



Peer Evaluation of the Regfood Syllabus



reviewed and written by:

Dr. Eleonore Heil

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1 Intro

The complexity of real problems breaks up the systematics of scientific disciplines and calls for overarching cooperation. Especially the nutrition of the people and the food supply related represent a highly complex system and calls for interdisciplinary approaches of teaching. The reviewed syllabus developed by the "REGFOOD -project" is an interdisciplinary teaching approach and is described to be used in the South Baltic Region and focusses on local and regional food (LRF). The following peer review report describes on micro-level and meso-level, how this curriculum can be integrated in education and focusses primarily on the German academic education. The report points out what opportunities opens up and related recommendations on the possibilities of further development will be given. On the micro-level scope, structure, composition, presentation, modules and ECTS are illuminated. The meso-level is about the integration of the syllabus in German universities, the possibilities for action, the usability and transfer to the teaching as well as on the different views and the possibilities for further development.

2 Micro Level

2.1 Scope, structure and composition as a whole

The course offers an interdisciplinary approach. The topic LRF in the South Baltic Region will be viewed in the dimensions of economy, business management, food sciences and public health perspectives. The course consists of three components. The component "1" provides introductory information about the state of affairs. Component "1" is obligatory, while the components "2" and "3" are addressing specific topics. Both are optional and are used as a complement to component "1".

Learning targets of the course are:



- The participants should get a good understanding of interdisciplinary aspects of LRF in the South Baltic Region.
- Participants should be able to analyze current developments in the LRF production of South Baltic Region and critically evaluate and derive the consequences for the regional economy, health and environment.

The learning objectives in component "1" refer to the food production. An extension of the way of looking at the entire product chain (food production, storage, transport, trade, consumer and disposal) would be useful. That participants will learn to use more possibilities to analyze the problems in all their complexity and to take a more critical look.

The target group of the course is undefined. Designed as an interdisciplinary approach, an explicit address of departments is missing.

2.2 The award of the ECTS

According to the "European Credit Transfer System" (ECTS) it is assumed that 25 to 30 working hours should be absolved to receive one credit point. Each component is marked with a workload of 90 hours, which correspond to three ECTS. A minimum of three ECTS points and a maximum of 6 ECTS can be achieved. The specified workload fits the targeted ECTS. A description with an example of achieving the maximum ECTS with all components would make sense, because it is unclear what the benefit of the attendance to all three components is. With a workload of 270 hours, an allocation of 9 ECTS would be expected but only 6 ECTS are intended. A statement if it's only expected to participate on two components is not precisely made.

The workload for the literature to be prepared and in particular for the implementation and evaluation of the interviews is very tightly calculated (for further explanations also in the following text).



2.3 Literature and Study task

In each component, the mandatory-to-read-literature is named. According to the text, this literature is to be found in a literature folder for each component. In addition, other literature is recommended. Compulsory literature is very extensive and could go beyond the scope of the intended workloads. Named are also publications with high number of pages, which are not limited for the reading. Furthermore the amount of extra literature differs quite a lot per component. In some cases the selected literature refer to US studies and their results, it should be pointed out in the lectures or in the syllabus that those ones are not transferable to the South Baltic Region.

The study task (writing an essay) with 1,200 words is appropriate. Topics and structuring of the study object are not listed.

2.4 Teaching approach

The design of the teaching approach is defined as student-centered and includes short lectures by lecturers followed by group work/ student presentations/ role-playing. In addition, students should perform a practical work, such as conducting interviews with LRF producers. Didactic comments describe possible teaching arrangements with didactical recommendations.

In the didactic recommendations methods of interdisciplinary work and methods of the integration of knowledge should be considered, additionally to the "SWOT analysis" and the "World Cafe" method. Well suited for this would be, for example, the qualitative modeling method NUTRIMOD, the design thinking-lab approach, the "future workshop", "the constellation analysis", the "Placemat"-method, the "World Cafe"-method, the "Fishbowl discussion", etc. More noteworthy are methods which allow the detection of the complexity of topics in LRF, like the NUTRIMOD. For the development of innovations



and business strategies the design thinking-lab or the future workshop would suit very well. both can be used (together with the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)) also transdisciplinary, for instance as a substitute for the interviews.

The expectations that are placed on the students are reasonable and feasible. It is expected that students provide a good preparation and active cooperation.

