



Report of External Evaluation and Review

BEST Pacific Institute of Education
Limited

Date of report: 27 July 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: Head Office, 5 Hugh Brown Drive, New Lynn, Auckland

Type: Private training establishment

Size: 2,164 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)

Sites: There are five sites in Auckland:

- Waitakere Tertiary College: 3-5 Hugh Brown Drive, New Lynn
- Manukau Tertiary College: 2 Ryan Place, Manukau
- Youth Campus South Auckland: 5 Ryan Place, Manukau
- Youth Campus West Auckland: 72 Delta Avenue, New Lynn
- Pacific Institute of Performing Arts: Unitec New Zealand, Mt Albert.

BEST Pacific Institute of Education (BEST) began operating in West Auckland in 1988, gaining registration with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in 1995. BEST is a self-identified Pasifika provider and has a distinct focus to serve Pasifika communities which is reflected in the demographics of the student body and staff. Seventy-five per cent of BEST's students are Pasifika, with the majority of them Samoan. Approximately 20 per cent of BEST's students are Māori and a large percentage of the total student body is female. BEST offers both face-to-face and distance options for study. Eighty per cent of BEST's students choose to study through the distance-learning option.

BEST offers a range of certificate and diploma programmes from levels 1-5. The majority of the students are enrolled in the business school programmes which include:

- National Diploma in Business
- National Diploma in Computing
- Certificate in Business Administration
- Certificate in Freight Forwarding
- Certificate in Information Technology

- Certificate in Retail and Business
- Certificate in Tourism and Travel.

Other programmes include the certificate and two-year Diploma in Performing Arts taught by the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA). A free four-week SAMA school is also run through PIPA.

BEST offers a range of level 1-3 Targeted Funding programmes for Youth and Training Opportunities programme learners. Youth Guarantee programmes, from levels 1-4, are also available. A new addition to the range of study options is the Certificate in Pre-Teacher Education, which staircases learners into the Bachelor of Education at other providers.

BEST's model of delivery includes the role of course directors who are allocated to learners on their enrolment. Course directors have a pastoral care and support role. They ensure learners are clear about their goals and meet their study deadlines, and they support learners to overcome any barriers to successful programme completion. BEST People – Careers and Employment is another centre of activity that is significant to BEST which supports learners with career planning and placement into work.

BEST was previously quality assured by NZQA under the audit system. At its most recent audit, in 2005, the school met all requirements of Quality Assurance Standard One, the standard then in force.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **BEST Pacific Institute of Education Limited**.

BEST is focused on educational achievement and rates are high, especially when benchmarked against national averages for Māori and Pasifika learners. For example, BEST's course completion rate for 2009 was 84 per cent for 2009 and compares with a national average rate for course completion for Pasifika students of 54 per cent for those enrolled in certificates and 64 per cent for those enrolled in diploma programmes.¹ Rates have improved steadily over the past few years.

BEST achieves excellent outcomes for the community and for its learners. BEST has a strong focus on providing graduates with a qualification that will enhance their opportunities to engage effectively in the New Zealand economy. For 2009, 83.7 per cent of BEST's graduates moved into positive outcomes: employment (69.7 per cent) and further training or education (14 per cent). There is strong evidence that learners gain vocational-specific knowledge and skills, transferable skills, and increased confidence, which improve employability. There is also evidence emerging to show a significant increase in graduates' salaries following study at Best.

BEST offers on-campus learning, although most of the learners choose distance learning which enables them to study while maintaining work and family commitments. The distance-learning model uses an engaging online platform and ensures learners remain connected to the organisation through the face-to-face component and regular personalised guidance and support. The model also ensures face-to-face connectivity and support among peers.

Pasifika communities feel a strong connection to the learning and the outcomes of BEST. The positive outcomes for learners have an impact on their families and wider communities (including intergenerational learning). The strongly Pasifika nature of BEST is fundamental, and the celebration and affirmation of the different cultures that make up the Pacific is clear throughout the organisation and reflected in the way BEST engages and celebrates success.

¹ Ministry of Education (2009) *Education Counts: Retention and Achievement: Passing Courses*. Retrieved 26.5.2010 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **BEST Pacific Institute of Education Limited**.

Achievement and retention rates are closely monitored for every intake for every programme, set against organisational and external targets and tracked and monitored regularly. Learner feedback is collected systematically and this feedback is regularly reviewed in programme and curriculum meetings.

