



Westport Deep Sea Fishing School Commercial Fishing and Processing Course



CONTEXT

Programme Title

Commercial Fishing and Processing Course.

Provider

Westport Deep Sea Fishing School, a Private Training Establishment.

Location

Westport (residential).



Funding

This is a Training Opportunities programme funded by the Ministry of Social Development through the Tertiary Education Commission.

Programme Description

This 20 week programme prepares people with skills to gain employment in the deep-sea fishing industry. The course content focuses on unit standards relating to seafood processing, maritime, and commercial vessel skills. This course includes a work-based training component. Literacy and numeracy are woven into different aspects of the programme.

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

This case study highlights a Westport workforce literacy and numeracy initiative identified as achieving positive outcomes for Māori.

"... for a job ... for the money, this is the real deal.

Fish smells like money to us." *Student: Westport Deep Sea Fishing School.*

In total, Te Puni Kōkiri undertook four case studies of workforce literacy and numeracy initiatives. These case studies were undertaken between March and June 2008, and were current at that date.

The case study provides practical illustrations of good practice features that relate to:

- Programme design;
- Programme delivery; and
- Programme results.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

Consideration of Barriers to Access by Māori

Referrals for this residential course come from Work and Income New Zealand. There are places for 50 students, with the provider operating on a rolling intake basis, that is, there are no set dates for new students to enter the course.

Māori trainees are eligible for scholarships through Te Ohu Kai Moana – if their qualifications make them ineligible for government funding¹. These scholarships cover course fees and travel.

Consideration of Barriers to Māori Retention and Achievement

Most students had negative recollections of school and were grateful for the opportunity of second chance learning. One student (now 17) had never been to secondary school – having been 'diverted' instead to courses, like Youth Training, since the age of 13. The students spoke of their feelings of whakamā (embarrassment) when asking or answering

CASE STUDIES METHODOLOGY

Case studies were chosen based on recommendations from State sector agencies, and the availability/accessibility of participants. Te Puni Kōkiri liaised with the respective providers to seek permission to conduct on-site focus groups, or one-to-one interviews, with:

- Māori learners;
- Their tutor/s; and
- The provider and /or employer.

In addition, Te Puni Kōkiri requested any relevant documentation that would be useful as background information to our on-site visits.

questions at school. By contrast, they had no such feelings on this course – because of their relationship with the tutors.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Responsive to Māori Culture

Peer teaching (exemplifying a tuakana: teina model) works well in the fishing school environment. Those who have passed a particular unit standard support their classmates through the same work.

Although they have in-depth industry knowledge, the tutors are open to learning from the students, promoting the concept of ako. They endeavour to relate the learning back to students' lives and are affirming of the knowledge that students bring to the classroom.



The hostel life simulates life on a boat, for example working in close quarters, practicing tolerance, and teamwork. It also provides opportunities for peer help and encouragement. As in the words of one student, "We all help each other out, like a whānau."

A desire was expressed for the school to contract a tutor who was knowledgeable in tikanga – who could, in the words of a student, "teach Tangaroa (God of the fish and sea) and karakia," to complement the industry knowledge. Likewise, the idea was expressed that if the classroom environment at the fishing school was like a whānau, that same ethos would be transferred to the boat, which would minimise the stressful working environment – because everyone would know their respective roles and responsibilities.



Providers and Tutors Are Skilled and Capable

There are two tutors. Both are keen to draw out the knowledge that the students bring to the classroom and are open to learning from the students themselves.

One tutor has three years of experience at the fishing school. The other has three months. Both tutors have a wealth of experience in the fishing industry – coupled with a passion for passing that knowledge on.

Literacy and numeracy is woven into the programme in a natural way, with those experiencing literacy and numeracy difficulties being given more 1:1 assistance (from a tutor or peer) and more time to complete tasks.

The tutors are able to teach 1:1 as well as in small group and whole class situations. They also have the flexibility to use alternative assessment methods, beyond writing. Visual literacy is legitimised, that is, viewing and presenting. This is especially relevant for those trainees who have low level literacy skills.

The tutors are able to keep their teaching simple and to break the content down into manageable 'chunks'. Real-life examples are used to illustrate teaching points.

