

# **Primary student teachers' perceptions of their prior experiences with craft-making in light of Hannah Arendt's human condition**

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*This article presents the results of a study about student teachers' feelings toward craft-making and teaching crafts. As a teacher educator in teacher training, my interest lies first in student teachers' prior craft experiences and in their prejudices about themselves as craft-makers in relation to the human condition as set forth by philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958/2002). Second, I am interested in how students' experiences and their image of crafts affect their attitude to crafts and teaching crafts. The study uses qualitative content analysis (e.g. Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), concept clarification (e.g. Kramer, 1993; Burkin, 2011) and thought experiments (Zalta, 2011; Cohnitz, 2006; Sorensen, 1992) to identify and categorise student teachers' emotional experiences. The data consist of essays (craft biographies, N=144) by first-year student teachers which were written in 2008 and 2009 during a basic course in crafts as part of teacher education at the University of Helsinki. Arendt (1958/2002) labelled the elements of the human condition as labour, work and action. In this study I discuss how, for instance, Arendtian concepts could be explained in relation to crafts, craft-making and education. Arendt categorises craft, defined as things made by hand, as part of the concept of work. In this study, I consider whether crafts and craft-making could be part of other Arendtian terms as well and how these terms fit various educational situations. As a result, there is a need for additional terms alongside Arendtian terms to describe multifaceted craft-making and primary student teachers' perceptions of themselves as craft-makers. In relation to student teachers' memories on primary school crafts, I have labelled Arendtian concept labour as students' credit-orientated activity, the concept of work as making-orientated activity and the concept of action as interaction-orientated activity. These three orientations of craft frame student teachers' perceptions of themselves as craft-makers and their attitude to crafts.*

**Keywords:** crafts education, teacher education, emotional experience, Hannah Arendt, the human condition

## **The aim of the study**

Having worked for 18 years as a teacher educator in teacher training in different areas of education, I am keenly interested in diverse approaches to supporting student teachers' abilities in teaching crafts. The current study explores the prior craft experiences of student teachers and their perceptions of themselves as craft-makers and how these experiences are seen in light of the philosopher Hannah Arendt's (1958) theory of the human condition (involving the concepts of labour, work, action). Some researchers have claimed that prior experiences and feelings can affect student teachers' attitudes and the development of their teaching skills (Kagan, 1992; Har Lam & Kember, 2004). My primary intention in this study is to explore how prior emotional experiences in crafts may affect student teachers' human image of themselves as craft-makers and how feelings affect student teachers' attitudes and motivation to engage in crafts and their professional development as future primary teachers.

I also touch on how teacher training and craft education could respond to current cultural conditions and what kinds of basic skills are required by society of teachers today? Our rapidly changing world

requires diverse qualities from humans such as communication skills, interaction skills, creativity, independence and ability to adjust continuously to new conditions. Also Arendt, in her essays in *The Crisis in Education* (1961) and her book *The Human Condition* (1958), tried to articulate something of the difficulty that education “entails for every human society” (Arendt, 1958, p. 185; cf. Higgins, 2010a, 2010b; Hinchliffe, 2010). Geoff Hinchliffe (2010), in interpreting Arendt’s writings claims that teachers have a responsibility to develop a capability for action in their pupils and their students. According to Hinchliffe, this goes beyond instruction and includes the creation of conditions in which students can start to take risks and responsibility for themselves.

## Data and analysis

The data consist of primary 144 student teachers’ essays (craft biographies, altogether 214 pages), written at the beginning of the first year in a basic craft course in teacher education in 2008 and 2009. The basic craft course consists of textile and technology studies and the students could emphasise one of the other content. The data were collected from students attending the crafts course with an emphasis on textiles. The task (the craft biography) was included in the textile course requirements and therefore was obligatory for the participants. The students were asked permission for their writings to be used for research. Two refused.

The students were asked to write one to three pages about their prior craft experiences and their feelings about crafts in primary and secondary school as well as outside of school. In addition they were asked to explore their present relationship to crafts and the teaching of crafts. The craft biographies are based on memories and the findings should be considered in light of this fact. With passage of time there is danger of losing the nuances of events and emotions. Verbalising and defining feelings always run risk of some emotions being omitted (Rantala, 2006). Also, at the time students were writing the craft biographies, their recent feelings may have affected the content, which is not accounted for here. However, strong experiences, feelings and emotions tend to persist over time. In fact, it has been claimed that the quality of students’ school experiences plays a significant role in the way student teachers’ respond to their initial teacher education programme and their perceptions of teaching (Nettle, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Har Lam & Kember, 2004; Russell-Bowie, 2012). Enhancing knowledge of students’ prior experiences may help teachers of crafts to understand better the needs of students.

The ages of student teachers at the beginning of the basic craft course range from 18 to 44, of which more than half (63%) were between 20 and 25 years of age (see Table 1). The sample was predominantly female, with only seven male students included.

