

## Infotalk about ways of becoming a teacher at vocational schools

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### 0:00 Ways of becoming a teacher at vocational schools

Becoming a teacher? A conversation with a student of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences about becoming a teacher at vocational schools.

### 0:21 Introducing the interviewees

Claudia:

Welcome to this Technische Universität Berlin info talk. My name is Claudia Cifire and I'm a student advisor at Technische Universität Berlin. Today, we're going to talk about the teaching training programs at Technische Universität Berlin. The teaching training available at Technische Universität Berlin is special because, with us, you can study teaching for vocational schools as well as prevocational education. My guest is Rafael, who is studying Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences at Technische Universität Berlin with a secondary subject in Biology at Humboldt-Universität. Hello, Rafael.

Rafael:

Hi!

Claudia:

Rafael, tell us a little bit about yourself so that our listeners know who they're listening to today.

Rafael:

I'm Rafael. I'm a course guidance advisor at the School of Education, which is the teacher training institute at Technische Universität Berlin. I'm majoring in Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences with Biology as my secondary subject. The secondary subject is not at Technische Universität Berlin, but at HU, Humboldt-Universität.

Claudia:

Are you a bachelor's or master's student? How far are you into your teacher training?

Rafael:

I'm currently in the second semester of my master's degree. My practical semester is just around the corner, which is a big school internship that's part of the master's program. I completed my bachelor's degree last year.

#### 1:42 Why are you studying to become a vocational teacher?

Claudia:

The vocational school teaching positions are largely unknown in comparison to other teaching positions that exist. How did you come across this path and what brought you there?

Rafael:

I did a landscaping apprenticeship myself, basically the one I'll eventually be teaching. During my training, I thought: How can I continue my education after the apprenticeship? So this teacher training program was also something I was considering and, in the end, I decided to do it, finished high school and then I started my studies here in 2016.

Claudia:

You just mentioned the apprenticeship as the one "you'll eventually be teaching." Perhaps you can briefly explain that to everyone who has graduated high school and doesn't really know what dual training and vocational school is all about: When you finish your studies and stand in front of a class as a teacher, what kind of people are sitting there? How old are they, and what trades are they learning?

Rafael:

They are mainly school students who are training to become landscape gardeners. It's a very diverse profession, from planning flowerbeds to paving courtyard entrances or creating ponds. The ages of vocational students vary widely. They can come straight from middle school or after their first graduation, so at the age of 16. But you can also do it at a later stage of your education and even be in your mid-30s. It truly varies.

Claudia:

Have you always been someone who liked to explain? Were the people around you always saying "Well, Rafael will definitely be a teacher one day, he's always explaining things and tutoring people?" Or was it love at second sight with you and teaching?

Rafael:

Well, I was never the person who was always tutoring people. I think it was - like you said - more like love at second sight. I found that out during my apprenticeship. Otherwise, I might

not have done any apprenticeship in the first place, if I had said from the start “Okay, I want to be a teacher,” because doing an apprenticeship isn’t the fastest route. You could almost say the apprenticeship gave me time to dwell on it, and I thought: That might be something for me. I think you have to have a certain level of desire to explain things to people or to help them understand. But you don't have to have 200 hours of tutoring under your belt already. At least I don't think that qualifies you for a teaching training program. I think the motive is something quite different, it's just about pass on what you learn in training or at university.

#### 4:39 How do you become a good teacher?

Claudia:

Do you think you can somehow test it beforehand or check/find out whether you are suited to teaching, or do you really only find out during your studies and during a practical semester in front of a class?

Rafael:

Well, I think you can test it a bit beforehand. For example, you will definitely have to give some presentations at school etc., where you also share the knowledge you've learned or prepared yourself with your classmates. I think that's a good way to test it. If something like that is fun and you are not thrown off guard when someone asks you a question and instead you think "How can I explain this so that they understand?" and you have enough empathy to realize: Okay, he didn't understand that. How can I explain that to him so that he does by the end of the lecture? I think if you like doing something like that as well as speaking in front of a group - I think that's also part of it - then those are good prerequisites. And if you enjoy it, then that's a good sign. Then I think it's almost just a formality, even in the practical work placement.

Claudia:

Do you think that a teacher training program can teach you how to become a good teacher?

