



Aarhus, Denmark, the 10th of April 2015

Evaluation report of the International Courses 2011-13

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate if the teaching offered by the International course 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

This survey was done online in 4 separate surveys - one for each year's students and one for the partners altogether, as some have sent students more than one year. In this evaluation report I have put together the numbers and information from the 3 student's surveys in one and this report is a summary of the most essential content in both the partner survey and the student surveys.

The survey forms were sent to all students from the courses in 2011-13, all together 40 students, and I asked them to forward the forms directed to the partners from their churches/organizations. We received surveys from 16 (40%) of the students and 4 from partners, representing 10 (25%) of the students, covering 3 continents and all 3 courses.

The percentage of responses from students was lower than the 54% in our survey done in 2011. It might be because we in that survey included the students, who had left our school only 4 months before and they accounted for almost 50 % of the responses. In this 2015 survey all respondents have returned to their home countries more than one or three years ago. As we wanted to check the long term effect of the course, we did not include students from 2014, and this might have influenced the percentage of respondents.

Partner evaluation

As the course in Denmark is not given for the sake of the student alone, but for the benefit of his/her 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.

All partners in the survey state that **their students are still involved in diaconal/development work** and/or training others in this. They express their satisfaction with the increased motivation and skillfulness of their student(s) and describe how this has positively influenced their organizations.

The partners also agree that **their churches and organizations have been able to benefit from the knowledge and experience achieved by the students** and they mention things like new practices and

methods in leadership and organization development, changes in how they do project work and church development and they find that the contributions of the students have caused their projects to grow in numbers and quality.

According to the survey 75% of our partners confirm, that **their churches and organizations have developed new ideas, practices or projects** based on the knowledge and skills gained by the students. Staff administration and organizational structure have been improved, new subjects are taught and more people are being helped through new ideas and projects.

All partners acknowledge that sending a student to our course has had a **positive influence on their relationship with their Danish partners**. Some express that the relationship is closer now and they appreciate the increased level of communication and support from their partners.

They all confirm that our curriculum **address important needs of their staff/volunteers concerning diaconal/development work** and they ask us to still emphasize subjects like organization, leadership and counselling as well as planning, management, evaluation, fundraising and publicity in Project Work.

One partner suggests that we have more practical practice like visiting and working with different organizations, while another asks us to focus on helping people understand and appreciate other cultures and, if possible, send teachers to other countries to open schools like this and train local teachers. Furthermore we are encouraged to continue, because we are doing a good job. :)

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?

2. All students participating in the survey are still involved in diaconal/ development work.

One is out of job, due to lack of budget, but she is still encouraging diakonia in her church. They work in areas as different as schools, vulnerable children, orphans, human rights for the least and marginalized, women empowerment, building shelters for widows, capacity building of civil society and local government, water, sanitation and hygiene services for rural poor population, humanitarian assistance for peace projects, internally displaced people due to armed hostility, gender and development, interfaith awareness as a mean for creating peace, sending out mobile primary healthcare clinics around Africa, drug rehabilitation, prisoners, organization of free legal support, disaster relief and leading a hospital focusing on Alzheimer and elderly healthcare.

3. The knowledge and experience gained at the International course made 31% more motivated and 69% a lot more motivated to do diaconal/development work.

Some of their comments were: "I have learned to respect and value human dignity first". "My self-confidence was build and the knowledge of the love and efforts of my donor organization and partners motivates me to proceed in my work faithfully". "My eyes were opened to do development with a diaconal attitude and to help others to work in a positive way for sustainability".

4. This knowledge and experience has helped 31% and helped 69% a lot in their ability to do diaconal/ development work. They profit from the knowledge and experience in different areas such as organization, leadership, counselling and teaching or increased productivity in their working field. One of the students mention that the skills and values learned in diakonia and value-based leadership help him to take better care of vulnerable people and involve them in decision making and activities.

Another is using her acquired understanding of the value and impact of mutual respect in building relationship.

5. The knowledge and experience achieved in DK is used in different ways to the benefit of their churches and organizations.

Many have shared their gained knowledge and experience both in- and outside their church/ organization, they have changed ways of management and communication, and taken up different new tasks of serving and leading. Some comments were: “The received knowledge benefitted my organization to better develop and support management technologies and develop the capacity of the local government institutions and poor population in increasing their living standards”.

