

## **ESTABLISHING A INDUSTRY-BASED VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM**

(For Evangelical ministries working with Street Children)

By Daryl Germaine, Founder and Director of Working Hands,  
(a ministry of ACTION International Philippines)

### **INTRODUCTION:**

How could any individual or group make a realistic difference in the life of a street child? The answer, first and foremost, would be a changed life through the saving knowledge and acceptance of the Blood of Jesus Christ being spilled for Salvation from sin. The second, and appropriate for this discussion, is a program to integrate the street child into society and life by giving him a vocation that is competitive in the real world, along with Scriptural values inculcation.

The Working Hands Vocational and Discipleship School in Silang, Cavite, Philippines is such a program. The school has been established since 1991, and has graduated over 300 students who are now working in the Philippines and overseas. Many former very poor are now working steadily, married with children, and serving their church and community. The school started with very little backing, and was able to be established slowly and steadily, to the place where the school is in demand by both the Christian community and the industry.

So the question is, how does an organization or individual start an effective vocational program?

### **ESSENTIALS:**

#### **Begin with the Industrial World**

Most Evangelical programs for the street poor are based on social reform or spiritual enlightenment. Those in charge of these programs come from certain, although legitimate, bias. Those who usually are in a position to put together and start a new program do not really understand, nor are inclined to understand the need to reconcile the program to the reality of industrial standards. Most social programs, if they fail, can be picked up, modified, and restarted. A vocational program is like an airplane. If an essential part (such as a wing) falls off in flight, disastrous events occur, resulting in the triumph of gravity and the loss of life. Industrial standards are an absolute. Workers must do good, useful work, or the company ultimately does not make a profit. The worker then loses his or her job as the source of income evaporates. Trainees must learn to an industrial standard, or they are useless to themselves and those connected with them.

Therefore, it is essential that the founder of the program must have an industrial and/or business background. Not just an education in the above, but real experience on the floor and in the offices of companies **that have had to make a profit**. This person must be able to make decisions concerning funding, location, personnel, direction and clientele of the new program. They must be answerable to an oversight committee that is results oriented.

## **Find the People**

Experience in the Philippines has shown that the main difficulty with an excellent vocational program is finding the right personnel. Location, facilities, funding and equipment will come with time and a pragmatic approach.

Appropriate qualified instructors are very hard to find. They must be at a journeyman or master level within their chosen profession. If they have a university background, they must have had practical experience as well. Not only should they be a Journeyman or Master in their field, they must be able to **communicate** their vocational thinking to the non-informed in simple, effective ways. Their curriculum must be clear and effective, using multi-media teaching methods. (These can be models, whiteboard drawings, demonstrations, exercises, lecture, note-taking, testing etc.) The instructor must be able to work with youth. Many teachers can't take the banter and interaction of the young people today. Teachers must be "situation aware" in order to keep a level control and safety in their classroom, especially when handling heavy, dangerous tools and equipment. The instructors also must be able to work in a cross-cultural situation if they are recruited from abroad. Is this culture annoying, can I really learn this language? Why do the roosters crow all night, why do these hamburgers taste so different? These teachers must be able to set up their own shop, program, and curriculum. They must be able to work under a minimum of control and supervision. Also, they must be able to raise their own support or take a salary at a level usually for below their capabilities. Are they qualified at least to minimum instructor standards in the country they are working?

So:

Can they do the work?

Can they communicate the work to others?

Can they handle youth?

Can they work in another culture?

Can they work within certain parameters?

Can they work at a reduced salary?

Can they come up the minimum qualification level required locally?

## **Start Small**

A vocational program needs to start small for various reasons. First, a vocational program is **capital intensive**. A particular course is chosen by finding and recruiting the instructor. A dorm, shop and classroom need to be located, modified, purchased or rented. An ideal starting size is 10 students. If an automotive class, for example, there would need to be 10 notebooks, safety glasses, etc. Several full tool sets, grinders, drill press, benches, etc. The classroom needs 10 desks and chairs, blackboard etc. The Dorm needs an equipped kitchen, tables and benches for 10, plates, utensils, beds, mattresses, etc. The staff, especially dorm parents, need to be housed on the same facility for overnight control. If possible, do not stint on equipment, as students need to experience a little of everything a trade has to offer in order to cope with the "input overload" of their first weeks in the professional world. Also, the curriculum, schedule, rules and regulations are simpler if there are fewer students in the first class. Administration,

instructors and other staff need to make their mistakes in a small, correctable environment.

