



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Responsive Trade Education Ltd

Date of report: 1 June 2010

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Brief description of TEO

- Location: Greenhill Road, Hamilton
- Type: Private Training Establishment (PTE)
- Size: 39 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)
- Sites: As above

Responsive Trade Education (RTE) was established in 2004 by the Responsive Maintenance 2000 Limited (RML2000) to train long term unemployed and people with low academic achievement, often referred to as second-chance learners. RTE has a strong focus on employment outcomes balanced with an education focus so that students can develop a career in the trades. Training is focussed on preparing students for work by providing them with literacy and numeracy skills, workplace communication skills, and foundation trade skills.

RTE is located within Responsive Group's site in Hamilton. RTE has a fully equipped workshop, classrooms, and outdoor areas to work on larger projects. Responsive Group is a collective term used to identify a group of companies. They include RML2000, which holds Housing New Zealand Corporation maintenance contracts, Responsive Mining Ltd., Responsive Trade Education and all associated subcontractors. The companies in the Responsive Group are significant employers of RTE trainees.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Responsive Trade Education Ltd.**

The data collected by RTE from 2006 to 2009 shows that, on average, youth and mature students achieve double the minimum of 20 credits set by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The data also shows that over 75 per cent of students gain employment or find a trade apprenticeship, which is well above the 60 per cent target set by TEC.

Evidence from students' feedback and documentation of student progress demonstrates that the content and delivery of the programme is effective in helping students learn the relevant skills, knowledge, and attributes required for the workplace.

The community also benefits because students learn valuable skills to enable them to be more productive members of society, and the organisation moves them into employment so that students are earning to provide for their families.

The organisation has set up a student support structure which is appropriate to the needs of its students and removes barriers to achieving their goals successfully.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Responsive Trade Education Ltd.**

The organisation has established a highly reflective organisational culture. All staff are involved in reviewing the purpose and direction of the training, and how it is meeting its stakeholder needs. Staff also have plenty of opportunities for reflection on their role, which benefits learners through improved teaching techniques and comprehensive student support.

The organisation records and analyses information on students' progress and achievement rates weekly. Information is used to assist students into employment, as well as to inform course content and delivery.

Examples of changes resulting from the organisation's self-assessment processes include assigning staff into specialist student support roles, improved communication processes, and enhanced enrolment processes. These have had a direct impact on improving outcomes.

The organisation collates information on its performance through a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, community groups, social service agencies, and students. Feedback provides tutors with information on students' knowledge and attitude improvements as well as trade skills. Daily staff meetings as well as weekly meetings are used to discuss information to see where improvements could be made.

TEO response

RTE confirmed the factual accuracy of this report subject to minor editing suggestions.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

Findings

The conclusions in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of RTE included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The following focus area was chosen because it is the only programme currently offered by RTE:

- National Certificate in Building, Construction, and Allied Trades Skills (Level 2).

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

RTE trains and assesses students towards the National Certificate in Building, Construction, and Allied Trades Skills (Level 2) (BCATS). Success is measured by the number of students who remain on the course and receive a minimum of 20 credits and/or achieve the national certificate. RTE also measures learners' achievements by the number of students who gain employment.

Explanation

The data collected by RTE from 2006 to 2009 shows that, on average, youth and mature students achieve double the minimum of 20 credits set by the Tertiary Education

Commission (TEC). The data also shows that over 75 per cent of students gain employment or find a trade apprenticeship, which is well above the 60 per cent target set by TEC. Currently RTE is finding it difficult to compare its success rates with those of other training providers in the same area or in similar training because there is no data available from TEC against which to benchmark. However, the chief executive officer (CEO) keeps informed of industry changes and trends through her own contacts and association with the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers (NZAPEP).

The organisation has been successful in identifying the cause of a decrease in outcomes in 2008. In response, the management employed a recruitment and support person to guide and support students from enrolment until six months after they leave RTE. This has enabled tutors to focus more on their teaching role. RTE also combined the youth and mature students, which has helped the younger students to learn to behave in a more appropriate work manner on courses, as the older students often role-model behaviours gained from previous employment experiences. Evidence of improvement has been demonstrated through an increase in retention rates, which has led to higher learner achievement outcomes. The current site has also unexpectedly led to higher retention rates because it is located in a rural part of Hamilton where there are fewer distractions for students.

Already these changes have produced results indicating that 80 per cent of students will achieve a national certificate in 2010. In addition, eight students have been employed by Responsive Group since January 2010. Withdrawal figures are much lower than previously, which has contributed to higher learner achievement results. RTE also acknowledges that because of higher unemployment it has a wider selection of candidates for courses, which means the organisation can choose students who are more likely to benefit from being with RTE and therefore have more chance of succeeding.

The results are significant, in particular because RTE students are often referred by the courts and this is a last-chance opportunity for some to make a better life. Others are long-term unemployed referred by WINZ or students who leave secondary school with few or no academic qualifications.

