



From 13th till 15th November interdiac organised third Seminars and Workshops on Social Inclusion, Participation and Diaconia in Český Těšín that dealt with topics of diaconia, social exclusion, theology and community development work. The lectures were lead by lecturers from Great Britain, Latvia, Finland, Hungary and Czech Republic. The group of participants from six European countries warmly welcomed student from Nepal among them.

The First Day

After welcoming and organisation information the first session was dedicated to **personal orientation and group building**. The method of Tree of feelings was used for expressing current emotions about the position in the process of interdiac study. The learners mentioned that they feel they have made some progress with their studies and that they are happy to reconnect with the group again. In the simulation game called “Derdians” the participants could experience meeting and working with different culture. They were divided into two groups: engineers, who were supposed to teach Derdians how to build a bridge, and Derdians, who were aboriginal nation with very specific rules and ways of communication. Participants expressed that they have learned how important it is to spend time with people you are supposed to work with and research the conditions and possibilities of the environment.

Sharing Placement Experiences session started with basic evaluation of the placements. Even though learners identified some negatives, most of all they are satisfied with their placements, feel as a part of the organisation and have enough opportunities to learn from practice. More details about the learning process on placement and work on assignments were discussed in three groups led by one of the lecturers.

Second part of the day belonged to the theme of **Diaconial Culture and Identity**. First of all the concept of vocation was introduced as the idea of vocation is central to the Christian belief that God has created each person with gifts and talents. Participants were encouraged to think about their gifts and divine calls. The lecturer presented several diaconia theses which were later discussed. The learners themselves were asked to create their own diaconia theses and express them with a poster. For example one participant feels that diaconia is a strong relationship with God which is mirrored in work and relations with other people. Love of neighbour, creating community, struggling with justice and caring for creation were recognized as main themes for diaconal culture. The differences between main types of



diaconia: personal-individual-general, congregational-communal, institutional and political-prophetic were explained and discussed. On the basis of mentioned knowledge, the groups of learners prepared a diaconal plan, which they can use as a model for their own specific plans.

The day was closed with a movie **Music Within** that shows the true story of Richard Pimentel, a brilliant public speaker with a troubled past, who returns from Vietnam severely hearing-impaired and finds a new purpose in his landmark efforts on the behalf of Americans with disabilities.

As the first day was very long and the participants were quite tired from the travelling, short and simple way of **evaluation** was chosen. Everyone was given time to think about the day and find one word to express it. Even though the student felt really tired, they appreciated the group reunion and found the day satisfying and interesting. Especially they appreciated the input about diaconia and importance of research.

The Second Day

Lecture on **Social Exclusion and Globalisation** focused on economical aspects of society. Terms work, employment and activity were discussed and clarified. In a personal work, participants were thinking about meaning of work in three generations and post their descriptions on a time line from 1920's till 2000's to see the development and changes in the importance of work. The development from producer driven economy to consumer driven economy was introduced and the consequences on work, the role of the state, welfare, personal development, societal organisation and community were discussed. In the end participants were trying to find the answer to a very crucial question: What are the roles of diaconia in a consumer driven economy?

Most time of the day was devoted to the topic of **Theology and Exclusion**. As the participants are supposed to write a **Case study with theological and ethical reflection**, significant part of the sessions was aimed to help them with this assignment. The aims and methods of a case study and ways of developing analysis were introduced. There was a very interesting discussion about the use of Bible in case study. Ideas from Old and New Testament about social exclusion were opened up. Special attention was given to the Old Testament and the Moses laws how to deal with poverty and how to protect exclusion. In a group work the participants studied texts from Jeremiah and Isaiah and came up with some interesting

findings. For example: a) God does not need rituals, God wants our action! b) The possible reason for our problems can be the fact, that we do not accept and use God's gifts. c) To sacrifice for others does not necessarily mean dying. It is to share what you have received from God with the other and not being selfish. The participants were told that they should look for trajectories, main lines, in the Old Testament text. Creation trajectory describes the equality of all create in the image of God. Royal trajectory emphasises the holiness and transcendence of God which makes the human inequalities trivial and insignificant. Liberating and prophetic trajectory searches for a renewed structure of equality and justice and link true worship with this. The mark of New Testament is than the equality and acceptance of diversity is a mark (image of the Body of Christ). These ideas were again connected to the case study and the learners were encouraged to integrate different reflections and ideas in their work.