The evaluation of the participants is split between 60% for writing papers/ essays and 40% for the active participation by presentations and attendance. Unfortunately, the provided evaluation mask doesn't point out if the implementation and evaluation of the interviews will be considered in the assessment.

The course provides a valuable contribution to the interdisciplinary aspects of LRF and contributes to a higher understanding of the problems associated with and to it. Due to the complexity of factors and impact on the nutrition, methods are needed that can reflect these complexity. A SWOT analysis can't afford this alone, so the use of other methods such as NUTRIMOD or constellation analysis should be considered.

An overview of the course components, sections and the content shows a selection of topics that are subordinate to the main theme. The structure is logical and understandable. It becomes clear that the issue of regionalism in all its complexity can't be fully addressed. The component "1" tries fragmentary to provide a broad framework and therefore it offers an overview to the variety in LRF. Unfortunately it's not getting clear that the different aspects are strongly interlinked and influenced by each other. Besides that, the LRF in Denmark, Germany, Lithuania and Sweden is described.

The second component focuses on networking and strategic management of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). An overview of the challenges and opportunities of SMEs shall be offered. In the practical part, the participants should design interviews with SMEs, implement and evaluate them. The scheduled time for this is too short, when the methodical work should be done well. The selected literature for qualitative research



provides an overview of options, but provides too little information for each method. Recommendable would be at this point to select two or three adequate opportunities such as expert interviews and focus group interviews. Furthermore an appropriate evaluation option as the qualitative content analysis, sequence analysis or conversation analysis should be recommended. Unfortunately the targeted Grounded Theory method is too costly and unsuitable for this course design; nevertheless it is described in the literature. Additionally to the interviews a business strategy should be designed in practice work. More than the scheduled 30 hours should be planned for this scope.

In the third component aspects of food quality, food culture and health are addressed. At the beginning of the section the syllabus suggests the presentation of a British film on nutrition and health, which is based on British advertisement campaigns. This has to be evaluated critically. Therefore this review recommends that every country (Germany, Denmark, Sweden or Lithuania) select custom movies.

3 Meso level - Implementation of the syllabus - possibilities of integration

The syllabus can be integrated into many areas of university operations due to its interdisciplinary basis. For example, students from disciplines such as Economy, Trade, Nutritional Sciences, Food Technology, Sociology, Social Work, Psychology, Medicine, Law and Environmental Management can participate and get involved subject-specific, to broaden their horizons interdisciplinary and experience an emergent knowledge increase in LRF.

In addition, the course can be integrated across disciplines and offered as part of the integration of knowledge to develop additional extraordinary skills. For this purpose, an expansion of the approaches and methods for integration knowledge and problem-solving strategies would be useful. The topics of the components can show the interconnectedness and complexity of diet associated problems. The syllabus can be



carried out by lecturers with basic knowledge in methods of knowledge integration and knowledge of the regional food production chain with access to SMEs. In transdisciplinary settings regional structures and local business strategies can be worked out and be analyzed to strengthen the needs of local and regional producers in the region.

Students can connect, relate and integrate their knowledge from various views of the topics in diet disciplines and subjects. They learn in disciplines and interdisciplinary collaborations to work together on problems. They come into contact with regional and local SME's that allow them to work together to develop business strategies that can strengthen the region. The students learn special features of inter- and transdisciplinary problem-solving processes. The limits of the course design can be seen in the tightly structured time management of the components, the lack of reflection possibility related to the problem based - method selection. Business structures are to be developed, but implementation remains unnoticed. It's not mentioned how the results can be transferred into practice.

The interregional approach of the teaching concept offers opportunities to find and adapt best-practice examples beyond the regional and local environment.

A critical examination of the literature and transferability to the German setting should be carried out. The syllabus is transferable as a whole or in parts. In relation to the German teaching it can be carried out as a block module or as an interdisciplinary further training concept.



4 Information of the reviewer:

Dr. Eleonore Heil is a researcher at the University of Giessen and is an expert in Nutrition Ecology. She has long term expertise of teaching and been involved in several projects in nutrition.

Her professional interests and expertise are:

- Development and influencing factors of nutritional behavior
- Complex sustainability problems
- Quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Nutrition policy
- Food quality, food safety



Contact:

Phone: +49 (0)641-99-39051

E-Mail: Eleonore.Heil@ernaehrung.uni-giessen.de