Domestic Sciences/Nutritional Science

Course: Nutritional Science
Group of courses: Agricultural, Forestry and Nutritional Studies
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Course objectives:

Students should understand, analyse and use theories and empirical knowledge of domestic science from a gender perspective. They should recognise that private and public processes of life organisation, meeting needs and further developing forms of life have gender-specific structural, sociocultural and individual connotations. They should be familiarised with both the historical development of gender relations in relation to everyday life and life organisation, and the current conflicts and future perspectives for development, and be able to deal with these in the context of domestic science. They should be capable of finding possible solutions for a gender-inclusive organisation of life, taking into account social, cultural and economical implications, and of relating these to the micro-level of households and families, the meso-level of neighbourhoods, communities and public bodies, and the macro-level of the state and society.

Teaching content/subject-specific gender studies content:

In modules entitled ‘household socio-economics’, ‘business studies’ (including resource management), ‘residential ecology’, ‘nutrition’, and ‘health’, the following key contents are taught:

- households and their functions; household needs; households in the consumer society; providers and consumers in the market; and the proactive role of households in a market economy
- household resources (material and immaterial): how they are generated, built up, and used
- (quality of) life management in the household and in society; households with collaborative sourcing strategies
- health, body care, and risk behaviour
- forms of life/household types: family, partnerships, single member households; service households; outsourcing households
- lifestyles and socio-cultural milieus; life situations; life phases; social norms and their importance for life management; demographic change; household work; compatibility of family and working life; work-life balance
- rationalization and mechanization as strategies for making supply services more effective: opportunities and limitations; designing sustainable supply services
- household performance in the areas of health, nutrition, and living (supply, use, and problems)
- eating habits and food culture(s) as socio-demographically and socio-culturally determined categories

When dealing with these topics, attention is paid to the general socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions that govern homemaking and life management. Likewise, the (sometimes contradictory) expectations and the consequences of decisions are considered for the individual, the community, and society.

When teaching these contents, the aim is to highlight the gender perspective, with gender understood both as a category of social structure and as a perspective guiding individual interpretations and actions. This also involves ‘gender-specific’ interpretations of biological differences. It is only by incorporating such interpretations that we can understand, analyse, and shape the interests and the motivations that guide individuals’ actions, as well the interrelations between individual life management and the socio-structural level.

Integration of gender studies content into the curriculum:

Home economists have been addressing gender-specific issues in variety of ways since the 1980s. Their work was reflected in publications, conferences, or curricular changes. Sometimes, it even served to effect changes in university structure: the University of Stuttgart, for example, eventually established a centre of competence on ‘nutrition and gender’.

The topics that have been receiving increased attention include:

- gender roles and the division of household labour
- gender-specific socialization in the household/family and in public institutions of socialization (including the resultant aspirations and lifestyles)
- gender roles, home economics and home ecology
- compatibility of family and working life / work-life balance
- social inequality and poverty
- health, risk, and eating behaviour and activities, as well as food culture considered under gender aspects.

However, gender-related topics up to this point have only rarely been explicitly included as required modules in most degree programmes. Whether it is in the basic natural science subjects or in the basic socio-economic subjects, students continue to receive too little exposure to gender perspectives. It would be desirable, therefore, to teach these contents on a broad, scientifically sound basis involving multiple perspectives, and to so in required modules such as ‘nutrition science’, ‘household socio-economics’, ‘business studies’, ‘consumer education/consumer policy/consumerism’, or ‘residential ecology’. When developing a disciplinary self-understanding and when creating degree programmes, integrating gender-related questions presents a great opportunity for getting up to speed with current issues in terms of designing fair, sustainable, and forward-looking social policies (e.g. work-life balance). This would also help create attractive new employment opportunities for graduates. Alternatively, a ‘small solution’ may be considered, involving the introduction of gender-related modules, partial modules, or required content in module descriptions – possibly in the required electives field and/or as interdisciplinary programmes (e.g. in conjunction with degree programmes with a focus on social education or ergonomics).

Degree Stage:

All of the above is basic study content that should be taught at the bachelor’s level in all degree programmes in this field (including those that train students to become teachers).

The exact placement of this content within the degree structure may vary; however, the fundamentals (see above) should be established during the first three semesters. This is especially important as a basis for self-reflection, because students still tend to choose their fields of study very much based on gender (i.e. home economics is a so-called female-dominated field of study). Based on this foundation, students may pursue in-depth studies in their chosen field, with an emphasis on education or application (e.g. gender and nutrition, household service concepts under the aspect of gender fairness, household-related education opportunities for boys/men, etc.).

Basic Literature/Recommended Reading:

Methfessel, Barbara & Schlegel-Matthies, Kirsten (Hrsg.) (2003). Fokus Haushalt - Beiträge zur Sozioökonomie des Haushalts. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider

Setzwein, Monika (2004): Ernährung - Körper - Geschlecht. Zur sozialen Konstruktion von Geschlecht im kulinarischen Kontext

Methfessel, Barbara (2004): Ernährungsleitbilder und Geschlecht. In: Doris Hayn & Claudia Empacher (Hrsg.), Ernährung anders gestalten. Leitbilder für eine Ernährungswende (31-39). München

Kettschau, I.: Haushaltsführung als Beitrag zur Armutsprävention - Konzepte, Kompetenzen, Förderungsbedarf. In: Zander, M. (Hrsg.): Kinderarmut - Forschungsergebnisse und Soziale Praxis. Publikation in der Reihe "Armut und Kindheit" - VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften/GWV Fachverlage: Wiesbaden 2005, S. 235-252

Kettschau, I.; Methfessel, B.: Neue Haushalts- und Familienarbeit. In: Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband e. V. (Hg.): Neue Hauswirtschaft. Ein Material für Multiplikator/innen der familien- und haushaltsbezogenen Bildung. Berlin 2005, S. 38-63

Kettschau, I.: Familienarbeit als Zeitkonflikt. In: Hauswirtschaft und Wissenschaft, 51. Jg., Heft 4/2003, Sonderheft "50 Jahre Hauswirtschaft und Wissenschaft", S. 171-178

Meier, Uta/Preuße, Heide/Sunnus, Eva Maria (2003): Steckbriefe von Armut. Haushalte in prekären Lebenslagen. Wiesbaden

Meier-Gräwe, Uta/Zander, Uta (2005): Veränderte Familienzeiten - Neue Balancen zwischen Männern und Frauen? In: Mischau, A./Oechsle, M. (Hg.): Arbeitszeit - Familienzeit - Lebenszeit: Verlieren wir die Balance? Zeitschrift für Familienforschung, Sonderheft, S. 92-109

Meier, Uta (2004): Bedarfsgerechte und verlässliche Ganztagsangebote als unverzichtbare Kontextbedingung familialer Lebensführung. In: Neue Praxis, 34. Jg., H. 6, S. 543-549

Journals:

Hauswirtschaft und Wissenschaft