Rafael:

Yes, I think so. Of course, there are certain things you should bring to the table. Like what I just briefly mentioned: things like empathy, for example. This is of course difficult to learn. But during your studies you learn what makes a good lesson and how best to plan a lesson. I do think it gives you a lot of tips and tricks for how you can later become a good teacher, and I don't think there's one perfect teacher, because everyone has slightly different preferences. Some prefer a teacher who's very humorous, while others don't like it when jokes are constantly being made or things aren't being taken as seriously. I think it's actually the mix that makes the difference later on. You definitely learn how to teach well, and that's the be-all and end-all. And I think you can learn to be a good teacher through that.

Claudia:

And, to sum up, you would say: A good teacher is someone who...?

Rafael:

That's a difficult question. Someone who can empathize with people, who can listen to the students, who can explain the subject matter well – I think that's particularly important, because they're striving for a qualification after all. Someone who can bring a relatively casual attitude to the classroom and somehow manage to capture students' attention, motivate them and keep them motivated over the three years of training. Someone who can pick up the speed again – even if there are phases where things get more difficult, or a trainee struggled with a preliminary exam or something – and help the students to pick up speed again too, so that they can still get a good final result afterwards. I think those are important components at least. That may not be an all-encompassing description of a good teacher, but if you can do that, you're on the right track.

#### 8:19 Does a teacher training program always include two subjects?

Claudia:

You just mentioned your secondary subject. Every teacher training program needs two subjects, right?

Rafael:

Perhaps we can reiterate the variety of the subjects on offer here. So we have a lot of main subjects that you can study. The first is Prevocational Education. That is a bit out of the ordinary, I would say – or out of the ordinary for vocational teaching – because it is not a vocational teaching training program, and instead it's taught at integrated secondary schools. We have a wide range of vocational subjects including Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Food Science and Nutrition, Vehicle Engineering, Information Technology, Media Technology, Mechanical Engineering, and then Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences. You can choose between 20 secondary subjects at Technische Universität Berlin. There is a combination table available. Not every subject can be studied with every major. But there are a whole host of possibilities, and you can then make a decision or state your preferences, and then you are usually assigned your chosen subject, which you then study. So there are a wide range of options.

Claudia:

But you can't study secondary subjects at Technische Universität Berlin, right? You would have to go to Humboldt-Universität or Freie Universität for that.

Rafael:

Exactly. There are a few exceptions that you can study at Technische Universität Berlin, but in fact most of the subjects are at Humboldt-Universität or Freie Universität, which is actually quite nice because you get to know two universities. Of course, this also involves some organizational effort, but you still have a different perspective on how things are at your own university, i.e. at Technische Universität Berlin, or what is better or worse at either university.

Claudia:

So how exactly do you do that? Are there days where you're fully at Humboldt-Universität and only doing your secondary subject biology, or do you sometimes dash from Technische Universität Berlin to Humboldt-Universität several times a day? What does that look like in practice?

Rafael:

It actually varies a lot from semester to semester. There were semesters where I was able to split it up by day. I'd say that is, of course, the more convenient option. But there were also semesters where I had to get from Technische Universität Berlin to Humboldt-Universität (HU) or vice versa within half an hour. If you have your second subject at HU, you're still in a relatively good position, because at the Marchgebäude building on Marchstraße – where we have many teacher training modules – and also the Erweiterungsbau – where a lot of vocational practice and specialist science take place – you can get a bus directly to the HU buildings where biology is taught. If you leave your first class five minutes early and arrive five minutes late to the second class, you can do it in half an hour. Sometimes people look at you a bit strangely, but I've had the experience where I've just been honest with the lecturers and said "Here's the situation. I have a class at Technische Universität Berlin right before and I just can't always be on time," then they actually understand. So that's usually not a problem. It can sometimes be a bit stressful for you, especially when the bus doesn't run as it should and you end up having to quickly take the S-Bahn. But most of the time it works quite well. Yeah, it's doable.

### 11:58 Can you build upon your knowledge from school during your studies?

Claudia:

Is this actually a field of study where you can somehow tie it in with school subjects you've had before, or is it completely different?

