

FOREST INDUSTRY TRAINING IN NEW ZEALAND

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INTRODUCTION

The last time I addressed a LIRA Seminar is now something like three or four years ago. At that time there was a lot of doom and gloom expressed, both by myself and from the floor, about the inadequate funding, and how LFITB never has sufficient where-with-all to employ the people and the equipment to enable us to do the job which we were set up for back in 1979.

I might say that nothing much has changed in that regard in terms of financing. The future however, does seem a little bit brighter if things work out the way they are supposed to work out. In the words of one of my staff in his annual report when listing the highlights of his year's activity, I quote :

"Last but not least, the LFITB remains intact. Maybe not a highlight but it would have to be a bloody miracle"...

And that virtually sums up our situation. We've been struggling for funds for the last 12 or 13 years. We've done what we can do, with what we've got, where we can do it, and I think there are many faces out there that I recognise that have been beneficiaries of what we've done over the last 13 years also.

I don't want to dwell on our problems however, because we've all got problems and most of those problems are based around money. The bright side of the coin is that in spite of everything, the activities of the LFITB have expanded over the past year or so to an extent never experienced in the past 12 years.

The demand for certification and recognition of skills, the demand for operational training workshops and specific skills workshops, the demand for training needs analysis and workforce evaluations, the auditing of pre-employment training, training of trainers etc., has been ever increasing. If nothing else has happened in the last 12 months, we've been run off our legs. Remembering that the staff the LFITB is small. There are seven of us covering an industry. Not only logging of course (the people who are represented here today), but also the establishment of forests, and the tending of forests, and the protection of forests, and the nursery work and everything else that goes into the forest industry, excluding saw milling.

What this growth in activity indicates to me however, is that there is an increasing realisation by the forest owner, the contractor and his employees, that training and self-motivated acquisition of skills is the key to success in the current climate of high production.

People have often said to me "Mike, in the 35-36 years you've been working, you've done a number of things. How come it is that you're still Manager of the LFITB after 12 years. Surely, you must have got sick of it". Well, yes I have. It's been tough going. But the situation is this: that both myself and my staff firmly believe in what we're doing, and we firmly believe in the forest industry. We know that unless the people out there on the forest floor have got the skills to do their job efficiently and safely, then the industry itself is at risk. It is very dispiriting sometimes when you talk to people. They know that and they accept that, but are not prepared to do anything

about it. I can quite readily admit that LFITB has never been able to fully satisfy the demands put on us for the provision of training.

CERTIFICATE SYSTEMS

What we have been able to provide is a credible, national and internationally recognised system for the recognition of skills via our two certificate systems.

I say nationally because we're not only recognised as having a good system as far as the forest industry is concerned, but surprisingly enough over the years other industries in New Zealand have come to us and asked us for the basis of our certificate system and transferred that into their own industry. This has been borne out just recently. There is a new organisation out there as a result of our famous last government (who seemed to be very keen on changing things and setting up new organisations). This organisation is called the New Zealand Qualifications Authority which some of you should have heard of by now. In their newsletter just recently they quoted LFITB competency on-job-based certification system as being a leader of its kind in New Zealand.

I say it's recognised internationally, because we have had over the years (particularly in recent years) many, many visits and calls from abroad, particularly Pacific-rim countries and from Europe, investigating and looking at the way that we implement our skills recognition system. Only last week I had a ring from the British Columbia Ministry of Forestry who have asked for everything that we've got, so that they can investigate it and set something similar up in British Columbia.

The activities over the past year have been geared pretty much to the person himself, to the guy on the forest floor. This has been recognised in terms of the number of certificates that have been issued over the last 12 months. We've had a fantastic response, particularly from logging, in terms of people seeking that Certificate. There were 829 assessments carried out this financial

year. That resulted in 328 new Logger's Certificates being issued, and something like 400 revalidations of existing certificates. The activity involved with that is administratively quite large, apart from what it takes out in the field to carry out these assessments, which might range from one to two hours, through to one to two days, for a particular part of the Logger's Certificate.

We've had two pretty successful certificate systems. One of them was designed in 1979 and put into place. That was the Logger's Certificate. Five years later we designed and put into place the Forest Skills Certificate, which covers all the rest of forest activities.

In that intervening five years we realised that there were some parts of the Logger's Certificate which could be improved. We implemented that in the Forest Skills Certificate. So what we have now are two certificate systems which are quite dissimilar in some ways.

REVISION OF THE CERTIFICATE SYSTEM

For some time now we've realised that the Logger's Certificate needs revision. I have a paper available, "Certificate System Review: a Discussion Paper", that explains the whole reasoning behind this.

Very broadly speaking, we have a Logger's Certificate which is not very accessible. It only has four levels of skill, or four areas of skill - Logger III, II, I, and Machine Operator, and it only has one entry level at Logger III. In the modern system of qualifications, the broader the scope of skills that can be recognised, the more entry points into that certificate system that there is, is desirable.

So we are looking at revising the Logger's Certificate and defining more clearly the skills involved in logging, rather than just Logger III, II, I.

