

Report of External Evaluation and Review

National Council of YMCAs of New
Zealand

Date of report: 9 March 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, Wellington

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: Full-time students:

551 – Training Opportunities and Youth Training programmes

80 – Adventure Conservation programmes

92 – Alternative Education

30 – Specialist Youth Service Corp

Part-time students:

300 – Intensive Foundation Learning Programme

50 – Workplace Trainees

Sites: Nine regional sites across New Zealand

YMCA was first registered as a private training establishment with NZQA in 1991 and currently offers a wide range of programmes which are fully funded by the Tertiary Education Commission. These programmes are foundation and employment-related education, designed to provide training for clients of Work and Income New Zealand and for youth who have left school and are not yet in work or training. YMCA's primary objective is to enable students to develop a positive attitude to learning, to gain employment, and to facilitate their progress to gain credits towards a level 1 or 2 national certificate on the National Qualifications Framework. The organisation's values are "caring, respect, honesty, responsibility and enjoyment of life".

The organisation is also funded to provide a range of programmes through the Ministry of Youth Development and the Ministry of Education. Most students who attend YMCA courses progress to employment or further training.

YMCA's previous quality audit with NZQA was in 2007 and the organisation met the requirements for ongoing registration.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of the National Council of YMCAs of New Zealand.

YMCA is significantly exceeding the contracted targets set by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). Exceeding the performance targets is highly significant for this level of training. These targets are often the first educational achievements for a number of the students. They include education, employment, and students moving on to further training. The organisation has had its funding increased by TEC to enrol extra students in Training Opportunities and Youth Training programmes for 2010 in recognition of this performance. YMCA has maintained ongoing contracts for many years with TEC, the Ministry for Youth Development, and the Ministry of Education.

The organisation is using valid and reliable assessment practices and has robust processes to check the validity of its assessment material and assessors' judgements and decisions. The learning environments provided are stimulating and engaging for the learners. This was confirmed through interviews with staff and students and letters of support from community organisations.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **not yet confident** in the capability in self-assessment of the National Council of YMCAs of New Zealand.

YMCA has a range of processes for recording and monitoring the performance of programmes across the organisation which have been developed since its inception. Many of these record and monitor enrolment, retention, achievement of learning targets, and the progress of students to further learning or employment; they do not, however, evaluate how well processes are working or how well students are learning.

YMCA has not yet fully developed its quality management system to include evaluation processes across the organisation. While teaching staff and management regularly meet to discuss what is working and how well programmes are progressing, and to consider specific student issues and implement changes to make improvements, the organisation's Education Programme Committee is aware that some important aspects of its data collection and critical analysis are still in development. YMCA is trialling new evaluative processes, such as a new student survey, but the results of these are not yet available.

A significant proportion of the teaching effort with the student population of YMCA is dedicated to developing essential skills for learning, often referred to as "soft" outcomes. These are considered by the Educational Programme Committee to be indispensable prerequisites for educational achievement. Evaluation of successes and failures in relation to these outcomes is ad hoc, site by site, and although often effective, the organisation lacks a process for progressively recording and analysing students' progress in these skills, or of action taken to address failure, withdrawal, and other impediments to success. This

deprives YMCA of valuable data for development of its programmes, for the improvement of teaching approaches and skills, and for tutor training.

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 (ITP Quality) 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 Job Finders included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The following focus area includes all students enrolled under the TEC targeted funding programmes: Training Opportunities and Youth Training.

- Employment skills
- Foundation skills
- Adventure Conservation.

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 **Adequate**.

Explanation

YMCA's self-assessment indicates that 80 per cent of tutors' work involves developing students' prerequisites to academic learning, such as basic literacy and numeracy, promoting positive attitudes, motivation, communication, and problem-solving skills. The balance of time and effort contributes to students' achievement of credits on the NQF.

Within the employment skills and foundation education programmes students are moving into employment or further training at rates significantly above the TEC target rates, between 74 and 77 per cent, while achieving at least 20 credits – often more – in the process.

The YMCA Youth Training and Training Opportunities programmes are based on a wide range of industry areas. The organisation has sought appropriate input to its programme development from the relevant standard-setting bodies for its teaching and assessment material. This has also included close and ongoing contact with industry advisory groups and local employers. These relationships have been critical to helping YMCA achieve the high number of credits gained by students, and have also contributed to significant changes to students' attitudes and motivation to learn and gain employment. The evaluation team noted this as a highly significant achievement for this level of programme and this student group. Most students have not experienced success in other institutions in the past and many have not yet developed the confidence or skills to be able to gain employment.