Rafael:

My secondary subject is biology. So this is a secondary subject that is part of general education so you can of course build on the biology you learned at school. But you have to remember that the biology you do at school is usually covered in the first semester. With your main subject, it all depends on what kind of school you went to. I did an apprenticeship,

so I already have a few school subjects to build on. In vocational school, they were called production and civil engineering or something. It's a good starting point. If you're graduating from a non-vocational high school and haven't done any training, then I think it's more difficult to directly build upon a school subject.

Claudia:

You can kind of imagine what a teacher like that does. We were all school students at least once. But what do you do at university when you study to become a teacher?

Rafael:

So it's actually very varied. Of course, you have the technical content, so basically what you learn afterwards, the material, so to speak. In my main subject, for example, there are modules such as "plant science and use," which covers where certain plants can be used, what kind of location they have, for example, but also technical things, like in the "technical and constructional basics," where it's really kind of about structural engineering things, i.e. how do I build a staircase, or how do I pave? In addition to this content, there is also the pedagogical side – in other words, educational science and didactics. Didactics is about how you can actually teach the students what you've learned in the subject. So you have many different subjects.

### 13:58 Do you have to do an apprenticeship beforehand?

Claudia:

It's a stroke of luck for you that you did an apprenticeship in exactly that field beforehand, so you know the subject matter. There are definitely also students studying to become teachers who went to a non-vocational high school, and so they haven't had any training at all and are still studying to become teachers at vocational schools. Do you think it's easier if you've done the relevant training too? Or can you kind of make up for this gap by studying?

Rafael:

You can definitely catch up. But of course – and it's important to make this clear – the practical element, i.e. this knowledge of plants, which I mentioned at the beginning, is something you already have and do a lot in your training. You have an advantage over those with no training. But that doesn't mean you'll struggle in your studies or shouldn't start without an apprenticeship, because you can easily catch up. It may be a bit more work in some places, but you can still do it well and I don't think that determines whether you'll be a good or bad teacher later on.

Claudia:

How many are there in your Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences course at Technische Universität Berlin?

Rafael:

Well, in general, all teacher training courses are relatively tight-knit and familial, with the exception of prevocational education courses, which aren't as small. So there are always between ten and twenty people who start, but this number always goes down a bit because a few drop out or stop once they have their bachelor's degree. There are three of us in my master's program at the moment. There's definitely a family atmosphere. You know each other, you've been studying together for a long time, and that's really nice. Also, if there's someone you don't get along – which can happen, of course – you have the advantage of regularly being involved in other courses. For example, I spend a lot of time with the people from the Landscape Architecture or the Ecology and Environmental Planning courses. You get to know loads of other students from a wide range of courses and meet a lot of new people.

Claudia:

I think that very few people would have expected that a large university like TU with over 30,000 students has a degree program where you know all your fellow students by name. It can also be very family-like here at Technische Universität Berlin.

#### 16:28 What experiences do you have in teaching?

Claudia:

Have you had the opportunity to stand in front of a class and teach as part of your studies?

Rafael:

Yes, immediately after the first semester of the bachelor's program, there is a practical work placement, which is simply there for you to try it out and find out if this is really the right path for you. Is this what you want to do? You go to a vocational school and sit in on the lessons a lot. So you watch, but you watch actively. You don't just sit in the back and doze. You're looking specifically at how the teacher does what. Of course, there are also a few lessons that you have to give in the work placement, and whether you do more or less – basically, more – that's up to you. But you can try it out to see what it's like to teach, what works well, and what maybe doesn't work at all. This is all experience that you take with you as early as your work placement. But the big practical component doesn't come until the master's degree. This is in the third semester of the master's – the practical semester. That's when you start giving a lot of your own lessons.

Claudia:

How long was this first placement in the bachelor's degree?

Rafael:

Six weeks. In the first winter semester break – or the lecture-free period, as it is called – you do this placement in a school.

Claudia:

Were you nervous before you had to stand in front of the class for the first time and give lessons by yourself?

Rafael:

I think so, even though I'd done an apprenticeship myself and already had a rough idea of how things work at vocational school. But of course, you're kind of nervous. You have made a plan and hope that it works the way you think it will. If it goes well, that's great too, but there are always situations that you didn't see coming at all. But that comes with the territory, I think. It's a great learning experience to stop and ask: How do I get this back on track now? How do I deal with this? If someone disturbs you or something like that, that always happens. It's exhilarating when you do it for the first time.

