

## PROBLEMS AND PRACTICES IN FISHERIES TRAINING AND EXTENSION: AN AUSTRALIAN VIEW

by

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*Abstract*

The paper deals primarily with on-the-job training and extension services for the fishing industry in Australia. Training activities such as those conducted by technical and maritime colleges are not discussed. Methods of investigating the training and extension needs of the fishing industry are examined and steps by which these needs may be satisfied are suggested.

The paper divides training and extension programmes for the fishing industry into four stages. The first of these deals with identification of the training and extension needs of the industry. During the second stage, a programme is designed to meet these needs. Implementation of the programme constitutes the third stage and evaluation of results forms the fourth. The relative merits of the methods used during each stage are discussed and suggestions are made concerning which methods are to be preferred.

## INTRODUCTION

Training and extension for persons engaged in the Australian fishing industry are very much in their infancy, but recent events have highlighted the need for greater attention to be paid to these activities.

The federal system of Government and the consequent government involvement in the administration of the fishing industry present problems when considering a uniform national approach to training and extension, particularly when both activities are essentially state responsibilities. Rather than enter into the argument of how training and extension can best be coordinated and implemented under our system of government, I shall confine myself to the generalities of identifying training and extension needs, and providing guidelines for the conduct of programmes to satisfy these training and extension needs.

Training and extension are closely related and providing definitions which are generally acceptable can present problems. As this paper will concern itself solely with the less formalized or field exercises rather than college or school-based activities, I shall describe my terms accordingly, *viz.*:

*Training* may be considered an on-the-job type activity which is primarily concerned with teaching skills and which will lead to improved safety and/or efficiency;

*Extension* may be considered as two-way communications using whatever means are deemed necessary to convey information with the objective of improving the level of understanding and changing attitudes.

## IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

Let us assume that we are aware of programmes conducted by educational institutions and that we are also aware that other government authorities and some industry organizations are engaged in *ad hoc* programmes. Initially, or in conjunction with the investigation method, all programmes available should be indexed and it should be ensured that the index is current when the investigation is completed.

The method of determining the needs of the industry must be investigated on a systematic basis taking each step to its conclusion. A suggested method follows:

### *Industry interviews*

Interviews should be conducted with management and operatives, on a selective basis. In Australia, probably the most effective approach would be, first, to define the fisheries and their structures and then select individuals rather than groups; otherwise the majority faction or senior group is likely to dominate the discussion.

Questionnaires are not considered to be an effective alternative to interviews as they presuppose that the questions that should be asked are known when, in fact, experience has shown that often irrelevant questions are included, emphasis on some questions is often misplaced and many questions of significance are omitted. This impersonal approach leaves the onus on the recipient to complete the questionnaire accurately and conscientiously without the personal influence that there would otherwise be in a direct interview; the latter having the advantage of drawing the interviewee out as much as possible, thus gaining the full benefit of his knowledge and experience. Having discredited questionnaires as an alternative, that is not to say that they cannot prove a useful aid when interviewing and a questionnaire may be developed as the knowledge of the industry develops.

### *Industry attitudes*

In order to complete the picture and develop proposals which are likely to be acceptable, it is necessary to evaluate the attitudes of industry toward research, management, regulation intervention and, obviously, training and extension. This exercise should be conducted in conjunction with interviews; however, the evaluation proper will be consolidated when all information is at hand. This exercise presupposes that management has a positive attitude and is likely to support the general principles involved in the final analysis. If those responsible for the exercise are not sure of management's attitude, then it may be necessary to conduct similar interviews with management in order to clarify the situation.

### *Governmental advice*

As there are a number of government authorities which have some involvement in various aspects of the industry, it is necessary to obtain data and advice from these authorities as there are great dangers in dealing with any problem in isolation and not understanding the full ramification of any corrective strategy that may be used.

### *History*

In order to avoid the pitfalls of the past, it is desirable to review past attempts at improving the fishing industry and training and extension in Australia. Although our experience is limited in both of these fields, there is no doubt that there is much to be learned from projects which have been undertaken to date.

### *Comparative programmes*

There are a number of primary industries which are, to varying degrees, serviced by training and extension programmes. A comparative review of these programmes may well prove invaluable in developing guidelines for the fishing industry.

### *Overseas activities*

Similarly, a review of overseas training and extension programmes, particularly those relating to the fishing industry, will provide an invaluable contribution to the development of programme guidelines.

## PROGRAMME METHOD

When all the ingredients for a programme have been collated, thought should be given to the development of a model for testing in a pilot or experimental situation. There are various forms that the model may take depending on the industry group concerned and it would be unwise to illustrate specific examples which might be quite inappropriate to follow.

The purists would abhor the thought of proceeding to the stage of providing programme guidelines without, first, stating objectives. In order that I do not upset the *status quo*, I shall be mindful of the broad objectives inherent within the descriptions of terms. I say this because we cannot enforce programmes nor are we dealing with a captive audience.

Fishermen are a unique body to deal with because if fishing is good, a visit to a port may prove to be an exhilarating experience but little, if anything, will be communicated or learnt.

Having identified needs, the proposed programme must be publicized as much as possible. This is easier said than done; our experience has been that fishermen are not readily receptive to written communication and the only guarantee of information being received is to transmit it by word of mouth and have it acknowledged.

Even in the off-season, time is still money and programmes must be of short duration and, if travel is involved, it may be worthwhile conducting a number of programmes concurrently. As far as courses are concerned, they must be practically oriented and theory should be limited to that which is necessary to maintain and efficiently operate a machine, item of equipment or a system. It is not enough for the people conducting programmes to be fully conversant with the subject matter involved; they must be able to communicate at the appropriate level and display the qualities commensurate with good teaching and reporting practices.

## CONCLUSION

I have endeavoured to present a number of thoughts which may have some application to other countries but are considered to be, perhaps, most relevant to the Australian situation. I have not given any specific examples of programmes which have been or are currently being undertaken in Australia as this would require great detail with little in the way of originality to impart.

There is no doubt that training and extension provide important links between management and industry and are the most effective methods of ensuring that industry is made aware that management is concerned with its welfare.

In a large country like Australia with a coastline of some 12 000 mi, it presents a considerable task in terms of time and resources to meet the training and extension needs of the fishing industry. There is, however, a positive attitude toward satisfying these needs and doubtless the techniques and expertise will grow in time.