

Building Quality Education and Sustainable Future in Finnish-Brazilian Teacher Education

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Tiivistelmä

Suomalais-brasilialainen VET Teachers for the Future -koulutusohjelma järjestettiin Hämeen ja Tampereen ammattikorkeakouluissa vuosina 2014–2016. Ohjelman tavoitteena on valmentaa osallistujia tuottamaan yhteisöllisesti uudenlaisia koulutusratkaisuja Brasilian alueellisiin ja kansallisiin haasteisiin. Opettaja Carolina Corado valmistui pilottikoulutus-

ohjelmasta vuonna 2015 ja on siitä lähtien kehittänyt oppijakeskeisiä pedagogisia menetelmiä, joissa kestävä kehitys, opiskelijoiden sitouttaminen ja yhteisön palveleminen ovat keskeisessä roolissa. Hänen viimeisin oppimisprojektinsa ”#disque108” keskittyy viidenteen kestäväen kehityksen tavoitteeseen ”Sukupuolten välisen tasa-arvon saavuttaminen sekä naisten ja tyttöjen oikeuksien ja mahdollisuuksien vahvistaminen”. Projektin pedagogiset käytänteet pohjautu-

vat VET Teachers for the Future -ohjelmaan. Monikansalliset opettajankoulutusohjelmat voivat osaltaan edistää tietoa ja osaamista kestäväen kehityksen tavoitteiden toteuttamiseksi tukemalla opettajia pedagogisten käytänteiden kehittämisessä ja koulun ja yhteisön yhteistyön vahvistamisessa.

Avainsanat: *monikansallinen koulutus, ammatillinen opettajankoulutus, kestäväen kehityksen tavoitteet*

Abstract

The Finnish-Brazilian VET Teachers for the Future programme was organised at Häme (HAMK) and Tampere Universities of Applied Sciences (TAMK) in 2014–2016. The goal of the programme was to coach the participants to collaboratively rethink and design education to respond better to their on-going regional and national challenges in Brazil. MSc Carolina Corado graduat-

ed from the pilot programme in 2015 and has since developed student-centered pedagogical practices having sustainability, student engagement and serving the community as her leading principles. Her latest project “#disque108” concentrates on SDG 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The pedagogical approach of the project is based on the VET Teachers for the Future programme. Transnational training initiatives like the VET Teachers for the Future may advance the knowledge and the competence for sustainable development implementation by supporting teachers to proactively develop their pedagogical practices and by strengthening the school-community collaboration.

Keywords: *transnational education, vocational teacher education, sustainable development goals*

Introduction

The School of Professional Teacher Education from Häme University of Applied Sciences (HAMK) has cooperated in vocational teacher training with Brazil since 2014.

The teacher training programmes vary in their duration, curriculum and objectives from a one-week intensive training to several years’ professional development programmes in pedagogical competence development. The programmes are designed, implemented and monitored in Finnish-Brazilian co-operation, and practitioner research is conducted on development work (Global Education Research and Development, n.d.).

The Finnish-Brazilian VET (Vocational Education and Training) Teachers for the Future professional certificate programme was organised at HAMK and Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) in 2014–2016. The programme was implemented in co-operation between Finnish and Brazilian educators. Altogether, 106 participants scored 30 ECTS in the programme. The programme participants were professional teachers from the Brazilian Federal Institutes for Education, Sciences and Technology. The Federal Institutes offer basic, vocational and technological education nationwide and support regional innovations and collaboration between education and the world of work (Instituto Federal Rio Grande do Norte, n.d.). The programme participants represented diverse fields of education, for example biology, chemistry, biotechnology,

agricultural engineering, agronomy, computer science, mathematics, linguistic, educational sciences and business administration.

The goal of the programme was to coach the participants to collaboratively rethink and design education and learning environments to better respond to on-going regional and national challenges in Brazil (Ryymin, Kunnari, Joyce, & Laurikainen, 2016). The emphasis of the programme was on the paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogy and local development work.

