First NZCER national survey of early childhood education services

2003–2004

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NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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Many teachers, managers, parents, and parent committee members participated in this first national survey of early childhood education (ECE) services. We appreciated their willingness to take the time to complete the questionnaires and contribute their views. We would also like to thank the people within ECE services who distributed the questionnaires and encouraged people to fill them in.

Representatives of major national ECE organisations, Ministry of Education, ERO and Teachers' Council officials, and individuals with experience in ECE helped us identify issues that needed to be addressed and commented on drafts of the questionnaires. This was extremely valuable, especially since the national survey was the first survey of such a range of participants (teachers, parents, and management) undertaken in New Zealand ECE services and was developed from scratch. The questionnaires were piloted by managers, teachers/educators, and parents in education and care centres, kindergartens, and playcentres. Their accounts of issues experienced in filling them in and suggestions for amendments were useful.

Natasha Kenneally co-ordinated the development of the survey and assisted with designing and proofing the questions. Cathy Lythe telephoned general ECE services and Diane Mara telephoned Pasifika ECE services where there was no response by the due date, to encourage them to participate. Hilary Ferral and Edith Hodgen undertook the initial data analysis. Denise Falloon and other data entry staff contributed to coding and data capture. Cathy Wylie provided critical feedback throughout, and Bev Webber managed the publication process.

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Executive summary

This national survey of teachers, managers, parents, and committee members in licensed early childhood education services in New Zealand was undertaken in late 2003/early 2004, a year after publication of the strategic plan for early childhood education, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki (Crown, 2002)*. It provides a baseline picture of the situation for all services except kōhanga reo at the beginning of a period of considerable change, against which the impact of the strategic plan can be monitored. Where possible, we have made comparisons with other New Zealand evidence.

The sample was a stratified random sample of 531 ECE services, approximately 15 percent of all services. The percentage of sampled services where there was at least one response was 60 percent overall. Response rates were highest in kindergarten (87 percent), then playcentre (69 percent), home based (46 percent), education and care (45 percent), hospital (43 percent), and Pasifika (17 percent). Each service in the sample was sent one questionnaire for management, two questionnaires for teachers/educators, two questionnaires for parent/caregivers, and one questionnaire for parent committee member or office holder.

Key findings

Opening hours and enrolment patterns

The opening hours of early childhood services are quite variable. Most playcentres are open for 15 hours or less a week, and home-based and education and care services have the widest range of hours. More children from playcentres and home-based services left before they started school.

ECE services were catering for parents from a range of income levels, but income levels of families using ECE services were higher than those of families with children under five in the 2001 Census. As well, some ECE service types provide ECE for different socioeconomic groups:

- Kindergartens were more likely to cater for mainly middle- to low-income families.
- Hospital services were more likely to cater for a wide range.
- Playcentres were more likely to cater for middle-income families or a wide income range.
- More education and care centres catered for middle/high-income families. Within the education and care sector, private services were more likely to cater for high-income families.

From 2002–2004, education and care centre enrolments increased at a faster rate than enrolments in other forms of provision. Managers reported some demand for more places for children under two in education and care centres, suggesting education and care for this age group will continue

to be an area for expansion. Where ECE rolls were decreasing, the main reasons were general population or housing change, and changes in parent preference.

Irregular attendance was associated with low family income and affected by poor child health, bad weather, and parent needs. Transport availability was another factor. These findings indicate the value of ECE services being within walking distance (with small children) in local communities.

Parent views

ECE attendance patterns

Overall, most parents were satisfied with the times that ECE provision was available to them and the type of provision.

A small percentage of parents (6 percent) said the times their child attended an ECE service did not suit them. Home-based service parents did not have such needs, suggesting it was the flexibility of provision that suited these parents. Eight percent of parents wanted more hours. Fourteen percent of parents wanted to use a different type of ECE service, especially kindergarten. The reasons parents could not access different services when they wished was because of waiting lists or the service was not available in the locality.

Consistent with other studies, incidence of children attending more than one service was reasonably high at 22 percent, and increased with age. Parents seemed to choose more than one service because of benefits to their child or the hours available. Cost is also a factor: 14 percent of parents using more than one service would use only one if ECE was free. Dual attendance is not necessarily harmful for children: the Competent Children, Competent Learners study has found no impact on children's competencies either at age 5 or later.

Playcentre was under some pressure, with a larger percentage of children leaving before they go to school. Playcentre parents were more likely to want more hours and to want to use another type of provision, especially kindergarten.

ECE services allowed parents to undertake paid employment/training, participate in housework, contribute to work in the ECE centre itself, and have time for their own interests and families.

Parent choices and information

A good quality education programme and teachers were the main reasons for parental choice of ECE service. Distinctive features of service types also appealed to some parents, reflecting parental needs, e.g. for employment.

Most parents found out about their current ECE service through word of mouth, but only a third made decisions about enrolling their child through visiting the ECE service, and fewer used Education Review Office (ERO) reports or asked professionals about the service quality. Many parents said they would find it useful to have information about ECE services available through

health professionals and community noticeboards, as well as community organisations and schools.

Parents were generally very positive about their ECE service. Teachers had a range of strategies to induct families, e.g., a guided tour of the service, encouraging parents to attend at any time, discussing information about the child with the parent, and providing a handbook about the service.

Relationships between parents and ECE services

Teacher–parent contact was mainly informal, made when parents were at the ECE service. Parents talked to teachers primarily about their own child. The emphasis on informal contact was an issue for some parents who wanted a set time to talk, such as a parent interview.

About half the parents and two-thirds of the committee members were involved in assessment and planning for their child. A sizeable minority of parents wanted more ideas for how they could support their child's learning at home, information about their child's progress, and assessments used by ECE staff.

Playcentre parents had the highest level of contact with staff (who are mostly also parents) and were most satisfied with information about their child, and kindergarten parents had the lowest level of contact with ECE teachers.

Over a third of parents had experienced some problems or concerns in the ECE service. These were mainly about *affective* issues, especially their child settling, or other children in the programme. Most parents who had raised concerns reported they had been fairly listened to, but about a third of parents did not know who to raise concerns with.

Consultation with parents and community

Overall, parents were happy with information about their ECE service and did not want more say in it.

A third of parents and about two-thirds of committee parents had participated in formal discussions of the ECE service's philosophy and goals. Most of these parents valued these discussions as a way of having input into goals and developing understanding of the teaching and learning environment. Those who wanted greater involvement were constrained by the time discussions occurred, methods of gathering input, and feelings of inadequacy.

Committee members were generally satisfied with levels of parent involvement in their service but a third thought the volunteer workload fell on too small a group of parents.

Consultation with Māori was limited and mainly with local Māori parents/whānau. Few services consulted with Pasifika communities, or other ethnic communities. Not knowing how to consult with Māori and Pasifika communities was an issue for committee members.

Playcentre parents were more involved and satisfied with consultation and kindergarten parents more likely to want more information.

Resources

Funding

Insufficient funding was the major issue confronting ECE services. Government bulk funding was the principal source of funding. Parent fees were a second major source for education and care centres and home-based services, and fundraising and charitable grants contributed to funds for kindergartens and playcentres.

A fifth of services were in deficit at the end of their last financial year and a similar percentage expected to be in deficit at the end of their next financial year. More of these were education and care services.

Almost a third of parents experienced difficulties in meeting the cost of fees or donations, with low-income families more likely to be experiencing difficulties.

Free early childhood education was very widely supported by all groups, delivered as a universal entitlement, not targeted to low-income families. Participants were equally divided between free ECE for up to 10 hours, 15 hours, 20 hours, or more than 20 hours per week. There was considerable support for free ECE for all ages (managers, 43 percent; teachers, 44 percent; and parents, 30 percent). About a third of participants thought free ECE should be restricted to 3- and 4-year-olds.

A fifth of parents said they would increase the number of hours their child attends if ECE was free. The greatest demand for more hours was from parents using less than 20 hours per week, and parents who were dissatisfied with hours and times. If ECE was free:

- Ninety percent of parents who would increase the hours were currently using less than 20 hours ECE a week. Parents using 15 hours or less per week ECE were most likely to want to increase their hours if ECE was free.
- Fifty-seven percent of parents who said they would like more hours of ECE would increase the number of hours (compared with 17 percent who were satisfied with the number of hours). About 26 percent of those using less than 20 hours would like more hours.
- Fifty percent of parents who would like ECE at different times said they would increase the hours (compared with 18 percent who were satisfied with provision times).

Most parents (86 percent) said they would not change the type of service their child attended if ECE was free. Fourteen percent of those parents who were using more than one ECE service[1] would use only one if ECE was free. This suggests cost is a factor in parents using more than one service.

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[1] Twenty-two percent of parents were using more than one ECE service.

Around 20 percent of managers would consider extending their hours and 20 percent said they would be more responsive to the hours wanted if ECE was free.

Thirty percent of parents indicated that free ECE would enable them to enrol in education/training, start employment, or increase hours of employment.

Data gathered on characteristics of children on the rolls of the ECE services showed variable distributions of children from non-English speaking homes, special needs, and from low-income families. Each of these presented particular challenges that have implications for provision of funding and support services. The Equity Index used to capture services with higher numbers of children from non-English speaking homes and children with special needs does miss some services with a large number of such children.

Managers were divided about whether the Government should replace the current system of bulk funding with payment of teachers' salaries and a grant for other costs, with teachers and parents being largely unsure.

Resources and surroundings

Most teachers rated their teaching and learning resources as good or very good. Professional publications and parent library were less satisfactory, except in playcentre.

Over half of managers and teachers had email, Internet access, and digital cameras at their centre, and some have a range of other ICT peripherals. Internet access was poor in 42 percent of services. Playcentres had lower levels of ICT access, and kindergartens higher levels. ICT was used in documenting children's learning, and communicating with parents through newsletters and notices. The most frequent problems teachers reported with ICT use related to their own limited expertise and confidence.

Staffroom space, office space, space for storage and preparation, and adult furniture were the most pressing needs, especially for playcentre and kindergarten.

Ratios, child places, and group size

Over half the ECE services operated above regulated adult:child ratios, and these services were more likely to rate their ratios as adequate. Most were playcentres and education and care services, and services with children under two. Kindergartens were likely to operate at regulated staffing requirements and to rate ratios as inadequate.

Sizes of groups varied by service type, with home based (maximum four children), followed by playcentre (less than 10 up to maximum 25), and kindergarten the largest (most 41–45). Most kindergarten teachers thought the group sizes were too big.

About a fifth of education and care and home-based managers, and some playcentre managers, wanted more places for under twos in their centre. Few wanted more places for over twos.

Teacher employment and morale

Most services employ few staff. Means for the different service types were: kindergarten, 2.81; playcentre, 1.75; education and care, 7.29; home based, 7.71. These means are the number of teachers actually employed: full-time equivalents are lower.

There were high levels of teacher turnover. Half the services had one or more teachers leave in the last 12 months. This level of turnover is a large percentage in a sector where most services employ a small body of staff. Staff turnover is likely to be associated with instability for children, administrative costs, and time spent on recruiting staff. Turnover makes it harder for services to sustain service wellbeing and build on professional development undertaken when new staff members have not participated in the professional development experiences.

Among those who left, the main reasons were the teacher moving to another location (15 percent), changing career to another occupation outside education (11 percent), or taking parental leave (10 percent). Common reasons for changing to another ECE teaching position were another service was more attractive (7 percent) or better pay (6 percent), especially in education and care centres (12 percent and 10 percent respectively). Teacher turnover was higher in private education and care services than community-based services. There is a cost in the need to train more teachers, where teachers are lost to another position outside of education.

