

# Safety educ

**G**ive 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, very often, these colleges, and the NGOs that support them, neither have the financial nor expert resources they need to give these trainees the certificated occupational safety and health (OSH) training that many of us take for granted.

For a number of years I have worked voluntarily, during my free time, in such vocational training colleges throughout south-east Asia, teaching the trainees basic health and safety for the workplace. However, the demand for these classes far outstrips the time I can give. To address this shortfall, this year, as

▶ **Vocational training colleges in developing countries are teaching young people work skills. *David Magee* is working with these students to teach them how to work safely.**

part of the OSH literacy project (see <http://oshliteracy.org/>), I decided upon a much more structured approach. I registered OSH literacy.org as a training centre and also registered to deliver a number of OSH courses as well as ‘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 vocational colleges 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.

Trainers will gain qualifications that they can use as part of their CPD and trainees will gain a structured programme of OSH training embedded in their vocational training and receive internationally recognised certificates that they can take with them when applying for jobs. Hopefully, it may also inspire some to develop a career within health and safety too.

Having well trained staff will also enable the training colleges and NGOs to develop community health and safety outreach programmes in the local communities in which they work.

## Getting started

I decided to hold the first courses in Vietnam, focusing particularly on projects and colleges which are training young people to enter the rapidly growing hotels, restaurants and catering (HoReCa) sectors.



▶ **David Magee (left) with students and trainers in Vietnam**

The focus for this year is to deliver training on food hygiene, workplace health and safety, fire safety, emergency first aid at work and eventually trainer registration courses. I have linked up with charities in the local area – the KOTO Foundation in Hanoi and Saigon ([www.koto.com.au](http://www.koto.com.au)), the Saigon Children’s Charity ([www.saigonchildren.com](http://www.saigonchildren.com)) and the Hoa Sua Training College in Hanoi ([www.hoasuaschool.edu.vn](http://www.hoasuaschool.edu.vn)). All of which are doing excellent work with minimal resources.

My first trip to Vietnam at the end of September was a great success. I delivered courses in training centres in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). All the trainees came from very disadvantaged backgrounds and many of them had had little experience with education, but with the help of a translator I was able to ensure students and trainers



▶ **Saigon Children’s Charity’s vocational training school in Ho Chi Minh (Saigon)**

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were able to access the learning. (All the colleges run English language programmes as well as study skills and other courses.)

Although the courses I delivered only lasted for around three hours each, I spent a lot of time beforehand with the trainers. Training for them included the use of inclusive learning styles and lesson planning. Together we planned the courses and used a variety of teaching techniques including kinaesthetic (in which learning takes place by the students carrying out practical activities, rather than listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations) and role play. We also had large print training guides and lots of dictionaries on hand.

In my article on OSH literacy published in the September 2015 issue of this journal I stated that 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. With health and safety courses, 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 health and safety in the workplace. The statistics speak for themselves and young people transitioning from full-time education to employment and vocational training are the most vulnerable.

In Vietnam, as well as most of Asia, they still use the 'chalk and talk' system of learning whereby the teacher stands in front of the class and dictates to the students. The teacher is not usually questioned and the respect for him/her is absolute. Nevertheless, although my course teaching style 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 that 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 said they had learned a lot from the experience,

which I do hope they will employ in future training sessions. The trainees get to practice their newly learned work skills in the training restaurants which the charities also operate.

On my next trip to Vietnam, already in the planning, we will hopefully be able to do the *Fire safety* and *Emergency first aid at work* courses and then continue to build from there.

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► Teaching trainers how to use role play to help learning

For more information about the projects in this article, or to get involved, see [www.oshliteracy.org](http://www.oshliteracy.org) or email: [davidmagee@oshliteracy.org](mailto:davidmagee@oshliteracy.org)