The VET Teachers for the Future programme was a transnational training, an arrangement in which courses or programs offered by an educational institution based in one country are delivered to students located in another country (Ziguras, 2003; Alam, Alam, Chowdhury, & Steiner, 2013). In this challenging setting, the aim was still to develop and scale context-appropriate educational solutions and innovations in Brazil instead of educational borrowing or “educational tourism” (Oates, 2015, p. 2) in Finland.

The VET Teachers for the Future programme is one of the initiatives of Finland and Brazil to promote Sustainable Development Goal 4, to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, and especially its target 4C “By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers” (United Nations, n.d.).

Local solutions for sustainable education in Brazil – A case of empowering women and girls by “#disque180”

MSc Carolina Corado graduated from The VET Teachers for the Future -pilot programme in 2015. Since then, she has been developing student-centered pedagogy in her institution and implemented an engaging learning project every year, where sustainability, participatory design, student activation and serving the community have been leading principles. She has also been working as a pedagogical developer of teacher in-service training programmes for Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN). In 2017, she received a remarkable award “O Prêmio Professores do Brasil” in her state given by the Brazilian Ministry of Education regarding the recognition of inspiring and innovative pedagogical practices of public school teachers that contribute in a relevant way to raise the quality of Basic Education in Brazil (Ministério da Educação Brasil, n.d.). MSc Carolina Corado was recognized for her fun and challenging student-centered strategies, in which physical, emotional and mental well-being is paramount to the success of the learning process.

The IFRN campus Natal Cidade Alta is located in one of the poorest areas of Natal, Rio Grande do Norte state, Brazil. As in most of the Brazilian Federal Institutes for Education, Sciences and Technology, the vocational education is combined with the general upper secondary school as a four-year vocational integrated course. Among the courses offered by IFRN, the vocational multimedia course gives students competencies in technical and visual media production and commu-

nication, highlighting ethical, social and political responsibility. Last year, MSc Carolina Corado taught biology I module (5 ECTS) to 54 students of a vocational multimedia course. The age range was from 16 to 18 years.

One of the biology modules facilitated by Corado was “Sexuality and human reproduction” that lasted for 8 weeks from November to December 2017. Under this topic, she initiated a new, community-engaging learning project with students. At first, she guided students to familiarize themselves with United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in small groups discuss what should be the most important focus of learning today, in this institution and in this community, under the frame of the references of SDGs. (United Nations, n.d.)

After mindful conversations, the students concluded that they would like to focus on the SDG Nro 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. They had an idea to develop an awareness raising campaign based particularly on the target 5.2: “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation” (United Nations, n.d.). To support their collaborative decision-making, the students sought data released by the Brazilian Ministry of Human Rights (2016) about the reports of violence against women.

The main goal of the campaign was to share the knowledge with the school and local community members in order for them to be able to recognize abusive situations and how to proceed in case those are witnessed, experienced or both. The campaign was implemented in three phases:

- 1) dialogue and problem-based collaborative creation of multimedia awareness material, 2) implementation and dissemination of the awareness raising material, and 3) assessment of the campaign, the process and its results.

An important part of the campaign was to disseminate awareness of the toll-free number 180 for reporting any sort of sexual harassment or violence. The number was created in 2005 by the Brazilian Secretariat of Policies for Women (Presidency of the Republic Brazil, 2005) to serve as a direct channel and knowledge base about women’s rights and public services throughout the country. In March 2014, the number 180 became an anonymous incident reporting hotline with the capacity of sending those cases to Public Security with a copy to the Public Prosecutor of each state. (Ministério dos Direitos Humanos Brasil, 2018.) Thus, the students named their awareness raising campaign after the number 180 with the hashtag “#disque180” (#dial180 in English). The hashtag and information were published online and via printed material. In order to enrich the students’ campaign and to deepen their knowledge of wellbeing, the campus psychologist and medical doctor were invited to students’ project meetings to discuss sexual and other types of exploitation.