A vocational discipleship program in the Philippines costs about \$120USD per student per month for an 8-month basic program. This kind of support (\$1200 per month for 10 students) is a difficult one to sustain until the support base becomes established.

Note: A vocational program can be **self sustaining** only with using experienced grads from the program or hired outside workers. Unless the program is set up with income generation as a separate part of the school, the income generation will take over the instruction side of the school, especially if the instructor of that class is also the manager of the income generation. Instruction is a full time job. So is the income generation. The time demand of a product or a service is hard to resist in light of pressure from the customer. “I ordered my cabinet a month ago, where is it?” If the program is supposed to be self sustaining, have someone with vocational and managerial depth run the income generation side.

### **Be Innovative and Cost Conscious**

Until reports of the school success goes out to a wide support base, or a generous start up support is laid aside, or a realistic promise of monthly support is in hand, every dollar of ‘set up’ and ‘routine expenditure’ needs to go far. What is the cheapest way to get a good quality piece of equipment? Import it? Local purchase? Build “in house”? These wise decisions need to be made from a pragmatic, practical point of view. Is this piece of equipment really necessary? Working Hands built and equipped an Auto shop for \$35000.00 in the 90’s. Earlier, a vocational school nearby built a Welding Program for \$80,000.00. The Auto shop has a capacity of 35 students per year. The Welding program serviced a clientele of 6 students per year. Later, Working Hands, after eviction from the original campus, started the school again with a loan of \$2500.00 in a rented storeroom. That seed money has stretched into a \$50,000.00 a year program on a 2.5 million dollar campus. Even though the school support is more even after 17 years of existence, WH recently built a wood stove to do the majority of the dorm cooking, using wood grown on campus.

Does the person in charge of this new ministry have a history of husbanding their funds in their personal life? Do they like the best of food and equipment and are willing to pay well for it? Perhaps they are overly careful and will make decisions costing large amounts in order to save a few dollars. Again, it is very important to find that right “founder” of this ministry.

### **Work with the Churches**

Recruitment is very important. Do not use the vocational training as an evangelical tool. Look for those applicants who are already born again and active in their local church. The school invests a huge amount of funds in each student. The investment should be empowering those already quickened by the Holy Spirit. Secondly, one or two non-believers may pull down a group into dissention and sin rather than being positively influenced to a decision in Christ.

Keep the control of the student in the hands of the church. WH students go home on weekends to participate in their home church and see their families. This has several advantages: The pastor and elders can keep track of the student’s spiritual life, and the

student cannot return to school unless accompanied by a form signed by the pastor stating that the student is still under good discipline in the church. Going home on weekends also reduces the staffing and expense load on the school. Also, the students in the Philippines get very lonely for their families if they can't see them very often. Graduates that have lost their relationship with their church usually fail in their spiritual life due to employment community pressures.

Technical fields, (like vocational training) is an area that foreign missionaries can still serve, even as in many countries the Church is maturing.

One pastor is using the vocational school as a recruiting tool for his young people. He hands out WH school brochures in areas that young men congregate. He asks if any would be interested in free vocational training. Interested ones should join the young peoples at his church in order to fulfill some of the requirements for the school! (Accepting Christ is one of those requirements).

The industry in the Philippines appreciates the Working Hands graduate because he is the end product of much testing, filtering and requirements. In order to be accepted, the applicant must have a recommendation from his pastor or elder. They must be from 18 to 25 years old, in good health. They must be from a definite hardship or orphan background. They may be a high school graduate, but students are accepted according to a testing process. They cannot be a graduate of any other vocational course, nor have more than a year of college. They must pass a series of 5 tests, simple math, logic, spatial ability, mechanical or vocational aptitude, and a spiritual test.

