Crafts and Home Economics Studies Abroad
Student Identified Differences and Suggestions for Teacher Education in Latvia

Māra Urdziņa-Deruma, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia
Lolita Šelvaha, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to research and analyze the differences students have noted in foreign programmes and suggest ways to development the crafts and home economics teacher education programme in Latvia. Students (n=14) were interviewed and asked to describe any noted differences in the study organization process; indicate the various methods, assignments, and assessment practices used in home economics and crafts courses, including teaching practice; and attitude of students towards the study process. Content analysis of the interviews indicate students’ suggestions to development the crafts and home economics learning and teaching process, as well changes in teaching practice made by the students. Research results indicate that the students offered more information on differences than suggestions for development. The greatest differences were noted in the acquisition of crafts skills, followed by the organization of the study process and home economics. Student suggestions focused mainly on course content, but actual changes were implemented in teaching methods.

KEYWORDS

Student Mobility, Crafts Education, Home Economics Education, Teacher Education

INTRODUCTION

With the increase of globalization, including in the sphere of education, cross-cultural influence is on the rise. One trend in the globalization of education is increased education exchange at the tertiary level, as required in the Bologna Declaration: ‘Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to: for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services’ (1999, p. 3). The European Union has implemented the Erasmus Plus programme since 2014, which offers ‘more opportunities for millions of Europeans to study, train, volunteer or gain professional experience abroad’ (ERASMUS+: The EU programme for education, training, youth and sport (2014-2020), 2017).

Since 2005, a total of 24 Latvian Crafts and Home Economics teacher education students have participated in mobility programmes in Finland, Estonia, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, and the Netherlands. The majority (15) studied in Finland. Studies abroad affect one’s personal life, development of professional competence, and promote researching of and becoming familiar with a foreign culture. Studying abroad is a form of cross-cultural educational exchange. Margeviča (2008, 40) notes that cross-cultural educational exchange is necessary to be able to better understand one’s

DOI: 10.4018/IJSEUS.2018100107
own culture, to learn about the culture of others, and to become multilingual. Kondrova (2003, 246) states that ‘cross-cultural contacts affect how a person views his or her own and foreign ethnic cultures. The desired result is integration – maintaining one’s own culture while being enriched by another.’ Kokko & Dillon (2011, 487-488) note that globalization results in interaction of cultures, which previously met rarely and that globalization influences culture positively and negatively. On the one hand, change is connected to economic growth, prosperity and greater mobility, thus, encouraging better understanding of cultural forms. On the other hand, change can threaten traditions and create uniformity.

Home Economics and Crafts teacher education students have a greater opportunity to experience a foreign culture than do other students because the acquisition of culture is a specialty: crafts and home economics (handicrafts, food preparation, etc.) include acquisition of culture and traditions. Learning crafts is not just learning about techniques and skills needed to create something. It is also learning about culture, because the experience of creation passes on cultural heritage and values through the use of ornamentation and colour combinations, techniques, and use and combination of various materials. Handicrafts are influenced by culture consciously and unconsciously. Anttila (1988, 21-22) states: ‘With respect to the processing as well as the finished product, handicraft is bound to the prevailing culture, its traditions, and its language of form’. Johansson (1996, 56-57) indicates that in multicultural societies, crafts and art students have differing cultural and social backgrounds. As a result, student and lecturer experiences are transformed and new knowledge about how people create is born. Kokko & Dillon (2011, 501) stress that individual experiences and collective values are strongly dependent on personal histories, and these histories affect both perceptions of crafts and craft education and also the values that individuals place on them. McCall (1997, pp. 167-168) places significant value in cultural studies on textiles because ‘Textile arts can reflect group identity, everyday life, historical events, special ceremonies, beliefs, and values of a culture’. Fadels et al. (2017, p. 36) note that one’s own culture must be maintained and developed through contacts with other cultures: ‘We wish that each individual gains benefits from shared cognition but simultaneously not allowing these unifying goals to be detrimental to local values and understanding’.

During exchanges in Finland and Estonia, students studied primarily crafts and home economics courses. In Finland, crafts are part of the general curriculum for Grades 1-9, and home economics is a separate subject for Grades 7-9 (Distribution of lesson hours in basic education, 2012). ‘Since the founding of the Finnish school system in 1866, craft has had an established presence that has been separate from art’ (Pöllänen 2009, p. 250). Kokko & Dillon (2011, 502) conclude that in Finland, craft is more highly appreciated than in other countries. During exchange studies, international students ‘came to value crafts and wanted to learn more about them.’ In general, ‘Teacher education in Finland remains very competitive and is one of the most attractive educational programmes at the tertiary level’ (Education and Training Monitor. Finland, 2016)

In Estonia, crafts are taught in Grades 1-3 and include basics of handicrafts, home economics and technology studies. Pupils in Grades 4-9 are divided according to their wishes and learn handicrafts and home economics or technology studies (National Curriculum for Basic Schools, 2014).

In Latvia, crafts and home economics are taught jointly in Grades 1-4. In Grade 5, the subject is taught one to two consecutive lessons a week, but pupils are divided into two groups based on their interests: for crafts, they can choose either textile or wood and metal technologies; however, home economics is taught to all pupils (Noteikumi par valsts pamatizglītības standartu, pamatizglītības mācību priekšmetu standartiem un pamatizglītības programmu paraugiem, 2014).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research data were collected through structured interviews, which included open-ended questions to determine the differences students observed during studies abroad in comparison to studies in Latvia. It also allowed students to offer suggestions for improvement or supplementation of home economics...
A Query-based Approach for Semi-Automatic Annotation of Web Services
[www.igi-global.com/article/query-based-approach-semi-automatic/53474?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/query-based-approach-semi-automatic/53474?camid=4v1a)

The Essence of Organizational Knowledge: A Social Epistemology Perspective
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/essence-organizational-knowledge/52220?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/essence-organizational-knowledge/52220?camid=4v1a)