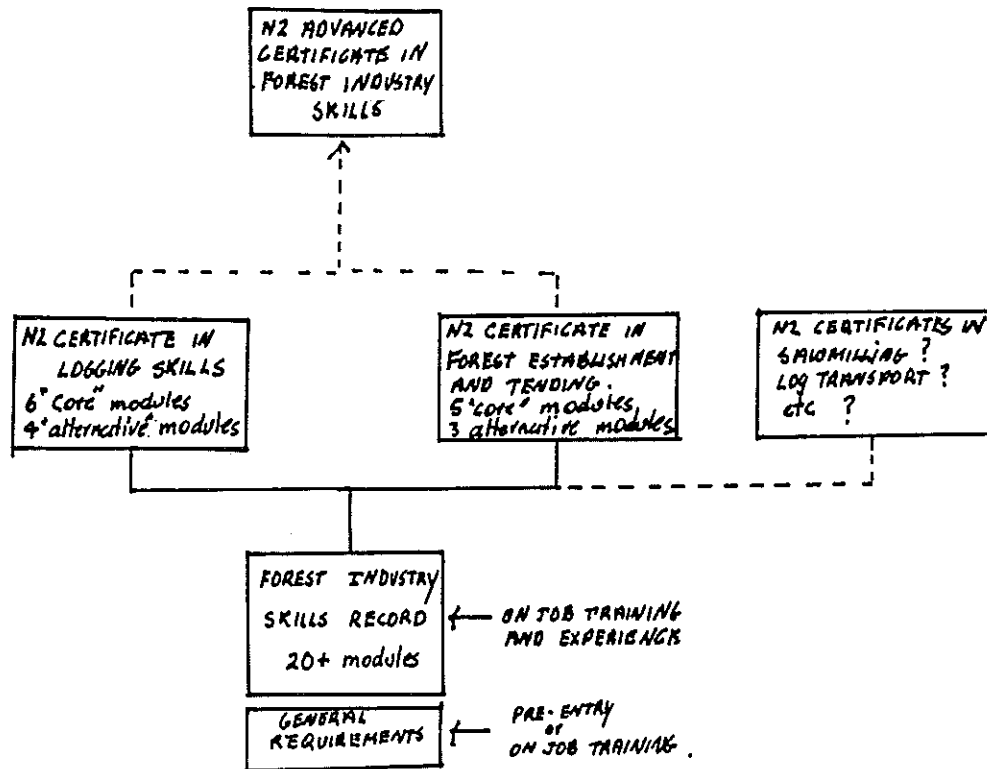


Figure 1 - Structure for the Revised Certification Scheme

We are combining all the logging skills together with the forestry skills (the skills of establishing and tending forests). We don't feel that there is a need to have two separate systems to recognise skills.

Consequently we've identified 25 broad areas, some of them new, some of them old. For instance, there is a module "Windthrow Handling". Now that has never been recognised as a specific skill in the current Logger's Certificate. There are 25 of these skills and we will combine them together, and they will be called Forestry Skills generally. Let's face it, you're working in the forest - they are forest skills whether its logging, pruning, planting or whatever.

The certificate system itself will not be called a certificate, it will be called "LFITB Forestry Skills Record". That will lead to a certificate which will be recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and will be registered as a Trade Certificate, with the same value, the same emphasis, as any other trade in any other industry. To my mind, and to the people that we've talked with over the last six months, this seems to be a good move.

So, we will have a "New Zealand Certificate in Logging" and a "New Zealand Certificate in Forest Establishment and Tending" and they will be New Zealand Qualifications Authority-recognised Trade Certificates (Figure 1).

The LFITB Forestry Skills Record with its 25 modules is at the bottom of the figure. That means there are 25 entry points into this record system. Some are prerequisites, for instance, and some modules are linked with others, and they must be gained in a certain order. For instance, before you can attain "Tree Felling Stage I", you must have attained "Chainsaw Maintenance and Operation", so there's a prerequisite situation. There is a prerequisite situation for any module and that is "General Requirements".

Those of you who are familiar with our current certificate systems realise that general requirements are:

- basic safety training
- basic fire prevention and control training

- training as to what to do in the event of an emergency

These general requirements preclude any other of the 25 modules. When certain criteria are met, we then advance to the Trade Certificate situation. On one hand, the "New Zealand Certificate in Logging", which at this stage (and this as yet isn't set in concrete) will require 6 "core" modules of these 25, and 4 "alternative" modules of the remaining 19, and four years experience in logging.

On the other side of the figure is the "New Zealand Certificate in Forest Skills" with a similar structure. A number of these 25 modules can be cross-credited. For example, "Tree Felling Stage I" can be gained in either a logging or a silviculture situation (thinning to waste etc.). Similarly, "Tree selection" can be cross-credited, and there are three or four others which can be cross-credited to either certificate system.

Up the top of the figure, there is a dotted line because we haven't really progressed passed this. Will we go into a further advanced Trade Certificate situation with a combination of skills from both areas of forestry? Can it be extended out on the same level to include New Zealand Certificates in Saw Milling, Log Transport etc? It's only a matter of adding the modules that apply to these particular skill areas into the basic bottom here, and then can lead into a Trade Certificate situation if that is what the industry wishes.

CONCLUSION

I'm sorry I've got to finish here, it's very abrupt, I know. There are a lot of thoughts out there. People who already hold Loggers' Certificates are wondering how they fit into the proposed new system? What if you've already got a Senior Logger Certificate, does that get you a Trade Certificate? What if you've got Level One of the Forest Skills Certificate, does that get you a Trade Certificate in this area? If anybody has got those thoughts or worries I'm prepared to answer them.

The theme of this particular seminar of course is machine operating, and I certainly haven't mentioned anything about that. Bryan Vincent is our National Coordinator for Logging Training, and Bryan is the machine operator person. He's going to talk to you now about what's happened to machine operator training in the industry up to this date.