Claudia:

Did anything happen that flustered you a bit, or did you confidently sail through it?

Rafael:

Yes, my plan – at least for the first lesson – just didn't go that well. So, at first, I thought I would ask a question and that the students would definitely answer. But they didn't. Then I had to think: Do I just tell them the answer or do I ask ten times? When this first phase, which was a little bit difficult to start with, was over, then things got better and then I could relax a bit and get back into it a bit.

Claudia:

But were the students kind to you when you taught them for the first time? Or were they trying to see how much they could get away with?

Rafael:

No, because I wasn't alone. The teacher who normally give the lesson also sits in the back and watches and, if necessary, intervenes. So it was all very relaxed. The students were very laid back and did a great job, although I think my questions were a bit strange at first, because they didn't seem to know what I wanted. But it actually worked out really well. So at least I can say it wasn't a horror show.

Claudia:



Were there any students in your program who were so disillusioned after their first placement that they said, "No, I'm not doing this anymore. I guess I wasn't meant to be a teacher?"

Rafael:

Yes, there were. There were one or two students who realized, "Okay, this isn't for me." But I think that's also an important realization, and fortunately this work placement is only after the first semester. That means you can also afford to say "Okay, I'll reorient myself now instead of working as a teacher for 30 years and not feel comfortable at all." But that's exactly how it's intended – you can try it out in this work placement and see whether or not it's for you. You have a preparatory seminar beforehand, where you also discuss this, and I think that's also an important realization, when you can say "Okay, maybe I won't train to become a teacher after all."

#### 21:13 How do you spend your everyday student life?

Claudia:

So what does it actually mean to study in your subject? What does a student do on a typical day or week at university?

Rafael:

Well, it totally varies. In the bachelor's program, you have these modules, like a project for example. That's in the fourth semester. I found it particularly exciting to choose a topic myself and research it and then write a term paper at the end. At that time, I was dealing with the topic of microplastics in the soil, which had not yet been researched that much because you only ever notice this microplastic in water. It was really exciting to look at places where there's a lot of plastic in the ground. For example, in front of the Olympic Stadium, plastic honeycombs are installed everywhere, which are completely dissolved by the cars and are already lying around everywhere, totally crumbled. It was really interesting to devote an entire semester to this kind of project. Apart from that, you have a lecture right in the first semester called "Vocational Education, Learning, Work," which is all about the fundamentals of educational science. It covers things like the PISA study, for example. Beyond that, of course, you still have to factor in the secondary subject, which I still had to attend modules for in biology at HU.

#### 22:41 What were the highlights of your studies?

Claudia:

It's clear that this project was a highlight for you. Are there any other highlights that you have experienced so far in your studies, where you think: That's almost better than I thought, or that was really fun?

Rafael:

In the third semester, which I found really exciting, you study didactics for the first time. Didactics is about how to teach the students what you have previously learned. It's really exciting to look into how it can work, and what concepts there are. You take a close look at the curricula or the syllabus, you look at which topic goes where, what is important to the training, what do the trainees have to be able to do for the exam afterwards? In other words, what do I have to teach them in these three years of training so that they can do it for the exam and their training? With didactics, it all comes down to that, and I found that really exciting. And that is then taken further in the master's program, where you really write your first drafts. Exciting stuff.

#### 23:54 What surprised you?

Claudia:

You've told us a few highlights from your studies. But, as we know, every silver lining has a cloud. Were there also things that you found difficult, that gave you a bit of trouble, or that were perhaps boring, where you said: I guess I have to do this too, but I'll be glad when it's over?

Rafael:

Well, I think there's always a lecture in every program that you go to twice and then think, "Oh God, I'm going to fall asleep." There are always teachers at university that you think aren't exactly the best at giving lectures. But that's part of it, and you do it anyway, because it has to be done. But we don't actually have any of those horror stories of classes where half of the students fail the written examination. What is sometimes a bit tiring is when you have to juggle the two universities, because that's a lot of organizational work. You really have to sit down at the beginning of the semester or shortly before the semester starts and say: Okay, what modules do I have? The SETUB has course checklists that show what is planned for which semester. So I'd recommend using that. Of course, you check it quite a bit to make sure you're sticking to it. But sometimes it's kind of difficult, when the secondary subject has a lecture or a seminar at exactly the same time that usually has some form of compulsory attendance. So, it's sometimes a bit difficult to reconcile everything. But with a bit of finesse and moving things around, it usually works.