In the assessment phase, the students had the opportunity to evaluate the process and its results, as well as their collaborative learning. The students experienced that they had learned more than the study goals of the module; furthermore, they had learned several lifelong learning skills, such as co-operation, communication and problem-solving. According to the feedback survey, it was very important for them to work under the theme they

felt important and topical. They were also very gratified that they had the opportunity to serve their community and manifest the leadership of positive change. Many of them stated they would get involved and take action that would continue throughout their lives:

“I realized how many things there are, prejudices and lack of knowledge about many types of violence, abuse and discomfort felt by women. I think the most frightening thing was realizing that there are still women who do not understand they can say ‘no’ at any time, and this was shocking. I thought the idea of our intervention was great, because this change of mindset begins on our campus.” (A 17-year-old male student)

“I could observe that there is not much discussion about these themes among my friends, sometimes we talk about it, but always for a little while. I was able to understand that discussing machismo, the types of violence that occur in a family, school and work environment are subjects that will permeate my whole life, and knowing about this subject helps me to identify situations that may occur to me or to close friends.” (A 16-year-old female student).

The pedagogical approach and learning methods including student guidance and assessment in the “#disque180” campaign were based on the Finnish-Brazilian VET Teachers for the Future programme.

Reflection

According to UNESCO (2015, p. 20), sustainability is understood as “the responsible action of individuals and societies towards a better future for all, locally and globally – one in which

social justice and environmental stewardship guide socioeconomic development”.

Sterling (2014) illustrates that the education for sustainable development can occur at different forms of engagement referring to curriculum orientations originally presented by Miller (2007) in the context of pre-tertiary education. Firstly, by acquiring basic sustainability knowledge (transmissive), secondly, by reflection about the acquired knowledge (transactional) and thirdly, by creative engagement and the epistemic change in which the mindset moves towards a more holistic, connected, agile and open outlook (transformative). It is important that education for sustainable development goes towards transformative practices. As the “#disque180” campaign revealed, the inclusion of sustainable development into teaching and learning can turn the focus of the educational process to the promotion of social justice and improvement of quality of life for people, addressing basic human needs and linking local and global actions.

The students experienced that their campaign made a difference in their community. Also the World Bank (2018, p. 206) has found out that sustained educational development requires strong partnerships between schools and communities. Especially when incentives for systemwide development are weak, local action can be a substitute. Local innovations and initiatives can harness new approaches to solve complex challenges and have full possibilities to influence policymaking and redesign public services (United Nations Development Programme, 2018, p. 6).

Educational co-operation between Brazil and Finland continues. The spin-

off of the VET Teachers for the Future programme is Finnish Teacher Trainer Diploma, which in turn produced Brazilian teacher in-service training innovation “Brasileiros Formando Formadores” (Amado, 2017).

Many countries face increasingly similar global difficulties (unemployment, inequalities, climate change etc.) and there is now a call for universality and integration as essential features of development. Universality implies that all countries will need to change their development path, each with its own approach and according to its own circumstances (UNESCO, 2015, p. 88).

Successful sustainable development agenda requires global partnerships built upon a shared vision, goals and capacity building. Transnational training initiatives like the VET Teachers for the Future programme may advance the knowledge and the competence for sustainable development implementation by supporting teachers to actively and proactively develop their pedagogical practices towards an innovative education and by strengthening the school-community collaboration. Sustainable partnerships, as the one between Brazilian and Finnish educational institutes briefly described in this report, are important to advance the thinking, the tools and the actions that can lead to a sustainable development pathway, imperative for the 21st century. In the future, it is critical to study the effectiveness and impacts of global co-operation in the field of education and monitor the scaling of learning.

Transnational education is always dialogical by nature and a reciprocally inspiring learning process. The VET Teachers for the Future programme has taught its

Finnish partners that vocational education and training is not only a response to changes occurring in economics – it is also about empowering people with innovative learning methods, knowledge and skills so that they can themselves be catalysts for community change, as it was revealed in “#disque180” campaign.

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