

Digital library education on Master level in Borås, Copenhagen, and Oslo Qualitative case study

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***Abstract:** The paper offers a short overview of a Master Thesis that offers a qualitative comparative case study on digital library education programmes in master level in Borås and Oslo, and the digital library related elements of LIS Master Programme curricula in Borås, Copenhagen and Oslo.. The comparative analysis is placed into a wider global and European context with a literature review. Some interviews made with programme coordinators in Borås and Oslo is also referred at the thesis but these are not primary resources just add some more details to the content based on written documents and articles. The major research questions are: How do the three Scandinavian library schools in Copenhagen, Oslo, and Borås adapt digital library education related subjects in their master programmes? In which curricular form do these digital education subjects appear in the current programmes? Is it possible to determine some common features in the represented topics or education aims of the different programmes and schools? Sub-questions refer mainly to the internationalization of digital library education and to the effects of on-campus and distance course delivery ways to curricula. The paper is discussing the summary of the main findings to these research questions focusing on the most relevant common points of the programmes; It refers to a comparative framework on the subject, content and contextualization ways of different education modules.*

Keywords: Comparison, qualitative case study, digital library education, Master level, Scandinavia

Introduction

Digital library education has become a popular topic in the recent years. A recent book of Anna-Maria Tammaro and Sue Myburgh (Tammaro & Myburgh, 2012) focuses on this topic in general. An earlier thesis by Nafiz Shuva (Shuva, 2011) described an overview about digital library education in Europe based on a quantitative survey design.

The currently summarized master thesis (Németh, 2013) uses a narrower perspective. It offers a qualitative comparative case study on digital library education in master level focusing on three library schools in Borås, Copenhagen and Oslo. These schools represent the most comprehensive education and research capabilities in this region (Denmark, Norway and Sweden).

The main research design is qualitative. The major thesis sources are programme, curricula and course descriptions and academic articles. The main focus is on the qualitative analysis of curricula, course descriptions, and further relevant online and offline materials. These documents can help to determine the general profile, academic focus, major features and elements of the different programmes. Some interviews made with programme coordinators in Borås and Oslo are also referred at the thesis. These are not primary resources, just add some more details to the content based on written documents and articles. The thesis style more like descriptive than interpretive by an elaboration of comparative analysis and research findings subjects without long interpretive discussions.

The comparative case study initially focuses on curricula of digital library education programmes. The DILL is a programme that is coordinated from Oslo with two additional partners and two programmes from Borås are in this group. Furthermore comparison also

focuses on digital library education elements of LIS master programmes curricula in all three cities.

The comparative analysis is placed into a global and European context by a literature review. The literature review introduces some models that help to contextualize the comparison and seems to be relevant in context of the evolution of digital library master programmes by DILL and in Borås. These models represent the iSchool community, the European LIS curriculum Project, the thesis framework of Nafiz Shuva about digital library education from Europe and the Digital Library Curriculum Project from the USA.

Followed by a short summary of the literature review the thesis offers a brief general introduction to Scandinavian LIS education for a further conceptualization of the main comparative topic.

The comparative analysis initially describes and compares digital library programmes with each other. In the following the horizon widens to the digital library elements of the LIS master programmes. By the end all the programmes are placed and analysed in a common comparative framework.

Research questions, analysis, major findings

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In my thesis I use a programme-based perspective. I am comparing the programmes with a special focus on digital library education.

I chose a programme based perspective mainly because some master programmes are specifically devoted to digital library education (in Oslo and in Borås). Some others appear by their names to be general LIS programmes seem to have also a certain digital library direction (in all three schools). The programmes themselves represent a context I could study. I can determine the position of digital education subjects in their curricular context in the programmes of the different schools then compare them with each other. I can use the previous results of Nafiz Shuva's thesis to help determine certain aspects of digital library education. I can find out how the general European subject preferences of the curricula on Master level according to the respondents in that thesis can be applied to the case of the three Scandinavian library schools.

The general question as I referred above can be further detailed by the following specific sub-questions. By these sub-questions I would like to focus on some specific elements in that comprehensive general topic. These elements can also be referred to as general LIS programmes and specific digital library master programmes in the different schools.