Table 1. Student teachers’ age ranges

Age	18-19	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45
	7%	63%	15%	9%	3%	3%
	(10/144)	(91/144)	(22/144)	(13/144)	(4/144)	(4/144)

Along with age differences student teachers’ background skills in crafts varied a good deal, owing to crucial changes in teaching arts and crafts in basic education, such as a decrease of in the number of class hours over the last several decades (Karppinen, 2011). The same tendency has occurred in arts and crafts in teacher education. Today’s particular challenge in teacher education is how to endow students with adequate teaching skills and the courage to teach crafts at the primary level, as well as to respond to the requirements of future societies.

The data were analysed through qualitative content analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), and subsequently later interpreted through concept clarification (e.g. Kramer, 1993; Burkin, 2011) and thought experiments (e.g. Sorensen, 1992; Zalta, 2011). The analysis aimed to raise various experiences, emotions and feelings qualitatively, not to measure them quantitatively. As Zalta (2011) notes, thought experiments are most often communicated in narrative form and illustrate by features a process for visualising a situation, carrying out an activity, seeing what happens and drawing a conclusion. Thought experiments are a strategy of the imagination used to investigate the nature of things (Zalta, 2011). He raises how Karl Popper (1959), for example, distinguishes several categories of thought experiments ranging from heuristic (to illustrate a theory) to critical (against a theory) and apologetic (in favour of a theory). The main distinction here is constructive vs. destructive. Another viewpoint includes those thought experiments that aim to demonstrate that the theory in question conflicts with other commonly held beliefs. (Zalta, 2011.) This study employs this latter view, which highlights 'instinctive knowledge' from experience (see, e.g. Sorensen, 1992, pp. 51–75). Concept clarification analyses by critically thinking about an abstract idea (or concept) in order to deepen our understanding of its meaning and implications (Novak, 2007). It is a process of meaning-making through: 1) formulating purposes; 2) choosing, examining, and integrating data sources; and 3) presenting a final conceptualization that can also be examined for adequacy (cf. Kramer, 1993). The central challenge in concept clarification is to understand how words create things, meaning and practices.

Here, the data were first categorized roughly according to Arendt's concepts (labour, work and action). Second, they were coded according to categories (emotional experiences and feelings, craft-making at home, relationship with crafts, meaningfulness of making things by hand, and attitude toward crafts). Third, the data were explored through concept clarification and thought experiments to compare the content with Arendtian concepts; they were then decoded to fit the context of crafts.

## **The theoretical background**

The study is outlined by the definition of emotion (Määttä, 2006; Buckley & Saarni, 2006) and the theory of the human condition by Hannah Arendt (1958/2002). Craft-making has been closely integrated into human life since humans began using their hands. Today, instead of only producing everyday items, crafts has been linked to various meanings (such as self-expression, communication and therapy), and hand skills are vital part of many professions. Making things by hand is, as well, essentially connected with emotions. I consider emotions and feelings to be a medium through which individuals are connected to human existence. In this article I try to interpret Arendtian human actions (1958/2002) through emotional craft experiences.

### *Emotions in learning*

Experiencing and learning a craft-making is an active mental and physical process, involving both emotion and cognition. Emotions and feelings in these processes can vary from joy and enthusiasm to hate and frustration. Emotions and feelings seem to affect, sometimes crucially, student teachers' attitudes to and motivation in their craft-making (Kagan, 1992). Feelings are developed and intertwined in mind, body, biology and the culture (Määttä, 2006). Määttä (2006) explicates that in the human experience, feelings and emotions form a net, an affective state, which expresses a combination of feelings in certain situations and contexts. This means that students may experience a variety of feelings simultaneously, intentionally or instinctively while doing a craft. As for, moods, unlike emotions, are relatively low-intensity; they tend to be diffuse and long-lasting emotional conditions that are often subconscious and have no salient route (Forgas & Wyland, 2006; Määttä, 2006). As Buckley and Saarni (2006) emphasise, our emotional functioning develops and is revealed in our

everyday lives, depending on the ongoing exchange between a person and his or her environment. Furthermore, they add, we actively create our emotional experiences through the combined influence of our cognitive developmental structures and our social contacts with emotional discourse. Through this process, we learn what it means to feel something.

A growing number of studies reveal a connection between socio-emotional intelligence and academic success, as well as the positive impact of socio-emotional programmes on academic skill development (Ciarrochi, Forgas & Mayer, 2006; Buckley & Saarni, 2006; Mayer, 2006; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011). Feelings seem to have a crucial effect on learning, either inspiring or hindering a person. Failure and unpleasant learning experiences rather frequently generate negative feelings and disappointing learning outcomes. Those feelings may be linked to anxiety, frustration or hate. Likewise, joy and satisfaction may increase positive learning outcomes leading to excitement, high self-esteem, learning intensity and success (Määttä, 2006). Unfortunately, student teachers often enter universities with anxiety about crafts and craft-making as a result of poor experiences and negative attitudes built up over a lifetime.

