

IMTN: *A conversation of trainers that leads to action*

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A Case Study from Romania. Using a clear strategy to ensure missionary training is effective.

Introduction

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The Case Study in Bulletin 16 comes from the Romanian Centre of Cross-Cultural Studies (CRST) and we are grateful to CRST's Executive Director, Ileana Hrișcă, for sharing her passion to see young people equipped to take the gospel where it is most needed. Through her leadership of CRST, Ileana seeks to provide an excellent environment for the students' spiritual and academic development.

Currently there are a number of important global conversations about how missionary trainers can ensure that the quality of training is consistently excellent and that the training being delivered is relevant, transformative and equipping for cross-cultural life and ministry. We hope some useful tools will develop that we can share in future Bulletins. Having a clear, focused, intentional, Spirit-empowered strategy for every stage of training - from recruitment of students through to their long-term placement in ministry - seems to be essential in ensuring the effectiveness of the training. In this Bulletin Ileana shares CRST's "Spirit-inspired strategy" which provides an excellent model for us to reflect on.

Through careful monitoring of their "Six-T's-Strategy": Testing Calling, Teaching Quality, Training Practically, Transforming Spiritual Environment, Treasuring Resources and Transferring Wisely, CRST is able to check that the students are provided with the best possible environment for effective and transformative learning that will prepare them as gospel witnesses and enable them to fulfill their "holy dream". Thank you very much Ileana for challenging and inspiring us.

Using a clear strategy for ensuring excellence in missionary training

Ileana Hrișcă MA, Executive Director of CRST

The Romanian Centre of Cross-Cultural Studies (CRST) is a two-year training program that started in 2001 in Constanța, the south-east part of Romania, an area that is home for 14 ethnic groups, of which 70.000 are Muslims.

The Romanian Center of Cross-Cultural Studies exists to equip Romanian Christians in a framework of excellence, in order to send them as missionaries to the unreached people groups, especially to the Islamic nations. The strategy that helps CRST fulfil its vision, consists of six distinct aspects, 6Ts namely;

T1 – Testing Calling

T2 – Teaching Quality

T3 – Training Practically

T4 – Transforming Spiritual Environment

T5 – Treasuring Resources

T6 – Transferring Wisely

T1 – Testing Calling

The recruiting process for a mission college is critical. In Romania, the potential is still huge, considering that today only 15% of the Romanian Pentecostal churches are supporting missions. We have learned to work with what we have, still finding ourselves in a pioneer stage. Besides the fact that there are not many candidates to answer our invitation to study at CRST, we are insisting that our candidates have a call to cross-cultural mission. In our admission interviews, year after year we meet young people that want to study in our school. We evaluate their personal relationship with God, their character, and their call to mission as being most important. One year we had 17 candidates and we had to say no to five of them. We learned that without an authentic call, they will not last on the field. “Calling is central to the challenge and privilege of finishing well in life!”¹

¹ Os Guinness in E. Gibbs, *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, 2005), 191.

T2 – Teaching Quality

Throughout the years we developed a very specific curriculum and for the teaching we invited highly qualified lecturers, both men and women, Romanians and foreigners. We did not focus only on their academic degrees, but also on their missionary experience and on their spiritual journey. It is very important that the professor that stands before the students will speak volumes through their lives, not only through their words.

During the first year of their studies, CRST students receive basic Bible classes, introduction to missions and spiritual formation. Subjects include: Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, Gospel's Study, Church History, Bible Doctrines, Apologetics, Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Homiletics, Evangelization & Cell groups, Pneumatology, Introduction to Islam, Missions' History and Theology, World Religions, Signs and Wonders in Missions, The Book of Acts, Working with a Sending Agency, Spiritual Disciplines, Missionary's Character, The Life & Ministry of Jesus, Leadership Principles, Identifying personal Spiritual gifts.

During the second year, the training is missiological, both theoretical and practical. Islamic Studies, Cross-Cultural Communication, Anthropology, Cultural Issues, Hinduism, Buddhism, Team building, Holistic missions, Kairos course, The Kingdom of God. Missions' Strategies, Spiritual Warfare, Methods of Language learning on the field, Church Planting, Family life, Christian counseling, Bi-vocationalism (Tent Making), Care for the Emotional and the Mental health of a missionary.