BEST has good links with various communities and regularly consults with them both formally and informally. There is clear evidence that positive innovations result from consultation. New developments are informed by careful analysis and planning and are monitored carefully for their impact. There is a strong vision which is articulated clearly across the organisation.

BEST is a large, complex, multi-site organisation with consistent policies and processes and robust systems in place. The information collected through the student management system aligns with each centre's key performance indicators. The clarity of information and processes means that minor issues identified by the external evaluation and review team had already been revealed by the organisation's self-assessment processes, and plans are in place to gather further information to respond effectively.

TEO response

BEST acknowledges that this is a comprehensive and thorough report but does not agree with the rating of "good" for capability in self-assessment in section 1.1. *How well do learners achieve* or the rating of "good" for capability in self-assessment in the focus areas *BEST People Careers and Employment* and the *National Diploma in Business*. All the evidence has been discussed in depth with BEST. NZQA remains sure of the evidence and logic through which the original judgements were reached.

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

For the external evaluation and review, the following mandatory focus area was chosen:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

Other focus areas were chosen to represent vertical and horizontal dimensions of the organisation. Focus areas that run across the organisation included:

- Distance learning: Fresh- e
- BEST People – Careers and Employment (BEST People)

The range of programmes selected included:

- National Diploma in Business (Level 5)
- Certificate in Tourism and Travel (Level 3)
- Diploma in Performing Arts (Level 5)
- Youth Training Waitakere (Levels 1-3).

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 **Good**.

Learners at BEST are achieving well. BEST is focused on educational achievement for Pasifika Peoples. Concern and an awareness of the underachievement of Pasifika Peoples in mainstream education have spurred the organisation to find an approach to education that works to address this. Across the diploma and certificate programmes the average rates of qualification achievement for 2009 sit at 62.8 per cent. This compares with a national average rate of achievement of 40 per cent for Pasifika learners enrolled in certificates and 34 per cent for those enrolled in diplomas.² BEST's rates of achievement have been steadily improving over the last few years which the organisation attributes to the improved delivery of e-learning and the improved support given to the distance-learning students.

BEST's course completion rate is 84 per cent for 2009. This rate has also been steadily improving and compares with a national average rate for course completion for Pasifika students of 54 per cent for those enrolled in certificates and 64 per cent for those enrolled in diploma programmes.³ Achievement rates are closely monitored for every intake and programme and are set against organisational and external targets and tracked and monitored regularly. The collection and reporting of data for different purposes means that at times the organisation's own understanding of its achievement rates needs clarification. The organisation is aware of this issue and is working internally and externally to streamline processes.

BEST aims to equip learners with useful qualifications as well as confidence and skills which can enhance their lives and the lives of their families and communities. The evaluation team heard many examples of how learners had acquired new skills, knowledge, and confidence which enhanced their lives and the lives of their families. For example, the

² Ministry of Education (2009) *Education Counts: Retention and Achievement: Gaining Qualification*. Retrieved 26.5.2010 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement

³ Ministry of Education (2009) *Education Counts: Retention and Achievement: Passing Courses*. Retrieved 26.5.2010 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/retention_and_achievement

evaluation team gathered clear evidence of learners gaining useful transferable skills, including improved literacy and numeracy, computing skills, customer service skills, and an understanding of the retail industry. Other examples included job interview skills, presentation skills, and curriculum vitae preparation.

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**.

BEST achieves excellent outcomes for the community and for its learners. BEST has a strong focus on providing graduates with a qualification that will enhance their opportunities to operate effectively in the New Zealand economy. The establishment of BEST People is closely aligned with enhancing the vocational goal achievements for learners. The key performance indicators for this centre mean the destinations of BEST graduates are closely tracked. For 2009 BEST People tracked 83.7 per cent of its graduates into either employment (69.7 per cent) or further training or education (14 per cent). For the National Diploma in Business, 76.6 per cent of graduates have found employment and 7.6 per cent have gone on to further training. These results are attributed to close links with employers and the support and guidance given to graduates. Longer term tracking of alumni has begun and one of the early findings shows a significant increase in graduates' salaries after graduation.