Claudia:

Even though you'd already done an apprenticeship in this field before was there anything about your studies that totally surprised you and made you say: Wow, I wasn't expecting a vocational teacher training program to be like this?

Rafael:

What I actually found surprising is that, when I look back on my bachelor's degree, there was actually relatively little pedagogy and didactics involved. So in the bachelor's degree, you mainly cover subject-specific content, i.e. the really practical or theoretical/practical content you get taught. But didactics and pedagogy are only covered relatively briefly. You only have a relatively small number of modules. So at the beginning, you hardly notice that you're studying to become a teacher, because you don't deal that much with these typical teacher training things, where you think "Okay, you only have didactics and you only have pedagogy." There's actually very little of that in the bachelor's degree, but then it's almost the opposite in the master's program. With the master's, there is almost no specialist content and almost only didactics and pedagogy.

#### 27:04 What kind of exams do you have?

Claudia:

What about the exams in your degree program? For example, in engineering, there are a lot of written exams at the end of the semester. Are exams also the predominant form of examination in a teacher training, or how do you earn credits at the end of a semester?

Rafael:

It's mostly exams for us too actually. In between, you have a term paper or an oral exam, and there are always modules where you have a portfolio exam, which is an exam made up of several parts. Even with these portfolio exams, there is usually a written or oral element at the end. This means that, at the end of the semester, it can sometimes get a bit stressful because you have exams in both your major and secondary subject. This means you have to somehow divide your studying into two subjects. And, of course, the universities don't coordinate on the exam dates. So sometimes you have to switch to the second examination period – also because things are just too tight otherwise. If you end up with eight exams in one semester, it obviously gets very stressful if they're all within two weeks. But then you can switch to the second examination period at the beginning of October, and then it actually works out quite well. But yes, we're mainly assessed through exams. That only changes when you get into the master's program, where it's only term papers – or mostly that, at least. I think it depends on the student and what they prefer – taking an exam or writing a term paper.

Claudia:

Would you say there's an atmosphere among the trainee vocational teachers that perhaps differs from the other teaching subjects, or is there no difference at all? Is there anything special about this training here at Technische Universität Berlin?

Rafael:

I think the special thing is simply the size. I can compare it with HU because, in biology, you spend a lot of time with students from all the teaching training programs, especially at the beginning. So if you're studying to become a vocational teacher, then you're really exotic anyway. There aren't that many who come from Technische Universität Berlin, which is definitely not a bad thing. But you sit there with the primary or secondary school teachers, and it's just a completely different atmosphere, whether you're sitting in the room with 100 people or 150 – or even more in biology at the beginning – or whether you're at Technische Universität Berlin and sitting in a room with 15 to 20 people initially, or even just five further down the line. You know each other much better, but you're still always in classes with other programs, where there are lots of people – more than five, at least – and the landscape architects are somehow also in the mix. So you somehow end up with 60, 70, 80 people. So it's very different, and I think that's what actually makes Technische Universität Berlin and the teaching training special – this family atmosphere, these small courses.

### 30:15 Are you left with any free time?

Claudia:

In addition to the commute and the two subjects at two different universities, do you also have free time alongside your studies, or is all your time spent traveling back and forth and studying during the lecture period?

Rafael:

No, so there's definitely still free time. I mean, free time is also an important thing, of course. I don't think just hanging out at the university from 8 on Monday till 20:00 on Friday is very good for your social life either. Of course, you have free time. The exact days you have free time will vary from semester to semester. Sometimes, you have everything packed into three days, for example, and then have Mondays and Fridays off, which I think is really nice. Sometimes, it's spread over the whole week and sometimes there are – quote unquote – annoying days, where you only have to go to university for one class, which is sometimes a bit frustrating. But, of course, you also have free time.

### 31:20 Do you have any tips for getting off to a good start in a new city?

Claudia:

Before the interview, you told us you're actually not a Berliner. You came to Berlin to study and you're originally from a small town – so you were dealing with a new city as well as a new program. I'm sure you've become quite an expert when it comes to settling in and making a fresh start. What would be your tips for someone who is just starting their studies and is maybe even new to the city?