Over the years various educational psychologists have proposed frameworks of emotion and learning such as Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956), multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999), emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000; Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995) and emotional competence (e.g. Buckley & Saarni, 2006). Goleman (1995) considers emotional competence to be one of the abilities that help motivate the self to persist in the face of frustration, to feel confident, to be socially competent. Even if emotion is often neglected in education, despite its effect on learning, it may play an essential role in motivating students to make things by hand and in generating various attitudes toward crafts. Other key factors affecting student teachers' professional growth are prior experience, the quality of their own school experiences and the content of their initial teacher education programme (Kagan, 1992), all of which in turn affect their attitude to teaching a subject. In addition to the effect that emotions may have on students' attitudes to crafts, emotions may also affect their self-esteem and human actions in everyday life (cf. Forgas & Wyland, 2006, p. 77). In this study my intention is to explore, in addition to attitude toward crafts, how student teachers' prior emotional experiences with crafts are based on their very existence as humans.

### *Arendt's concepts of the human condition*

In her book *The Human Condition* (in Finnish *Vita Activa*, 2002), philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) discussed three fundamental activities of human existence: *labour*, *work* and *action*. By *labour* Arendt means our everyday activities carried out to (such as eating and sleeping); *labour* is non-productive, as there will be no concrete product in the end. By *work* Arendt signifies productive activity, a process of making something, such as craft-making, resulting in an end product, which makes sense in an individual's mind. The concept of *work*, according to Arendt, creates the world around us. Arendt's third human *activity*, *action*, is also defined as productive activity, but immaterial activity. *Action* means communication between humans. Thus, action is connected with plurality and comes about through the fact that 'men, not Man, live on the earth'. (Arendt 2002, p. 15-16.)

Arendt (1958) considered humanity through the things that people do in order to make sense of our world (labouring to sustain ourselves, creating artefacts and acting to promote interdependent activities and meaningful lives). Although Arendt's philosophy and works are fundamentally politically coloured, they have their value and are transferable to many areas. Arendt essentially basically categorised crafts as part of the concept of *work*, and art as part of the concept of *action*. In this study, however, craft making is analysed through all three of Arendt's concepts of human activities (*labour*, *work*, *action*) by exploring student teachers' prior experiences with craft education.

Those experiences are significantly connected with the personalities of their teachers, with how they have been taught and the kind of communication and relationship that developed between a teacher and pupils. For students, who have chosen to become teachers themselves, those experiences are important in creating images of themselves as craft-makers and future teachers, even though crafts will be only one subject in their future teaching repertoire as primary teachers. As my interest in this article is fundamentally connected with teaching, my task is to advance arguments for how student teachers' emotional experiences with crafts are outcomes of teaching-learning interactions, thereby creating the student teachers' images of themselves as future teachers.

By *Labour* Arendt (2002, p. 15) means activities that support life and provide sustenance. Labour consists of the work of a physical body by which humans are linked to human life. Arendt claimed that *labour* is the activity that corresponds to the biological processes of the human body. A sign of the process, according to Arendt, is repetition, and the human condition of labour is life itself. Arendt stated that *labour* is connected to the obligations and necessities of life. During this process no permanent things are created. (Arendt 2002, p. 15.) Arendt distinguished *labour*, as a non-productive activity, from a productive activity *work* (Arendt 2002, p. 90-93). Even though a process in which no articles are created is not central to craft overall, I assume that craft-making and learning through the craft process is *labour*, for example, for small children in the Arendtian sense. Small children repeat their gestures (as in painting on fabric) unconsciously, while consciously trying to find out how their bodies move and perceive distances. These are vital conditions of young children's lives, and also the basis of human life through self-knowledge and self-awareness. (Karppinen 2005, 2008.) Also, craft-making as therapeutic activity may serve human life by harmonizing individuals' physical, mental, social and emotional well-being. Making things by hand has a therapeutic nature by sensory, psychological and social significance, something that enhances personal strengths and functioning in individual's life (Pöllänen, 2009).

Arendt (2002) signifies productive activity by the concept of work in the sense that a process is followed to bring a material object into being. Through created artefacts and work human beings are connected with the surrounding world. Further on, Arendt explains that the human condition of *work* is worldliness. Hence, *work* is an activity that communicates with human existence, which means that artefacts are created by re-shaping the world with the intention of defining the maker. (Arendt, 2002, pp. 15-16, 139.)

Whereas Arendtian *labour* indicates resignation and work indicates equality, Arendt's (1958/2002) third *activity* of the human condition, action, signifies otherness. *Action* means communication between humans. Action is connected with plurality and comes about because we do not live alone on the earth (Arendt, 2002, p. 15). *Action* is the only activity that exists directly between individuals. Meaningful life, in Arendt's view, rests on communication: individuals can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and themselves. Plurality corresponds to a very broad category of human activity, which covers interactions with other people (Arendt, 2002, pp. 179-183). It is not a matter of routine behaviour, but requires personal initiative primarily consisting of the intention to create something entirely new (like in art), such as new associations under particular conditions. It is something which emerges also in collaborative creative processes in crafts, arts and design.

As craft-making is material and teaching is immaterial and interactional, there is a temptation to categorise these two as Arendt (1958, 1961) does, namely craft-making as *work* and teaching as *action*. However, Arendt's outline of education has recently stirred critical discussion (e.g. Hinchliffe, 2010; Higgins, 2010a, 2010b; Duarte, 2010). In connection with the place of pedagogy in Arendt's human condition, Chris Higgins (2010b) asks: Can teaching itself be a form of *action*, or is it simply *work*, even *labour*, ennobled solely by its connection to the future action of students? Likewise, I want

to discuss the place of craft-making and craft education in the context of Arendtian human condition. This is one interpretation of Arendt's theory and a trial to understand student teachers' experiences in crafts through her theory. I seek not to question Arendt's theory and concepts, but to demonstrate her concepts through thought experiments and concept clarification in the context of crafts.