Unattractive pay and conditions within a competitive environment are also making it difficult for services to recruit staff in the education and care sector. Almost half the education and care service managers had difficulty finding suitable and qualified teachers for any teaching vacancy, because of competition with other ECE services over pay, better leave provisions in other ECE services, and better noncontact provisions in other ECE services. Playcentres were more likely to have difficulties because of remote location.

A sizeable minority of teachers in paid employment had only the statutory minimum entitlement of three weeks annual leave. In some centres, there was very little or no noncontact time, and staff meetings were held infrequently (once a month or less). These opportunities provide conditions to support processes of planning, assessment, evaluation, and review that contribute to effective teaching and learning.

Teachers in private education and care centres had poorer working conditions (annual leave, noncontact time, frequency of staff meetings) than teachers in community-based education and care centres, were less likely to be involved in decision making as a member of the team, and more likely to rate their workload as excessive.

ECE teachers/educators' morale was generally high; higher than the morale of primary and secondary teachers. Seventy-three percent of teachers rated their morale as "very good" or "good", 18 percent as satisfactory, and 5 percent as "low" or "very low".

A fifth of teachers rated their workload as "excessive". Morale was associated with workload. Most teachers describing their workload as "excessive" also rated their morale as "low" or "very low".

Kindergarten teachers and playcentre educators, followed by teachers in community-based education and care services, were more likely to say they felt consistently part of the decision-making team, and home-based educators and teachers in private education and care services were less likely to say this. An exception for home-based educators was communicating with parents. Home-based educators were more likely to say their views were not sought by those making decisions.

Volunteer work

High levels of voluntary work were supporting and sustaining community-based ECE services, especially playcentre and kindergarten. Most volunteer work was in the education programme, fundraising, maintenance, working bees, and management. Parent committee members reported the longest hours of voluntary work. At the high end, some parents were working voluntarily for more than 15 hours per fortnight.

The main reason for not volunteering was parents not having such an opportunity because the ECE service did not use volunteer help. Other reasons were being in paid employment, not having time, or not being asked.

Most playcentres and over half the kindergartens provided training for volunteers, but few education and care services did (but they did not use volunteers so much).

Volunteering is placing some pressure on services where workload levels are high, especially playcentres. A substantial minority of playcentre participants thought their volunteer workload was too great, with too much responsibility, and that volunteers were struggling. A minority also reported difficulties in recruiting parents, mainly because the workload fell on too few parents, or parents were in paid employment.

Many parents gained an array of benefits for themselves and their child through involvement as a volunteer, with more committee members reporting gains. Benefits for parents were primarily from the enjoyment, companionship, and sense of belonging that involvement engendered. Many committee members also gained heightened confidence in their abilities and a sense of achievement. Parents reported overall benefits for children, better understanding of their child's progress, and better understanding of the education programme. Most playcentre parents and committee members also gained benefits, as well as training and qualifications.

Teaching and learning

Assessment, planning, evaluation, and curriculum matters

Most teachers were collecting assessment data which could be shared with others and used formatively, e.g., photographs, records of children's conversations, examples of work, learning stories, and anecdotal records. Teachers also placed store on discussion amongst themselves, and consultation with parents, to gather information about children's learning. Just over half the

teachers were involving parents and children in making decisions about the education programme. Playcentre parents were more involved than other parents in these processes.

Insufficient time was the main barrier to assessment, planning, and evaluation and was also linked to having little/no noncontact time in the working day, especially for teachers/educators from services other than kindergarten.

In most ECE services, at least a little te reo Māori was spoken every day. However, the main usage was limited to greetings and commands. About half the teachers said they placed a little emphasis on biculturalism.

Over half the teachers said they placed a little emphasis on multiculturalism, but teachers in services with five or more children from non-English speaking homes said they placed a lot of emphasis on multiculturalism.

Teachers' main achievements over the last three years were related to improvements in teaching and learning practices. They reported increasing their knowledge and skills, creating a more positive learning environment, becoming better at meeting needs of individual children, improved assessment and evaluation practices, greater confidence in using *Te Whāriki*, and involving parents in children's learning.

Professional development

Most managers and teachers had participated in professional development in the previous 12 months, and many had undertaken more than 15 hours professional development. Management professional development commonly focused on management roles of staff appraisal, self-review, and leadership. Teachers' professional development commonly focused on teaching and learning, e.g., assessment, evaluation, educational theory, te reo and tikanga Māori, and children's behaviour, as well as staff appraisal.

The most common delivery of professional development was through one-off seminars or courses, followed by whole service professional development.

Managers and teachers favoured a range of professional development providers, but a higher percentage of playcentre educators and parent management preferred professional development from someone skilled within their own service.

Almost all managers and teachers thought that professional development resulted in their trying new strategies. Teachers gained their most useful ideas from other practising teachers.

Teachers' greatest needs for advice and information were about stress management, ICT use, staff appraisal, and children with special needs. Information about becoming a registered teacher was wanted by education and care teachers. These were also many of the areas where teachers felt they were missing out on advice.

Overall, education and care centre teachers had fewer hours professional development and kindergarten teachers more. Playcentre parent management were less likely to focus on staff appraisal and self-review, and more likely to focus on leadership and administration.

Reviews of ECE service provision

Self-review against the Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) was being undertaken by most services. The aspects least likely to be reviewed were communication and collaboration with community, meeting needs of Māori, and meeting needs of Pasifika. These were also aspects where participants were lacking in confidence. Many were using Ministry of Education resources. Parents were more likely to be involved in reviews undertaken by management, than reviews undertaken by teachers, and community and children were rarely involved. On the whole, reviews were perceived as useful, with most reporting positive change occurring as a result.

A substantial minority of services had had a "new style" ERO review, focused on educational improvement as well as compliance. Of these, most managers found the review helpful. Almost half thought their ERO review provided positive impetus for change to the ECE programme, especially in processes of assessment, planning, and evaluation, strategic planning, self-review processes, and health and safety.

Only about half of the committee members and parents had read the most recent ERO report on their service or knew how to contact their local ERO office, although most parents knew that ERO reviewed their service. Where parents had read the report, most thought it was helpful and had used it.

Relationships with local ECE services and schools

Collaboration between ECE services of different types was minimal. Where there was collaboration this was mainly to share professional development, followed by sharing resources and providing mutual support. Kindergartens reported the highest levels of collaboration, and this was with other kindergartens in their association. Main obstacles to forming closer relationships with other ECE services were time, resources, and competition between services.

When children attended more than one ECE service, about half the teachers/educators reported no relationship with the other service. The most usual contact was through parents. A substantial minority did not know whether any of their children attended more than one service.

Most teachers regarded transition of individual children to school as largely a parental responsibility. A third of ECE services had no or limited contact with their local school, but many (over half) had children going on to three or more schools. Where ECE services had specific transition practices these were mainly visits to one school with children or visits from school children to the service. These practices were more likely in services where children went on to only one or two schools.

Teachers thought continuity for children would be strengthened through primary and ECE teachers sharing curriculum and pedagogical understanding, and sharing ECE assessment information about individual children.

Major issues, priorities, and change wanted

The major issue confronting managers, parents, and parent committee members at the end of 2003/early 2004 was insufficient funding. Top priorities for change after funding reflected pressures that were distinctive for service types:

- Kindergarten respondents wanted improved staff:child ratios and reduced group sizes.
- Education and care respondents wanted better pay and employment conditions.
- Playcentre respondents wanted reduced administration and paper work.
- Home-based respondents wanted better pay and employment conditions.

Overall, from all groups—managers, teachers, parents, and committee members—there was agreement about the highest three priorities for government action. These were:

- improving teacher quality
- increasing funding levels
- lifting teacher pay.

Conclusion

Overall, the survey findings show ECE services are picking up on Ministry of Education initiatives to benefit their practices. Professional resources and professional development opportunities have helped teachers develop their assessment approaches, and teacher morale is high. Parents are generally positive about their relationships with the ECE service.

Some issues pose challenges for policy and practice:

- Teacher turnover was high, especially in education and care centres, where it was exacerbated by competition over employment conditions. High levels of teacher turnover can be detrimental for children's development, since children's wellbeing is supported by secure relationships with adults who know them well. The ECE service culture and capacity of staff to build on professional development experiences may also be eroded by turnover.
- There was pressure on services for more spaces for under twos, and some demand to use different types of provision. A fifth of parents said they would increase the number of hours their child attends if ECE was free. The greatest demand for more hours was from parents using less than 20 hours per week, and parents who were dissatisfied with hours and times. These findings indicate there may be some pressure for expanded or new ECE provision when free ECE is implemented. Under the current policy framework there is no systematic process of planning to ensure all services are meeting needs.

- Significantly poorer employment conditions were found in private education and care centres compared with community-based centres.
- High levels of voluntary workload were placing pressures on community-based services, especially playcentre, although volunteering was also associated with benefits—greater community cohesion, parent support, and parent learning. Ways to reduce workload and support volunteers so that benefits from volunteering are sustained is a policy and ECE service challenge.
- High child:staff ratios and large group sizes were problematic in some services, especially kindergartens, making it hard for teachers to interact responsively with all children.
- Aspects of collaboration that could be strengthened were: collaboration between ECE centres sharing the same children; transition to school, especially where children graduate to three or more schools; sharing information and integrating action between home and school; and working with Māori, Pasifika communities, and other ethnic communities. These could usefully be targeted as aspects for professional support.

1. Introduction

This first NZCER national survey of early childhood education (ECE) services is a comprehensive survey of teachers, managers, parents, and committee members in licensed ECE services in New Zealand. NZCER intends to carry out these surveys every three years, to provide a barometer of the wellbeing of ECE provision, and to monitor changes to provision of interest to the sector and policy makers.

This first survey in the series was carried out in late 2003/early 2004, a year after publication of the strategic plan for early childhood education, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Crown, 2002), and before many of the major actions of the plan were implemented. It can therefore provide a baseline picture of the situation for all services except kōhanga reo and playgroups at the beginning of a period of considerable change, against which the impact of the strategic plan can be monitored.[2]

Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki is the first long-term strategic plan for any education sector and is based on goals for children. It was developed through extensive consultation with the education sector and is described as "a shared vision between the sector and the Government" (Crown, 2002, p. 2). Three goals—of increasing participation in quality early childhood education, improving the quality of early childhood education services, and promoting collaborative relationships—provide the framework. Sequenced action plans support each goal. When the NZCER survey was undertaken, plans for increasing the number of registered teachers in teacher-led services were known, Equity Funding was in place, and kindergarten teacher pay parity with primary and secondary teachers had started to be implemented. The Government was starting to favour community-based provision—a shift from the equal treatment of community-based and private profit-making services that characterised previous government approaches. From 2002, licensing and chartering advice and support offered by the Early Childhood Development (ECD) was provided only to community-based services where previously it had been available to private services as well. Equity Funding, which was implemented in 2002, is for community-based services only. But other actions that were to herald key changes, such as in funding and regulation, were under review, and assessment exemplars had not been published. In 2006, when this report was written, policy had still to be developed on parent/whānau-led services

[2] Where possible, we have made comparisons with studies of ECE provision since these provide evidence on some of the same issues. They include Smith's (1996) study *The Quality of Childcare Centres for Infants in New Zealand,* the Department of Labour and NACEW (1999) *Childcare, Families and Work* study, the *Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara, & Wylie, in press), the *Evaluation of Initial Uses and Impact of Equity Funding* (Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara, & Wylie, 2006a), and *Competent Children at 5* (Wylie, Thompson, & Kerslake Hendricks, 1996).

and on professional development, and regulatory changes to adult:child ratios had just been announced.