Usually in WH, the top scoring eligible applicant from the poorest background has priority for an opening in the school. During the last recruitment, 35 students were selected from 120 qualified applicants.

Less than 5% of Working Hands graduates started as orphans on the street. Street children cannot directly enroll in a vocational program. They need to go through an intermediate program to build up their social and tutorial skills. Fortunately, there is now a program associated with WH called Honest Hands Discipleship Home. Honest Hands works with street boys and school dropouts, tutoring them in scholastic and spiritual areas. Several boys, recommended by pastors who found them on the street, have passed through the Honest Hands program, learned further skills at Working Hands, and are now gainfully employed in the Philippines and abroad. Seven students have passed from Honest Hands to Working Hands, and 3 of those have graduated. In the past, before Honest Hands, several street boys have graduated from Working Hands, as the school takes every student on a "case to case basis".

### **Use Graduates as the Staff Core**

WH struggled in its' first years finding those who would be loyal to the school and competent in their work. Once the outstanding graduates have a bit of work experience, those qualified may be asked to come back and work at the school. In the Philippines, the graduates can have a debt of gratitude that serves well as a great pool of employees. Currently, all staff and instructors (except one) are graduates of the school. Many staff, if qualified, have been sponsored to further Bible or technical training. In WH, the Discipleship instructor has a MA and Master of Divinity. He is now working on his Doctorate. Most of the staff is ministering as pastors or elders on the weekends in their home churches.

In the Philippines leadership is very important. The leader of a ministry sets the spiritual tone for that ministry. Continually, Christian Non-Government Organizations in the Philippines have their ups and downs in the areas of leadership and spirituality. At Working Hands it has been a struggle for the director over the years to build spiritual maturity and leadership into the staff. The staff is continually sponsored to upgrade their technical and spiritual skills. The director daily mentors the staff in regular morning Bible studies. Because the missionaries and staff stand before the students and their lives are in focus, the personal Christian lives of the staff is very important. There was a time when a division between staff carried on beyond regular employee discipline and spiritual encouragement. The director announced that the school would shut down permanently and all employees dismissed if the situation was not resolved by the staff themselves. Fortunately, the situation was resolved and the school has been blessed by the close, Godly atmosphere.

Also, the staff is used to being flexible. Even though they may be hired for one particular employment, they have been, in the most part, very ready to step in where needed. The school is set up efficiently in order to keep the staff numbers down low. The students do much of the Dorm and grounds work as payment for their stay.

The staff to student ratio at WH is 8 staff (including missionaries) to 40 students.

### **Building Equipment and Facilities**

Again, START SMALL! A facility for 10 students is not overwhelming. The WH principle is to have the campus in the countryside, which gets the student away from noise and pollution. Facilities in the countryside are usually much cheaper. The campus needs to be within an hour commute of suppliers. Usually, adjacent properties may be purchased for expansion. WH restarted in 1991 with \$2500, which paid for the rehab of a passion fruit warehouse which included a shop, bunkroom and kitchen for 20, plus an apartment for the Dorm Parents. WH accepted repair work from the landlord in order to reduce the monthly rental fee. WH graduated 14 students that first year. Many churches or organizations will fund the purchase of property or building of facilities.

### **Chores! Chores! Using Discipline as a Teaching Tool**

WH has a strictly enforced daily schedule along with chores for the students. The students wash their own clothes, clean the Dorm, and assist with the cooking. Also, they participate in “community service” which does the bulk of the grounds work on a 1 ½ hectare campus. From “get out of bed” to “lights out”, the student only has about 30 minutes of free time, not including snack breaks. Students are not “entertained”, but have plenty to do. Free time is after cleanup at 4pm, and is spent either playing or watching basketball. Students have 30 minutes daily with a staff member in a group devotion, and then 1 hour of practical Christian Living with values inculcation. In the evening, there is an hour of Bible Study, again a group activity. Vocational training includes 2 hours of shop or theory in the morning, and 3 hours of shop time in the afternoon.