The Adventure Conservation programme aims to develop life skills and change student behaviours. It does so by offering students a series of physical challenges in the outdoors and by involving them in conservation projects. This programme is achieving high quality outcomes in terms of enabling students to challenge their own attitudes and behaviours. Its success rate is measured primarily in these terms. YMCA has confirmed these outcomes through engagement and feedback from the many community support agencies such as Child, Youth and Family (CYF), police youth aid, and students' whānau. Students' stories are collected as one means of ascertaining real life-changes for the students. Success in this programme is crucial because these students cannot participate in other education programmes until they have developed the skills and attitudes to manage their lives and cope with their background life issues. Among the students interviewed during this evaluation, some were already setting goals to achieve the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (Level 1), and many discussed how their confidence and skills had changed as a result of the course.

This programme is outstanding among those reviewed in the depth and scope of its day-to-day analysis and response to the concerns and challenges of individual students' successes and failures, of the probable causal factors involved, and of the success or otherwise of specific initiatives by the tutor. The programme may contribute to a model for the organisation as a whole, to provide a body of valuable data to inform analysis and evaluation at each of the nine education sites.

YMCA is currently in the process of developing and trialling new policies and procedures for self-assessment, such as a redeveloped student evaluation, and processes to analyse the data collected and to make improvements. The organisation has effective processes for monitoring and reviewing all aspects of its business, but the use of those tools and processes to determine the contributing factors to areas of success or failure is still in development. The causes of success are better known than the causes of failure or non-performance. The regions have autonomy to address specific regional needs, but are also required to report to the Education Programme Committee monthly via the management reporting system. This contributes to the overall sound governance and management of the organisation, providing a national overview of students' achievements, and a means of identifying other emerging successes and issues.

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 **Good**.

Explanation

The outcomes achieved are highly valued by the funding bodies and by a wide range of organisations and agencies with an interest in these students' welfare, such as Child, Youth and Family service, and police and youth aid officers.

The Tertiary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Youth Development have been contracting with YMCA for a number of years. Funded student places in 2010 have been increased specifically because of the value of the outcomes gained. The executive director of the YMCA National Office is in daily contact with a range of key stakeholders and the result of this relationship networking is a high level of awareness of the value YMCA contributes.

The organisation surveys students and employers every six months and is satisfied that both parties value the outcomes achieved on the courses. Student interviews, and documentation reviewed during this evaluation, confirmed this view.

Student stories collected by YMCA indicate that the positive personal changes experienced are very highly valued by students. This is confirmed by tutors' personal contacts in the community with interested groups such as students' whānau, caregivers, and case managers.

Although the organisation collects a large amount of data to confirm that programme outcomes are valued, not all of this data is fully reviewed or analysed to ascertain contributing factors to successes and failures in order to bring about improvements.

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 **Good**.

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

Explanation

YMCA has adopted the material developed by the Tertiary Education Commission and the Ministry of Education known as Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, to assess students' literacy and numeracy needs at the time of enrolment. Students' learning needs are also ascertained during the enrolment interview, and teaching staff record their observations during the first weeks of the programme. This information is recorded with the students' individual learning plans, with some staff and students finding this information more useful than others. There was little evidence at this evaluation to confirm or refute the link between individual learning plans and students' needs being met. Teaching staff record their observations of students over time. This documentation

contributes to the organisations' self-assessment and confirms that students' needs are in fact being largely met.

Data collected from student surveys also confirms that students' needs are well met. Some students interviewed during this evaluation expressed some concerns about the Christchurch teaching site. Management at this site has been informed by students of these concerns, but they have resisted costly improvements while they seek alternative accommodation.

Programmes are designed to accommodate a variety of learning styles and to provide an interactive learning environment. Both staff and students confirmed that there is a good level of variety in teaching strategies, and sufficient time is allowed for the practical application of learning. For example, on the meat-processing programme students learn about knife sharpening and spend time using the skills learned to break down an animal carcass into cuts of meat.

YMCA meets regularly at a national level with interested parties to review how well their needs are met, and facilitates industry advisory groups at a regional level to have input into the development of programmes, and to review the outcomes of the programmes.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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 **Adequate**.

Explanation

The performance of teaching staff is reviewed annually. This includes a self-review by staff members and is linked to the professional development supported by the organisation, which is resulting in an increased understanding of effective teaching and learning. This is significant because YMCA employs tutors primarily for their industry knowledge and passion to work with young people and long-term unemployed adults. This performance review in their professional development process helps tutors develop their understanding of adult learning theory and practice.

