Abstract

Problem of teacher education quality has been discussed in Lithuania frequently over last twenty years by scholars, politicians, administrators, employers, teacher educators and teachers themselves. Not an exception is arts teacher education. Our purpose in this study is to discuss coherence between expectations of postgraduate arts education study programme management and social partners. Seeking to answer questions methods of literature review, autoethnography, interview and survey of social partners were applied. The results of the research show that programme management expects postgraduate arts education studies to deepen competences to plan, implement, research, evaluate and improve content of arts education in various types of formal and non-formal educational institutions while graduates are disposed for lifelong learning and seeking new knowledge in more abstract way. Employers outline need of arts education teacher as a leader, active organizer, school community bringer and culture bearer.

Keywords: arts education; teacher education; postgraduate studies; social partners.

1. Introduction

For the last decade the quality of teacher education is underlined in the most of European (European Commission, 2005; Association for Teacher Education in Europe, 2006; Commission of the European Communities, 2007; European Trade Union Committee for Education, 2008) and Lithuanian (Description of Professional Competences of Teachers, 2007; Regulations for Teacher Education, 2012) documents. Though, understanding of this phenomenon and its implementation as investigations show (Pedagogu rengimo kokybe Lietuvos aukštosiose mokyklose, 2002; Juceviciene, 2006; Zhao, 2010; Monkeviciene, Rauckiene, 2010) still needs improvement.

* Birute Baneviciute. Tel.: +370-610-48408.
E-mail address: birute.baneviciute@leu.lt
Similar situation is observed also in arts teacher education (Matonis, 2007; Baneviciute, Kudinoviene, 2012; Matonis, 2013; Baneviciute, Kudinoviene, 2014). The quality of arts teacher education as part of higher education studies in general is ensured by number of documents (Law on Science and Education, 2009; Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, 2010; Bulajeva et al., 2011) where it is stated that in the process of quality assurance, formulation of programme aims and study outcomes all stakeholders should participate including programme management and social partners.

Starting point of the given research was our involvement into self-evaluation process of arts (music, dance, theater, visual arts) education master’s programmes administrated by the Department of Arts Education of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. As we are arts education programme creators, lectures and administrators at the same time as well as members of the study committees which monitor and ensure quality of study programmes. Our need to evaluate quality of study process in order to ensure its improvement as well as ground it according to the national and European documents on higher education and especially on teacher training induced our scientific interest to research the problem of expectations on postgraduate studies in arts education from stakeholders point. This interest was strengthened by other research works on given topic (Cesnaite, 2002; Sirtautiene, 2006; Chmieliauskas et al., 2012; Sunelaityte, Zydziunaite, 2013; Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre, 2013) which revealed shortage and fragmentation of investigations on the quality of postgraduate studies especially from the point of social partners.

The aims and learning outcomes of the master study programme of arts education we formulated on the essential requirements enlisted in the Descriptor of the 7th level of The Descriptor of Lithuanian Qualification Framework (2010), in the Descriptor of 2nd cycle studies in Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (2005) and in the Definition of the Qualification Degree of Second Study Cycle provided in Dublin Descriptors (2004). We also take into account recommendations of external evaluation experts as well as internal social partners such as graduates and employers. Every year we have informal and formal meetings with our social partners where we discuss programme quality various aspects such as programme aims, study outcomes, expected competences of graduates, studies satisfaction, etc. Their insights become basis for our deliberation on possible programme changes of content, structure, aims and outcomes, academic staff, material sources, etc.

Our philosophy and understanding of arts teacher with master’s degree from one side and concern to maintain high level of study quality and to educate arts education specialist relevant to demands of labour market from other side create tension between us as programme creators and lecturers and us as programme administrators. This tension together with official regulations to incorporate social partners into the maintenance of study programme quality shapes the problem of coherence between expectations of programme management and social partners. Therefore the aim of the research is to reveal expectations of programme management and social partners on arts education postgraduate studies.

2. Research methodology

Seeking to reveal expectations on postgraduate arts education study programmes methods of literature review, autoetnography, interview of employers and survey of graduates were applied. Interview included two groups of questions on: (1) competences of arts teacher with master’s degree and (2) promotion of arts teacher to enter postgraduate studies. Survey consisted of four groups of semi-open and open-ended questions including: (1) demografic data (year of graduation, study programme, current occupation); (2) factors of entering postgraduate studies; (3) coherence between acquired competences and professional activities; (4) benefits of postgraduate studies.