“I am being molded to be a servant leader”. “One thing I remember as an important thing is the concept of diaconia. So, I put love and servant attitude first on my mind whenever I talk with my partners, my donors and my team. It makes me improve both myself and my team in helping each other and also my project. We get more partners and funding, which can support more affected people”.

6. According to the survey 80% 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, practices or projects concerning various areas as renewable energy, the ability to brainstorm, partnership, holistic approach to human needs, school projects and work among needy women and children.

Some comments were: “I now have a brand new direction for hospital development”. “I am applying a lot of the knowledge and skills in my project and in working with my project team. It has really helped me a lot”. “We are now planning much better with improved organizational structure, defined lines of communication, advocacy as transversal axis and practice of regular monitoring and evaluation.” “I became completely responsible for implementing a school project in my organization based on the knowledge and skills I gained at the diaconal College”.

7. In the survey 87% of the students say, that they are still doing the same work in their church/ organization as before the course.

Nevertheless, many of them mention new areas of work and increased levels of responsibilities. All but two are still working in their church/organization. One lost her job due to budget cuts and another is now employed in another development organization. Some comments were:

“Before I went to the international course I was as operational team leader for my project. When I came home I was given more responsibilities and now I am working as a project manager. This is definitely an impact of the international course”. “After the course I am working more on supervising and giving advices for colleagues.”

“I was working as program manager and inspired by the course in 2012, I dedicated myself to improve the quality and outlook of our project and program management and to pay attention to whether the projects answered the needs of the poor communities and achieved the required outcomes. Thus I could improve our increased number of projects with fresh and modern insights. In 2014 I was elected as Director for my organization due to my hardworking manner, value-based leadership talents and fresh ideas in managing the staff and the programs”.

8. All the subjects of the teaching are rated either helpful or very helpful for their work in their church/organization by between 100% and 88% of the students.

All subjects, except civil society (50%), are rated very helpful by the majority of the students. They

range between 81% (organization and leadership) and diakonia (63%). Some comments were: "I would love to suggest more emphasize on dialogue with authorities. For a person from a third world country it is rare to have a proper dialogue with authorities and the experience at the course built up my self-confidence to face authorities".

"Emphasize more on project work and it could be helpful to know a little more about fundraising". "Subjects like organization, leadership, communication, counselling and Danish study week are very helpful, so I hope they will be emphasized more". "Dialogue with authorities impressed me deeply and has changed me a lot". "All the subjects are very interesting, but we needed more time to master them well".

9. All the students find that their time in Denmark has improved their understanding of and their relationship with their Danish partner organization. As many as 80% states that they now understand Danish culture and their Danish partner better and 47% finds that communication has become easier now. Some comments were:

"To know Danish culture help me understand much better their behavior and how to work closer with them in good understanding". "It was a very good experience to know our partner's culture and see how they work". "Getting a chance to talk with partners face to face is much better than e-mail contact". "Our relationship has improved because it was a link to a mutual understanding between my Danish partner and my home organization".

10. Suggestions as to how we can make our course better

Some wanted us to prolong the course, invite more students from their country and provide additional training or scholarship for further study at the Diaconal College. One student commented on the importance of the sending organization having a clear plan/strategy on how to implement what their employee has learnt on the course. The students did not limit themselves to suggestions on improving the course they also added some words of encouragement. Some of their inputs were:

"The course is impressive, inspirational, remarkable and helpful". "Each part of the course is very well balanced, all topics are relevant, do not remove any of them. The visits are very inspiring and they contribute to the knowledge of the other learning experiences". "It is a very good project for people, who need it; I hope it can last as long as possible". "Good and wonderful teachers" etc...

Conclusion

Based on this evaluation report it seems fair to conclude, that the International course 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.

We are thankful for all the words of appreciation and encouragement and we will take all suggestions for improving the course into consideration. However we do not have any plans of starting new schools at the moment and prolonging the course to at least 5 months is unfortunately not possible due to the visa regulations. But we will continue to try developing and improving the course based on this and our annual student evaluations.

Lisbeth Pedersen

Course Director, the International Course

The Diaconal College / Diakonhøjskolen

Lyseng Allé 15, DK-8270 Højbjerg,

www.diakonhojskolen.dk/uddannelser/the-international-course/