The 1990s were characterised by a market model, with a private sector framework applied to ECE services. Evidence about impacts over this period demonstrates a high level of fragmentation, inequalities in access to ECE services, especially in isolated communities, and difficulties for ECE services in catering for diversity (Early Childhood Education Project, 1996). There was a tendency for services to operate according to low common regulated standards for staffing, which did not provide the staffing standards known to be associated with good learning outcomes for children (Mitchell, 2005). On the positive side, the early childhood education curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, was published in 1996 and professional development funding allocated for its implementation. Projects to develop assessment resources to support teaching and learning were also funded (Carr et al., 2000).

The strategic plan and policy that took shape from 2000 has signalled a somewhat transformed role of the state away from minimal involvement and support, with individual ECE services alone responsible for their own performance, to mutual responsibility between government and services. The situation in 2003 had elements of both market and state support.

The NZCER survey has attempted to describe the scene with respect to the major aspects of the strategic plan and issues that sector representatives and government officials were keen to know about. Since we knew the debates that were being held in respect to key issues of funding and regulation, we were able to ask questions in 2003 that are pertinent to what has happened through the strategic plan subsequently.

Survey design and analysis

Since this was the first NZCER national survey of licensed ECE services, we consulted widely with sector representatives and government officials about the most important issues to include. We met with or received feedback from the following ECE organisations: Barnardos, Early Childhood Council, Kindergarten Federation, NZ Childcare Association Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa, NZ Kindergarten Incorporated, NZ Playcentre Federation, NZEI Te Riu Roa, and a hospital service participant.

Government officials from the Ministry of Education and Education Review Office, and staff from the Teachers' Council were consulted. The Ministry of Education asked us to include some specific questions on ICT to help inform the development of an early childhood education ICT strategy,[3] and made suggestions about information they would like to know in each of the areas of

[3] Findings from the ICT questions have been reported in Bolstad, R. (2004). *The role and potential of ICT in early childhood education. A review of New Zealand and international literature*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

the strategic plan for early childhood education.

Draft questionnaires were piloted by teachers/educators, parents, and managers from playcentres, education and care centres, and kindergartens. Key Ministry of Education officials involved in early childhood education commented on the draft questionnaires. The survey was then finalised.

The questionnaires were sent in November 2003 to 531 ECE services, approximately 15 percent of all services, using lists obtained from the Ministry of Education. The sample was a stratified random sample, selected to be representative of each type of service except kōhanga reo and playgroup, and oversampling for Pasifika (23 of 65 services) and all hospital ECE services because of their small numbers. (A representative sample would have given us too small a number to usefully analyse.)

All the Pasifika centres in the sample were telephoned by a Pacific researcher to encourage participation. Nevertheless we achieved a low response rate from Pasifika services (four services) and have included them under the category "education and care" because the number was too small to report separately. We have made comment on hospital services where they stand out from other services rather than reporting numbers, because of their small sample size. We would have liked to include kōhanga reo in the survey but Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust planned to do its own survey in 2004, using the NZCER survey as a basis. However, this did not happen.

Overall, the percentage of sampled services where there was at least one response was 60 percent. Response rates were highest in kindergarten and lowest in Pasifika services. We think the response rates could have been improved had we been able to send the survey at a better time.[4] However, taken as a whole, the sample and responses are broadly representative of the service types nationwide.

Table 1 **ECE services sampled and response rates in NZCER national survey 2003–2004**

Sample and responses	Education and care centre	Pasifika education and care	Kindergarten	Playcentre	Home based	Hospital
Sample (n)	253	23	107	81	35	17
Percent of services where one response	45%	17%	87%	69%	46%	43%

[4] The main reason given for nonresponse was staff busyness. The time of year (close to the main holiday break) and other commitments were also factors. Four possible respondents thought the survey was not relevant to them (two were from home-based services, and one each from playcentre and education and care). Three private providers did not think the information sought would benefit them and one of these "did not agree with" the questions about free early childhood education. Two playcentres operating with group supervision (each playcentre member participating in running the education programme) did not think the teacher/educator survey was relevant to them.

Appendix A sets out the characteristics of ECE services nationwide, the characteristics of the 2003 survey sample of 531 ECE services, and the ECE service characteristics of participants. Overall, there is some under-representation in the responses of education and care, and private services, and some over-representation of kindergartens and isolated services. These patterns are largely replicated for management, parent committees (in services where there was a committee), parents, and teachers.

Each service in the sample was sent one questionnaire for management, two questionnaires for teachers/educators, two questionnaires for parent/caregivers, and one questionnaire for parent committee member or office holder (the president/chairperson or a committee member who had served for a long time). We asked management in each of the services to select teachers/educators and parents/whānau by drawing names at random and explained how this was to be done. We provided the names of NZCER statisticians to contact if there were any difficulties. A freepost envelope was sent for return of each questionnaire. Services were asked to send us a note if they did not have a parent committee, since most private services and some community-owned services do not have one. We received notes from seven private centres, four community-based education and care centres, and one kindergarten.

We sent a reminder letter to those who had not returned their questionnaires within three weeks to ensure the questionnaires had arrived, to see if the service needed replacement questionnaires, or to confirm that the service did not wish to participate. The time frame was extended to mid January 2004 for some respondents.

Response profiles

Table 2 gives the response rate for each of the four groups surveyed. Managers had the highest response rate.

Table 2 **Response rates for participant groups**

Managers (n=242)	Teachers (n=402)	Parents (n=455)	Parent committee* members (n=171)
%	%	%	%
46	36	39	32

* Most private education and care and home-based services did not have committees.

Consistent with our sampling, the highest proportion of managers, teachers, and parents were from education and care centres followed by kindergarten. The pattern for parent committees was different, with the highest percentage from kindergarten.

Table 3 **Percentage of participants from each service type**

Participants	Education and care centre %	Kindergarten %	Playcentre %	Home based %	Pasifika education and care %	Hospital %
Managers (n=242)	47	33	13	5	2	2
Teachers (n=402)	47	32	5	5	2	3
Parents (n=455)	42	33	5	5	1	1
Parent committees (n=171)	31	43	25	1	2	1

Participants responding to our survey were predominantly women, working as teachers (98 percent), managers (96 percent), committee volunteers (95 percent), and parents (92 percent).

Parent committee members answered the same 69 questions as other parents plus 32 questions relating to their committee and service work. We did not combine parent data with parent committee members' data for the common questions, since the two samples were different in some respects, and some services did not have committees. There were more New Zealand European/Pākehā, and fewer Māori and Pacific parents among the committee members compared with other parents.

The ethnicity of parents and parent committee members in our sample was:

- European/Pākehā (parents, 90 percent; parent committee, 95 percent)
- Māori (parents, 14 percent; parent committee, 8 percent)
- Pacific (parents, 4 percent; parent committee, 2 percent)
- Asian (parents, 3 percent; parent committee, less than 1 percent).

Compared with the 2001 Census of parents with children under five, European/Pākehā parents are slightly over-represented, and Māori, Pacific, and Asian parents are slightly under-represented. This is probably because the under-represented groups have lower participation rates in early childhood education according to Ministry of Education figures. As well, kōhanga reo, which are predominantly used by Māori families, were not in the survey.

Compared with parents, fewer committee members were in full-time paid employment.

Table 4 **Employment status of parents, committee members, and mothers with children under 5**

Employment status	Parents (n=455) %	Committee members (n=171) %
Full-time parent/caregiver	42	47
Part-time paid employment	35	37
Full-time paid employment	20	13
No response	3	3

The household income of committee members was higher on average than of parents. Incomes for both groups were higher than those of families with children under 5 in the 2001 Census.

Table 5 **Household income of parents, committee members, and families with children under 5**

Household income	Parents (n= 455) %	Committee members (n=171) %	Families with children under 5 (Census 2001)
Under $30,000	22	15	32
$30,000–$69,999	48	43	31
$70,000 and over	26	37	18
No response	4	5	18

A fifth of parents and a quarter of committee members had a tertiary qualification, and 10 percent of parents and 6 percent of committee members had no school qualification.

Table 6 **Highest school qualification of parents, committee members, and mothers with children under 5**

Qualification	Parents %	Committee members %
No qualification	10	6
Fifth form qualification	14	9
Sixth form certificate	16	25
Higher school qualification	6	6
Certificate, apprenticeship, or diploma	27	22
Bachelor degree	12	16
Postgraduate degree or diploma	9	10
No response	6	2

The most common occupational category for those who were in paid employment was professional (parents, 19 percent; committee members, 18 percent), followed by clerk (parents, 9 percent; committee members, 8 percent), manager (parents, 7 percent; committee members, 5 percent), and service or sales worker (parents 6 percent; committee members, 5 percent).

The Department of Labour/NACEW (1999) New Zealand Childcare Survey also found that preschool children who were European and from higher-income families were more likely to have ECE arrangements. In the New Zealand Childcare Survey, 66 percent of European, 53 percent of Māori, 48 percent of Pacific Islands, and 42 percent of children from other ethnic groups had ECE arrangements. Seventy-four percent from high-income families, compared with 61 percent from middle-income families, and 52 percent from lower-income families used ECE. (As well, the New Zealand Childcare Survey found families with a sole parent in employment, or two parents in employment, were more likely to have ECE arrangements.) Thus the ECE participation patterns did not change much from 1999–2004. This suggests that the strategic plan goal of finding out and addressing barriers to ECE participation was needed.

Analysis

Since this was the first national survey of ECE provision in New Zealand, and we were at the beginning of implementation of the first long-term strategic plan for early childhood education, we wanted to get a comprehensive picture. The questionnaires used in this survey were lengthy. The pilot showed that they took between 30 minutes and 50 minutes to complete, and that pilot participants found them to be user friendly. It was a challenge to cater for the diverse range of early childhood services within a common questionnaire, and some questions seem to have been less applicable to home-based services and playcentres. Copies of the questionnaires are available from NZCER.

Many of the questions asked were in the form of closed questions with a bubble for the respondent to fill in (a pencil was provided). Answers to open-ended questions and comments have been coded. Frequencies of the answers are reported, and these have been crosstabulated with a set of service characteristics—type, the socioeconomic rating assigned to each service by management and the Equity Index (for community-based services only), and ownership (private or community-based)—to find out if these characteristics are reflected in any differences in answers.

Personal characteristics of parents—of income and paid employment status—have been used in analysing some parent and parent committee data.

Crosstabulations were done using SAS, and results tested for significance using chi squares. Differences significant at the $p<.01$ level are reported, and differences that are meaningful or following a trend are reported as indicative differences where the p value is between 1 and 5 percent. Tests of significance do not imply causal relationships, simply statistical association.

The structure of the report

The report is based on themes. The themes are:

- opening hours and enrolment patterns
- information from parents to give an overview of parent experiences, including attendance patterns, choice of service, relationships with teachers, consultation with parents and community
- resources issues—people and material resources—that underpin ECE service provision and offer conditions to support the work of ECE services;
- Teaching and learning processes, including assessment, planning, and evaluation and how these are used in the education programme, the emphasis teachers are placing on biculturalism and multiculturalism, and teachers' views of their main achievements in the last three years. We report on the delivery, uptake and value of professional development; self-review undertaken by ECE services themselves and views of external review; and relationships with other local ECE services, and schools.
- Major issues, priorities, and changes wanted.

Where there are differences associated with ECE service type, the socioeconomic profile of the families served by an ECE service, location, and ownership (privately owned and community-based), these are highlighted. A final section discusses key findings in relation to the strategic plan for early childhood education*, Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki.*

2. Opening hours and enrolment patterns

Opening hours

Twenty-two percent of ECE services were open for 20 hours or less per week and 30 percent were open for more than 40 hours per week. This does not mean any individual child attends for that time.

Home-based and education and care managers reported the longest opening hours for children to attend, while playcentre managers reported the fewest. Over a third of home-based services opened for 61 hours or more. This is a long working day, and week, for a home-based educator.

Most hospital services were open for 26–30 hours per week.

