

Chapter 4 pathway notes

House of Joy: Community living, service and social enterprise

Designing inclusive pathways with young adults: A pathway from Malaysia

Purpose

These pathway notes support chapter 4 of the book: *Designing inclusive pathways with young adults: Learning and development for a better world*. The chapter profiles the Training Service and Revenue (TSR) concept developed by Joy to the World Community Services (better known as 'House of Joy' (HoJ) in Malaysia. HoJ's TSR outcomes are certified by the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL). Organizations interesting in using the TSR concept should contact Dato' Dr Vincent Tang via the GULL website at www.gullonline.org

GULL welcomes affiliation with any organization working with marginalized young people and the purpose of these pathway notes is to assist those who are using or developing a similar approach. For more details about how to affiliate with GULL please see: www.gullonline.org/affiliate

Pathway implementation

The HoJ with GULL Professional Bachelor (B) degree pathway aims to provide a structured introduction to self-directed development in three stages or levels (L) - each with a different focus. To begin, HoJ provides opportunities for skills acquisition and development (BL1 Entry) by cross-exposure to a range of different TSR social enterprise activities. This helps to ensure that participants can identify for themselves, the kind of work that they enjoy doing. Next, the focus changes to character development (BL2 Certificate) to encourage participants to develop attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with a professional working environment. The third stage aims to develop initiative and leadership skills (including entrepreneurship) as BL3 Diploma students lead fund-raising and other projects and take responsibility for supervising BL1 and BL2 students.

Given that most of the HoJ students have been deeply unsettled by prior events and experiences, the aim is to build their confidence and self-belief at BL1 by recognizing successful foundation skills acquisition. After that, it is easier to encourage them to face the more difficult issue of behavioural change so that they begin to think and act like professionals. Although they might be able to earn a living by acquiring and demonstrating competence in foundational skills, our objective is to go further by incentivizing the students to make what for some, is a difficult transition to responsibility for supervising and guiding others. HoJ uses feedback from instructors and from workplace co-workers and supervisors to gauge progress. Further, as HoJ works with external commercial organizations, it can draw on their frameworks and experience to gauge 'commercial readiness' in terms of how its students would be able to cope if they were employed.

Implementing the Training, Service and Revenue concept

Training – Service – Revenue – (TSR) this is a core philosophy of HoJ, so how is it implemented in the community environment and in the workplace?

When young people join HoJ, they spend some time adjusting to the residential home environment. When they are ready, HoJ provides them with training experiences but as a precursor to this, it is necessary to understand their character and needs so as to guide them towards an appropriate work pathway. For example, if they are able to continue at school, they are encouraged to do so and they undertake work placements during their school holidays. Additionally, all the young adults assist with transporting items like furniture and with other aspects of the logistics involved in supporting 11 centres and 120 residents.

When they begin their work experience, they are initially placed in environments that they can easily adjust to and fairly rapid learning assimilation of the job role(s) is normally evident. There is also more supervision at the outset and during the initial phase, HoJ's adult volunteers observe and make decisions about how to develop and enrich the work experience pathway for each young person as they move around HoJ's social enterprise network, learning a wide variety of skills. Later, they might return to the workplace that best suits them to further develop their skills and confidence. For example, a young person might conclude that they like bakery work, so thereafter, they'll focus on the bakery/shop.

So in summary, once a young person has settled in, they are encouraged to be flexible (in terms of absorbing life and work skills) in order to explore a variety of work environments and discover what they like to do and what they are good at doing. This is also important because when they reach the age of 18, HoJ aims to ensure that they are ready to live and work independently. Given the multiple work and learning environment that they will have experienced, HoJ feels that they are then reasonably well equipped to select a work pathway for early adult life that is well suited to their character, experience and aspirations.

Verifying outcomes

Pastor Joseph and his wife explain HoJ's philosophy and approach from the outset – so that all its young adults understand that as soon as they have settled in, they are expected to work and to begin to accumulate life and work skills via the TSR 'hands on' programme. When the work and skills element is underway (at BL1) participants are encouraged to begin to reflect on their emotional situation and the ways in which they can strengthen and build their character (at BL2). This is HoJ's key agenda as the mental and emotional development of YAs is a core component of the mentoring and supervision that it provides. So, how effective is the philosophy and approach? Here, one of the BL3 holders, Bryan Taaey Kim Hui shares his insights.