Each class has specific means of evaluation that include reading assignments, written exams and papers.

Our school is not regarded as an institution, but as a family, and this is because “no teacher can be a true teacher unless he is also to a certain degree a friend,”² for “it is often the lasting impact of the life of a teacher that affects students more than the information they have gained from the lecturers.”³

² H. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 11.

³ E.L. McKinney, “Some Spiritual Aspects of Pentecostal Education: A Personal Journey,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3.2 (2000), pp. 253-279 in Warrington, “Pentecostal Theological Education, 11.

T3 – Training Practically

At the end of the week, our students do not have a free weekend, but a fruitful weekend. Students are placed according to their gifts and experience, in children/youth ministries, church planting, evangelism and discipleship. During their first year, every student will attend at least one short term mission trip to a Muslim majority community in Turkey, Albania, Macedonia or Kosovo. During the second year, the students take a two-month internship, when they travel to very diverse places, according to how they understand the specific call for their long-term ministry. We have had students choose places such as Mali and Egypt, Mozambique and Madagascar, Ethiopia and Uganda, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, India and Bangladesh, Indonesia and Afghanistan. Our graduates are serving in more than 25 different nations, as a result of the divine confirmation they received during their internship. We noticed that practical ministry in the real world motivates students to study with more enthusiasm in the classroom.

T4 – Transforming Spiritual Environment

Our school is a place where spiritual formation is offered in different ways. Each day of the week starts with forty-five minutes of corporate worship. On Mondays each group of students meet in separate room for prayer. On Tuesdays they meet in the same way, for a Bible study. Wednesdays are our fasting and prayer day – both students and leaders, we fast breakfast and lunch each week and we focus on a specific theme. In the morning we invite one of our lecturers to preach on that topic, and at 4 pm we meet for an hour of prayer, interceding before the Lord for the specific needs we've been fasting for. It is great for the students to experience God's miraculous ways of answering our prayers. On Fridays we organize the "Jumaa prayer" (www.jumaaprayers.org), and our whole devotional is focused on praying for missionaries and for the unreached ethnic groups. Every semester we have an entire week of fasting and prayer and every year we organize missions' faith pledges – students learn to give for missions, before they go.

We know that on campus students need to see the teachers and leaders joining them in prayer, in fasting, at the Lord's Supper. We don't leave them alone, but we join with them in waging this spiritual warfare.

T5 - Treasuring Resources

It took us many years of work to build a strong team, to develop a facility that serves the whole training program (including library, dorms for the students, a dining room and others), to network with different national and international organisations. This takes a huge human and financial effort and we have learned that the people we work with, our donors, our partners, are the most valuable resource, and for their sake, we should not waste our time or money on things that are not serving CRST's vision. During the two year program, our students face different challenges, for example, some are getting married, some are having children, some are facing opposition from family and, for some the school's requirements are too difficult. Through our personnel, especially through the campus pastor, we aim to help our students be overcomers.

T6 - Transferring Wisely

Richard Wurmbrand states that those who have not compromised can teach us that "the great suffering is not caused by lost battles (no warrior can win them all), nor by physical injuries, but by brothers and sisters who do not take up their cross to fight the good fight, and give up the holy dream."⁴

56% of our graduates are now serving God in different ministries, but still, 44% of them are not yet enrolled in long term mission. We are very concerned that this 44% will be lower and lower year after year, as we work hard in providing our students the training they need in order to decide to make the next step, and apply to a sending agency for the logistic support needed in going on the field. Right now, we have 46 graduates serving in cross-cultural ministry abroad, of which 40 are sent through the Pentecostal Agency of Foreign Missions (APME). Six years after the school was founded, as our graduates did not have the means of being sent on the mission fields, part of the school's Board of Directors decided to start APME in order to provide our students a Romanian platform for going on the field. The former students are looking to APME as to a family, and they enjoy the feeling of belonging, being held accountable, being mentored and guided while on the mission field. We pray very much and we do our best so that our students will not give up their holy dream!

⁴ R. Wurmbrand, *De la Suferință la Biruință (Tortured for Christ)*, 121.

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