

[illegible]

Support of after school activities for children and/or teenagers in need

Alexey Mazalov

Learning Report

Abstract—The report describes the personal experience obtained while being involved in the "Support of after school activities for children and/or teenagers in need" activity that consisted in helping children from unhappy families know more about the Ubuntu operating system.

Index Terms—Children, "Tercena", studies, informatics, Ubuntu, Libre Office Impress, experience



1 INTRODUCTION

THIS report describes my personal experience obtained as a result of being engaged in an activity proposed within the Independent Studies III course.

Being a student of the Informatics Systems and Computing Engineering master program and devoting a lot of time to particular studies, I wanted to choose an activity which would give me a chance to develop my soft skills. From my point of view, such an activity might include participation in doing social work, mastering my Portuguese and getting to know better the Portuguese customs and society. Having chosen the activity of helping children in need promoted by the "ENTRAJUDA-Bolsa do Voluntariado" foundation I think I managed to tackle all the mentioned issues. The main reasons for choosing the particular activity, the challenges I confronted during its fulfillment as well as the results obtained in the context of my personal growth are discussed below in detail.

-
- Alexey Mazalov, nr. 80462,
E-mail: a_a_mazalov@mail.ru, Instituto Superior Técnico,
Universidade de Lisboa.

Manuscript received January 31, 2015.

2 PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND THE GOALS PURSUED

Human personality is complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, in spite of the years I spent studying computing and other exact sciences I have always longed for getting involved in an activity of a more humanitarian nature. What is more, I consider social work very noble and important. On the other hand, I realize that being useful implies assuming responsibilities. Hence, I got interested in the project of helping children in need made by the "ENTRAJUDA-Bolsa do Voluntariado" nonprofit foundation.

I spent more than 15 years studying, therefore, I believe I have developed an intuitive grasp of how teaching process is carried out. Doing a master course in Informatics Systems and Computing Engineering at Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) implies good skills at dealing with elementary informatics problems. For the same reason I thought I would be the right person to help the children in their studies in mathematics. Finally, I thought I might be equally useful in helping schoolchildren with their English as to be accepted as a student of the TIME international mobility programme I had to prove a fluent level of my English.

On the other hand, in communicating with the Tercena children I had to use Portuguese which was both a challenge and an excellent opportunity to practise it. It will not be immodest of me to say that there was no language

barrier between me and my “pupils”. I was really encouraged by the experience and look forward to continue it.

3 BEFORE STARTING THE ACTIVITY

Because of certain delays in establishing contacts with the charity institution’s representatives described in the Activity Report I could start with the social work itself only in December. However, this period of “idleness” that occurred for reasons beyond my control also gave me some personal experience. For instance, it was my initiative to use solely Portuguese while corresponding with the members of the Coaching Team. Doing so, I wanted to improve my written Portuguese which at that time leaved much to be desired. The letters of my colleagues to me represented a valuable example of a formal-style written language produced by its native speakers.

4 IN THE COURSE OF THE ACTIVITY

4.1 Communicating with the “Tercena” Representatives

From my point of view, communicating with the “Tercena” Representative was a source of knowledge concerning the organization of social service in Portugal. I learnt a lot about the way children from unhappy families are taken care of as well as about the efforts taken to mentally reform their parents whose way of life constitutes bad example for their children to follow. I also came to know some interesting facts associated with school studies organization and the way some subjects, namely informatics, mathematics and English are taught.

4.2 Working out the Programme of Studies

While working out the programme of studies I did not only have to go deeper into the matter of the Ubuntu operating system, but also had to present the material in a manner appropriate for the children to perceive it. For example, due to the children’s age and emotional disposition I had to balance the lesson’s time dedicated to practical skills and theory knowledge.

As for improving my own Ubuntu knowledge and skills, certain progress was also

achieved. For example, I learnt a lot about this OS’s past as well as discovered some previously unknown Ubuntu features. Before I had no occasion to design presentations using the “Libre Office Impress” tool so the activity proved to be an excellent chance to meet the lack.

4.3 Communicating with the Children

Giving a lesson to the children was new experience to me and, therefore, an adventure in itself. As a result, I did not only learn more about their perception of the material offered but also came to know their vision of school studies, the subjects they considered tough and those they did not find difficult. In my case, the kids complained they had lots of difficulties in dealing with the tasks their school teacher of mathematics gave them. Furthermore, due to the reality of living in unhappy families they hardly have an opportunity to arrange any extracurricular studies of English which leads to their poor performance in this subject. According to the prior agreement achieved with their mentors, next term I will be helping the children with their studies in mathematics and English.

5 CONCLUSION

Being a participant of the TIME international students mobility programme and a newcomer in Portugal, the Independent Studies III course was new experience to me. First I was ignorant of the rules and the teaching politics within this course. What is more, the process of getting into the activity took much more time than I had expected. Nevertheless, I feel satisfied with the work done because thanks to it I feel that I have not only enriched my general outlook but also acquired some special knowledge including that concerning the Ubuntu operating system, its tools used for slides design as well as the LaTeX tool [1] used for writing this report.

REFERENCES

- [1] L. Lamport, *LaTeX: A Document Preparation System*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1986.

In this type of document (technical), the conclusion should start with a summary of the subject addressed and then should highlight the results.