Personal reflections: Bryan Taaey Kim Hui, House of Joy community member

When a new person arrives at House of Joy, he/she is not put under any pressure, they are encouraged to integrate with the HoJ community and observe other people. After that, Pastor Joseph's approach and philosophy centres on 'guiding' (not directing) and emphasis is placed on self-directed development, team-working and bonding.

Bryan joined HoJ in March, 2012 at the age of 16 because he could no longer live with his parents. Here he reflects on his development journey as a HoJ young adult.

I was referred to HoJ by the Government's Welfare department because of the severity of the problems I was facing at home. Pastor Joseph did not question me about what had happened – he simply made me feel welcome and ensured that the surroundings felt safe, secure and comfortable for me. I soon realized that HoJ was the best thing that could have happened for me at that time – a place where I felt accepted without any sense of being 'interrogated'. Once I was settled, natural conversation enabled me to share my story and the difficulties that I had experienced and I found out during those early months that some of my fellow community members had experienced far greater problems than I had. So as time passed, I got to know others and was able to adapt to HoJ and to integrate myself with others in this community.

How has HoJ helped you to move forwards?

At HoJ you end up doing things that normal kids – and especially city kids would never do ... this sometimes requires full attention and maximum effort and you see that everyone here is doing the same thing – there is no point in complaining because everyone is working hard! Joseph and his wife do their best to help us to fit in – there isn't any pressure – but I recall visiting his house and observing constant activity – everyone seemed to be working – doing something – even the small children were busy helping! Joseph explained that this was his concept of Training, Service and Revenue (TSR) in action.

Can you opt out of TSR?

At first, that was how I reacted – I didn't want to undertake voluntary work that was hot, physically challenging and sometimes unpleasant. I had previously had a rather privileged educational experience in a good school and I tried to understand for myself why all this work was necessary – Joseph and his wife are not directive – they don't give you the answers or the solutions, they want you to discover these for yourself! They guide you but they don't tell you what to do. It's a subtle, indirect approach and step-by-step I realized that from the moment I arrived at HoJ I was beginning my own TSR programme. When we see someone who has gone through similar (or worse) experiences, we tend to want to help. It doesn't matter who you are and what you've been through – for example, HoJ cares for young people who have been abandoned and for drug addicts and people with criminal records – but deep down, they all want to change. I realized that subconsciously I was helping, listening to others and playing a part in the community – even though I might have been saying at the time that I didn't want to help. It's because you've been there and you've felt the pain that others are experiencing. I then began to observe how the TSR induction process worked. When a new person joins us, Pastor Joseph sends them to carry furniture.

Initially the new person might say 'No, I'm not doing that' but as they are with a group of other young people, they might watch others work initially, but then they join in and help. So angry, selfish or lazy people might initially stand and watch but they soon realize that their fellow team members have also endured rejection and pain. As we have all suffered, we experience a kind of attraction to one another.

Pastor Joseph encourages each of us to choose our own pathway and so he offers development options and opportunities, but you have to choose – he won't make decisions for you. His philosophy is that you must learn how to reason for yourself, make choices and gradually become independent. It is often the case that when HoJ sends you to perform a duty or to undertake a job – they don't tell you how to tackle the project or task – they let you figure this out for yourself. It's not because they are trying to push you away or show a lack of interest or concern – they want you to be able to 'reason' with yourself and with other people – because the task or situation might be something you have to face later when you are on your own.

So you are encouraged to help and support each other?

Yes – we don't always realize this at the beginning because many of us are in denial ... but the HoJ 'guiding approach' which I have absorbed first hand from Pastor Joseph, I in turn try to use to help others. For example, I have learnt to approach people in different ways – according to their situation and circumstances – so as to befriend people in order to help them to open-up and talk about their problems and concerns. So we do help each other as we work together on a wide range of tasks. It doesn't matter what work we are doing, we know that it is only through team work that we can accomplish the task.