Table 7 **Opening hours per week**

Hours	Kindergarten (n=79) %	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Home based (n=14) %	Overall (n=242) %
15 hours or less	3	88	9	0	16
16–20 hours	9	6	4	0	6
21–25 hours	52	6	4	7	20
26–30 hours	32	0	11	0	17
31–40 hours	2	0	15	7	9
41–50 hours	1	0	43	14	21
51–60 hours	0	0	13	14	7
60+ hours	0	0	0	36	2
No response	1	0	1	21	2

Length of enrolment

Services differed in the average length of enrolment of children. Education and care centre and home-based managers reported the widest range of enrolment length, from less than 3 months to 5 years, but 57 percent of education and care managers reported average enrolments between 2 and 3½ years, and another 21 percent between 3½ and 5 years. Children tended to stay longer in playcentres than kindergartens, where 78 percent of playcentre parent management reported children enrolled between 2–3½ years. Most kindergartens (87 percent) had children enrolled between 1–2½ years, reflecting the fact that most enrol children from age 3 on.

Roll stability

Many managers (61 percent) said that less than half the children left their centre before they went to school. Playcentre and home-based management were more likely than kindergarten and education and care centre management to report a large percentage leaving before they go to school. The question was not relevant to hospital services (most children are in hospital short term).

Table 8 **Managers' view of stability of their ECE service roll**

Stability pattern	Kindergarten (n=79) %	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Home based (n=14) %	Overall (n=242) %
Less than half the children leave before they go to school	63	53	66	36	61
About half leave before they go to school	6	9	7	21	8
More than half leave before they go to school	0	31	9	29	10
Other	27	3	14	7	18

Most of those commenting in the "other" category gave more precise estimates indicating that very few children left their service before they went to school.

Fifty-eight percent of managers said that their roll numbers had changed little in the previous two years, with kindergartens and playcentres showing the most roll stability. Twenty-six percent of managers reported an increase, with higher rates of increase for education and care services (39 percent). Ministry of Education figures show education and care enrolments increased at a faster rate from 2002 to 2004, than enrolments in other forms of provision (12.8 percent increase in education and care enrolments, compared with 0.1 percent increase in playcentre enrolments and 1.6 percent decrease in kindergarten enrolments). We also found managers reporting parental pressure for more places for children under two in education and care centres, suggesting education and care will continue to be an area of expansion.

Twelve percent of managers reported a decrease in their roll numbers, notably home-based services. The two main reasons for roll change were general population or housing changes in the area (33 percent) and changes in parent/caregiver preference (22 percent). The most frequent reason given by the managers from home-based care services was that other ECE service/s had opened in the area and children had moved to them. Fourteen percent of managers gave other reasons for change, including improved public image and meeting the needs of parents in paid employment:

Permanent staff member providing continuity and public image also supported increased roll. (Organised home based)

Centre is new and becoming known in the area, therefore roll and waiting list increased. (Education and care)

More working parents require longer hours and we have applied to extend our licence to full day, which has been granted for next year. (Education and care)

Regularity of attendance

Irregular attendance is an issue for children's learning and for service funding. Children benefit from attending good quality ECE, and longer duration in ECE is linked with children's cognitive gains and gains for learning dispositions and social competence (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, in press). Regular attendance enables children to benefit most from their ECE experience. In addition, attendance is linked to funding. Government funding is not provided for children who are absent from a service for more than 21 days (three-week rule for continuous absence), or for a consistent pattern of absence (frequent absence rule).

Nearly all managers (92 percent) said that most of their children attended regularly. Of the 5 percent who said that about half the children had irregular attendance, proportionately more were from kindergarten, followed by playcentre. Most were services receiving the low socioeconomic component of Equity Funding.

This adds to evidence from *An Evaluation of Initial Uses and Impact of Equity Funding* (Mitchell et al., 2006a) that low family income and location in poor communities created problems that could affect regularity of attendance, i.e., health and nutrition, affordability, wet or cold weather, and proximity or transport availability.

Managers in services with any children who did not attend regularly were asked to state the reasons. There were three main reasons: poor child health; because of bad weather; and parent needs.

Isolated services were no more likely than others to report irregular attendance. This finding differs from findings in the evaluation of Equity Funding (Mitchell et al., 2006a), where most isolated participants said irregular attendance was an issue for many children. The Equity Funding evaluation had a smaller sample of isolated services (17 services, 10 of which were kōhanga reo, compared with 32 in this survey), and asked somewhat different questions about irregular attendance. However, both this survey and the Equity Funding evaluation identified the same reasons for irregular attendance in isolated localities. These reasons were more prevalent than for services that were not isolated. They were seasonal employment, transience of families, and cost (because of greater distances travelled to attend an ECE service).

Table 9 **Reasons for irregular attendance**

Reason	Overall proportion of managers rating reasons for irregular attendance (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Child's poor health prevents regular attendance	40	Kindergarten (58%)
Children sometimes do not attend when the weather is bad	30	Kindergarten (57%), education and care (15%)
Casual attendance meets parents' needs	29	Isolated (56%), playcentre (47%)
Parent has other responsibilities and cannot always bring child	28	Playcentre (50%), kindergarten (49%), education and care (11%)
Parents have no transport	26	Kindergarten (56%)
Children move between parents/caregiver	18	Kindergarten (35%)
Parents move out of/into the area	16	Kindergarten (32%), isolated (31%)
Parents have seasonal work	10	Isolated (35%)
Parents cannot always afford to bring their child	8	Isolated (18%)

Socioeconomic profile of services

Overall, information from managers about income levels of families, and information from parents and committee members gives a similar picture. ECE services cater for a wide range of income levels. Nevertheless, as reported in Table 5, income levels of families using ECE services were higher than those of families with children under 5 in the 2001 Census.

Some ECE service types provide ECE for different socioeconomic groups. Kindergarten head teachers were more likely than other managers to report that their service catered for mainly middle- to low-income families. Hospital services were more likely to cater for a wide range. The one hospital service catering for mainly middle/high-income families was a casual crèche for children of patients, rather than hospitalised children. Playcentres were more likely to cater for middle-income families or a wide income range, and there were more education and care centres catering for middle/high-income families.

Table 10 **Managers' estimates of socioeconomic profile of families using their ECE service**

Socioeconomic profile	Kindergarten (n=79) %	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Hospital (n=5) %	Home based (n=14) %	Overall (n=242) %
Mainly low income	20	9	14		7	15
Mainly middle/ low income	42	22	19	20	36	28
Mainly middle income	20	31	16		7	19
Wide range	11	34	26	60	50	24
Mainly middle/ high income	4	3	21	20	0	12
Mainly high income	1	0	3		0	2

Within the education and care sector, managers of community-based centres were more likely to categorise their families as "mainly low-income" (17 percent) than private centre management (6 percent). Conversely, they were less likely to categorise their families as "mainly middle/high" or "mainly high" (9 percent community-based; 31 percent private).

This same pattern was largely replicated in parent responses, except that playcentre and kindergarten parents were more likely to be low-income families. Education and care centre and home-based service parents were more likely to be high-income families. These latter services may include more dual-income families if the service is being used to provide education and care while parents are in paid employment.

Table 11 **Household income of parents and committee members**

Household income	Under $30,000	$30,000–$69,999	$70,000–$109,999	$110,000 and over
Kindergarten parents (n=149) %	25	56	16	1
Kindergarten committee (n=73) %	8	52	27	11
Playcentre parents (n=86) %	23	53	15	3
Playcentre committee (n=43) %	16	47	19	7
Education and care parents (n=191) %	18	41	26	9
Education and care committee* (n=53) %	23	30	28	17
Home-based parents (n=23) %	17	30	43	9
Parents overall (n=455) %	22	48	21	5
Committee overall (n=171) %	15	43	25	12

* Most education and care committee parents were in community-based centres.

Parents in private education and care centres had higher incomes than parents in community-based education and care centres. Forty-three percent of parents in private education and care centres had incomes of $70,000 and over compared with 29 percent in community-based centres. Fewer were in low-income brackets (11 percent earned less than $30,000, compared with 24 percent in community-based centres).

Summary

The opening hours of early childhood services are quite variable. Most playcentres are open for only 15 hours or less a week, and home-based and education and care services have the widest range of hours. More children from playcentres and home-based services went on to other ECE services before they started school.

ECE services were catering for parents from a range of income levels, although income levels of families using ECE services were higher than those of families with children under 5 in the 2001 Census. As well, some ECE service types provide ECE for different socioeconomic groups:

- Kindergartens were more likely to cater for mainly middle- to low-income families.
- Hospital services were more likely to cater for a wide range.
- Playcentres were more likely to cater for middle-income families or a wide income range.
- More education and care centres catered for middle/high-income families. Within the education and care sector, private services were more likely to cater for high-income families.

We found some pressure for more places for children under two in education and care centres, suggesting education and care will continue to be an area for expansion. Where ECE rolls were decreasing, the main reasons were general population or housing change, and changes in parent preference.

Irregular attendance was associated with low family income and affected by poor child health, bad weather, and parent needs. Transport availability was another factor. These findings indicate the value of ECE services being within walking distance (with small children) in local communities.

3. ECE attendance patterns and parent views

ECE attendance patterns

About two-thirds of parents were using 20 hours or less ECE per week. ECE attendance ranged from under 6 hours per week to 50 hours, with one parent marking "over 50 hours". Hours of attendance were lowest in playcentre. Kindergarten parents mainly used 16–20 hours per week, or 6–15 hours. The 13 percent reporting more than these hours in kindergarten are likely to be in kindergartens which have extended the "traditional" two sessions per day (e.g. five 3- or 4-hour sessions per week in the morning, and three 2½-hour sessions per week in the afternoon). Education and care centre parents were clustered in two groups: those using 6–15 hours per week, and those using 21–50 hours. These patterns are likely to reflect whether parents are using a full-time or part-time place. There was no clear usage pattern for parents using home-based services—perhaps a reflection that home-based services may be more flexible about hours to suit parental needs than other service types.

Table 12 **Hours per week attendance**

Hours per week	Kindergarten (n=149) %	Playcentre (n=86) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=23) %	Overall (n=455) %
Under 6 hours	1	42	3	0	10
6–10 hours	16	45	23	9	24
11–15 hours	17	9	13	13	14
16–20 hours	52	1	9	26	22
21–30 hours	13	0	18	26	13
31–50 hours	0	0	32	26	15

Desire for hours of ECE provision at different times

Overall, most parents were satisfied with the times that ECE provision was available to them.

Six percent of parents and 7 percent of parent committee members said the times their child attended an ECE service did not suit them (but bear in mind that this study did not include parents whose children did not attend an ECE service). What was wanted in preference was quite varied,

with similar numbers of parents wanting morning only (especially kindergarten and playcentre), all day (especially education and care), school hours (especially kindergarten), and during term breaks (especially education and care). Numbers of home-based parents wanting different times were very low. These figures are consistent with the 9 percent of parents who wanted hours at different times participating in the Department of Labour/NACEW New Zealand Childcare Survey (1999) and in the *Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Mitchell et al., in press).

Desire for more hours of ECE

Eight percent of parents and 9 percent of parent committee members said they would like more hours of ECE. More of these were from playcentre (parents and committee members each 12 percent) and kindergarten committee members (11 percent). More hours of ECE were wanted by 27 percent of parents in the Department of Labour/NACEW New Zealand Childcare Survey (1999). The higher percentage of parents wanting more hours of ECE in the Department of Labour/NACEW survey may be because average weekly hours of children's attendance were lower in 1998 when the data for Department of the Labour/NACEW survey were collected, than in 2003–2004 when the data for this survey were collected. Ministry of Education figures show the average weekly enrolled hours for children had increased in all services except playcentre.