## Results

During the data analysis, it became evident that the entire content of human craft-making among student teachers could not explicitly be described by Arendtian concepts of the human condition. I have therefore reconceptualised Arendt's concepts of *labour*, *work* and *action* to fit the craft context.

The concept of labour is decoded as *credit-orientated activity*. That means that student emotions and images of themselves as craft-makers are seen primarily as connected to dependency on others (though with rather unconstructive emotions). The concept of work indicates more or less optimistic experiences in which the process of making crafts with an end product in mind makes sense to an individual; here this is called *making-orientated activity*. Arendt's third human activity, *action*, is described here as *interaction-orientated activity* describing expectant feelings and activities for something new. The following sections will clarify these orientations.

### Credit-orientated activity

In the context of the present study, students' *credit-orientated activity* includes students' images of themselves as craft-makers with actions of defence and resignation. These actions comprise an individual's being tightly bound to others, including their desires and criticisms. This creates in the individual feelings of unskilfulness, passing a course without devotion to it, a serious focus on earning high marks or carrying out teachers' instructions. Arendt's view of *labour* is derived from Aristoteles's writings during the Greek classical period where the distinction between slaves, who performed physical work, and free craftsmen (*kheiro tekhnēs*) was clear. At that time, however, slavery was not necessarily an undervalued position, only that some individuals were obligated to do work under the command of others (Arendt, 2002, pp. 84-89). This connection with dependency raises in the context of craft-making students' feelings of hesitation and indecision.

Student teachers' craft experiences prior to the craft course could be explained through the *credit-orientated activity* as an action in which a concrete product is not the main interest or is discounted. Instead, students' prior experiences making craft seems to be work that has to be done without any particular interest in it or the meaning of the action is elsewhere. Illustrative examples are those students who have compressed craft making at school mainly into a package to pass a course, an overwhelming desire to get high marks or to carry out teachers' instructions, as follows:

I remember as a girl who always got 'tens' how terrible it was to get eight in crafts on a school report. (Female, 21) [author's note: Finnish school report marks range from 4 to 10]

We had skilful teachers and good resources. I was good in crafts, but I indeed aimed at high marks. Only later did I understand the value of making things by hand." (Female, 20)

In *credit-orientated activity* human action frequently has a rather unpleasant meaning in the sense that, instead of enriching students' willingness to engage in craft making and develop their skills and enthusiasm, the opposite has happened. For example, having good marks is very positive sign of success, but at the same time it might create a rather destructive phenomenon. In the creation and production artefacts lose meaning, and students engage with action mostly in combination with unwilling emotions. The joy of making something disappears and action becomes a compulsory deed. The 'human existence in crafts' is drowned out by the emotions of disinclination. The difference

between productive and non-productive activity is seen in the way Arendt distinguishes *labour* from *work*. The focus in the Arendtian concept of *labour* is on ways of maintaining the self (Arendt, 2002, pp. 90-93). If I interpret Arendtian *labour* straightforwardly, in the kind of craft making practiced at school maintaining the self appears not only as sustaining the body, but also as mental sustenance. It is a question of the stressfulness of the work. Aristotle, on whose writings Arendt based her theory of the human condition, discussed 'enervating' work; i.e. work that mostly enervates the body (Arendt, 2002, pp. 84-87). Instead of being bodily enervating, students' emotional expressions clearly indicate how mentally stressful it might be to overcome the negative impact of feelings about crafts as follows:

Textile lessons were very oppressive all the time in primary school. The atmosphere there was fraught and disapproving, and the teacher was not very helpful .... there was comparing and ranking of works ... not only by the teacher, but also by the pupils. (Female, 25)

In the fifth and sixth classes I started to hate crafts. ... my craft teacher changed, and the chemistry just wasn't right between us. I was maybe a bit of an annoying pupil because I was restless and got enormously frustrated if I didn't get help with my problems immediately. Along the line there wasn't any encouragement to do independent problem solving.... Sometimes I was even afraid to go to the craft lessons because of the teacher... (Female, 21)

As Buckley and Saarni (2006) emphasise our emotional functioning is revealed in our everyday situations between a person and her environment. We dynamically create our emotional experience through the combined influence of our social contacts with emotional discourse. For example, perceptions of an unfriendly social surrounding may influence subsequent interpersonal behaviour towards anxiety or fear (Buckley & Saarni, 2006).