It is also the case that Pastor Joseph is very knowledgeable. Initially I thought that he must be a very care-free person because he is not directive in his approach – but then I came to realize that he is actually thinking about how best to integrate individuals with different groups so that the groups will gel and the team members will learn together and help each other. He doesn't 'categorize' people in relation to the type of person that they might be – he is more interested in the work team that any individual might benefit from and with whom you might be able to make friends and feel comfortable with. So, as you join a small group and work together, slowly you form a bond with the others that is not visible from outside the group – you can only 'feel' the bond when you are part of the bonding process. For example, when I first came to HoJ, Pastor Joseph suggested that I join a group that was outwardly quite rebellious – the other members of the group were angry and/or strong characters and this was reflected in the behaviour of the group as a whole. It actually suited me very well at the time and I had fun working with this group. We were undertaking routine housekeeping tasks on behalf of all the HoJ centres, we also moved furniture and sometimes we would take on big projects – for example, we might help to set-up a stall at a shopping Mall or assist families to move house. These are not projects that you can undertake on your own and so I joined a small group – there were nine of us, and when I joined we gave ourselves a name that in English translates as the 'Nine person gang'. As we worked together, we each knew that we believed in one another and we wanted to support one another. It is interesting though that if someone did something wrong, the others could be harsh in their words and actions. You cannot blame any individual for this – it's just how they were – they were a product of their own background, home and school environment.

So if a person doesn't 'fit' with a team, will Pastor Joseph move them to a different team?

If Pastor Joseph thinks that a person is struggling to fit in, he might find ways of linking a person – initially in a tentative way – with another team. He might see that a person may be able to establish a stronger and more positive bond in a different team. Here at HoJ, we all know each other – good and bad points – we are already one family and so he approaches relationship building very carefully – often by placing people 'randomly' in places that he thinks might suit the individual. But he will never direct someone to move teams – he wants each person to make their own decisions because he cares deeply about each person's freedom. Exceptionally if someone 'opts out', Pastor Joseph will take steps to ensure that the person in denial does begin to work on their own development. It might seem harsh, but he has to ensure that each person learns how to be independent to ensure that they will succeed in whatever they choose to do. The reason why he created HoJ is to see people succeeding – independently – either with his assistance or the help of others. I can't imagine that he would want to create an organization that has already lasted for more than 20 years unless it had a clear and important purpose – which is helping vulnerable people to learn how to make their own decisions and stand-alone – independently. HoJ is a non-profit organization and occasionally we find that we have more than we need (e.g. food) and so we will go to places where people do not have enough food to share with them. So Pastor Joseph not only helps us to be independent, he teaches us how to be kind to people who are less fortunate than ourselves. If we can help, we do!

What's your view of GULL's structured step-by-step approach?

In my view, it is always helpful to explore and then seek to develop your potential to the full. It is down to the individual to find ways of developing and releasing their potential and to make the most of this opportunity, it is necessary to work hard. For example, HoJ is providing opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized people to move forward. The opportunity for me at the moment arises from the fact that HoJ trusts me to run its budget hotel and at the same time, I am able to continue developing myself. I am still only 18 years of age, I hadn't previously received hotel training but I have accumulated many skills and a strong 'can do' work ethic because of the HoJ philosophy and TSR approach. Now, I am receiving specific training from Doubletree by Hilton who are assisting us to improve our budget hotel via their own CSR programme and so this is an incredible opportunity for me. I don't think many young adults are given this chance to develop!

In terms of GULL, I am really delighted to have been given the opportunity to participate in the on-going initiative to develop personal and professional skills and like HoJ, it is providing me with a development pathway and opening doors that would otherwise have remained closed because of my life situation. If I hadn't been given the chance to join HoJ, I might have gone completely off the rails and as I have been sharing, I have a level of confidence and self-belief that I would never have imagined might be possible when I arrived several years ago. Every opportunity - whether it is training or service - is a new opportunity for me and I now have a positive mindset that enables me to grasp and make the most of every chance to train and to serve and help other people.