

Punlaan: Sowing the seeds of women empowerment

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Learning an occupation is easy but developing the right attitudes toward work takes some doing.

Students and graduates of Punlaan School, a vocational-technical institution and senior high school in San Juan City, believe that attitudes, more than the skills, are what truly prepare them for the world of work.

Mariyah Cristina Carranza and Sarah Jane Aquino and graduate Ceedith Velasquez say the values taught by the school give them an edge over other people aspiring for the jobs they trained for.

And businesses that have repeatedly looked toward Punlaan, which literally means seedbed, to meet their staffing needs agree that it is the graduates' attitude toward work that make them more desirable employees.

Annie Garcia of Vivere Hotel has found Punlaan members “patient, very focused on their tasks and orderly.”

They also relate well with colleagues. Their good attitude at work, in addition to the fact that they are very skilled, makes them even “better workers than those who complete four-year courses,” she says.

Executives of Conti’s Bakeshop and Restaurant are equally effusive in their praise of Punlaan’s way of equipping its graduates not just with required skills but also traits valued in the food industry.

Patricia Tan, general manager, says, “Values are very strong (among Punlaan graduates) and God-centeredness.” Commissary general manager Paolo Conti adds, “They are good examples for fellow workers (with their) attitudes, willingness to

learn, diligence and resilience. They are persevering and adaptable.”

“What’s really more important (in workers) is the attitude, as well as personality and character,” says Philip Moran, president and chief operating officer of the Italian restaurant Amici and Caramia Bakes and Gelatos.

New building, same values

Their experience with Punlaan graduates, he says, has been good. “They have a strong commitment to their jobs.”

With Punlaan replacing its old school building on M. Paterno Street with a new structure to accommodate more students and to provide better kitchen and other hands-on experiences, Moran is looking forward to hiring more graduates.

That the school is exclusive to girls and women and gives values as much importance as actual skills are not surprising. The school was founded, after all, to actualize the words of St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei: “Development, maturity, emancipation of women should not mean a pretension to equality, to uniformity with men, a servile imitation of a man’s way of doing things ... women would turn out losers, not because they are better than men or worse, but because they are different.

“...In this sense, a woman’s emancipation means that she should have a real possibility of developing her own potentialities to the fullest extent—those which she has personally and those which she shares with other women.”

Linda B. Bolido

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