The latter example also raises another essential aim of education: development of pupils' independence. As Hinchliffe argues, teaching should create conditions in which students can start to take risks and responsibility for themselves (Hinchliffe, 2010). A teacher has a crucial influence both on pupils and on teaching. The Finnish National Core Curriculum (2004) determined by the Finnish National Board of Education provides guidelines for teaching and objectives in crafts. However, the guidelines do not require using certain craft techniques, tools or teaching methods. Those decisions remain for the teacher or the teacher team. Thus, schools and teachers have tremendous power and a responsibility to consider carefully what kind of teaching they will deliver. Though frequently conventional traditions seem to be favoured, this does not mean that teachers should trundle behind tradition. Traditions are to be changed, applied and new ones created. Many students complained of boredom regarding the materials, tools and tasks in craft making at school. Some tasks seem to be repeated year after year, and they are often a template which the teacher had planned in advance. Strict and demanding teachers are usually mentioned in accordance with credit-orientated activity in a negative sense: they are called 'angry grannies', 'terrible', 'mean', 'cruel', and 'inaccessible'. Teachers' repulsive behaviour and teachers' favouring certain students were in many cases the reason for students' unpleasant feelings and attitudes to crafts.

Student teachers' feelings of inferiority and unskilfulness in making crafts are characteristic of *credit-orientated activity*. Students were frequently disappointed in their action of making something and its results; as one student put it: "It was obvious that teachers liked the pupils who were naturally enthusiastic, creative and talented...and supported them. I haven't had any trauma, but still I have very strong feelings of uncertainty about my skills and abilities." (Female, 24)

Childhood and youth are times for constructing identity and building self-esteem, as well as independence (cf. Hinchliffe, 2010). Youngsters very often tend to belittle themselves and their skills, and if pupils in that sensitive period do not get any support from their teachers in their trials and skill

development, it may produce an undesirable outcome. The feeling of failure was mentioned very often, as in the following:

Textile lessons were tolerable, but I always had a feeling at the back of my mind that I cannot manage to make anything...“ (Female, 22)

I never felt talented in crafts. All my creations in primary school were bad and useless. I could never ever imagine that I could become a 'crafts person'. (Female, 22)

Certain feelings are typically dependent on age. According to Tuovila's (2006) study, Finnish young people feel fear more often than adults. Anger, sadness, tiredness, anxiety, jealousy and frustration are also more characteristic of a youngster's life than an adult's. (Tuovila, 2006.) Many negative expressions were mentioned in the students' biographies in addition to the above examples of students, such as not being interested, feelings of inferiority, feeling clumsy (feelings of being unskilful) or disappointed, repulsive, hateful, hideous, distressed, blunt, embarrassed, annoyed, frustrated, bungled, fearful, uncertain, ashamed, dissatisfied, afraid of blundering, irritated, stressed, and envious. However, for crafts, these were very often connected with the teacher's attitude, demands, feedback to students and unfair treatment of pupils. However, feeling of unskilfulness may also be a consequence of the surroundings or learned from parents, as follows:

Making crafts was not a habit in our home .... my mum did some knitting, but to us kids we only remember mum always saying she was very bad in crafts. ... I think her beliefs are in me. Already in my early years at school I had a view of being unable to do crafts and that crafts are difficult. I did some crafts at school, but I always had a feeling of uncertainty.” (Female, 33)

If a pupil has high self-esteem, he/she is full of possibilities, Merikoski (2011) claims. She argues that even a small child adopts a perception of the self, even a false one, such as, a child being convinced by her parents that she is unskilful in something (such as music, crafts, drawing). Also, students in this section mentioned more often than in other sections that craft-making was not a habit in their home. This may have a crucial effect later on in teacher training, as the first attempt is to overcome prior perceptions of the self as a learner.

Some students mentioned in their biographies that they had encountered problems with being left-handed. Rather often teachers lack skills to guide left-handed students in a craft, for example, in knitting. In some cases pupils were obliged to learn right-handed knitting or in the worse case, a pupil was left alone with the left-handed problem. In most cases pupils tried to survive with the problem one way or another, which mostly resulted in frustration and unskilfulness. The most hopeless cases in credit-orientated activity were students without any memory of prior craft experiences. That may have been a sign of total defence against unpleasant feelings and further, ignoring their humanity as crafts makers.

In sum, the core result of *credit-orientated activity* is lack or loss of the enthusiasm, enjoyment or excitement in craft making for various reasons. That means ignoring and belittling the self as a craft maker. Only what matters is to earn school credit or gain acceptance from other people, person acting like a doer of necessity. Craft-making is not productive in the sense of meaningful action. Instead, the focus is on adjusting to the situation. In such a situation craft experience is seen more as something to be endured and as a sign of resignation than expressing character. This is opposite to freedom. Aristotle differentiated a free man from men with obligations and requirements. A free man can choose. The condition of freedom completely excludes the possibility of lifestyles that merely sustain life, including the lifestyles of all those who by their own will could not decide their course and actions. (Arendt, 2002, pp. 20-21.) The question is more psychological than emotional. Here, in the context of craft education, pupils are imprisoned by the conditions of a teacher (mainly strict and unjust) and the school facilities. A teacher (or other pupils) dominates the situation and may cause



unpleasant feelings among pupils (and in the worst cases causing distress and depression). A fruitful human existence is not achieved in the sense that would mean freedom and that would match what Hinchliffe argues about teaching: teaching should create conditions in which students start to take risks and responsibility for themselves. (Hinchliffe, 2010.) A student puts this as follows: "In primary school teachers were frequently nurturing helplessness: we had to queue to get help from the teacher with every single problem that appeared; there was no guidance in helping oneself or a chance to ask help from a more skillful peer". (Female, 22)

Individuals with *credit-orientated activity* are driven to be *doers of necessity*, whose craft image of themselves is weak and complex, and they lose their connection with well-being and human action. They find little enjoyment or excitement in making crafts, or the activity is shadowed by rather unpleasant emotions. What matters is survival. Such treatment, which is described in credit-orientated activity and occurred in only about one in twenty cases, represented a minority of the data.

