

General comments on evaluations carried out in Lithuania 17th -20th September 2012.

Programmes evaluated

Professional Bachelors Fine Arts and Technology Pedagogy Zemaitija College

Masters in Dance Pedagogy Lithuanian University of Education Sciences

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1. The team were to some extent astonished that programmes with such small numbers of students, but demanding such considerable staff expertise and resourcing (specialised equipment/provision of specialist spaces such as dance flooring etc.), have been proposed and validated when so few students have been recruited. We are concerned over the financial liability of such provision. In the case of the Master's Degree in Dance Pedagogy the fact that this is a new programme, designed to fill a gap in the provision of Master's level study in Lithuania, makes such provision understandable. However, the college's provision of the qualification of teacher of arts and technology is more difficult to accept. There are other programmes in the country in colleges and in universities. The setting up of such a programme is very demanding of specialised staffing and resources and without large numbers of students cannot be financially viable. It is understandable that rural areas wish to provide the possibility of training teachers for work in local schools but this is offset by the fact that the student experience is limited by the environment provided, they are often of lower academic ability to those who are trained elsewhere and staff, with sufficient specialist expertise, are hard to find. This can result in an over dependence on part time staff who can never have the same commitment to the programme which will be provided by a dedicated team. Data showing the need for such teachers in the area was not available to the team or it appears to the college staff, although the Ministry assures us that such data is in existence. This is a common problem we meet when we visit HEIs – a worrying lack of specific data to explain the need for the programme in question. We would suggest that before new programmes are proposed and put forward for validation a clear business case for the establishment of that programme should be presented to the HEI including a full

financial breakdown and the provision of data which clearly shows the need for the provision of the programme and that these are closely examined by senior management. It is astonishing to experts that programmes are allowed to commence with four or five students, or even less, in a year group. In many other countries in Europe this would not be contemplated, particularly in the light of current economic problems. However, the educational argument is greater, in that such a limited group of students cannot offer the stimulating and challenging environment provided by a larger student body which is essential to student growth. In addition it should be required that HEIs examine the staffing of the programme and its implications. Are staff already employed suitable for delivering such a programme? In the case of pedagogy programmes it is advisable that a large proportion of staff have experience of teaching in schools or at least in non-formal settings where children are present. Without this experience the teaching of subject didactics will tend to be theoretical and general rather than specific.

2. The use of information and communications technology is still lagging behind that in many countries in Europe. Often basic education on the use of programmes such as Word and Excel are given whilst the pedagogical use of ICT embedded into subject studies in the school classroom is not covered. Provision of ICT resources for the arts and technology programme was very limited. We would expect a large amount of the work in these areas to be computer based and students introduced early to suitable packages. The provision of interactive whiteboards on which students can practice their lesson preparation is essential and staff may well need specific training in the use of ICT equipment and programmes. The students produced by present pedagogy programmes will be teaching for many years to come and if not now presented with up to date knowledge they will be at a serious disadvantage from their first day as a teacher. Children across the EU are becoming expert at the use of all forms of ICT and teachers need to be up to date.
3. The team would like to raise the question of the distinction between the professional and non-professional bachelor's degrees. This is a distinction that if possible should be removed, as all those preparing to teach should be prepared as professionals as a matter of course with a university validated bachelor's degree. This can be taught in colleges if this is helpful to the country and validated by a nearby university, a common practice in some other countries. This would remove the 'second class image' of a college qualification.
4. The concerns of the team over the amount and quality of the teaching practice provided echoes comments made by the team for the evaluation of the 'non-degree' teacher training programmes in May 2012. The letter of the law is followed i.e. teaching practice takes place each year, but the intentions of the regulations are skirted around. For example many first teaching practices involve no teaching whatsoever and are just a paper exercise. There are no set regulations for how many lessons a student must teach before being deemed to be qualified and in most cases the numbers of lessons students are expected to teach are ridiculously low. We found that in the first year of the arts and technology programme the 'teaching practice' did not in fact involve any teaching only some observation and data gathering about the school. In practice two students were teaching four double lessons and in for the third practice eight double lessons. The final practice (not yet attempted) is individual work seemingly more related to research not actual teaching. It would be good to see regulations on the amount of paired/support teaching a student is expected to do and the amount of individual lessons that have to be prepared taught and evaluated against

strict criteria by a mentor or tutor for each practice. Standardisation of marking between schools providing placements is essential and some form of external assessment of a selection of teaching practice lessons is essential to ensure national quality. It is also essential that students go to a variety of schools for practice not staying in the same one for three years which does not give them a sufficiently wide experience and that all students follow a module on special needs education and how to cope successfully with inclusive and diverse class groups. (For further remarks please refer to the report of May 2012 as the problems are the same e.g. mentor training, motivation test only for those with state funding etc.). Subject didactics are again problematic especially in a complex programme such as arts and technology. Tutors of this area need to have school teaching experience and be able to provide the specific input for all the subject areas. In this case as in many we have seen previously didactics are general not sufficiently oriented to the different subject areas.

5. Dissertation marking for post graduate theses is still highly problematic. Marks are far too high, titles too ambitious and there is little or no reference to research theory as a justification for the methods used. Research theory books are often not mentioned in the bibliography and far too few foreign resources are used, despite some good provision of access to data bases and via them research journals. This is despite many students being able to communicate very well in English. The question must be asked, is this problem caused by the problem of staff inability to access research articles because of their own deficiencies in English? Most high level international research journals are written in English so a working knowledge of the language is essential to all those involved in pedagogical research. It is extremely wasteful for an HEI to be providing very expensive resources that are not used by students and staff.
6. The EET have concerns about the fragmentation of Masters programmes. There are so many different programmes requiring validation, evaluation and resourcing from SKVC. We believe this has something to do with the need to name programmes separately. However, sensibly HEIs put together much of the teaching on Master's pedagogy programmes and again to save time money and effort it would be good to see for example in an HEI one Master's degree in education with branches e.g. Master's in Education: Dance Pedagogy - Master's in Education: Education Management. This would save a great deal of time and finances for the nation, including the separate validation of all these programmes.
7. The EET has concerns that some students, who already having received funding for previous studies, are now receiving further funding for pedagogical studies to gain teacher qualifications as they are working unqualified in schools. At the same time they are receiving a salary for working as a teacher (i.e. receiving double state funding). This seems unfair as other students who would benefit from the provision of state funding cannot receive it as there is less money to be distributed due to the above mentioned double funding .
8. There seems again to be the problem of a multitude of modules with low credits at undergraduate level, which breaks up the teaching of the programme. A more holistic and less fragmented approach is required.
9. HEIs are still struggling with writing ILOs to the correct level and linking them to a) aims b) modules c) assessment. Help needs to be given on this as it is a national problem. Master's degrees should not have LOs stipulating that students should develop an interest in..... etc. but use the correct level of terminology so LOs at the various levels are differentiated.

10. The low mobility levels of students and staff in some cases are still a cause for concern.
Using a great many part time staff must affect the mobility levels.
11. The EET were concerned that, as is common in many HEIs in the country, there is a lack of access for the disabled. Even new or refurbished buildings are not served with ramps or lifts in many cases. It is understandable that in older buildings these provisions could take time to introduce, but in those buildings recently renovated the use of steep steps at the entrance is not inclusive and projects the wrong message to students who are themselves supposed to be prepared to teach children with disabilities. It is good to see in some places attempts to provide lifts etc. have been made recently but often access to the main doors is not possible, wheelchair users having to find an alternative entrance. This gives the impression of second class citizenship. Provision for access for disabled students should become a priority for the government as has been directed by the EU.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian Hilton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gillian Hilton on behalf of the team