Tutors are open and approachable to help with unit standards and also pastoral care. They sit alongside students, not teaching from the front in an instructive way. They provide a 'hands-on', student-centred approach.

The tutors nominate their own professional development needs – mainly through courses at Te Tai Poutini Polytechnic or Workbase². Each tutor is required to have the unit standards needed for designing assessment tasks.

Contextualised Learning and Resources

This programme exists to prepare people with skills to gain employment in the deep-sea fishing industry. Due consideration is given to timeliness and efficiency of tasks, increasing workforce morale, reducing accidents, and understanding instructions.



While the unit standards for this programme focus mainly on the fishing industry, literacy and numeracy learning is embedded into the programme. The fishing school has a 'literacy policy' – which recognises the complex inter-relationship of speaking, listening, reading, writing, problem solving, critical thinking, numeracy and practical skills.

Most of the resources are for 'hands-on' teaching and learning. For example, there is a processing room and a set of knives used in seafood processing, to simulate the real working environment. In addition, there are Industry Training Organisation videos to assist with covering unit standards. Tutors also make use of other audio visual, graphic and text based resources. There are integrated literacy learning activities within the resources used.

The provider has responded to industry needs by building a model fish-processing plant on-site. A non-threatening learning environment has been established by seeking out tutors who are approachable and, at the same time, knowledgeable about the industry. Safety is integrated into all learning.

Collaboration with Whānau and Between Authority Figures

In terms of sustainability and planned improvements, the provider is seeking funding for a part-time social worker. This would go some way to addressing the social service issues of the students.

RESULTS

Success is Identified and Replicated

The provider evaluates this programme from three different perspectives – the trainees, tutors, and skippers. The evaluation information is used to refine subsequent courses.

Programme Contributes to Improved Māori Literacy and Numeracy

Trainees gain a real sense of achievement from passing unit standards. Most achieve the level one and two unit standards, with a few attaining level three. Trainees have more confidence to undertake reading and spelling tasks, and have built up a broader vocabulary. In addition, work-based tasks are completed more efficiently and the students demonstrate an improved work ethic – being more able and willing to follow instructions and to work as a team.

To quote an employee from the Tertiary Education Commission, this course involves "high investment but great pay-offs."

Māori Access the Programme

At any one time, the course comprises an average of 70 – 80% Māori students. The majority of trainees are male, and there were only three females on the course (all Māori) at the time the case study research was undertaken. However, despite the male-dominated industry, it was reported that females did very well on this course and were sought after by employers.





Skills Learnt Assist Māori to Enter the Workforce Or Improve Their Current Employment Position

The following are the intended course outcomes:

- To secure employment on modern, large, deep-sea factory trawlers OR enter further training;
- To gain National Certificates in Seafood Processing and Vessel Operations; and
- To provide fishing companies with good employees.

The fishing school is contracted by the Tertiary Education Commission to achieve a 65% success rate in employment and educational outcomes. The actual success rate is 77% for young adult students and 71% for mature students.

The fishing school has direct access to industry employers – whereby skippers can select students from the different intakes for full-time employment. There are demonstrable career pathways for trainees, for example cadet > deckhand > deck boss > second mate > first mate > skipper. Although there are career paths, the challenge would seem to be to encourage these learners, through goal-setting, to maximise the career opportunities to enter into more highly skilled employment.

Flow-on Effects

The residential aspect of the course requires trainees to become more self-sufficient and independent. It also allows them to remove themselves from any negative lifestyles and undesirable influences at home. In the case study interviews, they spoke of the need to get “out of the gangs,” “out of the ghetto,” and “out of trouble at home.” One student talked about getting a natural high from his work experience on the boat – as opposed to drug highs. Long-term, the students’ attendance at this course, and their subsequent employment, will go some way to increasing the prospect of inter-generational change.

The school is an integral part of the Westport community, thus giving students a sense of belonging. The course’s emphasis on self-discipline, fitness and teamwork provides a good foundation for life. The daily exercise component ensures mind-body complementarity.

1 There’s a maximum level of qualification that prospective trainees can have to make them eligible for Training Opportunities allowances.
2 Workbase provides training, advice and resources to literacy and numeracy tutors throughout New Zealand. (Workbase, <http://www.workbase.org.nz/Article.aspx?ESID=669&ID=0>)

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