Rafael:

Well, I think the most important thing is for you to connect with your fellow students in the first few classes – they're really useful for that – and share ideas with them, find out what secondary subject they're studying. They may be studying the same thing, and then it definitely makes sense from the second semester... In the first semester, you usually have a timetable that is at least partially predetermined, or you're sticking very rigidly to your class checklists. But in the second semester, it definitely makes sense to sit down with your fellow students and think about how you want to proceed. It's nice to come to classes where you know someone. So, of course, you always get to know people, and that's actually also the nice thing about it: You also get to know people in your secondary subject. But it's still nice when you have a few subjects a week – and you can also do this in your secondary subject – where you have a few people with practically the same weekly timetable as you. You can exchange ideas and prepare for exams together. These are all things you can take advantage of. And I think, beyond that, you should just really engage with your studies and the city. Of course, it's different when you come from the country – like me – but it also has many advantages, because the public transport runs all night and you're always well connected no matter where you are, so you don't need a car. That's definitely a plus too.

Claudia:

Did you also attend the big general introductory events that Technische Universität Berlin has, or just the one for your program?

Rafael:

I actually didn't go to the big orientation event at the time. But that was simply because finding an apartment took a little longer than expected, so I wasn't even in Berlin yet when this first event was held. However, even then I think there was already a video of it available, which I watched, and then, of course, I was at the introductory event for my program, so I got to meet the people there. We learned about organization and started talking amongst ourselves, and when we arrived at our lecture on the first day, we already recognized the faces and could then sit down and ask each other: What lecture are we going to next, or what other classes do you have today? What about your secondary subject?

### [34:29 Where can prospective students find information?](#)

Claudia:

As a student course guidance advisor, what would your advice be to people interested in teacher training for vocational schools? Where can they find more information about the vocational teacher training at Technische Universität Berlin? Do you offer anything special for non-vocational high-school graduates who want to know more about this type of study?

Rafael:

Well, of course, there's our website [setub.tu-Berlin.de](https://setub.tu-Berlin.de), where there's a lot of information available. We also offer info sessions in between, because no trade fairs or TU info days took place in person during the pandemic. But there are info sessions where you can simply attend a video meeting, where the courses are presented to you. Of course, there's also the option of simply coming to us for advice. We have an answering machine, we have an email address, and we also have video drop-in hours, where you can simply drop by without an appointment. You can find all of this on our website, and, of course, you're always welcome to ask us questions.

#### 35:44 Does digital teaching play a role in the program?

Claudia:

Since you just mentioned the pandemic: Does the current situation actually play any role in the training now? Do you also cover how to bring the material to people if you can't be in a classroom?

Rafael:

That was a major topic last semester – how lessons can also be designed digitally and what can be used for this. Of course, I think that's a big issue in the practical semester anyway, especially when there's a chance the school could temporarily close again. In the bachelor's program, I think it's less of an issue because you don't have that much didactics. And when it comes to subject-specific content – that's a good opportunity to gain experience yourself and see which classes are well prepared, and which online tools you work better with than others. I think you learn a lot yourself this way, simply because you do it yourself and see how the lecturers put it into practice.

#### 36:54 What are Q-Masters?

Claudia:

I assume most of our listeners haven't gone to university yet. But we would also like to mention that Technische Universität Berlin also has a very special a kind of fast track for those interested in teaching at vocational schools – the so-called Q-Master (a lateral entry program). Can you briefly explain to us what that is at Technische Universität Berlin?

Rafael:

So the Q-Masters are subjects where you can go directly to the master's degree. To do that, you have to have a relevant degree, so a degree in that field. The Q-Master is only available in relatively few subjects. You can find out exactly which subjects on the website. But you can do it in Electrical Engineering or Civil Engineering, for example, and you have to have a degree in that specific field beforehand, and you can then start your master's degree immediately. And then you only have... Well, maybe "only" isn't the right word. But then you mainly focus on didactics as well as studying a secondary subject, which in most cases is

math, and then you end up being a fully trained teacher like everyone else, even though you didn't study to become a teacher from the very start.

Claudia:

So it's never too late to become a vocational school teacher. Even those who, for example, have completed a bachelor's degree in engineering can still become a vocational school teacher – and in a relatively short time too.