Table 13 **Average weekly enrolled hours of attendance 1998 and 2004 (MOE figures)**

Year	Kindergarten	Playcentre	Education and care	Home based
1998	10.7	4.4	15.9	15.7
2004	12.5	4.4	19.5	21.3

Another reason may be that the Department of Labour/NACEW survey included parents using playgroups which open for short periods per week and were not included in this survey.

Parent activities while child attends ECE

We asked parents what they usually did while their child was at their ECE service. Most indicated more than one activity, and the most common activities were housework/shopping (50 percent), helping at/attending the ECE service (43 percent), and paid work (36 percent).

Parents from education and care and home-based services were highly represented in paid work, while parents from playcentre were least represented, but were the largest group helping/working voluntarily at their centre. Eighty-six percent of playcentre committee members also helped at the centre. Kindergarten parents were more likely than other parents to do household or personal

activities, i.e., housework or shopping, pursue their own interests, look after other children, or visit friends and relatives when their child was at their ECE service.

Table 14 **Parents' activities while their child is at an ECE centre**

	Kindergarten (n=149) %	Playcentre (n=86) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=23) %	Overall (n=171) %
Housework/shopping	83	33	37	17	50
Undertake paid work	34	5	64	74	43
Own interests (sport/time out)	39	16	22	13	26
Help at or attend ECE service	20	72	7	0	24
Look after other children	40	14	16	9	23
Visit friends or relatives	34	14	17	4	21
Take part in education/training	13	21	12	17	14

Committee members reported similar activities but 18 percent of them did other voluntary work compared with 8 percent of noncommittee parents, and they were more likely to help at or attend the ECE service (43 percent) than undertake paid work (36 percent).

Parents' comments indicating other activities included:

> Sleep—I work evenings. (Kindergarten parent)
>
> I want to work, but I am not, as this is a playcentre where I have to be with my child all the time. (Playcentre parent)
>
> I live 53 kilometres out of town. Kindy is very important. Just muck around in town while he is there. (Kindergarten parent)
>
> Counselling to help me be a better mum. (Home-based parent)

Parents who were using full-time ECE services (65 percent) were more likely to be undertaking paid work than parents using sessional services (23 percent), but there was no difference in service type usage for parents in education or training. Those using sessional services were more likely to help at the service (39 percent compared with 7 percent) and more likely to undertake household or personal activities while their child was at the ECE service.

Attending more than one ECE service

Twenty-two percent of parents and 17 percent of committee members said their child attended more than one ECE service. None of those attending more than one service were children under two years.

This overall percentage of around 20 percent of children attending more than one ECE service has remained consistent from 1998 to 2004 in the three studies where this was measured. A higher percentage of parents used more than one service in the *Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* compared with parents in this survey, especially education and care parents (33 percent compared with 17 percent in this survey). It may be that specific features of the shape of provision in the eight localities in the locality based evaluation were less likely to suit parental needs than the overall pattern of provision in the national survey.

Table 15 **Percentage of children attending more than one ECE service in four studies—consistency over time**

Service type	NZCER national survey – parents (2003/04) (n=455) %	NZCER national survey – committee (2003/04) (n=455) %	Locality-based evaluation of Pathways to the Future* (2004) (n=771) %	Department of Labour/NACEW Childcare Survey** (1998) (n=168,000)
Overall	22	17	20	20
Kindergarten	18	18	23	
Playcentre	31	19	35	
Education and care	17	13	33	
Home based	43	NA	33	

* This survey included kōhanga reo.

** This survey did not break down the figures by service type.

Parents from playcentre (31 percent) and home-based services (43 percent) were the most likely in this study to use another service, but in the locality-based evaluation of the strategic plan, playcentre and education and care service parents were most likely to use more than one.

In this study, education and care services were the most popular with playcentre parents as their second service, and kindergartens were the most popular choice for home-based service parents.

Parents were choosing to use more than one service because it suited them. Their main reasons were related to times and sessions available and costs. Another main reason was the benefits to the child of using more than one service. A higher percentage of playcentre parents stated not having enough sessions in one or other service was a reason for using more than one ECE service.

Table 16 **Main reasons for using more than one ECE service**

Reasons for using more than one ECE service	Parents (n=101) %	Committee members (n=29) %
Suits the parent	37	34
One or other more beneficial for child	13	14
One or other does not have suitable times	12	10
One or other does not have enough sessions	10	6
One or other costs less	9	3
Parent prefers philosophy of one or other	8	3
One or other more suitably located	8	3
One or other has better programme	6	14
Parents prefer teachers at one or other	4	3
Other	8	28

The parents who stated there were "other" reasons for using more than one ECE service generally elaborated on the main reasons of child benefits and hours. For example:

Hours: So I can work more hours. (Kindergarten parent)

Friday morning so I can go to the gym. (Education and care parent)

Socialisation:

I like my daughter going to kindergarten—she will make school friends there. (Education and care parent)

She needs some other children her own age. (Kindergarten parent)

Educational programme:

One is private and small, the other is public, so we get different things. (Education and care parent)

Mainly music. (Playcentre parent)

Te reo Māori input. (Education and care parent)

Parents appeared to see the dual attendance arrangements as offering a balance that benefited both them and their child, as for example a child going to home-based care for the hours the parent was employed and then playcentre for the child to socialise with more children their age.

The Competent Children, Competent Learners study found that the incidence of attending more than one service at the same time did not have an impact on children's competencies at age 5, or later ages.

Different type of ECE service wanted

Fourteen percent of parents and committee members said that they would *like* to use another ECE service if they could. Most were from playcentre (28 percent). Kindergarten was playcentre parents' first choice (17 percent), followed by an education and care centre (11 percent). Parents from other services showed similar preferences. The most frequent reasons given for not using the desired other service were waiting lists or there was no service of the type available locally. The next most frequently given reason was that the service was too expensive, and as this reason was given almost exclusively by parents using kindergarten and playcentre services, they were most probably referring to a desire to use education and care services.

Other reasons were:

> No service for under two. (Playcentre)
>
> Local kōhanga only wants full-time children and I would like it to complement playcentre. (Playcentre)
>
> Need full-time care due to work commitments—so crèche needs to be full-time. I am not allowed to have my children enrolled in another service at the same time as crèche therefore can't use these other local services on a casual or part-time/occasional basis. (Education and care)
>
> The days of the week for our local kindy coincide with daycare days. The child has to be available for each day that kindy is on … (Home based)

A similar percentage of parents (15 percent) wanted to use different types of service in the Department of Labour/NACEW New Zealand Childcare Survey (1999).

Summary

Overall, most parents were satisfied with the times that ECE provision was available to them and the type of provision.

The small percentage of parents (6 percent of parents and 7 percent of parent committee members) who said the times their child attended an ECE service did not suit them, wanted to access different times and days. Home-based service parents did not have such needs, suggesting it was the flexibility of provision that suited these parents. Eight percent of parents wanted more hours, but this was substantially less than the 27 percent of parents wanting more hours in the Department of Labour/NACEW New Zealand Childcare Survey (1999). Children's average hours of attendance were lower in 1998 than 2004, indicating that the increased hours in all services except playcentre are perhaps meeting parental needs better.

Fourteen percent of parents wanted to use a different type of ECE service, especially kindergarten. This percentage is similar to that found in the Department of Labour/NACEW New

Zealand Childcare Survey in 1998. The reasons parents could not access different services when they wished was because of waiting lists or the service was not available in the locality.

Incidence of children attending more than one service was reasonably high at 22 percent, and increased with age. Parents seemed to choose more than one service because of benefits to their child or hours available. Dual attendance is not necessarily harmful: the Competent Children, Competent Learners study has found no impact on children's competencies either at age 5 or later.

Playcentre was under some pressure with a larger percentage of children leaving before they go to school. Playcentres were open for fewer hours than other services per week (most opened 15 hours or less), and playcentre children attended for fewer hours. Playcentre parents were more likely to want more hours and to want to use another type of provision, especially kindergarten.

ECE services allowed parents to undertake paid employment/training, participate in housework, contribute to work in the ECE centre itself, and have time for their own interests and families.

4. Parent choices and information

Choice of ECE service

Most parents (84 percent) knew what ECE services were available in their community before making their choice.

The most common set of reasons for parents choosing an ECE service was the quality of teachers and programme, and the service being locally based. These suggest parents were seeking a service that would offer a good early childhood education within their own community first and foremost. Practical reasons of affordability and opening hours, as well as support for the child's transition to school were the next most common set of reasons. The third most common set of reasons linked to values—the philosophy of the service or recommendations from another person, and to the practicality of whether the service took the child's age group.

Table 17 **Reasons parents chose ECE service**

Reason	Parents (n=455) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Good quality teachers/educators	68	Playcentre (43%)
Good quality programme/service	65	Playcentre (48%)
Is in local community	56	Kindergarten (73%), playcentre (73%), home based (13%)
Is affordable	45	Home based (65%)
Hours open suit my needs	41	Kindergarten (25%), home based (70%)
Supports transition to school	40	Kindergarten (61%), home based (9%)
Philosophy	34	Playcentre (47%)
Recommended by another person	32	Home based (52%)
Takes children of my child's age	32	
All my children can attend together	19	Playcentre (49%)
Close to workplace/training establishment	16	Education and care (27%)
Only choice in my community	8	Playcentre (24%)
Cultural appropriateness	7	

Many parents chose multiple reasons for selecting their particular ECE service. Some of the comments on quality included:

I had a very special feeling about it as soon as I saw it—very supportive, involved teachers—good lay-out. (Education and care)

Outstanding care of babies, great communication with parents. (Education and care)

Small numbers, stimulating, lots of one-on-one time with teaching staff. (Education and care)

Helps educate children to their ability, not age. (Education and care)

As with the parents, about two-thirds of committee members chose the good quality of the teachers or educators (68 percent), the good quality of the programme or the service (65 percent), and the fact that the centre is in their local community (67 percent) as their three main reasons for choosing the service.

There were differences between services in the reasons given for their choices:

- Playcentre parents were less concerned about quality than other parents, but more concerned about the centre being in the local community, being affordable, being available to all their children, and the playcentre philosophy. Playcentre parents themselves are the educators and perhaps regard themselves as responsible for quality. These parents were more likely to state that playcentre was the only local choice.
- Kindergarten committee members and parents were more concerned about transition to school and the centre being local.
- Education and care parents and committee members were more concerned about being close to their workplace.
- Parents from home-based services chose their service based on affordability, hours of opening, and were more likely to have it recommended by another person.

Gathering information and making decisions about an ECE service

Parents and committee members were asked how they had found out about how good the ECE services were before they made their final decision. Most relied on word of mouth. Only about a third visited the ECE service to find out about its quality, and even fewer read ERO reports.

Table 18 **Sources of information about ECE service quality**

Source	Parents (n=455) %	Committee members (n=171) %
Word of mouth	82	84
A visit to the ECE service	31	35
ERO reports	17	23
Health professionals	14	9
Local schools	7	8

Most parents and committee members (82 percent) thought that they had enough information on quality when they made their choice. Thirteen percent of parents said they did not have enough information. Information they would have liked included pamphlets, a rating system, prospectus material, more advertising, reports, more visits, open days, and more detail in ERO reports.

Parents were asked where they thought parents/whānau would like to get information about ECE services from. The most favoured sources were health professionals (64 percent), word of mouth/other parents/friends (60 percent), community noticeboards (39 percent), a visit to the service (37 percent), the Internet (36 percent), the library (34 percent), and local schools (31 percent).

