore, ideas need to be implemented which enable existing teaching staff to gain subject and didactic qualifications in an appropriate manner alongside their everyday teaching job, ideas which can simultaneously be used to design programmes of study (Kaminski, 2014).

The teaching staff, in turn, do not only gain qualifications. In the view of lesson design, teaching staff should also be equipped with ideas, didactical materials (e.g. lesson steps, worksheets, podcasts), support structures and exchange possibilities to guarantee the actual goal of ensuring good quality lessons in schools. In that respect, permanent access opportunities are to be provided (Kaminski, 2014).

These three points alone reveal that only internet-based approaches can provide the appropriate course packages. In establishing complex online databases, systems of qualification may be constructed which can be centrally organized and jointly financed on the one hand while at the same time allowing the consideration of specific content, specialist didactic and methodological requirements of each of the sixteen German federal states.

Requirements for the Qualification of Teachers

In the last two decades, a shift in research interest in the educational sciences is evident. Taking centre stage are the questions of quality of lessons and the analysis of the range of factors which influence
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