

The Challenge of New Horizons

by Ihor Kornii

Introduction

In this publication you will be guided to learning context of our Double Degree Programme in Social Services with focus on Diaconia and Christian Action by our student Ihor Kornii. Ihor is in the 3rd year of our studies. He has gained various experience from being engaged in different social services through his practice in our Programme and before. He aims to show what personal and professional difference it makes for him to bring the learning from interdiac to the working context.

Oksana Prosvirina
Responsible Teacher in DDP

In three years involvement with interdiac, as a participant in the Double Degree Programme in Diaconia and Social Action in Central and Eastern Europe, I have come through many points of growth, both personally and professionally. Before joining the interdiac Double Degree Programme (DDP), I was only involved in work with children and young people. After diverse practical engagement in the Ukrainian and British contexts, I have had the chance to take part in more diverse projects in the Czech Republic.

I have experienced five different practice contexts, where I worked with various groups of people, including children and youth of Roma and Czech origin, as well as the adults with intellectual disabilities. In the DDP I have hugely extended my scope of interest in social and diaconal work, and, from the perspective of practice, became more versatile. Going out of my comfort zone and being supported to do so, has helped me to face up to and cope with various challenges.



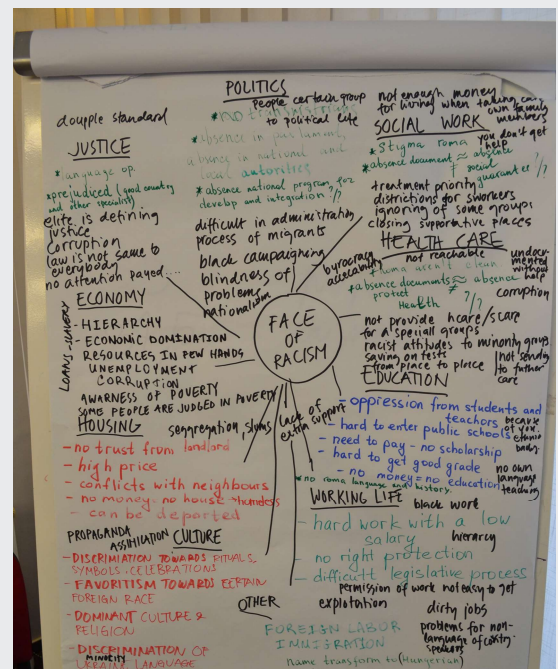
Service Model.

I would like to start with the transition progress from the first to the following years of being involved with interdiac. In the beginning I had a goal to learn more about myself and my personal service model, in particular, its influence on how I act and think. I can clearly recognize now that in my service model I started with being “a helper”, and moved to be “a facilitator”, and later it has been modified to being “an agent of change”. The latest process has become possible due to the healthy environment of my current practice placement and the contribution of three years’ experience of the studies. I have realised and understood that I have to give more space to people to make their own decisions, and thus, provide them with the opportunities to take a personal control over their own lives without unnecessary intervention from my side.

The process of reflection.

In the second year of my studies I gained insights and skills that helped me to distinguish and consider solutions to various key issues and concerns in the practice placements where I was involved. During the first year of studies it could take a long time to see and figure out what was going on in a new place. Therefore, gaining the confidence to take an action was an important factor in developing this skill. Consequently, after the range of activities in the practice placements I have learnt how to produce reflective writing in the learning diary, with the purpose of not losing the important points of my practice learning. Usage of the learning diary for reflection on my practice and with sharpened insight of intuition I came to the realisation that I have to give a higher priority to the quality level rather than ‘quantity’ in both practical activities and assignments.

It is important to notice that I began to focus more on the content in the placement and tended to integrate the goals of the studies into the practice process. However, if in the first year of my studies I followed the methods of work suggested by the agency, now I am confident enough to bring about and test new methods from the literature and content of the study programme, such as working for the empowerment of service users through a chosen project. A key role in the raising of my confidence was also played by the improvement of Czech language skills, which were very important for communication with both service users and the agency colleagues.