Characteristics looked for in a good ECE service

Parents and committee members were asked to identify the three most important characteristics that they looked for in a good ECE service. Most identified affective factors, with only about a quarter looking at structural aspects of staff qualifications, ratios, and educational environment that are associated in research evidence with good quality. The characteristics were:

- characteristics related to affective factors—that the children are happy and settled (55 percent of all parents), and that there are warm and nurturing teachers and educators (41percent), e.g., "Caring teachers who relate well to the children", and "Children having fun"
- characteristics related to resourcing of the educational environment—a well-resourced centre, such as playground equipment, books, art supplies, puzzles, etc. (28 percent), qualified teachers (26 percent), and a high teacher:child ratio (25 percent)
- characteristics concerning high standards of health and safety (13 percent).

Other comments included:

> Good mix of children, i.e., Māori, Pākehā, Samoan. (Kindergarten)
>
> Bicultural education in Māori and Christian values of the importance of the whānau. (Education and care)
>
> Outside play area with large shade trees. (Education and care)

5. Relationships between parents and ECE services

Constructive working relationships between parents and teachers can enhance adults' understanding of children's learning and learning opportunities, and so contribute to learning and wellbeing in both settings. Children who see their parents working closely together with their teachers "gain a sense of continuity and of being cared for" and experience a "trusting and secure environment in which they can learn and grow" (Whalley & the Pen Green Centre Team, 2001).

The Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) require ECE services to work in partnership with parents/guardians to promote and extend the learning and development of each child who attends the service. Sharing pedagogical aims and practices between families and teachers is one way to strengthen the consistency of interactions and environment to support children's learning and development.

The longitudinal EPPE study of effective ECE pedagogy linked to cognitive and socioemotional outcomes for children (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2003; Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggert, 2003) found that excellent settings "shared child-related information between parents and staff, and parents were often involved in decision making about their child's learning programme" (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2003, p. vi). When ECE services promoted a relationship with parents in terms of shared pedagogical aims, and pedagogical efforts were made at home to support the child's learning, good developmental outcomes were achieved.

Kei Tua o te Pae (Ministry of Education, 2005), which had not been published when this survey was undertaken, has discussed how assessments can draw on parents' knowledge of their own child, and are useful in planning for learning, whether at home or in the ECE setting.

Mitchell, Haggerty, Hampton, and Pairman (2006) reported on a project in six New Zealand early childhood centres combining action research with professional development to support ways in which teachers, parents, and whānau worked together to enhance wellbeing and learning. Where partnerships with parents developed, consciously formulated strategies and actions created a welcoming environment. Parents identified that affective characteristics of their ECE setting were important to them. Centres devised different ways to co-ordinate actions of teachers and parents so they could be reinforcing, find out parents' views, discuss values and aspirations, and find out about home experiences.

In this chapter we examine relationships between parents and teachers/educators that could support a child's learning and participation, or help address issues or concerns that parents have.

The survey questions elicited information about how teachers went about inducting parents, and views of contact between teachers and parents.

Relationships with teachers/educators

Nearly all parents and committee members (94 percent) felt welcome at their ECE service. Four percent said that it varied, but no parents or committee members said that they did not feel welcome, or that they had never been there.

Induction included a guided tour of the service (89 percent), encouraging the parent/whānau to attend with their child (85 percent), encouraging parents/whānau to stay at any time and discussing information with them about their child (80 percent). Seventy-five percent also gave a handbook about the centre to new parents/whānau.

The most common form of contact for both parents and parent committee members was talking about their own child's progress, interests, and abilities. Parents' next most common form of contact was about their own child: their child's behaviour, followed by what the child does at home, and how the parent can help the child at home. On the other hand, reflecting their role, committee members' second most common form of contact was talking about ECE issues at committee meetings, followed by what the child does at home, their child's behaviour, and how they can help the child at home.

Committee members were less likely than parents to talk to the teacher about what they could do to help their child's learning, what the child does at home, or the ECE curriculum. It may be that committee-related work becomes the dominant topic of conversation for these parents.

Teachers reported a higher level of contact with parents about the child's progress, behaviour, what the child does at home, how parents can help the child's learning, and the ECE curriculum. This may have been because teachers communicated differentially with parents and some parents responding to the survey had lesser contact with teachers. Teachers may also have communicated but in ways that did not "get through". Or teachers may have overestimated the types of contact they had.

Table 19 **Types of contact about child between parent and teacher**

Type of contact	Parents (n=455) %	Committee members (n=171) %	Teachers (n=402) %
Talk about child's progress, interests, and abilities	89	47	97
Talk about child's behaviour	63	32	87
Talk about what the child does at home	54	33	81
Talk about what parent can do to help child's learning	50	32	74
Talk about ECE curriculum	35	23	68
Talk about ECE issues at ECE committee meetings	26	42	56

Most of this contact happened informally, either at the ECE service or when teachers and parents saw each other around the community. Some occurred in the course of parent help or duty, during excursions or trips, and at ECE service meetings or committee meetings.

There were some differences between services and the types of contact parents had, which reflected the nature of the services:

> Parents using playcentres were more likely to talk about issues, particularly the curriculum, at centre or committee meetings, or while helping at the service.
>
> Parents using education and care services reported having more contact with teachers at (formal) interviews than other services.
>
> Kindergarten parents and home-based service parents were less likely than other groups of parents to say they talked about the curriculum or what they could do to help the child's learning.

Opportunities for parents to talk with teachers

Most of the parents (79 percent) were positive that they had enough opportunities to talk with ECE teachers. Several playcentre parents commented that the question was not relevant to them. Four percent did not have enough opportunities to talk to teachers. Twenty-five percent marked qualified categories[5] and made comments, mainly related to the wish for time outside the ECE programme hours for discussion or the difficulty of talking during the programme:

> There are no formal times to discuss each child but the staff are very open. Many parents might like an annual/biannual chance to meet formally with staff. (Education and care)

[5] It was possible to mark more than one category.

I would like to see more formal discussion about progress/curriculum. (Education and care)

Parent voice forum. (Kindergarten)

Would like maybe an open evening to discuss progress in more detail. (Kindergarten)

Would like to talk more but as a parent often too rushed. (Education and care)

When talking to teacher, teacher cannot supervise other children therefore no real opportunity. (Education and care)

I usually instigate discussion but educators always welcoming. (Education and care)

Quality of information received by parents

Information that parents got from teachers about their children was generally rated good or very good, especially information about how happy and settled their child was. However, up to a fifth rated information about the programme, child's progress, interests, and abilities as only satisfactory or poor.

Table 20 **Parents' satisfaction with information about their child**

Aspect (n=455)	Very good %	Good %	Satisfactory %	Poor/ Not sure %
How happy and settled child is	64	24	8	2
Child's interests and abilities	51	30	12	3
Child's overall learning programme	50	27	15	5
Child's progress	50	28	15	3

Parents from home-based services reported significantly higher satisfaction rates than all other services. However, there were few home-based parents in the sample (23).

The most common way teachers communicated with parents about their child's progress was by informal means through regular contact (73 percent). Some participated in parent interviews (21 percent), although this was more likely to occur with education and care parents (31 percent).

The type of information most commonly shared was information provided in the child's profile book/portfolio (66 percent), and information from observation-based evidence (53 percent).

Information parents would like to have

While many parents and committee members (parents, 64 percent; committee members, 66 percent) said that there was no further information they would like to have about their child's progress than they already had, 18 percent of each group said that they would like further

information, and 14 percent of parents and 11 percent of committee members were not sure. This is a sizeable number wanting to know more.

A fifth of parents were keen to have information about how they could support their child's learning.

Table 21 **Information parents would like about their child**

Kind of information	Parents n=455 %	Committee members n=171 %
Ideas for how I can support child's learning	19	19
More detailed information about child's progress	15	12
Information about assessment for child's learning	15	11
More regular reports	10	9
Comparison with other children	9	4

Playcentre parents were less likely than other parents to want comparisons with other children, perhaps because they work as educators in the playcentre setting and undertake playcentre training.

The parental survey in the NZCER and Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust *Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Mitchell et al., in press) showed an even higher percentage—31 percent—of the 886 parents responding wanted information about their child that they did not have. Thirty percent of the parents responding wanted more time to talk with the teacher about their child. The main reasons why they did not have time to talk were that there was not always a suitable time (15 percent) or the teacher was too busy (11 percent). Some also said they themselves were too busy (10 percent).

Parent involvement in assessment and planning

Only 53 percent of parents and 63 percent of committee members were involved in assessment and planning. While playcentre parents had a high level of participation in assessment and planning (78 percent), only 43 percent of kindergarten parents and 50 percent of education and care centre parents had such participation. Committee members (kindergarten, 60 percent; education and care, 51 percent) were more likely to participate in assessment and planning.

Written comments provided description of how parents participated in assessments, goal setting, and learning plans:

> Parents have the opportunity to complete a section of the portfolio describing the child's development at home and what we would like to see included in their learning development. (Education and care)

> Each child has a profile book and parent are asked to write comments or anything that we think the teachers ought to know. (Kindergarten)
>
> I keep my children's portfolio/scrapbook—in it I record daily activities, learning and *Te Whāriki* commitment, records of art, photos, records of trips, programme. Also, each term an evaluation of last term and a separate individual play plan for this term. I contribute to other parents' anecdotes, observations (rostered and impromptu or as a result of training requirements) and play plans and photos. We evaluate each session and each term. Rostered teams organise activities, trips, and extension each session. (Playcentre)
>
> Every six weeks or so we have an IP and all of us, the teachers, specialists, and we as parents work towards the same goals. (Kindergarten)

Eight percent said that they fill out questionnaires or forms, home worksheets, discuss pamphlets from the Ministry of Education, or communicate about the child informally:

> I fill out a form about what we would like every six months. (Education and care)
>
> Complete RAPIDS[6] form regularly, regularly show photos of activities for portfolio. (Education and care)

Seven percent said that planning, assessment, and evaluation took place at meetings. Some playcentre parents were involved in these processes as regularly as each session, other parents each month, each term, or informally:

> Participate in evaluation meetings after each session. Filling out the child's evaluation form every term. (Playcentre)

Overall parental satisfaction levels

A large majority of parents and committee members were unreservedly happy with their child's education (93 percent of parents and 91 percent of committee members). The main reason why parents and committee members were not happy or were not sure was not having enough information about their child.

Raising issues or concerns

Fifty-seven percent of the parents had experienced no issues or concerns at their ECE service, but 38 percent indicated that they had experienced one or more. The most common were about their own child settling or other children in the programme. Issues related to:

- *affective factors* where there were issues or concerns about other children in the programme (14 percent); where a child had trouble settling (14 percent); or the child had emotional/social problems at the ECE service (2 percent)

---

[6] A framework for child observation.

- *staff concerns* such as the quality of teachers/educators and duty parents (8 percent); or inconsistent approaches to the child by teachers/educators/parents (4 percent)
- *accessibility* of the service such as cost problems (7 percent); transport problems (5 percent); conflicts with parents'/caregivers' paid work or other commitments (4 percent).

Other issues were the ECE service's inability to get staff, high turnover of staff, high child:staff ratios, and parent's relationship with teacher/s.

Playcentre parents were somewhat more likely than others to experience issues or concerns, particularly about the quality of teachers/educators and duty parents (15 percent), and issues about other children in the programme (27 percent). This higher rate may reflect the fact that playcentre is run as a co-operative and parents are involved at all levels, including working as educators with children. Kindergarten parents were more likely than others to experience problems that the child had in settling (20 percent). This could be a reflection of the larger group sizes and poorer adult:child ratios in kindergartens making it harder for children to settle.

About 40 percent of committee parents and 30 percent of parents had raised an issue or concern. Of those parents who had done so, most committee members (90 percent) and parents (78 percent) reported they had been fairly listened to. Most from both groups thought no action was needed, or appropriate action was undertaken.

Seventy-eight percent of committee parents and 65 percent of parents said they knew who to report to if they were not satisfied with their ECE service. They identified the following people or organisations:

- the teacher, head teacher, manager, management committee of the ECE service, chairman, centre director, president or supervisor, or licensee, owner
- kindergarten association, playcentre association, ECD,[7] Ministry of Education, ERO, local MP, Minister of Education
- a few said they follow the complaints procedure.

