Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a Cross-sectional Task for Teacher Training

The example of the subject related didactics ‘economics-technics-household’ (ETH)

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Project ‘BNE Implementation’

The Project ‚ESD-Implementation’ and its Objectives

The aim of the project is to integrate ESD into discipline-specific and didactic teacher training using the integrative subject ETH as an example. We are going to develop a course concept, which depicts ESD as a cross-sectional topic for all containing modules.

The goal of the accompanying research is to develop a transfer product for lecturers of other academic disciplines.

ESD is understood as transformative education (Singler-Brodowski, 2016). The project is based on the reference framework for ESD competencies, ‘key competencies in sustainability’ (Wiek et al., 2015). Furthermore, ‘key methods of ESD’ (Rieckmann, 2018, p. 49) provide a didactic background.

ESD in Teacher Training

Rieckmann and Holz (2017) describe the current state of institutionalization of ESD in teacher training in Germany. It “still affects isolated courses and projects; structural changes are just beginning. So far, there is not a single university in Germany that actually regards ESD as a cross-sectional concern of teacher training and systematically integrates it in subjects, subject related didactics, educational sciences and practical school studies” (p. 9, own translation).

Enshrining ESD in relevant documents (for universities: university laws, university development plans, performance agreements, resolutions of the German Rectors’ Conference and Rectors’ Conferences of states) is an important commitment to future-oriented education and a supportive basis for its actual implementation in teaching reality. At the same time, there is freedom of academic teaching. It can be assumed that decreing ESD alone is not sufficient for its implementation in actual learning reality. The project ‘ESD-implementation’ is a bottom-up approach: It describes an initiative of lecturers in higher education at Leipzig University. The focus lies on process documentation, reflection and transfer.

The Integrative Subject ETH

In Saxony, vocational education is represented by the subject Wirtschafts-Technik-Haushalt/Soziales (economics-technics-household). Due to its interdisciplinary character, ETH offers a particularly strong potential for integrating ESD.

Research Design

We found that lecturers already focus on system thinking (Wiek et al. 2015) and use ‘key methods of ESD’ (Rieckmann, 2018, p. 49) like service learning. But there is a lack of topics and methods that train students to anticipate or create future scenarios. (Goller & Markert, 2020)

Based on a systematic literature review (Fink, 2019), subjective theories of five ETH-lecturers are described. Subjective theories are “complex cognition aggregates of the research object, in which their cognitions relating to the self and the world become manifest and […] show at least implicit argumentational structure.” (Groeben & Scheele, 2000, p. 2). Therefore they have a major impact on the lecturers professional behavior.

Next step: explanatory validation

Initial Findings and Next Steps

Based on team meetings (videography), memos and field notes I used Autoethnography, a method of scientific self-observing (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010), to describe and reflect on the first steps of the team process in the project ‘ESD-implementation’. (Goller & Markert, 2021)

In three focus groups ETH-students discussed how ESD was important for them in their present studies or in their future work as a teacher.

Next step: qualitative content analysis

References