### **Making-orientated activity**

Unlike in credit-orientated activity, the fundamental act in *making-orientated activity* is intention and energy. The Arendtian concept of work indicates making in its multiple connections (Here, in connection with crafts: skills, techniques, craft products and cultural heritage) in which the process of making crafts with an end product in mind makes sense to the individual. This signifies *making-orientated activity*. In student teachers' prior experiences intensity and meaningfulness of the craft making process create the essence that inspires students to create artefacts. Students' memories and experiences in making crafts indicate a somewhat positive relationship to making things by hand. This activity does not exclude negative experiences, but students have the ability to cope with unpleasant feelings and moods. For example, a student's unpleasant experiences may help him/her to better understand pupils' emotions about crafts. In fact, in certain situations both negative and positive moods can have beneficial consequences for individual's thinking and behaviour.

Craft-making as such can be inspiring, enjoyable and rewarding as it appears in students' biographies. Students categorised in *making-oriented activity* have found a relevant personal connection (cf. Booth, 2003, 2012) to crafts in which craft is the basis for creativity, learning and the feel of artistic emotions. Students cannot always explain where their enthusiasm comes from. However, most of the students in this section mentioned that craft-making was a habit at home. However, if the culture around us and the surroundings show positive attitudes and enthusiasm about craft, these feelings would probably be transferred to others; as one student wrote: "I enjoy crafts; I've made a lot of crafts with my mum and also attended many craft courses with her in adult education centres." (Female, 20)

What makes crafts interesting? Students list the following reasons: concrete creativity in making things by hand and artefacts finished with satisfaction; a process of design in which the end product is not essential; situations in which learning occurs and the process is ongoing; enthusiasm which inspires one to continue making on and on. The joy of making crafts has been expressed as follows:

Craft has been always one of my favorite subjects ... I feel I am creative; I enjoy it enormously when I have the chance to make something with my hands ... Often I am rather easily frustrated with complex and challenging tasks, but when the item is finished, the result is very rewarding.... I am not an active craft person, but from time to time it's fun and relaxing to do some knitting or crocheting and forget, for example, school stress. ... The most inspiring tasks were those in which we could apply the given instructions and be creative. ... I think this is one of the elements that makes crafts meaningful.... (Female, 19)

In a meaningful craft process a maker is freed from the chains of the body in Arendtian sense and enjoys working on her own with full power; as one student said: "I got to work as an assistant teacher in knitting

because I was so enthusiastic! ... I feel so great when I've managed to create something beautiful, for example, in knitting." (Female, 28)

Arendt (2002, p. 14) argued that through created artefacts and work *homo faber* (as Arendt described a human being related to work) is connected with the surrounding world. This deed by itself generates human existence. It brings forth a maker and his ideas captured a piece of work; i.e. the process indicates a relationship with nature and the world and expresses a sense of permanence (Arendt, 2002, pp. 15-16, 139). Work as an act of human life makes meaningful the concepts of skilfulness, knowledge and making things by hand. In this view making things by hand and material objects have a stabilising effect on human life (Arendt, 2002, p. 140) in the sense that individuals can equate themselves with material objects and identify themselves through those objects. Not all production qualifies as work. For example, a factory worker who sews textiles remains an *animal labourans* (*labour*) – on account of the fact that *animal labourans* is not completing the work of producing. His main interest and the meaning of his actions are to sustain his life and maybe his job. A basic characteristic of producing (work) is that it has a specific beginning and end, which distinguishes work from the other Arendtian human activities. Action which is rooted in the cycle of the body movements (*labour*) does not have a particular beginning or ending (Arendt, 2002, p. 146).

*Homo faber* (unlike *animal labourans*) is the lord of himself, not only because he is the lord of nature, but also because he is the lord of what he makes (Arendt, 2002, p. 146). He is not totally free of obligations, as he is committed to producing artefacts, but he produces through his own will, and with enthusiasm and pride. As for *animal labourans*, who nurtures the life by his body and is a lord of maybe all living creations, is still only a servant of nature (Arendt, 2002, p. 146).

In sum, human existence becomes meaningful in satisfaction, which is revealed during the process of making something. In the *making-orientated activity* (cf. Arendtian concept of work) craft making in students' biographies describes mainly positive feelings and attitudes to craft making and its end products. Positive emotions arise from constructive experiences in youth, such as a supportive teacher, encouraging parents and pleasant atmosphere during craft lessons. The basic source of producing items emerges from the skill of thinking and the ability to create a personally relevant connection (cf. Booth, 2003, 2012) with craft. To create and to understand the whole process with its complexity of producing is a human ability, not just a physical need or desire. The meaning of making crafts is revealed in the joy of making things by hand and the excitement of using new skills as well in freeing mind. Making is itself a reward. Such activities, mentioned in the making-orientated section and occurring in about two thirds of the cases, comprise the majority of the data.