The value of structured learning and deepening knowledge skills.

Contact Teaching sessions together with learning in practice placements, supplemented by individual home studying provided me with the approaches to act in working situations.

Additionally, according to the goals of the study programme I worked on the development of my ability to analyse the context of the placement organisation and the relationship of the organisation to the context and the service users. Now I am much more confident in making a brief survey and assessment of a new place. Moreover, Study Units about using assertive behaviour helped me not to panic in critical and challenging situations, but much more often to use reasoning and clear arguments to keep my position. Also another one of my goals was to evaluate the organisation in relation to its approaches in working with people.



Although in the context of practice, it was hard to identify the methods used for empowerment, I have made an effort to plan and carry out the empowering project of “Peer Mentoring” in the context of social therapeutic workshop, “Eben-Ezer”, a day care centre for people with learning difficulties in Český Těšín (Czech Republic). It is good to notice that my contribution to the placement about community development was appreciated and positively assessed by the service-users and the staff of the Centre.

I can confirm that I definitely improved my understanding of the role of a professional worker of a strategies for social change. The opportunities for possible changes were often on the agenda during the weekly supervision meetings with the placement supervisor. This was aimed at the student’s development and support.

Furthermore, thanks to the rich knowledge gained at the Contact Teaching sessions, and wide range of reading resources I am equipped with different methods and approaches, which I am able to use in practical situations. An example would be promotion of participation in decision making, which contributes to sustainable development.

In my opinion, the skill of making a proper selection of method and using correct tools in challenging situations in practise played an essential part in professional growth.

The importance of ethic and values in social work.

Through the programme I devoted a lot of time to on-going exploration and implementation of ethics in social work, in practical situations in particular. The literature suggests that ethical expertise is essential for professionalism of every social worker. Indeed, it was helpful for the understanding of the actions by different people in my placements. I have started the process of looking for other factors that influence human thinking when it comes to interaction with other person. Usage of learning diary have contributed greatly to the development of my ability for critical thinking and reflecting on human actions.

Furthermore, in contrast to the previous placements, my current participation in social therapeutic workshop in „Eben Ezer“ has provided me with essential learning experience for working with people with learning difficulties and has given me possibility to participate in the different centers of Slezská Diakonie.

I previously had the chance to work with people with a more severe diagnosis in the sheltered workshop „Eden“ in Český Těšín. This semester I have been lucky to work on both development of my thesis and planing the peer – mentoring project with people with learning difficulties. Due to my previous experience in the current field I did not need much time to get integrated into the work and start my professional learning process.

Future learning and responding to new challenges.

To sum up, during the three years of professional studies in DDP in Interdiac I have come to the realisation and awereness that professional and personal learning in the social field is an ongoing process which implies constant personal and professional development. In everyday work a social worker is likely to be presented with new challenges stemming from different working situations and social contexts. I have found that these challenges should be reflected on and learnt from, for the development of succesful practice and service to people. For example the challenges with the workers and volunteers at previous practice placements helped me to shape healthy working relationships with new colleagues in the current placement.

In the end I would like to notice improved language skills, which helped me in communication with both service users and colleagues. With the help of language skills I am gaining insights into engaging with people who have learning difficulties and how best to respond to their concerns, issues and interests.

Undoubtedly, the past three years have offered new horizons and continue to provide me with new challenges for personal and professional growth.

By Ihor Kornii

3rd Year Student in interdiac

*Double Degree Programme in Social Services focus on
Diaconia and Christian Social Practice*

CONTACT

e-mail: ihorkornii@gmail.com

© Published by Interdiac, July 2018

Address:

Interdiac o.p.s.,
Dukelská 264/5, 737 01 Český Těšín
Czech Republic

Web Site: www.interdiac.eu

Email: office@interdiac.eu