Autoetnography as a research method (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2010; Mitra, 2010) enabled and encouraged us as programme creators and supervisors not only to reveal our experiences, but also to analyse them seeking to understand our starting ideas for structuring arts education postgraduate study programmes, as well as foreseen programme possibilities to meet needs of social partners and challenges of labour market.
2.1. Research sample

Research sample includes two groups of participants: arts education master’s study graduates and employers. To form a research sample of employers we chose criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) when sample units are selected from the population in accordance with the criteria set out by the investigator’s. In this research employers had to meet these requirements: (1) to be an administrator of an educational institution (director or deputy director of a comprehensive school, cultural center or arts school); (2) to lead an educational institution where arts (music, visual art, theater or dance) teacher with master’s degree works. Twelve respondents from seven cities of Lithuania participated in the interview.

In the survey of graduates 59 respondents participated from all arts education master’s programmes: music education (N=15), dance education (N=11), visual arts education (N=26) and theater education (N=7). They included graduates of 2010–2014 year of graduation.

2.2. Procedure

Process of autoethnography started in May 2014 by us as co-authors of this article discussing issues related to arts education master’s programme initiation context, formulation of programme aims and learning outcomes. Later materials of several discussion sessions were written down and categorized.

Interview of employers and survey of graduates were held in June 2014. Appointments for the interviews were made in advance ensuring respondent privacy and confidentiality by not mentioning names and institutions which they represent. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed saving respondent’s associated with the topic vocabulary, syntactic structure of the text and other peculiarities of the speech.

Survey for graduates was posted on website of the Department of Arts Education of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. Link of the questionnaire was sent by email to graduates with the request of spreading it to their schoolmate colleagues. Questionnaire was open to fill in for one month and after survey results were analysed.

After categorization of autoethnography, interview and survey materials we analysed categories of each group of stakeholders’ expectations seeking to reveal links between them and existence of coherence.

3. Results of the research

Autoethnographic research revealed our aim by arts education postgraduate studies to create favorable conditions for students to expand their competences to plan, implement, research, evaluate and improve content of arts education in various types of formal and non-formal children, youth and adult educational institutions. These aims we declare in all arts education master’s programmes (music education, dance education, visual arts education and theater education) which are implemented by the Department of Arts Education where we are employed and work as lecturers, members of study committees and administrative staff. We as programme management expect that graduates of arts education master’s programme will be able to become leaders in their institutions contributing by innovative ideas and creative problem solving as well as initiating changes in arts education not only on institutional, but also on regional or even national level. As we are also arts education scholars having scientific interests in arts teacher education as well as arts education in general we expect graduates to be able to contribute to arts education scientific research field as this corresponds also to the strategy of our university.

Our expectations as programme management might be grouped in two categories one of which relates to the competences of graduates and second one to graduates’ involvement into further collaboration with the university (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Expectations of programme management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competences of arts teacher with master’s degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subcategory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence to plan and project content of arts education in various types of formal and non-formal children, youth and adult educational institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence to teach, manage, consult, advice, provide feedback to</td>
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</table>
children, youth or adults in various types of formal and non-formal children, youth and adult educational institutions

Competence to research, evaluate and assess the quality of arts education in education and culture institutions of various types and to introduce measures for its improvement, to present problems of and trends in education to the society in a generalised way

Competence to collaborate with pedagogical or academic communities of various educational institutions striving for introduction of innovations into cultural artistic activities

Participation in the university alumni activities

Personal participation in conferences, seminars, concerts, other scientific and artistic events organized by the university and department

Collaboration with the university and department on the institutional level implementing pedagogical practise, research and artistic activities.

Besides acquired relevant arts education graduates’ competences as the most important expectations of us as programme management we have interest in keeping in touch with graduates for future possibilities not only to spread inovative arts education ideas, but also to get feedback from graduates about their career, achievements in pedagogical and artistic fields, their ideas for closer collaboration.