A number of Pasifika communities feel a strong connection to the learning and the outcomes of BEST. The evaluation team heard from key members of several communities who described the link they felt to the mission and values of the organisation. In many cases, the outcomes for learners are inextricably linked to their families and wider community. In 2006 BEST began a consultation process with over 80 Pasifika churches in the West and South Auckland. A more recent engagement included a research project which conducted face-to-face surveys and focus groups with students and members of the communities of West and South Auckland. A number of outcomes have resulted from BEST's engagement with Pasifika communities including the establishment of the pre-teacher certificate programme to build the number of Pasifika teachers, and the establishment of the distinctly Pasifika PIPA.

Māori form a significant body of the student population and are achieving valuable outcomes through their education at BEST. A proactive strategy to appoint Māori staff is reflected and the distinct place that Māori hold as tangata whenua is acknowledged in policy documents. Recent developments with the student management system will enable the organisation to affirm that it is meeting its goals for Māori student achievement.

The family is central to the learners and the distance-learning option means that many families are connected to the learning. The evaluation team heard examples of a "ripple" effect, where family members were drawn to education having watched the example of other family members. The distance-learning option also means the learner is supplied with a computer and an internet connection for the duration of their study. The positive impact

of the computer going into the home and the enhanced information technology skills every learner gains were widely reported by staff and students.

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**.

The distance-learning model used by BEST matches learners' needs through enabling them to combine working or caring for their families with study. Learners remain engaged in their learning through the combination of the Fresh-e delivery platform and the eight hours per week on-campus component of the courses. The evaluation team heard many examples of learners who would not have been able to take up the option of study if the distance-learning model was not available. From its inception in 2002, the e-learning online option is now taken up by 80 per cent of BEST's learners. There are ongoing developments to the Fresh-e platform to ensure that it best matches the needs of learners and tutors.

BEST maintains links with business and industry and relevant industry training organisations to ensure that the training is relevant and matches employer needs. The evaluation team heard examples of the content of programmes being adjusted to match the needs of industry better. For example, for the Certificate in Travel and Tourism, new software has been introduced to match the needs of industry. The evaluation team also learned of new qualifications being developed to fill gaps in training.

The range of programmes offered by BEST shows an awareness of the needs of the communities, and the programmes, from foundation level to diploma, are meeting the needs of the community. For example, BEST offers a range of Youth Training and Youth Guarantee programmes which enable learners who are no longer engaged in compulsory education to continue their study. Having their culture affirmed, together with individual attention, helps break down a barrier to learning that some experienced at other education institutes.

PIPA is another example of a programme established to match the needs of the community. Prior to the programme being offered by PIPA, Pasifika Peoples lacked a venue where their culture could be affirmed and celebrated while engaging with the performing arts. PIPA is engaged with the wider performing arts industry and placing graduates into work.

BEST regularly consults with the wider community and learners. The course directors are an effective feedback mechanism for learners, and anonymous feedback is collected at the end of each programme. This feedback informs regular programme and curriculum reviews. Close monitoring of retention and achievement data also enables management to identify any issues with the programmes. The recent research undertaken with the wider community has been analysed and is being workshopped with the different work teams at BEST.

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**.

Across the diverse range of programmes offered by BEST Pacific, tutors are employed with good knowledge and first-hand experience relevant to their programme. For example, tutors for the Certificate in Tourism and Travel must meet the industry training organisation requirement of a minimum five years' industry experience before being employed. Tutors who work in PIPA are all working in performing arts and can give students first-hand experience of the industry. The evaluation team heard from students who valued the real-life examples and expectations being brought into the classroom.

Tutors are supported in their roles with a comprehensive performance management process which identifies tutors' strengths and areas which need development. Professional development targets these areas; for example, many tutors are participating in ongoing workshops about e-learning. Assessing and moderating with unit standards was another focus for some tutors. National external moderation results have been improving and the organisation is working to ensure consistency.

There are curriculum team meetings every six weeks and regular programme management meetings to ensure issues are discussed and resolved. The evaluation team heard of examples of improvements being made to both content and assessment as a result of these reviews. For example, the Certificate in Travel and Tourism moved to using Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation (ATTTO) assessments, which were written more clearly and were easier for the learners to understand. Another example included new resources and games to support the development of literacy and numeracy for youth in the targeted funded programmes.

