

Service-learning as Model of Professional Practice in Social Work Education – Experiences from Matej Bel University, Slovakia

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Service-learning at Matej Bel University

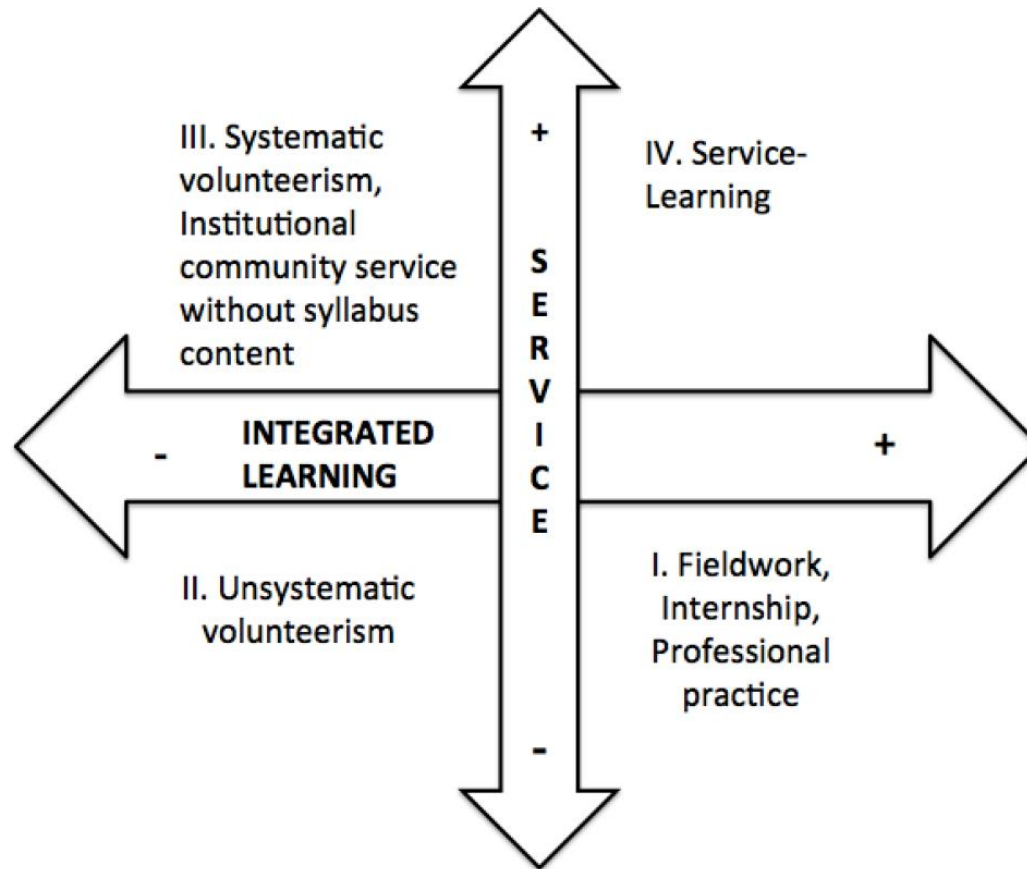
- since 2005, strong development since 2013
- CLAYSS
- platform for sharing experiences
- various models of SL



Service-learning in Social Work Education

- education in social work is perceived as a historical contributor to the development of service-learning (Zieren, Stoddard, 2004)
- education in social work suffers from a lack of real understanding of the essence of service-learning and very often confuses service-learning with work experience and volunteering, ignoring the focus of service-learning on activities conducted in cooperation with the community and the development of competencies in the field of civic engagement
- several models of SL application in social work education and documented benefits

Shifting Professional Practice into SL



adapted by Tapia, 2006 based on the model elaborated by the Service-Learning 2000 Center, Stanford University, California, 1996

Service-learning as Model of Professional Practice at MBU

- 2 semesters – two courses
- First semester (course Social Prevention)
 - Need analyses in cooperation with social institution
 - Project preparation
- Second semester (course Professional Practice)
 - 90 – 120 hours of service – SL project implementation + reflection

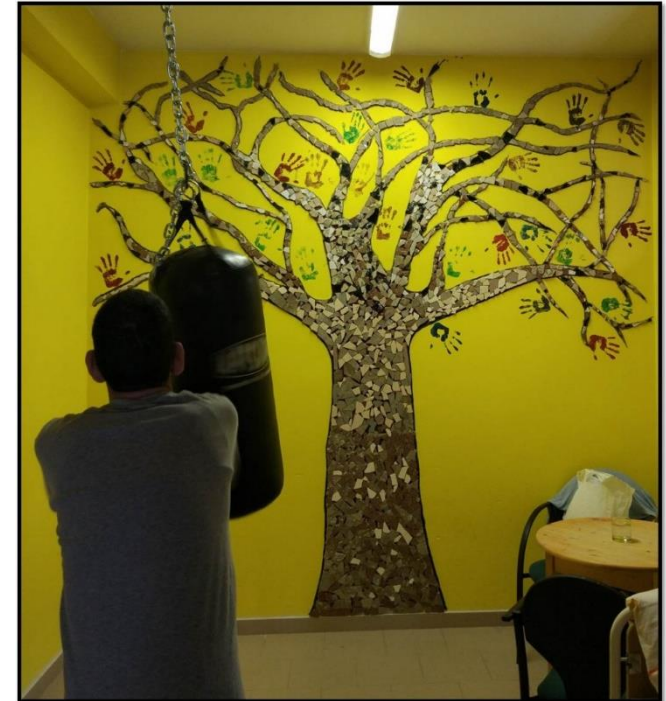
Safe space

Target group: adult male clients with diagnoses of schizophrenia, schizotypal disorders and delusional disorders in special social house

Aims: prevention of regular episodes of aggression manifested by self-harm and the destruction of property of the facility

Activities:

- get acquainted with the clients of the device through activities and games;
- creation of a "Safe Space" - a room with a hanging punch bag in order to mitigate the occurrence of aggressive incidents and thus allow hosted clients to express their emotions in a safe way.