Kaisa Rauma, visitor from Finland, introduced **Diaconia in one Finnish parish** in the very last session. She not only stressed the positives, but also shared the weaknesses and threads of this work. This input was very inspiring for the participants.

At the end the day was evaluated by using the **Network evaluation**. All the participants were standing in a circle. One participant asked an evaluative question about the day and threw a ball of string to another one. The receiver answered, asked another question and threw the ball again. This continued until everybody was holding the string. During this evaluation the learners emphasized the usefulness of the input about case study, appreciated interesting session about globalisation and expressed that they can feel they really belong to the group and that others care about them.

The Third Day

Last day begun with an Agape meal and Worship, which was positively assessed by both learners and lectures, as it helped to grow the group cohesion. This day was devoted to **Community Development Work**. In the first session detailed description of community development work was provided. The main focus was given to 1) roles and 2) process in community development work. After the input the participants were able to think which role of community worker is close to them – animator, facilitator, organiser, challenger, advocate, developer and supporter. Systematic approach to community work process showed that it is necessary to follow some structure during the work. First of all it is important to expose to



the community, gather information and make contact with key local people, map potential and actual allies and block. After these initial phases, it is time for identifying and developing groups to work with and analysis and vision building with the group. Before any action it is crucial to plan all the aims and objectives. Actions should be followed by celebration and evaluation.

Participants could imply the theory into practice in a group **community work case study**. They were given a complex report on an island community, where there are five classes: Tops, Upper Bottoms, Bottoms, Lower Bottoms and Rural. Two groups worked as a community work team to come up with an action plan or strategy how to work on behalf of the church with the people of the local community to develop responses to the problems of the Lower Bottoms and the Bottoms. The groups were given enough time to carefully study the current situation and to think about their strategy. Later they presented their plans to the other group and lecturers. Here are some ideas of one of the groups: First they would find human resources and work with the sources of power in the state, which is church and mass media to empower people by answering their basic needs (such as collection and distribution of clothes and food). They see that it is important to change the resources and provide education by church, such as trainings for women, nurse courses and classes for children, which should help to tackle discrimination and stigmatization. Also networking is crucial for this plan to be successful; they would make connection with people in countryside and collaborate with other churches. By advocacy and education they would like to find ways how to motivate people for elections. They would also like to affect markets and industry, to create a better environment for the citizens.

In the last session the **next steps** for oncoming placement period were planned. The tasks and assignments were revised and explained when needed. A new task, Essay on Human dignity: Theological, ethical and spiritual considerations in relation to the placement. This essay should describe and analyse an issue connected to practice placement, discuss the theological challenges, ethical considerations and spiritual implications of the issue, discuss the practice of diaconia or church towards this issue and conclude with a justified statement of learner's own position and proposals for diaconal action. The participants shared their ideas on the topic of this assignment, which could be divided into these groups: ageing and old people; intergeneration relationships, neglected children and family; people with disabilities; poverty and unemployment.



In the end a written **evaluation** was done. There were three parts of the evaluation. Participants assessed a) separately every day according to the content, process and practicalities, b) each teacher regarding the content and methods of the lectures, and c) their own learning points. Overall the learners were very satisfied with the content of all the lectures and practical arrangements. They also appreciated the dynamics of the process and the pilot module group. The evaluation of the lecturers provided useful feedback on the teaching methods and will be used in preparations for next seminars and workshops. During this meeting the participants gained quite a lot of new knowledge and skills. Especially they appreciated ideas about community work process, diaconia planning, identity and vocation, using Bible to analyse exclusion and practical tips how to write an essay and make a case study. They also mentioned that the content will be useful for them in solving their task and future work.