### **Interaction-orientated activity**

Craft making as such, in connection with the Arendtian third activity of human life, *action*, is here called *interaction-orientated activity*. Arendt defines *action* as productive, but immaterial. Humans' enervating work (*labour*) or production of artefacts (work) does not require other people the same way as *action* does. Therefore, interaction is revealed as an essential factor in *action*.

Conventionally, interaction in craft making could occur between maker and material. That means skilful work with materials through the creation process and problem solving, such as mental and practical discussions with the materials in use. In this form craft making describes Arendtian work more than *action*. In school crafts occurring in particular social contexts interaction could emerge in diverse forms, such as common communication, like chatting during the process of making crafts or discussions (relevant or irrelevant to the task). In their craft biographies students tended to express the feelings that art subjects on the whole were freer than other school subjects. Some students mentioned that during craft lessons, pupils more often than not are allowed to talk and to chat with each others

and with the teacher. And as one student described it: "...Pupils could sit wherever they wanted... we also drank tea and listened to music..." (Female, 20), or "... we sat around a big table and helped each other if the teacher didn't have time" (Female, 20). This kind of social activity facilitates human co-existence and the sense of belonging to a group.

On the other hand, interaction may occur by or through craft making where craft plays a role as a tool for interaction. Craft as a tool has become more and more vital in social life today where communication through different social media is part of a full, active life, as some students explained in their biographies. Moreover, craft blogs and 'craft cafés' enable the transformation of knowledge, and the exchange of ideas, which enrich the craft field in the human sense.

Arendt emphasised that people are not abstract social 'structures', but free, active agents, endowed with a will and the ability to change the world (Arendt, 1958, p. 178). Her point is simply that humans cannot change the world on their own, but only through interaction with others. Words and acts, being non-tangible and immaterial, need witnesses to be real (Arendt, 1958, p. 179). The ontological thesis is that there is no reality without *appearance*. The importance of (public) *appearance* comes from the idea that 'appearance, something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves, constitutes reality' (Arendt, 1958, pp. 36–7; see also Ivkovic, 2002). Human beings are real if they, that is, their words and the acts in which they disclose themselves, appear and are noticed by others. But what do 'others' mean? Not every *appearance* is equally valuable, because different audiences have different kinds of values. The real audience for a subject consists of others who are recognised and accepted by that subject as an equal (Arendt, 2002, p. 178), like people gathered in craft cafés.

'Others' as a plurality has a dual meaning in Arendt's human condition: the features of both equalization and individualisation. On the one hand, to be understood human beings need others who think in similar ways. On the other hand, if people are not unique and if they cannot be separated from each other, there would be no need for words and acts to understand one another (Arendt 2002, p. 178). This duality is significant in craft not only in the form of words, but particularly in the form of interacting and producing artefacts. That is also what design (such as industrial design, fashion and graphic design) is for. People want to belong to a certain group or society, materially or immaterially. Arendt categorises art in this activity (*action*) as it corresponds with the public and even requires the public to exist (Arendt, 2002, p. 16). As well, craft-art, art-craft and design could be placed in this activity (Karppinen 2008). Pieces of art require others in order to be evaluated as art. Design likewise requires others in order to have a reason to exist. Public need or desire creates the demand for a particular item or a design.

What makes craft making and craft education belong to Arendtian *action*? Is there, for example, any artistic feature in craft education that exists in students' memories, as Arendt included art in action? One student wrote that she approaches craft as a piece of fabric and material, the same way as a painter is attracted by a blank piece of paper and a bucket full of colours ... pieces of craft are like valuable pieces of art (Female, 29). Another student described making crafts as relaxing and creative, the practical making of art (Female, 19). Another student compared her craft skills to art: 'Love of pictures has directed my life and choices into the profession of art (I am studying in the Faculty of Art to become an art teacher).' However, she wonders 'why my hand-eye coordination doesn't work three-dimensionally in craft?' (Female, 22). In student teachers' biographies the artistic elements in craft were often minimized as to action of creativity and compared to strict model-based actions. The discussions about creativity in the students' writings were more about lack of creativity and artistic elements in craft. Somehow this might be a consequence of the separate subjects (art and craft) in the Finnish school system, but it is also a long-lasting conformist habit to think that creativity belongs only to art. In relation to interaction, not one single student mentioned, for example, collaborative craft projects, visits to museums or galleries, art-based crafts or other collaborative learning methods. This

does not mean that these activities do not exist, but it may indicate that students think of craft rather conventionally. However, one student expressed the reverse: '... I want to express myself creatively as in art... I want to create something innovative and funny... I think craft should merge in child fantasy and imagination in order to have courage for trials and sometimes go off in unexpected directions' (Female, 24). Most of the students in this section mentioned that they had engaged in arts or crafts at home.