The organisation's self-assessment has identified that students are not only gaining credits on the NQF, leading to the award of national certificates, but are also displaying more positive attitudes to learning and a greater self-confidence, which improves their opportunities for future employment. Students interviewed spoke of an increase in confidence in their ability to learn, and a high level of respect for the tutors

Assessment materials and the assessors' judgements are checked for validity and consistency through a rigorous internal process, and externally reviewed by standard-setting bodies. These processes confirm that assessment practices support learning and are well linked to the programmes' learning outcomes.

The organisation reviews and monitors each programme's physical and learning resources and it has appropriate processes for maintaining and updating resources. The review team found that the programmes reviewed were well resourced, and on the whole students and staff confirmed this.

Across the focus areas included in this report, YMCA has data on teaching staff performance, and has instigated professional development, but as in other areas there is not yet a strong process for critically analysing contributing causes for the levels of performance achieved.

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 **Adequate**.

Explanation

Staff have regular meetings to review students' progress and to identify emerging student issues. This process is effective in ensuring that all staff are aware of issues and are working together across programmes to resolve them. Students interviewed confirmed that they felt well supported and some spoke of a tutor as being a "father, friend, and teacher".

YMCA networks closely with a wide range of community organisations to access specialist support and to help students where this is needed. The result is that YMCA works with students, their whānau, community support workers, and police youth aid officers, and often attends family group conferences to support the students. This is a vital function, due to the wide range of issues that students bring to the courses.

One of the outcomes of the level of support provided was that students have a high level of attendance. Whereas in the past students have not been motivated to attend a state school, one YMCA tutor commented that "students often turn up early waiting for the course to start".

One strategy that has worked well to support students and to develop their skills on the adventure conservation programme is the identification of students with potential leadership or mentoring skills and buddying them up with other students. The tutor has observed that this process has been very effective in building mutual respect and understanding and students' confidence to work with others.

As already noted, although YMCA regularly monitors these activities, its ability to reflect critically on the effectiveness of its processes is not yet fully apparent. There is room for more complete analysis of the data collected.

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 **Adequate**.

Explanation

The YMCA structure includes a national council which provides overall strategic planning for the nine autonomous regions. The regional YMCAs are separate incorporated societies which develop local strategic and business plans and report directly to the National Council on programme performance. The organisation's assessment of the effectiveness of its overall structure, and the effectiveness of its governance and management processes at the national and regional levels, gives it confidence that it is providing appropriate oversight, clarity of purpose, and guidance to support learner achievement. The results of the education programmes across the regions support this judgement, with students achieving credits on the National Qualifications Framework and moving into employment at rates at or above the contracted figures. A number of regional staff are members of the National Education Committee and the Education Programme Committee. This allows for effective communications across the regions, and between regions and the National Council.

A number of quality checks are managed nationally, such as student surveys and checks on student assessments. YMCA has recently changed the survey format and the timing from conducting these surveys four times per year to two per year, and has also started gathering the data across the nine sites in an attempt to promote a consistent approach. The success of these changes is yet to be determined, but the evaluation team heard some concerns from students about the length and complexity of the student survey. The process for monitoring student assessments includes regional checks on all assessment material and a 10-percentage sample of students' assessments. This is moderated by the national assessment moderator. Internal processes produce a good level of confidence in both the assessment material and assessors' judgements.

YMCA has one set of quality management policies which provide operational guidance to all regions. The organisation's self-assessment identifies this policy as contributing to the achievement of national consistency and the high levels of student achievements. However, YMCA has yet to develop a complete set of processes to review how well the organisation is achieving outcomes for its students. YMCA management has ensured that the organisation has the tools and skills to collect excellent records of programme performance, and it knows what the regional organisations and programmes are achieving. Its weakness is in the lack of analysis of what is contributing to the achievement of outcomes for learners.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Employment skills programmes

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

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

Explanation

Employment skills programmes are offered in a wide range of subject areas, based on regional industry needs, such as workplace computing, health care, engineering, furniture making, and meat processing. These programmes have an industry focus which is used as a medium for students to build confidence in their learning ability, build social skills, develop skills to gain and hold employment, and learn specific skills for an industry. The organisation's self-assessment shows that this process of building the background skills within an industry area is effective in enabling students to build the prerequisite skills for educational achievement towards a national certificate. This is an important factor in the educational success of these programmes because until students have dealt with some of their background issues they cannot achieve educationally or gain and stay in employment.

