

WHO CAN LEAD A SCHOOL IN THE UOFN?

by Tom Bloomer

From the beginning of YWAM training, our normal way of raising up school leaders has been to challenge a student who has taken a school to come onto school staff, then in a later school join the leadership, then after that become the school leader. Depending on the person, this process can be shorter, or longer.

This progression remains valid for the UofN today. It follows our values of learning by doing, and by impartation. An exception could be that if a person is on school staff just for a particular purpose, such as hospitality, then these kinds of qualifications are not necessary. But all staff of any kind must have done a DTS! UofN policy is that no non-YWAMer can lead a school, or be on school staff.

Here are some of the principles guiding our policies in these areas:

Part of the issue here is impartation. We have been reminded of what many of the ancient Greeks knew, that learning is not just an intellectual exercise but a spiritual transaction. What we seek in our schools is not just the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but impartation.

Students who rub up against staff daily are receiving in the spirit, as well as acquiring attitudes and points of view. In my mind, this is why it is imperative that all staff who work in any capacity on a training base be YWAMers. If we do not hold to this principle, we are totally underestimating the power of informal learning.

However, we don't always want to require a professional person with years of experience in a given field to have to take a beginning course in that field as a student. We allow for this possibility in leaving to the College leadership the final confirmation of just who is qualified

to lead schools. But we must in that case redouble the emphasis on the intense discipling of that person as they come into staff positions.

We must remember that our heaven-sent teaching strategy of a school leader who is a spiritual leader, with a staff of committed YWAMers who are not far beyond the students in age and experience, combined with visiting speakers coming in and teaching in their particular strengths, is educational dynamite. It is a powerful educational dynamic, unequaled anywhere or in any time, to my knowledge.

When any part of this combination breaks down, as when staff are not YWAMers, or the school leader is not a spiritual leader, or visiting speakers are not brought in and most of the teaching is done by base staff, then the effectiveness of what we do quickly decreases.

Therefore, in my point of view, mastery of a field by itself does not qualify someone to lead a UofN school. That's preferable, but not as important as spiritual leadership. Mastery of the field is provided especially by the visiting speakers. Of course, school leaders must be working toward understanding more about the professional areas as well, and most of them I know are doing that. But spiritual leadership must be the primary qualification of a school leader.

What do we mean by "spiritual leadership" as it applies to a school leader, concretely? Two of our primary goals in our schools are seeing the students impacted by Jesus, growing spiritually as they learn; and learning how to learn from God, hearing from Him in that particular discipline.

If we have on our staff people trained in other universities, even Christian ones, we must remember that they do not necessarily have these elements in their experience. Most of them wouldn't have a clue how to lead in these areas. What they can do well is teach a subject, or a skill, so under their leadership a school becomes all about that kind of learning.

And for some of these people, they absolutely should do the introductory course! In talking with Dr. Bruce a few years ago about one lady who had a Master's in counseling, he said that they waived her doing the IBC and allowed her to go directly to MMBC. But after that she couldn't fit in at all, had problems, and left. My remark was, "You should probably have waived the MMBC, since that's the more academic stuff she already had, and asked her to take the IBC, which is where we start to teach counselors to hear from God about the person with problems". I guarantee that people trained in psychology do not normally know how to listen to the Lord concerning their counselees; even the ones from Christian universities.

Concerning creative areas, we could get lots of good Christians in to teach filmmaking, for example. But I want to see David Cunningham telling in our schools how he sought God every morning on the drive to the set, asking for Divine direction in how to set up the shoot for that day. He didn't get that training in the USC film school he attended, but at the UofN.

If we are going in new directions concerning these values because of principles, that's fine. But if we are driven by a need, such as lack of qualified staff, then that is NO reason to change. That is exactly how Christian organizations get into deep trouble. Why not fast and pray instead, and seek God as to why staff don't want to join us? Maybe we should change some of what we do? Is our base attractive to potential staff? Is the school leader the kind of person people want to work with?

The taking on of non-Christian staff is THE principal factor in the drift of Christian universities away from their moorings. Giving leadership to imperfectly-disciplined staff just because they have the mastery of the field would be the quickest way to turn the UofN into just another Christian university.

And friends, I'm not spending my life working on this project if that's going to be the result. Now, we all know people who have been students and staff in a school, and have still not

"gotten it". We are aware of our need for ongoing staff training, and are at work on several initiatives. Just requiring people to be a student and then staff will not automatically turn out the kind of leaders we are looking for. But we must not forget the way the Lord has led us. These are some of the principles. Each training base and College must apply them, and each College leadership may make exceptions to our overall policy of the student-staff-leadership progression. But let us ask for the fear of the Lord concerning these kinds of decisions, and be led by Him and His principles instead of being driven by need.