In sum, what kinds of emotional experiences are linked to *interaction-orientated activity* (cf. Arendtian *action*)? In students' craft biographies some of them longed for interactional activity where they could mingle with others. Some of them also hungered for a more artistic approach. Arendt's *action* is the actualization of qualities that reveal the identity of the human in his or her distinctiveness: actions enable persons to flourish because the result of the action is complemented by the quality of the character displayed (Hinchliffe, 2010). This does not occur in labour as the human action is not liberated from other persons' presser. A particular 'space of appearances' is required in human societies, a space which is free of necessity, obligation and production. Outside the space of action, only results matter, but inside that space, what really counts are the qualities (or principles) that actions embody and actualise (Hinchliffe, 2010). Arendt stated that through action the human condition is fulfilled; that requires others (Arendt, 2002, p. 137), however, different way than in *labour*, where a person is confined to other people. Interpreting her idea of human action in terms of craft education and making the craft activity should involve integrative, collaborative and cooperative qualities, discussions about the craft makers' inner thoughts, the crafts makers' as unique individuals and correspondences with current society. Activities which totally liberate the individual from regulations occur in only about one in ten cases and rarely appear in the data.

On the whole, as the result of the study, the question is one of education. Chris Higgins (2010b) asks: 'What is the place of pedagogy in Arendt's *vita activa*? Can teaching itself be a form of action? Or is it simply *work*, even *labour*, ennobled exclusively by its connection to the future action of students?' Hinchliffe (2010) proposes action as a shared world and discusses how education is both a part of this shared world and preparation for it. That is also an appealing point in craft education in relation to teaching: i.e. guiding students from a mentor-orientated attitude (*credit-orientated activity / labour*) to a more self-activating (*making-orientated activity / work*) and collaborative orientation (*interaction-orientated activity / action*) leading to independence. Disputing Arendt's claim that craft is only part of *work*, I argue that craft could be positioned in *labour* and *action* as well. All three craft action orientations reveal different student teachers' human existence according to their prior experiences (*doer of necessity, maker and social actor*), which, in addition to giving information to the teacher trainer, may play essential roles in students' self-exploration and, in understanding themselves as craft makers and future teachers.

## Conclusion

I was interested in identifying students' prior craft experiences and feelings and how their prior emotions may have affected their attitude toward crafts. I have labelled three sections based on Hannah Arendt's concepts of the human condition (*labour, work and action*) to describe students' varied emotions, feelings and experiences toward crafts: *credit-orientated, making-orientated and interaction-orientated activity*. There is a temptation to categorise all negative feelings and emotions as *credit-orientated activity* and, in turn, positive ones as *making-orientated* or *interaction-orientated*. That division would not have raised the essential nature of the Arendtian human condition. The question is more psychological than emotional; in *credit-orientated activity* (cf. *labour*), for example, a person is 'prisoner' to his or her own feelings and depends on other people's opinions, guidance and commands. Moreover, a person might temporarily experience negative feelings or failures, but might

nevertheless be able to handle his or her own feelings and overcome them through natural enthusiasm for making things by hand, as in *making-orientated activity*. In addition, eliminating ambiguity in categorising such emotions and feelings is impossible when individuals can simultaneously feel a variety of emotions and feelings.

Student teachers' prior craft experiences reveal a range of feelings and emotions that are worth paying attention to in teacher training. The majority (more than two thirds) of the students holds a positive picture of craft making and sees itself as conventional craft makers (making-orientated) who more or less enjoy making things by hand, trust their skills in crafts, and have the personal intention and energy to engage in craft-making. This might be a consequence of an encouraging attitude toward crafts at home, which most of the students in this section mentioned. Rather, the challenge in teacher training is, on the one hand, to help those students who feel uncomfortable with crafts or whose craft image of themselves and self-esteem are low due to past failures or unjust treatment in prior craft situations (*credit-orientated*). There is always a risk that those student teachers will be inactive in the field of crafts in their future teaching that they will graduate as primary teachers, and that crafts will be only one subject in their teaching repertoire. However, even those students who lacked enthusiasm or excitement in craft-making in school have recently become willing to develop their skills in crafts, as they mentioned in their essays. Is that a consequence of teacher training, positive feedback and encouragement, of their surroundings, or of maturity? Further studies would likely shed light on this issue and student teachers' self-efficacy skills in coping with their emotions.

All in all, the issue turns on the question 'What is the meaning of education?' It is, as Hinchliffe (2010) pointed out in his/her interpretation of Arendt's writings, to become active and autodidact (i.e. to develop from mentor-controlled and dependent (cf. *labour*) to confident and independent (*action*)). Teacher training has a responsibility and challenge to develop such learning environments and students' capabilities by encouraging them to take risks as well as responsibility for themselves (cf. Hinchliffe, 2010). These situations may enable student teachers to benefit from their varied emotional experiences and go beyond their zone of comfort, to find independence and activeness in craft-making and teaching. Even though the majority of students enjoys craft-making and has a positive attitude toward crafts (*making-orientated*), there remains a crucial need in future teaching to focus on enriching approaches toward more *interaction-orientated activities* and student independence and self-direction. Such a transformation would require more constructive open learning environments as well as interactive and inquiry-based learning among students.

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