Committee members also listed their local MP and the Minister of Education, and parents also listed national ECE umbrella organisations, Early Childhood Council, and legal advice.

Most parents (88 percent) had no issues that they wanted to raise with teachers. However, a very small percentage (about 5 percent) did have issues, mainly about the quality of teaching, and other children's behaviour, that they felt uncomfortable about raising.

Summary

Overall, parents were very positive about their ECE service and perceived their ECE service to be a welcoming place. Teachers had a range of strategies to induct families, e.g., a guided tour of the

[7] ECD integrated into the Ministry of Education in October 2003, while this survey was being undertaken.

service, encouraging parents to attend at any time, discussing information about the child with the parent, and providing a handbook about the service.

Teacher and parent contact was largely informal, made when parents were at the ECE service. Parents talked with teachers mainly about their child's progress, interests, and abilities, their child's behaviour, what their child does at home, and what parents can do to help their child's learning. The emphasis on informality was an issue for some parents who wanted a set time to talk, such as a parent interview. Reliance on informal contact for passing on information would pose problems for parents who do not go to the service on a regular basis or do not have time to talk.

Involving parents in assessment and planning can help make connections with home and enable families to enrich the documentation of learning. About half the parents and two-thirds of the committee members were involved in these processes. Playcentre parents had the highest level of participation and kindergarten parents the lowest. Teachers thought they communicated more with parents on matters to do with the child's interests, behaviour, and learning and the ECE curriculum than parents reported.

A sizeable minority of parents wanted more information about their child: especially ideas for how they could support their child's learning, at home, information about their child's progress, and assessments about their child used by ECE staff. Playcentre parents were less likely to want more information and had the highest level of contact with staff who are mostly also parents. Kindergarten parents had the lowest level of contact with ECE teachers. The EPPE study has shown the separate and significant influence of the home learning environment on cognitive and social-emotional development, and also pointed to ways in which practitioners can encourage continuity of learning between the home and ECE setting, and support parents in developing the home learning environment. This is an area where practitioners can make a difference and a fruitful area for development.

A large majority of parents and committee members were unreservedly happy with their child's education (93 percent of parents and 91 percent of committee members). The main reason why parents and committee members were not happy or were not sure was not having enough information about their child.

Over a third of parents had experienced some problems or concerns in the ECE service and these were mainly about *affective* issues, especially their child settling, or other children in the programme. Most parents who raised an issue felt they were fairly listened to and appropriate action was taken, or action was not needed.

6. Consultation with parents and community

When we undertook the survey, ECE services were required to have charters negotiated as a two-way contract between the service and its community, and between the service and government. Charters set out the objectives of the service within the Government's overall national guidelines for early childhood education. In 1996, the Government's Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) were deemed to be part of charters. The DOPs require "communication and consultation with parents/guardians, whānau, hapū, iwi and local communities" to acknowledge and respect all parties' values, needs, and aspirations. They also require management to "develop and regularly review a statement of the service's philosophy and the charter, in consultation with educators, parents/guardians and, where appropriate, whānau" (Crown, 1996).

Under the Education Amendment Act 2006, the requirement for licensed services to negotiate charters in order to receive government funding was removed, but consultation requirements under the DOPs remain. In this chapter, we report on parents' views of consultation.

ECE goals and philosophy

Parent views

Many more playcentre parents (71 percent) had been involved in formal discussions on the philosophy and goals for their ECE service than parents from other services (31 percent), while only 13 percent of kindergarten parents said they had been involved. Fourteen percent of parents from all services said they did not know how often such discussions were held. Services appeared to hold these discussions in a range of time frames, but the most common was once every term (12 percent for all services), with playcentre highest in this category (34 percent). From those parents who had participated in discussions of goals and philosophy, the vast majority (94 percent) made positive statements about how valuable it had been. Comments ranged over a number of reasons why it was valuable, such as:

> It is good to hear the goals for kindergarten first hand and to have some involvement. (Kindergarten)
>
> Allows parents/caregivers/whānau to have input and understanding of their children's environment. (Playcentre)
>
> Extremely valuable in terms of remaining focused towards goals and strategies to achieve these. Also assess the level of co-operation and motivation amongst parent-helpers. (Playcentre)

> Useful in understanding what the teachers and support teachers are thinking and their teaching philosophies. (Education and care)

Some parents stated that they had not participated in formal discussions of this sort because they were happy and satisfied with the way things were going, for example:

> None—the centre is fantastic and whatever they do, they do brilliantly. (Education and care)

Some parents said they would like to participate more but were constrained by time or felt they were not qualified to participate; others would prefer an informal evening for questions and answers; others suggested an opportunity to comment in writing via a newsletter; and others said they would like to be informed but not involved in setting goals:

> Some idea of aims of charter and yearly goals/objectives—just to be made aware of them and provide feedback, not necessarily to help formally set them or produce them. (Kindergarten)

A number of parents said they would become involved if major changes were about to happen, and several stated they were not interested:

> I choose not to have any discussion. (Education and care)

Committee members' views

Substantially more committee parents (60 percent) than parents had participated in formal discussions on the philosophy and goals of their ECE service. Fewer kindergarten committee parents (41 percent) reported doing so. Formal discussions were held once a year according to 20 percent of committee members, every term according to another 20 percent of members, and irregularly according to 12 percent of committee members. From those committee members who had participated in discussions of goals and philosophy, the vast majority (95 percent) made positive statements about how valuable it had been. Comments ranged over a number of reasons why it was valuable, such as:

> Continue to keep programme on track. Discuss communications from MOE/ECE. Discussion re special character of the service, i.e., meeting special needs. (Hospital care)

> You understand and learn the beliefs and values and goals of the kindergarten. (Education and care)

> Allows members to have a say on direction. (Kindergarten)

> Maintaining the language. Good quality service and programmes. (Education and care)

Participation that committee members wanted was involvement in discussing future directions of the service, implementing the strategic plan, fees, and setting of targets and goals. Like some parents, there were some committee members who reported not wanting involvement in such discussions:

> Not concerned about involvement at all. (Education and care)

I trust that the teachers are better qualified to cover these discussions. (Education and care)

Consultation and information

Parents' satisfaction with consultation and information

Most parents were satisfied with consultation and information. Three-quarters (75 percent) of parents from all services said there wasn't any further information they would like to have about their ECE service. The area parents wanted more information on was mainly about assessment, planning, and evaluation (11 percent).

Overall, most parents were satisfied with their say in their ECE service curriculum, assessment, planning, and evaluation, staffing, issues about children, ECE policies, and funding allocation. Seventy-nine percent said there wasn't any area of the ECE service that they wanted more of a say in.

When asked if they were satisfied with the way their ECE service was reviewing its charter, 61 percent of parents from all services said they were, with playcentre parents more satisfied (84 percent). One-third of all parents (33 percent) said they were not sure, not interested, or didn't know what was happening, with a higher percentage of kindergarten parents (43 percent) saying this.

Committee members' satisfaction with consultation and information

Most committee members (79 percent) felt they had all the information about their ECE service that they needed, but 7 percent said they would like more information about assessment, planning, and evaluation, and 6 percent wanted more information about curriculum. More kindergarten committee members wanted more information about curriculum (12 percent).

Most committee members (77 percent) did not want more say in any areas of their ECE service. Of the 16 percent who did, playcentre committee members were less likely to want more say (9 percent). The main areas committee members wanted more say in were curriculum (6 percent), assessment, planning, and evaluation (6 percent), and allocation of funding (5 percent).

Seventy-three percent of committee members from all services were satisfied with the way their ECE service was reviewing its charter, philosophy, strategic plan, policies, and procedures, but there was less understanding and interest recorded by kindergarten members than from other services.

Committee consultation with parents/whānau and the community

Committee members were asked what contact they had had with parents/whānau and the community in the last 12 months.

- Most (75 percent) said they had had informal talks with parents/whānau who are also friends.
- Many (60 percent) said parents/whānau came to committee/board meetings.
- Many (54 percent) said they helped or worked at the ECE service.
- A sizeable minority (33 percent) took part in committee consultation with parents/whānau on their charter.
- Another 28 percent said they contacted individual parents/whānau known to them to seek their views.

A higher percentage of playcentre committee parents used a wide variety of consultation methods.

Most (82 percent, including 95 percent of playcentre members) were happy with their level of contact with parents/whānau, and 74 percent were generally happy with the level of involvement of parents/whānau in developing some areas of their ECE service policies.

Māori whānau in particular were helping committee members to enrich te reo and tikanga Māori in the programme and help develop Māori education policy. Committee members were asked if they had consulted with a Māori community in the last 12 months, and just over 40 percent said they had. Twenty-three percent said it was not an issue for their ECE service, and 19 percent said there was no identifiable Māori community. Of those committee members who had consulted, the method of consultation most used was asking individual Māori whānau (29 percent), followed by a committee member being responsible for Māori liaison (20 percent), and discussion with Māori whānau (20 percent). The most common issue was about the use of te reo Māori in the programme (47 percent), followed by Māori education policy (27 percent), and inclusion of local history and knowledge in the programme. Sixty-five percent of those committee members thought methods of consultation were generally successful, and 12 percent though they were successful for some issues.

Royal Tangaere (2006), examining how to strengthen relationships with Māori, said that parents of Māori children are an important resource, but also warned that the levels of their knowledge and skills in respect to te reo and tikanga Māori will vary depending on the parents' own life experiences. These parents may also have access to the local marae and local resource person but this should not be assumed.

Most committee parents (55 percent) had not consulted with Asian groups, refugee, or religious communities, although 11 percent had consulted with Pasifika communities and 10 percent with "other" communities in their locality. Fifty-eight percent of committee members did not think there were any issues for their committee around community consultation, but 25 percent were unsure. Some of the comments of those members who did think there were issues around consultation included:

Very difficult to consult directly with local iwi—eight or nine separate iwi in the area—little communication between them. Children who identify as Māori at the centre are from iwi in other areas of NZ—no tangata whenua. (Education and care)

Very multicultural centre with 10 plus nationalities. (Education and care)

Pākehā parents feel insufficiently qualified/not knowledgeable enough to consult with local iwi. Māori /Pacific Island parents are reluctant to join council/board—possibly because of time commitments, possibly because they don't feel comfortable on a Pākehā-led European-style committee. (Education and care)

Increasing numbers of children with English as a second language, disabilities, special needs (crisis, intervention/social), new immigrants. (Home based)

How do you consult with community successfully? Newsletters don't always reach all the community and very few attend meetings. (Education and care)

Two committee members like to make all the decisions and often disregard the views of other parents. One of these people is president. (Kindergarten)

Summary

Consultation over philosophy is required by the DOPs. Overall, only a third of parents but about two-thirds of committee parents had participated in formal discussions of philosophy and goals. Most parents valued these discussions as a way of having input into goals and developing understanding of the teaching and learning environment. Playcentre parents said this was also an opportunity to gauge parent co-operation and motivation within playcentre. Parents who wanted greater involvement in such discussions were constrained by the time discussions occurred, methods of gathering input, and feelings of inadequacy.

A third of committee members were not satisfied with levels of parent involvement in their service, especially in fundraising and committee work. They also thought the volunteer workload fell on a small group of parents.

Consultation with Māori was slight and mainly with local Māori parents/whānau. Few had consulted with Pasifika communities or other ethnic communities. Main consultation issues for committee members were difficulties where children came from a wide range of different cultures, and not knowing how to consult with Māori and Pasifika communities.

