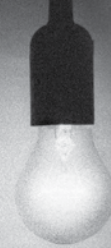


# TRAINING IN ACTION



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**D**uring a major event in Southeast Asia this week, I met a young global worker. I mean really young... like 20-years young. He is 1.5 years into a 3-year commitment in this Southeast Asian nation, on the opposite side of the world from where he grew up. So he started at 18!

His parents met on the field. From the age of 5, he grew up outside of the U.S. He learned his first, “second” language from friends on the streets and in school there. Now he feels called to this Southeast Asian nation and he is learning the language of the majority people group here.

Just yesterday, he attended an afternoon workshop that was being translated into that language. There was an experienced worker there who was translating for the speaker but who struggled with a word here or there. More than once, my new young friend—who was sitting near the translator—contributed the missing word. After a bit, the older worker handed over the mike!

A good friend of mine was also in the meeting. He has worked in this same language group for 25 years and was astonished and impressed—for several reasons. One reason was that this young man had no hesitation to contributing like a lot of young people. He had been encouraged to take leadership by those who mentored him. But the bigger surprise was his language skills after 1.5

years in what is a fairly difficult, tonal language.

Question: Why are we surprised?

We have known for years that the younger one goes out and gets started the better they can learn the language. Here was a living illustration of the point.

My long-term missionary friend, his field leader and I were talking about this, and I raised the idea afresh of the need to get this young man, other field-based workers and “nationals” any training that might be helpful. And if helpful and desired, a degree—all right in the middle of “the action on the ground.” The field leader said he had proposed this to his mission and to other organizations. No one was opposed, but no one gave leadership to it either.

Actually, Ralph D. Winter had the idea many years ago. Back before there were missions that mobilized a bunch of really young people to go out there early—like OM and YWAM—Winter talked about it with people like Clyde Cook. Cook was the president of Biola at the time, and had served as a missionary and mission agency president. Winter’s pitch was: “Clyde, what if you could double your student body and not build one new building or add a faculty member?” Cook was all ears! How could that happen?

Short answer? Send half the students overseas each year! Let them spend half their college years in a different cultural setting. It turns out that was much cheaper for the students too (helping to lower the increasingly massive debt that many students acquire now).

In a setting of mission agency executives, I heard Winter propose another related idea: encourage mission agencies to

create their own ‘accrediting’ body. They would rate universities and colleges, judging them on how well they dealt with missionary kids—both academically and practically. Winter figured that there were so many MKs that schools would listen. But, for lack of leadership to focus on it, neither happened.

*Why don't we combine these ideas, and perhaps others, and do it now?*

I’m not talking about most of the existing distance programs, which remain costly, often require some residency and usually exclude the kinds of study a global worker would want today.

Both missions and schools would buy into it. And with more and more online today, it would be so much easier to pull off.

My new 20-year old friend is very interested in learning and growing. He would be thrilled to get a degree in the process, but he doesn’t want to leave the country to which he feels called and deeply burdened.

So help me answer this question:  
*Why should he?*

Are you interested in helping make this happen? Perhaps you are an educator or an interested person who might be able to bring some skills or do some research (from home!). Or perhaps you are with a mission agency that would be interested. We need folks to help design, build and run such a thing. There is a lot of work to be done, from getting schools to buy in, to working out field situations that would help guide and coach the young people. Write me and let me know what you can help to do!

You may comment online at [www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org) or email me at [greg.parsons@uscwm.org](mailto:greg.parsons@uscwm.org). 