The organisation introduced a new staff structure in 2009. RTE demonstrates that it values its staff by involving them in decisions on the organisation's purpose and direction. The staff have developed strong relationships with students by providing the encouragement and motivation needed to stay in training and gain employment. The staff encourage the students to take ownership by allowing them to be responsible for their achievements, to turn up on time regularly, and to behave in a manner appropriate to a workplace.

The CEO already records students' progress for up to six months after they leave the programme, but would like to gather this information for a longer period of time to identify where RTE has succeeded and where it could make improvements to help people find a career that suits them.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

RTE provides training in foundation literacy and practical skills so that students gain skills for employment or further training.

Explanation

The value of RTE's training outcomes comes from having students achieving a national qualification and gaining work skills in order to be employed either by Responsive Maintenance or by a range of other employers appropriate to the needs of the learner.

The contract Responsive Maintenance has with Housing New Zealand Corporation contains a Community Contribution Plan, which contributes to RTE by taking on people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds who may otherwise be long-term unemployed.

The strength in the course is in the strong link between the parent company and RTE so that staff are aware of the value the trainees can bring to the industry, and industry will value the training provided. Not only does the organisation find work for students with Responsive Group, but the staff member responsible for trainee recruitment, retention, and support has been successful in finding suitable employment for students who are not taken on by Responsive Group. Some students have opted for self-employment.

Students gain valuable skills such as better communication, personal responsibility, and trade skills which provide them with the opportunity to gain employment. Records show that employment outcomes are high and have been sustained over a period of time.

Feedback from stakeholders demonstrates that they value the organisation highly for relevance, value to the industry, and the support provided to the students. The organisation helps students gain skills then helps them find work and provides support once in work. The community benefits because students learn valuable skills to keep them out of prison, and the organisation moves students into employment so they are earning to provide for their families.

RTE facilitates pathways between social services agencies, education sectors, and employment. Feedback from community organisations, such as Community Living Trust and WINZ, shows that RTE is able to help people with intellectual disabilities or health problems, or who are long-term unemployed, to gain new skills and find employment. Responsive Maintenance subcontracts maintenance workers to carry out maintenance, and its contracts include an obligation to employ graduates from RTE wherever possible. Feedback to RTE from the subcontractors who employ RTE students provides evidence of a high regard for the training outcomes.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

Responsive Group employs the majority of graduates from RTE. Therefore, RTE is required to align training activities to the needs of Responsive Maintenance. Students require training in employment and foundation trade skills to gain employment.

Explanation

The director of RML 2000 and the CEO of RTE meet weekly to discuss the direction of the course and employment needs to feed into the programme content.

The trade training package is aligned to the BCATS training package developed by the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO). In addition, students receive training in soft skills such as personal presentation, budgeting, and communication skills. The skills students gain help them to find employment, as is evident from the course records kept by tutors and also by the employment outcomes. RTE uses student and employer feedback to inform programme development opportunities.

Employers and community groups spoken to by the evaluation team said the staff at RTE are dedicated to helping their students grow and find suitable employment. The students' success is evidence of the amount of time and effort staff put into supporting the students to achieve. One secondary school principal told tutors that she was amazed that a former student had even attended, let alone found steady employment in the trade area.

At enrolment, students' individual learning and support needs are assessed to identify different learning styles and help plan the training. Students learn trade as well as literacy and numeracy skills while completing practical and theoretical activities such as planning and construction. Students were highly supportive of how the organisation met their needs. The employers are asked to provide feedback on the students' work attitudes, timeliness, and progress. Any issues are raised at regular tutor meetings as well as through ongoing staff communication to ensure the course is meeting employer and student needs.

The recruitment, retention, and support person employed by RTE looks after students from the moment they are referred to RTE until six months after they finish. When the students are deemed ready for work they are placed into a workplace that suits their needs. The majority of students find employment with Responsive Group. RTE assists students to find work in other fields if they are not employed by Responsive Group. The organisation follows up with students and their employer to ensure the job is suitable for them.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

RTE employs tutors with a trade background as well as teaching qualifications and experience. New tutors are mentored into the role by the training manager. The organisation has implemented a peer review feedback process to provide tutors with advice on teaching practices and on whether students' needs are being met, and to ensure barriers to learning are minimised.

Explanation

Evidence from students' feedback and documentation of student progress demonstrates that the content and delivery of the programme is effective in helping students learn the soft skills and practical skills required for the workplace.

Students are assessed on practice and theory when they are ready, and records of their competency are kept in the students' individual files. The files show records of achievement and projects which the students have successfully completed. Where students require additional time to reach the required standard, they receive support from the various staff employed at RTE. The literacy and numeracy tutors and the recruitment and support person make major contributions to effective learning.