Positive relationships exist between the tutors and students. Learners spoke of tutors going the extra mile and supporting learners with one-to-one support when necessary, often in the weekends and for as long as it takes. Learners were comfortable giving feedback about tutors and have regular opportunities to do so. Issues are readily raised with the learners' course director. The course director can work with the learner and tutor to resolve the issue and this occurs in the majority of cases. When appropriate, the issue is referred to a manager.

The distance-learning option is favoured by 80 per cent of BEST's learners. BEST attributes the steady increase in learner achievement to the development of e-learning and the delivery platform, Fresh-e. To ensure learners stay engaged with learning there is an on-campus requirement which requires learners to attend two evenings a week plus catch-up/additional support opportunities on Saturday mornings. Learners attested to the importance of this face-to-face component. The Fresh-e online platform is engaging and interactive and learners use the discussion and message boards to engage with their tutors and other learners. All tutors who work with distance learners participate in ongoing professional development with a focus on ensuring that the content and delivery remains student-centred in this new mode.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Learners who study with BEST are given good guidance and support. On enquiry, learners are invited to an interview by enrolment staff. Evidence shows that the quality of these interviews has varied, resulting in a few learners not getting the information they required. However, the majority of learners reported that the enrolment interview was helpful in advising them on an appropriate path of study. Once enrolled, learners are invited to an orientation (which they described as extremely informative) to introduce them to their course director, tutors, and the facilities.

The organisation ensures learners stay on track with their study through close monitoring of attendance, regular contact, and personalised responses to issues that arise. All learners are assigned to a course director whose performance is linked to ensuring learners' retention. All learners have a one-to-one session with their course director every six weeks to check their progress against goals set at the beginning of the programme.

Course directors contact learners who have been absent and liaise with their tutors to ensure they stay up to date with course work. Course directors will visit learners at home and liaise with the family if necessary. If a learner has a serious pastoral care issue they can be referred to the in-house student counsellor or to an appropriate alternative agency.

The guidance and support by the employment activity centre, BEST People, begins midway through the learners' programme and continues after the end of the programme to support learners to find further employment or appropriate study. BEST People assesses learners' work-readiness and provides support to develop interview, curriculum vitae, and presentation skills. When the learner is considered ready for employment, the centre liaises with the learner to find work-placement or job opportunities. The current economic recession has made it difficult to place learners in work, although learners told the evaluation team that the centre was still in contact with them, offering them support, months after their study had concluded.

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**.

Two directors and the head of school are responsible for the governance of BEST. Their vision and values underpin the strategic direction and resourcing decisions. Planned growth and development align well with BEST's mission and guiding principles. Examples of significant investment decisions, developed to match learner needs, include the growth of the Manukau campus and the ongoing work on the Fresh-e-learning platform. The evaluation team heard the mission and vision articulated consistently and passionately across the organisation.

The governance team is consultative and has established strategic links with key stakeholders. A willingness to engage across relevant stakeholder groups was evident and the engagement ranges from questioning to advocacy. The evaluation team heard of willingness to commission and participate in research and to form alliances with other educational organisations if they aligned with BEST's goals and pedagogy.

The strongly Pasifika nature of BEST is fundamental and there is a clear strategy to appoint and develop Pasifika and Māori leaders within the organisation. The celebration and affirmation of the different cultures which make up the Pacific is clear throughout the organisation and reflected in the way BEST engages and celebrates success.

Management meets regularly to monitor the organisation's performance against benchmarks which have been set both internally and by external agencies. The student management system allows the leadership team to analyse results across the different programmes, across the different intakes, and over time. When data indicates areas for concern, there are clear processes in place which enable managers to seek explanations and solutions.

BEST has a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes for learners and staff and for developing a culture of achievement. Performance management supports staff to develop and many are encouraged to engage in further education. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and about policies and processes. They feel supported by management and welcome the input they have into decision-making.

Although BEST is a large, complex, multi-sited organisation, policies and processes are clear and consistent and robust systems are in place. The information collected through the student management system aligns with each centre's key performance indicators. The clarity of this information and these processes means that issues highlighted by this external evaluation and review had already been revealed by the organisation's self-assessment processes and plans were in place to gather more information and respond accordingly.

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**.

For information on this focus area see section 1.6.

2.2 Focus area: Fresh-e/e-learning

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

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

BEST has struck a good balance in terms of its blended e-learning approach. Fresh-e has met a significant community need, with 80 per cent of BEST's learners choosing this method of blended learning.