Even with an 8 month course, if breaks are included, the students are at Working Hands for about a year. During that time, many real life crises come up in the lives of missionaries, staff and students. Girlfriends get pregnant. Someone gets possessions or funds stolen. Students leave because of bad attitudes, inflexibility, or parental pressure.

The attendant emotions, and real consequences can be addressed directly in public. Biblical principals to live by can be dusted off and explained.

In the Philippines, many times behavior of children or young people is not directly confronted by parents or churches. For many, it is the first time that sin has been pointed out in their lives. Change must occur in order for the student to continue at the school. All the staff participate in the discipleship. Each staff person and missionary spends at least ½ hour a week in a discipleship lesson/Bible study with all the students. For example, the director does a continuing Bible study on the life of Joseph and how that relates to the everyday life and needs of the students.

Students are **always** on probation. They may leave the program at any time that they do not consistently display a Christ-like attitude. There is a “3 strikes you’re out” policy. First serious offence (strike one) the student talks to the Dorm Parent and the Director, discipline is given, and the student is made aware of the seriousness of his actions. Strike two, the church/pastor and parents are notified that the student is displaying consistent problems and they are facing imminent dismissal. Strike three is the dismissal of the student.

### **Discipleship Curriculum**

- Doctrine about the Bible
- Doctrine about God
- Doctrine about Salvation
- Doctrine about Man
- Christian Living
  - a. Worship
  - b. Lord’s Supper and baptism
  - c. Backsliding
  - d. Soul winning and evangelism
  - e. Christian suffering
  - f. Love, courtship and marriage

### **Challenges**

#### **Business taking over the training;**

Working with the industry or customers has its’ challenges. The “real” world, business and profit wait for no man. A school that can produce products as well as teach is attractive to businesses and agencies. High quality products built over time for a low price. Many businesses would like to have contracts, or would like to use facilities and have their own people build or repair products for their own needs. Always, the spiritual aspect of the ministry needs to be protected from these onslaughts, no matter how lucrative the possibilities are. Another concern is when a quality education is given for a low fee or sponsorships available, many of those from upper levels of society are willing to pay for what they consider to be a bargain. Working with the poor and working for profit are two different worlds. Vocational training lives between these worlds.

#### **Demands to secularize the school;**

Working Hands has a memorandum of agreement with the Philippine government agency called TESDA. (Technical Education and Skills Development

Authority) This organization is in charge of vocational training in the Philippines. They have formal and non-formal methods of training. In building a relationship with this group, they are interested in the school becoming a part of their process, which would mean accepting students that fit their requirements for formal training. Because Working Hands is a non-formal type of training institution, there is some pressure to change the focus of the school. Working Hands is also a ministry under license from DSWD, the Philippine arm of the government concerned with social welfare. The agency can protect Working Hands if tragedy may occur, but they have a requirement for a social worker to be an integral part of the ministry. Working Hands would like to have a social worker, but is looking for a male Christian worker to be a real asset to the ministry. A male social worker is very scarce. There is pressure to hire a secular person, but that would compromise the very essence of the ministry. DSWD is quite patient, but the requirement is still there.

### **Drop the quality**

Many Christian workers in related ministries have suggested that the Working Hands standards are too high. Many of the applicants do not do well on the tests that constitute the entrance into the program. Perhaps, for example, a pastor is anxious that his church member will be able to enroll in the school. If the member does not pass the tests, the pastor would like the tests altered. Practically speaking, the tests cannot be altered at a whim, or because of the particular situation. The standard is not one that is set by the school, (as an entity to itself), but a part of an industrial standard nationwide that must be adhered to.

### **NOTE:**

Daryl Germaine, the Director of Working Hands Discipleship and Vocational School is available to answer any questions. He has been in vocational training here in the Philippines for over 20 years. He can be reached by email at [germaine@actionintl.org](mailto:germaine@actionintl.org).

The school can be reached just past kilometer 47.5 on the Aginaldo Highway, Silang, Cavite, Philippines. The barrio stop is "BALUBAD SECOND". If one turns right off the freeway, the school is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a kilometer down the concrete road, (just after the bridge).

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