Staff are provided with a range of professional development activities, including internal teacher training and external foundation literacy training with the University of Waikato. The tutors have also been selected by BCITO to attend its assessment courses. RTE had some issues with the new training and assessment materials developed by BCITO in 2009. The organisation responded to these issues by arranging a special workshop with BCITO to cover some of the issues and to update the tutors with changes to the content.

The peer tutor process enables tutors to sit with the literacy and support person to offer feedback on lesson planning, teaching strategies, and outcomes. Tutors stated that this support enabled them to reflect on their teaching practices and to better teach to the needs of students. They also felt the tutor support system had a flow-on effect to their support for students. Students' feedback to the evaluators and course outcomes show the success that tutors have in minimising barriers to learning.

Students are motivated and encouraged to learn. Tutors encourage students' reflective practice by requiring them to use self-assessment criteria to rate their own projects. This also provides an opportunity for tutors to practise reflective thinking on their teaching methods. Students receive both verbal and written feedback to help them understand what they need to achieve. Student progress is regularly tracked by the tutors and with one-to-one discussions with the recruitment and support person. Students also track their achievement of unit standards.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

RTE invests a lot of time and money in student support. It has created a specialist student support role and utilises the expertise of literacy and numeracy staff to support students.

Explanation

RTE reviewed its staffing structure in 2008 to ensure it was able to offer the best learning support for students and to help them to improve their well-being and success in gaining employment. The additional staff employed in 2009 and 2010 to support students has led to increased attendance and better learning outcomes, as well as higher employment rates for the students.

To help students achieve their goals, staff interview the students initially with their parent or guardian(s) present, if possible. This is to determine students' commitment and ensure the attendance and behaviour expectations are clear. At enrolment, the students sit a literacy and numeracy assessment and tutors review prior academic achievements to help them develop individual learning plans to support students to achieve their goal of finding work. Students and tutors review progress of this weekly, which helps students to stay focussed and also helps tutors to identify whether particular students need assistance with achieving their short-term goals. Tutors have a comprehensive system of tracking students' progress using class observation sheets, employer feedback, and communications with social service agencies. These are followed up at the tutor meetings held each morning, and after the afternoon pānui (meeting) with students.

RTE holds a pānui with students and tutors at the start and close of each day. This provides an opportunity for students to focus on the day's activities and to raise any issues about their training. It also provides opportunities for students to develop confidence in speaking in front of a group and leading karakia.

Students are provided with the responsibility for monitoring their own achievement, and monthly awards are presented to those students who show the most improvement, whether in attitude or academic achievement. Tutors assign a site foreman each day who is responsible for ensuring work areas are tidy and tools are returned at the end of the day. This also helps build students' sense of responsibility and work ethic.

Throughout the course students receive support from the BCATS tutors, the trades manager, literacy and numeracy tutors, support staff as well as the CEO. Students spoken to by the evaluation team said they were acknowledged as individuals, which encouraged them to keep attending.

Tutors note non-attendance, and the details are passed on to the training manager and the trainee recruitment, retention, and support staff member to follow up with the students immediately in order to identify any issues underlying non-attendance and to help students get back on track. Where possible, staff communicate with whānau to gain their support to encourage students to attend.

Students organise shared lunches monthly, which are attended by all staff as well as the directors of RML 2000. The views of the student group, represented by a president, vice-president, and secretary are also acknowledged by staff and suggestions for change are discussed at staff meetings. This makes the students feel the organisation genuinely cares about their well-being. The organisation is in the process of setting up a marae on site where students may stay to learn more about tikanga and to improve their attitudes to work.

Overall, the organisation has set up a student support structure that is appropriate to the needs of its students and removes barriers to the successful achievement of their goals.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

RTE was established by RML 2000 to train new employees for the Responsive Group. The director of RML 2000 meets with the CEO of RTE weekly to discuss employment opportunities and training. RTE management group consists of the RML 2000 director, the RTE trades manager, and the CEO of RTE.

Explanation

The organisation provides plenty of opportunities for reflection on its role and how it is meeting stakeholder needs. As a result, staff at RTE are highly reflective and respond well to needs of students. RTE has also contracted an external consultant to analyse how it operates at management level. Staff at RTE believe this has been the catalyst for a number of changes leading to positive outcomes.

The changes include strengthening of the staff structure to provide more student support, which has led to higher retention and successful outcomes. This also provides more time for the trades tutors to focus on teaching rather than recruitment and in-work placement support. Management has also reviewed the way in which they communicate. Meetings about students have expanded to include all staff, which makes for a more inclusive environment. The flatter structure has led to better communication, which staff said meant they were able to enact decisions more quickly.

As a result of RTE's relationship with its parent company, a high number of students are able to move into employment at completion of the course.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

2.2 Focus area: National Certificate in Building, Construction, and Allied Trades Skills (Level 2) (BCATS)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

NZQA

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