



Aarhus, Denmark, the 8th of April 2011

Evaluation report of the International Line 2007-2010

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate if the teaching offered by the International Line at the Diaconal College in Denmark has been useful, when it comes to motivating and enabling students to do diaconal/development work.

We have asked both students and leaders from their churches/organizations, if the course has been helpful for them and their church/organization and whether they had any suggestions for improving the course. The leaders are our local partners and therefore referred to as partners in this survey.

Evaluation survey setup

The survey forms were sent to all students from the years 2007-10, all together 43 students, and we asked them to forward the forms directed to the leaders from their churches/organizations. We received surveys from 23 (54%) of the students and 6 from leaders, representing 8 (19%) of the students. They covered 3 continents, most of our regular Danish partners and all 4 courses, (except there was no partner survey from year 2007).

The survey was set up to be done online, but considering some students having bad internet connections; it was also possible to do the survey by returning an e-mail. These documents were then transferred to the online survey. This evaluation report is a summary of the most essential content of a 9 pages partner survey and a 26 pages student survey.

Partner evaluation

As the course in Denmark is not given for the sake of the student alone, but for the benefit of their local community, we want to recruit students, who are willing to return to their own environment and work for a better society. Therefore it is important for us to know, if and how much the churches and organizations, to which the students return, are benefitting from sending students to this course.

The partners in the survey state that all their students are still involved in diaconal/development work, doing the same work as before the course and all partners express satisfaction with the positive motivation of their students and confirm, that their churches and organizations have developed new ideas, practices or projects based on the knowledge and skills gained by the students.

According to the survey 83,3% of our partners find, that their churches and organizations have been able to benefit from the knowledge and experience achieved by the students, and that it has had a positive influence on their relationship with the Danish partners. They also mention specific new ideas, practices and methods; they now have incorporated in their work.

Though they all confirm that our curriculum address important needs of their staff/volunteers concerning diaconal/development work, they remind us of the importance of emphasizing Project Work, the use of internet, Management, Study trips and Advocacy. The partner of a student from year 2008 suggest more focus on conflict solving, fundraising, new methods of rights based development, democracy and good governance. These are subjects we have given more attention in 2010.

We are not blind to the possibility, that some disappointed leaders might not have been asked to do a survey, but from what we hear elsewhere, we have no reason not to think, that these surveys are fairly representative for many of our local partners. Besides sending the surveys through the students was the only practical way to address their present leaders.

Student evaluation

When the students leave our school, they usually express gratitude and appreciation of what, they have learned, while in Denmark. But we want to know the long term results of the course. Does it really motivate and enable the students to do diaconal/development work - once the memories have faded and they are back into the daily tasks and challenges?

From the student evaluation we can see, that 87% of these students are still involved in diaconal/development work. Many of them work with children and youth and their work includes advocacy, leadership, organizing agricultural training and doing different social and diaconal tasks.

The knowledge and experience gained at the International Line made 56,5% more motivated and 43,5% a lot more motivated to do diaconal/development work; and has helped 56,5% and helped 43,5% a lot in their ability to do diaconal/development work. One student refers to the time in DK as a gift, that makes him want to offer something back to other people and another writes, that he plans to be involved in social work after graduation, because the example, he met at the Diaconal College, changed his attitude.

Others mention how they now use their improved knowledge on specific areas such as organizational management, capacity building, project & development work, advocacy, communication, counseling, teambuilding, local government and churches working together, and how they profit from an increased understanding of other people and a higher level of self-confidence.

The knowledge and experience achieved in DK is used in numerous ways to the benefit of their churches and organizations. Many have shared their gained knowledge and experience both in- and outside their church/organization and they have taken up different tasks of serving and leading.

According to the survey 78,3% of their churches and organizations have developed new ideas, practices or projects based on the knowledge and skills gained by the students. The students are referring to specific new ideas and new ways of doing projects, social service, capacity building, communication, use of publicity, income generating projects and making education more creative. The benefit of increased abilities in analyzing needs and planning and doing project work is mentioned again and again.

Even though 65,2% of the students say, that they are still doing the same work in the same church/organization, as they did before the course, many of them mention new areas and increased levels of responsibilities. Out of 23 students, 4 students have now left their organization, two because they moved to another country and one is now social worker in another organization. All of them did social work in their church/organization for some years after their return and some of them are still involved in social work.

A significant majority of the students state that their time in Denmark has indeed improved their understanding of, and their relationship as well as communication with their Danish partner organization. As one them writes: "This is important, because it is easy to resolve a problem or to understand each other, if you know the culture of your partner".

The subjects of the teaching are rated helpful/very helpful for their work in their church/organization by between 95,5% (Project Work) and 73,9% (Civil society). The last subject mainly get a lower rating by students from the 2008 course, and it seems like our increased emphasis on this subject the last year has improved the content.

Almost all subjects are suggested by some students to be emphasized more. Only a few subjects are suggested to be reduced, but these subjects have a high priority for other students. One student concludes that she had realized the importance of team-work and working hard, if you want to achieve something. Not a bad outcome of the teaching!

Concerning the last point "Any suggestions as to how we can make our course better", there are many specific suggestions. Like putting next year's coming students in contact with former students, sending up-date lessons, paying attention to age of admission and attendance, more practice, increasing the number of students (We certainly did in 2010), more attention to leisure time, forming groups based on experience and having more emphasis on development issues (we increased that in 2010.) Many suggest that we prolong the course, as they want more time to specific subjects or more subjects.

Conclusion

Based on this evaluation report it seems fair to conclude, that the International Line at the Diaconal College has been very useful, when it comes to motivating and enabling students to do diaconal and development work. Both partner and student surveys confirm that our course has been beneficial for their churches and organizations.

Yet there is always room for improvement and we will take all suggestions for improving the course into consideration. However we do acknowledge that to satisfy most of the suggestions concerning more subjects or more time to specific subjects, it would require that we prolong the course to at least 5 months and unfortunately this is not possible due to the visa regulations. We appreciate that no one wants the course shortened and we will try to make the best of the amount of time, we have - following the advice from one of the students: "Just do it!"

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