What are the major topics related to digital librarianship in the curricula in general LIS programmes on the master level? In which way are these topics represented in one or more specialisation tracks and in the single course level in curricula? In case of specific digital library programmes, what kind of conceptions, models have formed current curricula in case of the specific digital library programmes? What kinds of topics are emphasized in the curricula? Can the modules or tracks in the specific digital library programmes be compared to topics and aims in some modules or tracks of the general LIS programmes? What is the relationship between the theoretical and practical elements of the digital library curricula?

What kind of perceptions some programme leaders have of the curricular appearance and strength of practical and theoretical elements? Do the international programmes share courses with national master programmes in the same institution? What kind of cooperation can be determined among programmes in each institution? How are the specific programmes in each city delivered: via on-campus mode or via distance education? Why the schools chose the current form of delivery? What are the major advantages and disadvantages of these forms? What are the specific features of the on-campus and distance delivery mode that can be relevant to the management of the programme?

The following main aspects and topics were used by the analysis of the digital library master programmes:

A short overview about the beginnings of digital library education programme development; Brief description of two basic conceptual models for structuring digital library programmes; a basic overview about DiSe (Digital Services- Culture, Information & Communication Master Programme) from Borås as an example that appears as a collaboration model with the cultural heritage sector; international collaboration, institutional strategies, external environmental effects by programme planning; targeting of the programmes; brief summary of descriptive and comparative elements in some issues related to course delivery forms; basic description and comparison of modular structure of digital library master programmes; programme planning issues; some major points directed to the origin of similarities among digital library master programmes; brief description on some aspects of differences among digital library master programmes; comparing module structure among digital library education master programmes based on the model by Elena Maceviciute.

As a summary it can be stated that the three digital library programmes have some common theoretical basics founded on also the joint professional view by the leading professors. The target groups and aims of the programmes somewhat different. DiSe programme in Borås has formed to local needs by a local scope. The other two international digital library master programmes have global view by international programmes and by English as a language of instruction. The delivery of the programmes differs so much by the case of DILL (Digital Library Learning) and the two programmes in Borås. However DILL from 2013 is also offered in a distance mode as an alternative option. The Swedish programmes are more technology-oriented and more practice-based than DILL. On the other hand all the three programmes offer an insight to each major aspect of digital librarianship by human, organisational, information system and information content characteristics as well.

The next analytical chapter widened the horizon of digital library master programmes by introducing the digital library elements of LIS master programmes. It also offered an introduction to the contextualization of these elements in programme curricula. At the end both types of programmes were put into a common analytical framework.

The main chapter subjects were the following:

Description and comparison of basic module and course structure by LIS Master programmes in Oslo and Copenhagen; a descriptive and comparative narrative based on the appearance of digital library related topics in LIS Master programmes through various curricula structures; a complex comparison through an extended common framework based on subject types of modules; contextualization of modules related to digital library programmes and LIS master programmes in Oslo and Copenhagen

As a summary it can be stated that similar types of modules can be categorized in a common context regardless their relation to digital library or LIS Master programmes. The contextualization of the modules in their native programme environment is mainly influenced

by the different kind of programme designs and not by their names. LIS programmes in Copenhagen are as digital library oriented as the dedicated programmes in the other two cities.

Discussion

Followed by the analysis the discussion refers some major issues regarded to the research questions and some issues refer to the analysis. The discussion mainly reflected on the research questions and to some general issues that appeared through the analysis. The first major topic focused on the possible existence of a major Scandinavian way of curricula designs in digital library education. The second discussion sub-chapter focused on some issues related to the research questions. This discussion overview based on the major topics, conceptions, models and their representation in curricula. The basic considerations directed to all programmes seem to be really similar. The major difference appears on the implementation of the basic ideas via the programme design. Two major types of programme designs were discussed by discipline and profession-based directions. The choice over the two major design models mainly depends on the strategy of the host institutions, departments and the expectations of professors and students. Internationalization effects of digital library education and the various types of course delivery forms were also discussed.

Summary

The main results from the comparative thesis:

A major common point of Scandinavian digital library education is the focus on cultural mediation in a digital environment. The aim is not to train IT-technicians but educate digital library experts with broad comprehensive competences and skills in all major digital library dimensions.

Elena Maceviciute built up a model to compare digital library programmes in Borås with the DILL programme based on different main types of modules that represents all the major topic divisions of these programmes (Maceviciute, 2011). That comparative framework could be extended to the digital library related modules of LIS master programmes in Oslo and in Copenhagen. The framework is focusing on the subject, content and contextualization ways of modules: the elements can be comparable with each other by their main topic dimensions regardless their belongings to different programme types.

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