Most learners interviewed indicated that they had specifically enrolled and continued to study at BEST (often after withdrawing from other institutions) because of the flexibility of Fresh-e. Learners can study while continuing to undertake employment to support themselves and raise their families ("earn while you learn" strategy) and minimise student loan debt. Study is no longer prohibitive because learners avoid daily travel time and costs and they can continue to meet family and childcare responsibilities.

A number of students indicated that they would have been excluded from further education without this flexible e-learning option and were not aware of other providers offering e-learning in a similar form to Fresh-e. BEST's loan of computers and free provision of internet connections for the duration of enrolment has also made e-learning study possible for many students who lacked access to computers. Tutors refer to high retention rates in the National Diploma of Business as indicative of how learners' needs are being met.

BEST's focus on ensuring that learners receive their computers promptly upon enrolment also means that learners are not delayed in commencing their studies (80 per cent of students receive their computers within two weeks of enrolment).

Students feel supported from the outset of their study. Their level of computer knowledge is assessed at orientation to identify support needs, and several face-to-face classes are provided to demonstrate Fresh-e, ensuring students are sufficiently prepared before studying off-campus. Learners frequently use the one-to-one and extra classes that tutors make available for further support in a particular area of study. Tutors provide work schedules and timetables which guide learners in terms of the time they need to set aside at home to study. Prompt support is provided by BEST's information technology team, ensuring learning is not compromised due to technical IT issues.

Learners find Fresh-e engaging, personalised, and accessible. They are frequently engaged by their tutors and other learners via online chatlines and message boards. Students find the ability to ask and respond to questions via the online message board an additional support to their learning. Even the shyest person is emboldened to ask questions, find answers, and therefore get more out of their learning.

2.3 Focus area: BEST People – Careers and Employment

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

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

Engagement with BEST People is included as part of the curriculum for a significant number of BEST's learners. For the remainder of BEST's learners, the workshops and one-to-one support are a free service. BEST People's internal targets are to place 65 per cent of graduates into employment and 10 per cent in further training or education. The current economic recession has been a difficult time to place graduates into work and so the centre struggled to meet its targets in 2009. However, at the time of the evaluation visit, 69.7 per cent of 2009 graduates had been placed in work and 14 per cent were engaged in further training.

The service is tailored to each learner and works to support learners with career planning and placement into work. A recent development has been moving to online tools to streamline processes. Services include the development of a career action plan, curriculum vitae, job interview skills, and links to organisations like Dress for Success.

BEST People has established networks with a range of employers who regularly request graduates for work placements. Support and feedback loops are in place between Best People and the employer and the learner to review each placement. A work placement is useful for the employer and for the graduate. At times, the work placement can be the graduate's first experience of employment. The evaluation team heard evidence that a significant number of work placements lead to permanent employment. Employers also advised the team of the high regard in which they hold the skills and attributes BEST learners bring to the workplace.

The centre has been through a number of reviews and has recently had an increase in the number of staff and a dedicated manager appointed to oversee the centre. For a period prior to this, staff numbers did not allow for the amount of engagement BEST desired for its learners. The greater resource is being aimed at increasing links with industry and securing more work placements. Another recent initiative has been to track graduates at one, three, and five years after graduating from BEST. Although tracking has just begun, initial data indicates a significant increase in income post-graduation.

2.4 Focus area: Certificate in Tourism and Travel (Level 3)

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

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

This programme's achievement rate is about 70 per cent. This has increased significantly over the last few years. BEST attributes this improvement to ongoing review and improvements to the programme concurrent with the shift to Fresh-e. Many learners enrol in the programme with a goal to work in the travel industry. There was good evidence that during the course of their study learners' horizons and employment strategies are expanded as the range of employment possibilities becomes clear. The evaluation team heard of learners gaining important computing and customer service skills which improved their confidence and employability.

This is an entry-level qualification and learners are supported with literacy and numeracy teaching. For example, when appropriate, learners are given strategies to support them to build vocabulary and confidence in writing. The shift to using ATTTO resources means the language of assessment has been simplified, supporting learners to achieve.