The analysis of graduates’ survey revealed two categories: first related to the expectations before entering postgraduate studies and second related to the fulfillment of expectations after studies (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors of entering postgraduate studies</td>
<td>Aspiration for deeper knowledge</td>
<td>“&lt;...&gt; I wanted more deeper subject knowledge”, “&lt;...&gt; I needed more professional knowledge”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspiration for career promotion</td>
<td>“&lt;...&gt; I was thinking to get higher qualification”, “&lt;...&gt; I wanted to improve my qualification”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coherence between acquired competences and current professional activities</td>
<td>Deepened competences to plan and implement arts education</td>
<td>“&lt;...&gt; I can plan and organize various activities, programmes for children, youth, adults, special needs people”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Acquired entrepreneurship skills</td>
<td>“&lt;...&gt; I am more brave in experimenting, trying new methods”, “&lt;...&gt; I am more open and flexible”, “&lt;...&gt; I have new ideas, I have desire to work in a new, creative way, more contemporary methods”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal and professional improvement</td>
<td>“&lt;...&gt; I am more confident”, “&lt;...&gt; acquired degree gives me more trust in myself”, “&lt;...&gt; studies made me to improve on a professional level further, seek for new knowledge not only in practise, but also in theory”</td>
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Expectations of graduates before entering postgraduate studies in arts education exposed through factors which respondents mentioned as important for choosing master’s programmes. These include aspiration for deeper knowledge in their subject or profession in general as well as aspiration for higher qualification which is related to higher position at their workplace. The fulfillment of graduates’ expectations revealed through coherence between acquired competences and areas of current professional activities (Table 2). Respondents stated that for them it was important to deepen already existed competences to plan and implement arts education content on more creative, new way, which showed acquired entrepreneurship skills. Graduates admitted importance of postgraduate studies in promoting their engagement in lifelong learning, personal and professional improvement not only for the reason of higher position, but also for learning itself.

The analysis of employers’ interview showed two categories of expectations: first related to competences of arts teacher with master’s degree, second related to commitment of employers themselves to promote higher level of education and qualification of arts teachers of their institution (Table 3).
Table 3. Expectations of employers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competences of arts teacher with master’s degree</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>„&lt;...&gt; I see arts teacher capable to bring school community for projects, arts collective“, „&lt;...&gt; arts teacher has to have new ideas for projects, festivals, how to bring the team“</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>„&lt;...&gt; arts teacher should be flexible, creative“, „&lt;...&gt; with master’s degree should be able to transfer the skills from the university to school, that school has benefit of that“</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Culture bearer</td>
<td>„&lt;...&gt; arts teacher is culture bearer in the school on the first place“, „&lt;...&gt; arts teacher is very important in forming school culture“</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Subject knowledge</td>
<td>„&lt;...&gt; they have to have deep subject knowledge“, „&lt;...&gt; he should be very professional in his subject area“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors of postgraduate studies promotion</td>
<td>Lifelong learning principles</td>
<td>„&lt;...&gt; studying is very important for the person himself“, „&lt;...&gt; lifelong learning should be a priority for every person, especially a teacher“, „&lt;...&gt; it is important that he doesn’t stop learning“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualification improvement</td>
<td>„&lt;...&gt; arts teacher should have higher level than bachelor“, „&lt;...&gt; postgraduate studies it is very important for getting higher qualification and this important for the school“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career development</td>
<td>„&lt;...&gt; for master’s degree holders there is better conditions for career growth“</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employers stated that most important for them are skills of leadership and entrepreneurship of arts teachers with master’s degree. To employers opinion these skills allow graduates to bring school community to more effective organization of the institution, education of higher quality and evidence based teaching. Arts teacher as a culture bearer was emphasized by directors of comprehensive schools as well as culture centres. By no means, employers admitted deeper and wider arts subject knowledge of master’s graduates.

When deliberating on their own involvement into promotion of postgraduate studies of their employees employers stated that they encourage teachers to seek further education on a higher level and to improve qualification by giving flexible work schedule. Though, employers financially do not support aspirations for higher education. Acknowledging the importance of higher education level of arts teachers’ employers however couldn’t recognize the difference between bachelor and master’s degree graduates while employing them. They stated that it is not the main crucial factor as most important are competences of graduates, their activity and openness, willingness for lifelong learning.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion it could be stated that programme management, questioned graduates of arts education master’s programme and employers expect from postgraduate studies deepend professional competences, higher knowledge, superior personal and social skills. However, programme management emphasizes professional competences of arts teacher to plan, implement, research, evaluate and improve content of arts education in various types of formal and non-formal children, youth and adult educational institutions while graduates are disposed for lifelong learning and seeking new knowledge in more abstract way. Employers outline need of arts education teacher as a leader, active organizer, school community brigner and culture bearer.

The results of this research show that there are no significant differences between our as programme management expectations and expectations of social partners, though identified slightly different aspects of importance induce idea that aim and quality of postgraduate studies in arts education are still the issue for more wider public agreement. These our thoughts strengthened by investigations of other authors (Cesnaite, 2002; Sirtautiene, 2006; Sunelaityte, Zydziunaite, 2013) lead us to further investigations on better communication between stakeholders seeking for high quality of postgraduate studies in teacher education.
References