YMCA purposefully recruits teaching staff who are specialists in their industry area, and is able to demonstrate a high level of empathy both for young people at risk and for adults who are unemployed. Skills and knowledge in adult learning theory and practice are developed on the job through mentoring and study towards a national certificate or diploma in adult education. The organisation's self-assessment shows that this process is effective in achieving social, personal, and educational outcomes. This is evidenced in the collection of student stories and student surveys, and was confirmed by the evaluation team through student and staff interviews.

2.2 Focus area: Foundation skills programmes

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

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

Explanation

Foundation skills programmes are primarily entry-level programmes for youth who have left school and have not yet achieved any educational success. The focus of these programmes is on engaging the young learners in the process of setting goals, and on raising awareness of factors that contribute to or hinder their ability to achieve educational success. The organisation's self-assessment shows that these programmes are successful. The organisation cites evidence of this in the high attendance rates, the progress that is noted in attitudes and motivation, and the students' abilities and interest in setting personal goals. The evaluation team interviewed a selection of students who confirmed the organisation's self-assessment findings.

Students within the foundation skills programmes are achieving unit standards towards the national certificate in employment skills or the national certificate in educational achievement, at rates greater than the contract target rate. As already noted this is significant because many of the students had previously not experienced any educational success.

2.3 Focus area: Adventure Conservation

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

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

Explanation

The Adventure Conservation programme is funded through the Ministry of Youth Development, targeting youth at risk, and runs over a 20-week period, covering the following activities: outdoor adventure activities, conservation projects, and education

There are seven sites delivering this programme: Invercargill, South Canterbury, Christchurch, Masterton (2), Wanganui, and New Plymouth, but only the Invercargill site was visited in the course of this evaluation. The students on this programme take part in three separate components designed to build relationships, trust, mental resilience, and the motivation to re-engage in learning. The organisation's self-assessment found that the primary critical factor was in the building of trust between the tutor and the students, a process which takes time. The evaluation team interviewed students and staff, who confirmed the organisation's self-assessment. Students spoke of the time they spent with the tutor building a relationship, and the importance of seeing and experiencing the tutor modelling exactly what is required to build the trust relationship.

2.4 Mandatory focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The overall rating for performance in governance, management and strategy is **Good**.

The overall rating for capability in self-assessment in governance, management and strategy is **Adequate**.

Explanation

YMCA's National Council provides an appropriate level of strategic support and direction for the regional bodies, through the National Strategic Plan and the National Education Strategic Plan. An obligatory requirement for all sites is that, in all their programmes they both teach and exemplify the fundamental principles of YMCA. Regional reporting of programme results to the National Council on a monthly basis allows for regular monitoring of programmes across the nine regions, and this has resulted in a high level of awareness among staff of strengths and weaknesses. This is important because YMCA has successfully been building consistency and collaboration across the organisation through regional staff participation on national committees and teams, while at the same time maintaining regional initiatives to address local student and stakeholder needs. The composition of national committees such as the Education Managers Group and the

Education Programme Committee, are made up of regional staff and this has proved successful in building awareness across the organisation and collaboration across the regions, and to better meet student and stakeholder needs.

YMCA has developed a wide range of learning skills, not all of which are easily quantifiable, but which can still be measured through a variety of non-quantitative methods. The Education Programme Committee is well aware that a consistent policy for self-evaluation of teaching, and of addressing the needs of learners, needs to be developed for the organisation as a whole.

Statements of Confidence

The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.

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prerequisites for educational achievement. Evaluation of successes and failures in relation to these outcomes is ad hoc, site by site, and although often effective, the organisation lacks a process for progressively recording and analysing students' progress in these skills, or of action taken to address failure, withdrawal, and other impediments to success. This deprives it of valuable data for development of its programmes, for the improvement of teaching approaches and skills, and for tutor training.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

Because NZQA is Not Yet Confident in National Council of YMCAs of New Zealand's capability in self-assessment, NZQA will contact the organisation within 20 working days of this report to agree upon an appropriate quality improvement plan.

The plan is intended to enable National Council of YMCAs of New Zealand to work towards achieving a judgement of at least Confident in relation to educational performance and/ or capability in self-assessment. Implementation of this plan will be monitored by NZQA. When the plan has been completed, or at any time deemed necessary by NZQA, another external evaluation and review will be scheduled.

Recommendations

YMCA should explore the benefits of developing a database to provide all tutors with access to appropriate data.

YMCA should share course progress and successes across the nine regional sites to improve shared learning.

YMCA should consider how to track success where benchmarking externally is problematic.

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