The content of the course has been improved to match industry preferences, including a recent change in ticketing software. Tutors bring real-world experience into the classroom from their own work history and continued connections within the industry. To meet industry training organisation requirements, tutors must have a minimum of five years' industry experience before being employed. A recent highlight for learners was a field trip to Rotorua. For some, it was their first experience of being a tourist.

The graduate employment rate for 2009 was 67.1 per cent, and the number of graduates going on to further study has increased 11.9 per cent.

2.5 Focus area: Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts (Level 5)

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

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

The Diploma in Pacific Performing Arts is a two-year, level 5 programme, run under the umbrella of the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA) which provides students with practical skills and experience in traditional and contemporary Pasifika performance, acting, dance, Pacific history, and theatre studies. The programme has become a hub for casting agents and directors to use as one of their first ports of call when casting Pasifika people. Students have been cast in a variety of plays, film, and television projects and dance productions.

PIPA has the option of a summer school which many students take up prior to enrolling. This is valuable in ensuring that students gain a clear outline of what the programme involves, and any potential barriers to learning can be identified. Many students undertake the level 3 Certificate in Screen and Performing Arts prior to enrolling on the diploma because it provides a broad foundation and a "taster" to the diploma.

There are high retention rates and for the 2009 year there was a 74 per cent graduation rate. Casting agents recognise the calibre of students and the passion for the work they are doing for the craft and for the industry.

The programme is well designed to match the needs of learners and the industry. Of particular note is the focus on culture, where all students are encouraged to explore their cultural identity through the performing arts. This course has attracted high-calibre teaching staff who, students report, utilise effective teaching methods. Assessment of student progress is in the form of productions which includes industry feedback on student performance.

There is strong support for students. Students and tutors report, “it is like a family here”, whereby students are well looked after and value the connections they make with industry representatives.

The teaching staff reported that they feel well supported by governance and management, the course director reports directly to the managing director, who also has a passion for the arts and has allowed this course to develop its own identity.

2.6 Focus area: National Diploma in Business (Level 5)

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

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

The National Diploma in Business is BEST’s highest level qualification. Achievement rates for 2009 are at 66.4 per cent, and over 84 per cent of these graduates move into employment or further training.

Pre-entry criteria are used to ensure that learners can engage with the content of the diploma programme, with many learners joining the programme after completing one of BEST’s level 3 certificates.

Like most of BEST’s programmes, the majority of learners choose to study by distance. For these learners, the evaluation team heard that the message and discussion boards were used regularly by learners to pose and answer questions. The peer-to-peer support these channels provide was valued by the learners. There are evening face-to-face teaching sessions twice-weekly, and for those who still need support, one-to-one tuition and Saturday catch-up sessions are available.

Learners told the evaluation team that since commencing the diploma they have been able to set career and further study goals and feel confident and supported in their ability to realistically achieve these goals.

Tutors are well supported and have good experience which they bring to the classroom. Ongoing development has resulted in BEST meeting external moderation requirements. Learners spoke of feeling well prepared for assessments and this is supported by tutors using a range of exemplars prior to assessment.

A number of organisations regularly take graduates for work-placement opportunities. Some of these placements have resulted in full-time employment. The feedback from employers indicates that graduates have useful knowledge and skills which can be of immediate use in the workplace.

2.7 Focus area: Youth West

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

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

This centre offers one of Best's targeted funded programmes. Youth West operates from its own campus in West Auckland. The programme allows learners to move through a number of level 1 and 2 certificates during their time with BEST. The centre has high rates of credit achievement and a significant number of learners achieve qualifications. The programme is effective at meeting eight-week labour market outcomes of over 70 per cent.

The learners at Youth West are described as "students with promise", and the culture of achievement, evident throughout BEST, is significant for these young learners. Tutors work with learners on future planning and are clear that learners should focus on not just a job but also a career. Barriers to learning previously experienced are broken down as learners feel valued and comfortable in a holistic learning environment within which culture, spirituality, and family are embedded and affirmed. Family are encouraged to be part of the learner's journey from enrolment and are invited to collaborate with Youth West to ensure learners stay on track with their studies. Learners reported that their relationships with their families improved and that they were clearer about career options and future study.

The model of delivery at Youth West supports the younger learners, with the young people staying with the same tutor every day, all week. The evaluation team heard from some ex-Youth West students of guidance and support continuing well after they had left BEST. Extra support is provided by a literacy and numeracy tutor and a student counsellor.

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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