Rafael:

Exactly. So if you're interested, it's best to just write to us and then we can quickly assess how good your chances are given your previous education, because of course there are always cases where it's unclear if the subject-specific requirements are met. Or if you did your first degree abroad, for example, then you have to see which modules you have, what corresponds to what. But you can ask us all about that. Then you can simply come to us with your documents and overviews, and then we can take a look. Then we can offer you guidance and assess whether it's likely to work or not.

#### 39:10 [Has your idea of the teaching profession changed?](#)

Claudia:

Now that you yourself are on your way to becoming a teacher: Do you now think differently about your own school days, now that you're looking at it from a slightly different perspective?

Rafael:

Well, I think you learn to appreciate what the teachers do in schools, because being a teacher isn't just about standing in front of the class and sharing some information about the subject matter – those lessons also need to be planned. You have exams that you have to grade. As a vocational school teacher, you may even be on the examination board and conduct examinations there. As a result, teaching as a profession is also very diverse and involves more than just giving a few classes from 8 to 14:00, I think. It's quite a bit more than that and requires a lot of preparation and follow-up work. And if you really want all the students to engage with you, it's a lot of work, but it's also fun.

#### 40:09 [What are the job prospects?](#)

Claudia:

What are your own plans for when you've finished your studies? Where do you want to go and teach? Have you already thought about something, or are you not thinking past your studies yet?

Rafael:

Well, I'm already doing my master's degree, and now my practical semester is actually just around the corner. Of course, you think about it a bit: Okay, what do I do when I start my provisional teaching period? That's what comes next. It's 18 months working as a newly qualified teacher in a school. And of course, you think to yourself: Do I want to stay in Berlin or do I want to go somewhere else? But I actually haven't made a final decision yet – and I still have to complete my practical semester first. That's actually my priority at the moment, because it's starting soon and I'll be doing a lot of teaching and seeing how things go, trying things out and observing the lessons again closely and picking up tips and tricks.

Claudia:

The career prospects for vocational school teachers are relatively good, aren't they?

Rafael:

Yes, you don't have to worry at all that you won't find a job. So you'll usually be welcomed with open arms because many teachers will soon be retiring. That means it's not just a flash in the pan, it's going to last for a while. So I think the job prospects are actually very good – not just in Berlin, but throughout all of Germany. Teachers are in demand everywhere. It doesn't get much better than that, I'd say.

Claudia:

But, of course, that should not be the only motivation for taking this path. That probably wouldn't be enough. We also offer vocational teacher training in subjects other than yours – are the prospects good across the board, or do you have to look at it in a more nuanced way?

Rafael:

Actually, I would say the outlook is just as good for all subjects. Teachers are in demand everywhere, and you can actually find a job anywhere. In fact, it often happens that schools express interest in a teacher during the practical semester and say "Would you like to join us after your master's degree?". There is always an event at SETUB called "Last Wednesday of the Semester," where content from the course is presented, and the principals from schools always come along and talk with the students. And it's not uncommon for master's students to be offered a job there, even though they haven't finished their training yet.

Claudia:

Of course, these are almost heavenly scenarios that I'm sure many students in other courses could only dream of. So the prospects are great.

#### [43:12 Closing words and contact](#)

Claudia:



Rafael, I would like to thank you very much for giving us your time on this unbelievably hot day and for telling us about your study program. I'm sure a lot of our listeners will be left teary-eyed when they find out they can be headhunted before they even finish their studies, so they won't have to hang around at trade fairs, submit endless applications and be just one of several hundred graduates. Instead, they can be someone that school principals personally try to recruit before they've even graduated. That is certainly something very, very special and, of course, teaching is also a great thing if you have a passion for it. So thank you very much for sharing your insights with us today.

Rafael:

Sure, thank you too

Claudia:

Thank you to all our listeners for tuning in and sticking around till the end. We recommend visiting our page [StudienberatungAtHome](#) from time to time. Alongside this podcast, you'll find more conversations with students who shared insights about other programs at TU. This page is constantly being expanded and, due to the pandemic, is a great source of information, since you unfortunately can't visit us in person. But of course, you can also contact us, the Academic Advising Service, via email and during our Zoom office hours. We look forward to your questions and maybe we'll see you soon. Bye.

Rafael:

Bye.