

Cascading skills

We look at one member's desire to embed a safety culture in under developed countries

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for day, teach him how to catch a fish and you feed him for a lifetime," such is the mantra for many charities in their long-term assistance planning. As a result, in many developing countries there are a number of good vocational training colleges being set-up and run to help disadvantaged and vulnerable children become independent instead of falling into lives of crime, prostitution or other forms of exploitation.

However, often these colleges and non-government organisations (NGOs) neither have the financial nor expert resources they need to give these trainees the proper, in-depth and certificated occupational safety and health (OSH) training that many of us take for granted.

A structured approach

For a number of years I have worked voluntarily, during my free-time, in training schools throughout south-east Asia, teaching the trainees about basic occupational safety and health for the workplace. However, unfortunately usually demand for these classes far outstrips the time I can give. My mantra is: "Teach a man how to catch fish *safely* and you feed him for a lifetime".

So this year, as part of an OSH literacy project, I decided on a much more structured approach. I registered as a training centre to deliver a number of OSH courses as well as the 'train-the-trainer' courses, which I am qualified and

experienced in delivering. The aim is to train and certificate the teachers and trainers in these colleges how to teach engaging and accessible, health and safety classes, especially to young people who may have had minimum experience of education and subsequently very low levels of literacy. Then, hopefully the vocational training colleges could also register as a centre and the trainers can cascade their skills and learning down to the trainees and into their local communities allowing me to move on to other projects.

As a result, the trainees will gain a structured programme of occupational health and safety training embedded in their vocational training and internationally recognised certificates which they can take with them when applying for jobs. Hopefully, it may also inspire some to develop a career within health and safety too.

Employers will also recognise that these perspective employees have had suitable training in a number of workplace health and safety courses, through the medium of English, to be familiar with international standards and terms. The trainers will have qualifications which they can use as part of their CPD and the NGOs can be satisfied that they have met their requirements under the duty of care they have for the trainees. It will also enable the colleges and NGOs to develop community health and safety outreach programmes in the local communities in which they work.





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Increasing engagement

I decided to begin with Vietnam and especially projects and colleges focusing on training young people to enter the rapidly growing hotels restaurants and catering sectors. This industry sector is close to my heart because when I left school at 16 I trained as a chef, allowing me to leave my native Belfast during the troubles. It broadened my horizons and enabled me to get a career, which eventually led to teaching and training. The focus for this year is to deliver training on food hygiene, workplace health and safety, fire safety as well as the emergency first aid at work and eventually trainer registration courses. I have linked up with the KOTO Foundation in Hanoi (www.koto.com.au) and Saigon Children's Charity (www.saigonchildren.com), and the Hoa Sua training college in Hanoi (www.hoasuaschool.edu.vn), all of which are doing excellent work with minimal resources.

The first trip, made during the two week Hajj holiday as I work in Saudi Arabia, was a great success. I delivered courses in centres in Hanoi (the capital) and Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). With the help of a translator the students were able to access the learning as were the trainers. Although the courses only last for about three hours each, I spent a lot of time beforehand with the trainers.

All the trainees come from very disadvantaged backgrounds and many of them had had little experience with education. All the colleges run English

Training

language programmes as well as study skills and other courses. The trainees get to practice in the training restaurants which all the charities run too. However, as part of the programme, I wanted to train the trainers in inclusive learning styles and lesson planning. We planned and used a variety of teaching techniques including: Kinaesthetic, tactile and role play. We also had large print and lots of dictionaries on hand.

In Vietnam, as in most of Asia, still uses the 'chalk and talk' system whereby the teacher will stand in front of the class and dictate to the students. The teacher is not usually questioned and the respect for him is absolute. Nevertheless, although it was completely new to them, the trainees really enjoyed and engaged in the learning activities. It was great fun and there was a lot of laughter. However, there was also a serious side to the learning. All the trainees were able to see the relevance and importance the training had for their lives and livelihoods. They fully engaged in the learning and made a big effort with their English to communicate with me about it. I was amazed by their subject knowledge and their keenness to learn as well as the appreciation they showed towards me for trying to help them.

All of the trainees and trainers undertook Level 1 Awards in Workplace Health and safety and Food Hygiene. I am confident that they will all have passed and gain their certificates. The trainers and teachers also learned a lot from the experience, which I do hope they will employ in future training sessions. On the next trip, already in the planning, we will hopefully be able to do the Fire Safety and



Training students at the Hoa Sua School, Hanoi about food hygiene and conflict management (dealing with angry customers) through role-play and traditional teaching methods



Emergency First Aid at Work courses and then continue to build from there.

Accessible to all

There is a real need for risk communications to be delivered in a format which is accessible to people with varying learning styles and levels of literacy. Unlike academic subjects, simply 'not getting it' or failing to fully comprehend the seriousness of it, can have real, long-term physical and economic consequences such as losing a hand, an eye or even death. Unfortunately,

usually there are no re-sits when it comes to failing with workplace health and safety. The statistics speak for themselves and young people transitioning from full time education to employment and vocational training are the most vulnerable.

As a qualified state teacher and health and safety instructor I realise that in the UK we are very fortunate to have governmental, charitable and professional bodies such as IIRSM, CIEH, IOSH, RoSPA and the HSE. All of these organisations work extremely hard to raise awareness of workplace health and safety issues. For instance, IIRSM partners with organisations throughout Europe for projects such as Health and Safety Week and The Healthy Workplaces campaign. It also runs numerous events on a range of workplace health and safety related topics, many relating to risk communication and risk literacy.

Along with EU-OSHA and other health and safety groups, there is a collaborative aim to have occupational safety and health introduced to the national curriculum. However, sadly in many parts of the world people are not so fortunate. As health and safety professionals, I hope that we can all continue to support IIRSM and other bodies to make health and safety and accident prevention part of all national curriculums in schools world wide. And the best place to start is by setting an example is at home.

If anyone would like to get involved in these projects please visit www.oshliteracy.org or contact David Magee: davidmagee@oshliteracy.org



After classes with a group of satisfied trainees from the KOTO Vocational Training Centre, Saigon