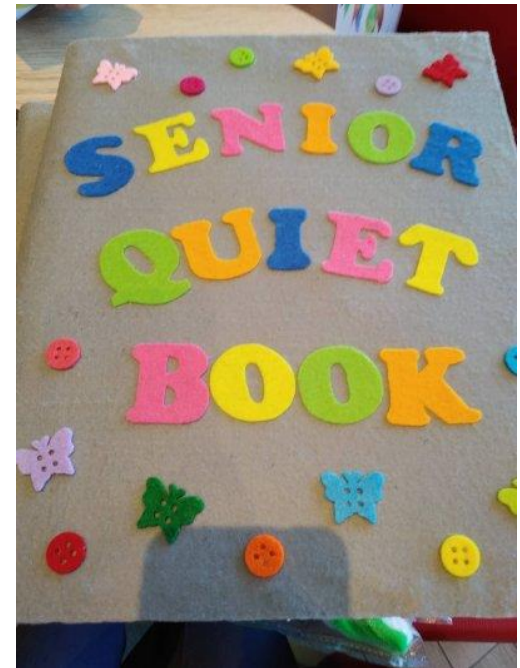
Senior Quiet Book

Target group: disabled people with mental and behavioural disorders, as well as people who have reached retirement age and are dependent on the help of another person.

Aim: to motivate the clients of the special facility and their activation to cooperate through the activities and tasks in the Senior Quiet Book

Activities:

- The students created two books:
 - Senior Quiet Book 1 (exercises focused on creativity, vocabulary, long-term memory);
 - Senior Quiet Book 2 (activities and educational aids aimed at practicing the fine motor skills of clients of the facility).
- students actively spent time with the clients and chose individual activities depending on the mood, composition of clients and their intellectual level.



Finances for non-financials

Target group:homeless people

Aim: to increase the financial literacy of people who found themselves in an unfavourable life situation.

Activities:

- four lectures in the facility on the topics: *"How to live and survive from social benefits"*, *"How not to get into debt"* and *"How to prove oneself on the labour market and the possibility of obtaining a second income"*. Each lecture lasted 60 minutes and included a discussion with clients focussing on their problem situation and the possibilities of how to solve it.
- students helped clients write resumes, worked with them in the garden and maintaining the premises around the charity, helped in the kitchen, sorted clothes and participated in small daily activities of the facility.



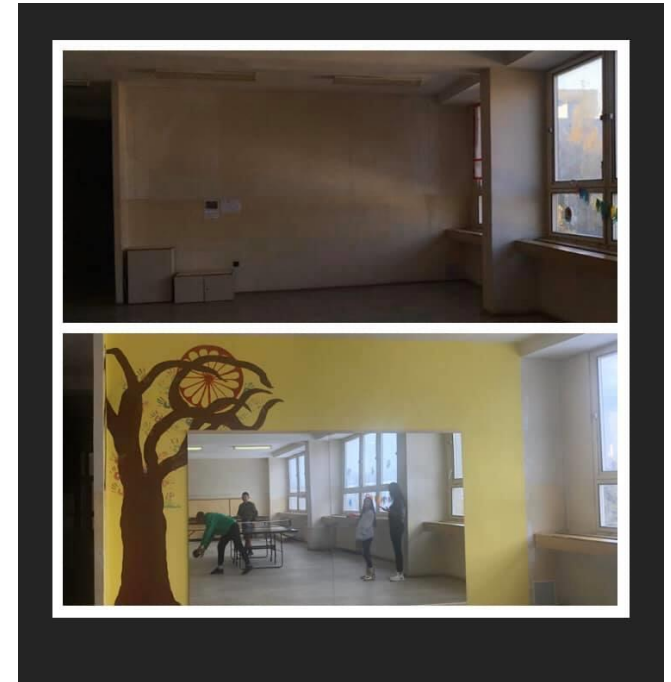
With Dance Close to Each Other

Target group: Roma children
in social need

Aim: to support and develop
social identity of Roma
children

Activities:

- Create dance space
- Train choreography



Reflected differences between SL practice and regular practice

- real result in the form of own preventive project for a specific facility, of which they were a part during project implementation, importance and benefit of the project for the community even after professional work experience
- the possibility to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge directly into practice
- students worked long-term with a definite very specific target group and this experience has taught them to identify the specifics and individual needs of these clients in social work.
- planning of a preventive project from the very beginning
- the need for longer and more conscientious preparation before the implementation of the project itself.
- number of hours spent with clients in the facility (exceeding the mandatory number of hours of professional work experience).
- working directly with the client with a sense of greater responsibility

Limits of the model

- increased attention to the selection of workplaces for the implementation of service-learning activities
- student teamwork

Thank you for your attention

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