Service differences in parent consultation were evident: playcentre parents were more likely to have participated in discussions of philosophy and were satisfied with consultation within the playcentre—a reflection of the co-operative management and parent involvement that playcentres require. Kindergarten parents were least informed about the philosophy and more likely to want more information about their ECE service. Kindergarten committee parents were more likely to want more say in their ECE service.

7. Funding

Every licensed and chartered[8] ECE service receives a Funding Subsidy, also called a "bulk grant", "grant in aid", or "bulk funding". The Funding Subsidy contributes to services' operating costs by paying an hourly rate for each child in the ECE service to a maximum of six hours per child-place per day (seven days per week). In 2003, there were three funding rates: Rate 1, the base rate for all chartered services; Rate 2, for chartered services that met standards higher than licence requirements for staff:child ratios and staff qualifications; and Rate 3, for kindergartens with a maximum of 320 sessions per year, eight sessions per week. Within Rate 1 and Rate 2 were separate rates for children aged under two, and children aged two and over, except that for playcentres the two and over rate was paid for all children. For home-based services, funding was not paid for a caregiver's own child.

Bulk funding is a competitive mechanism based on fairly similar per capita amounts. Since 1989, when *Before Five* (Lange, 1988) introduced the bulk funding mechanism (1989), ECE services have expressed increasing concerns about the low level of funding, and evidence indicated that the purchasing power of the Funding Subsidy was eroded (Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa, 1991, 1993; Early Childhood Education Project, 1996; Mitchell, 1996, 2001; Wylie, 1993). Bulk funding was also considered problematic because it was not possible to factor the different costs and needs of different services, whose costs were not directly comparable, into a formula primarily based on the number of children attending (Mitchell, 2005).

As part of the strategic plan for early childhood education, a review of funding was undertaken, and a new formula for bulk funding subsequently developed with differential funding rates calculated on the basis of the major cost drivers faced by each type of ECE service. The new funding system was implemented on 1 April 2005. The 2006 Budget adjusted the new rates to cover increased operational costs, including inflation. Additional funding increases were provided for playcentres to improve their financial sustainability and reduce administrative workload. These took effect on 1 July 2006.

From 1 July 2007, 3- and 4-year-old children who attend teacher-led ECE services will be eligible for up to 20 hours free ECE per week. This decision to offer free ECE was in accord with the recommendation of the Strategic Plan Working Group and the subsequent Technical Working Group for "an entitlement to a reasonable amount of free ECE for all children before they start school, implemented in stages" (Ministry of Education, 2001b). New funding rates for free ECE were released on 21 December 2006. It is up to individual services to decide whether they will

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[8] Instead of being chartered, home-based services must meet minimum requirements set out in the Education (Home-based care) Order 1992 (and 1998 amendment).

offer free ECE. At March 2007, most kindergartens had decided to participate in the scheme but many education and care service managers were undecided. Three issues have been raised about free provision:

- the adequacy of the funding rates–many ECE service managers have said funding rates are not adequate to cover the full costs of 20 hours free
- whether funding is sufficient for private owners to make a profit or "return on investment" and also offer free provision (Hill, 2006)
- a desire by playcentre and kōhanga reo for free ECE to be extended to their services.

Equity Funding was implemented in 2002 and is intended to reduce educational disparities between different groups in New Zealand communities, reduce barriers to participation for groups under-represented in ECE, and support ECE services to raise their level of educational achievement. Equity Funding is given to community-based services that meet criteria for one or more of four components: low socioeconomic community; special needs and non-English speaking background; language and culture other than English; and isolation. The special needs and non-English speaking background component is labelled as a single distinct component, but its calculation is linked to the calculation of socioeconomic status. Thirty percent of ECE services in this sample were receiving a component of Equity Funding.

The Funding Subsidy and Equity Funding are paid three times a year by the Ministry of Education on the basis of roll returns. There may be a cost to services of irregular attendance, which is more common in services catering for low-income communities, since funding is not received for children absent for more than 21 days.

A childcare subsidy administered by Work and Income NZ (now Ministry of Social Development) is an individually targeted subsidy for low-income families whose child attends a fee charging licensed and chartered ECE service, or chartered home-based service. The subsidy can be claimed for children whose parents are in paid employment, education, on a training course, temporarily cannot attend their work or course due to illness, are receiving a Handicapped Child Allowance, or have another child in hospital. Rates depend on family size and income. Applications are filled in by the parent and ECE service, have to be renewed every six months, and are paid direct to the service, and backdated to the date of application.

Discretionary Grants provide planning and capital grants for eligible community-based ECE services or groups which meet criteria set by the Ministry of Education annually.

Centres of Innovation (COIs) were established as part of the strategic plan for early childhood education and receive funding to undertake action research over a three-year period and "showcase excellence and innovation in ECE" (Crown, 2002). The first six COIs were announced in 2003.

Sources of funding

Most services have funding from at least three sources, as shown in Table 22.

Bulk funding[9] is an important source of funding, received by all services as licensed and chartered ECE services. Bulk funding may have gone to the umbrella organisation of the small percentage of managers who did not state that they received bulk funding.

Table 22 **ECE services' funding sources**

Funding sources	Kindergarten (n=79) %	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Home based (n=14) %	Hospital (n=5) %
Bulk Funding Subsidy	Received by kindergarten association	100	94	93	100
WINZ Childcare Subsidy	11	3	75	86	20
Equity Funding	43	19	22	7	80
Parent fees	24	75	89	93	20
Parent donations	86	50	17	0	20
Fundraising	95	81	35	7	0
Charitable donations/grants	89	88	47	21	40
Other	3	0	4	7	80

Other sources of income varied according to service type:

- More kindergartens received donations and fewer received fees, reflecting a tradition that kindergartens do not charge fees.
- More education and care centres and home-based services received fees.
- Playcentres tended to receive both fees and donations.
- Education and care centres and home-based services were more likely to receive the Childcare Subsidy.
- Fundraising, charitable donations, and grants were sources of funding for most kindergartens and playcentres. Fewer education and care, home-based, and hospital services reported these sources of funding.
- Most hospital services and about half the kindergartens received Equity Funding.
- Hospital services were more likely to report they had access to "other" sources of funding, especially through the Ministry of Health.

[9] Kindergartens are not included in the data related to bulk funding reported below (we did not collect data from kindergarten associations which receive and administer kindergarten bulk funding).

In addition, some services applied for contestable funding. The highest rates of successful applications were to philanthropic trusts (83 percent of 35 applications) and corporate bodies (76 percent of 17 applications). Of the 44 applications for government discretionary grants, only 21 (47 percent) were successful.

Levels of funding

The following table reports the amount of funding received from bulk funding. Kindergartens are not included. Hospital services are also excluded since their numbers were low (n=5), and their funding is based on a notional roll.

Bulk funding accounted for 60–100 percent of the income of playcentres with most between 70–89 percent. None reported less than 50 percent. Bulk funding accounted for a wide range of percentages of income in education and care centres, from under 20 percent to 89 percent. Home-based services also reported a range, somewhat narrower, from 40 percent to 89 percent. This wide range for education and care and home-based services which may provide full-time ECE, reflects the design of the funding system with children attending longer than six hours per day receiving no bulk funding for those extra hours.

Size of centre and opening hours are the main factors in determining level of funding since bulk funding is calculated on the number of children enrolled and hours of attendance. Education and care centres were bigger enterprises and open longer, and received substantially more in bulk funding than playcentres. Around half the playcentres received less than $16,000 in bulk funding compared with only 4 percent of education and care services. Conversely, around half education and care services received $76,000–$200,999 in bulk funding compared with no playcentres.

Table 23 **Amount of revenue from bulk funding**

Amount	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Home based (n=14) %
Less than $10,999	28	3	0
$11,000–$15,999	19	1	0
$16,000–$25,999	28	4	0
$26,000–$75,999	19	20	7
$76,000–$100,999	0	12	14
$101,000–$150,999	0	19	7
$151,000–$200,999	0	15	0
$201,000–$250,999	0	4	0
$251,000 or more	0	4	29
No response	3	19	43

Most services that received other sources of government funding, i.e., Equity Funding and the Childcare Subsidy, received less than $20,000 from these sources. Education and care centres and home-based services received the highest levels of the Childcare Subsidy.

The next most substantial sources of revenue after bulk funding were parent fees and donations. Only education and care and home-based services received more than $40,000 per annum from this source.

Table 24 **Funds raised through fees and donations**

Amount	Fees and donations (n=242) %
Less than $1,500	11
$1,501–$6,000	14
$6,001–$15,000	16
$15,001–$40,000	13
$40,001–$100,000	13
$100,001–$150,000	9
$150,001–$200,000	5
Over $200,000	5

Adequacy of funding

A sizeable minority (21 percent) of services were in deficit at the end of the last financial year and a similar percentage expected to be in deficit at the end of the next financial year (20 percent). Thirty-five percent broke even, and 36 percent reported a surplus. Education and care centres were more likely than other services to be in deficit at the end of the previous financial year (30 percent) and to expect to be so in the next year (28 percent).

Fee affordability

The data we collected on amounts paid by parents in fees has not been analysed as parents were not asked to report from a common basis of fees paid per week. (This will be asked in our next survey.) However, our data did indicate that costs are greater for parents with children attending education and care centres and home-based services. A similar pattern was found in the parent responses to a questionnaire in *Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Mitchell et al., in press). Although these services had higher average costs, children were attending more hours on average.

Three types of service had similar levels of parents experiencing some difficulty in their cost: education and care centre (31 percent), home based (30 percent), and kindergarten (28 percent). Few parents using playcentres (6 percent) had any difficulty in affording the costs.

Affordability reflected income levels. Thirty-eight percent of parents and 31 percent of parent committee members with household incomes of less than $30,000 said they had some difficulties with the cost of their child's ECE service or could barely afford it, decreasing to 12 percent and 6 percent respectively of those with incomes of $70,000 or more.

Committee members were less likely than other parents to find the cost difficult to afford, but also had higher average incomes.

Being able to afford the cost was one of the three most important characteristics in a good ECE service for 26 percent of parents.

Forty percent of service managers reported that more than 10 percent of parents had sometimes been unable to pay the full fee/donation. This was most common at kindergartens where 87 percent of head teachers reported this, compared with 18 percent of education and care centre managers.

Services receiving Equity Funding for the low socioeconomic component were more likely to report high percentages of parents had been unable to pay their fee or donation.

Table 25 **Percentage of parents unable to pay full fee/donation and service EQI**

Percentage of parents unable to pay full fee/donation %	Not receiving EQI %	Receiving EQI %
11–20	15	7
21–30	10	13
31–40	3	18
41 and over	8	21

However, there were no significant differences between service types in the likelihood of subsidising children whose parents were unable to pay. Thirty-eight percent of kindergartens, playcentres, and education and care centres, and 37 percent of home-based services subsidised children.

Expenditure

We have excluded kindergartens from this analysis of expenditure, since we did not have data from associations. Overall, the greatest percentage of income was spent on employment of staff, followed by operating costs, facilities, professional development, and organisation membership.

There were type differences in expenditure on staff employment. Seventy percent of education and care centres spent over 50 percent of their income on employment costs, compared with 42 percent of home-based services and 6 percent of playcentres. Playcentres rely largely or completely on unpaid parent educators to take responsibility for the education programme and centre operation. Home-based services tend to pay reimbursing expenses rather than salaries to home-based educators working in their own home, and employ a salaried co-ordinator. Education and care centres employ teachers, and may also employ administrative and support staff.

Playcentres spent a higher percentage of their income on their umbrella organisation than did other services. Playcentre associations levy their playcentres to contribute funding for their work in supporting centres and providing training.

Support for free early childhood education

The May 2004 Government Budget announced an entitlement of up to 20 hours free education a week for 3- and 4-year-old children attending teacher-led community-based ECE services. The 20 hours free ECE was extended to all teacher-led services, including private services, in the 18 May 2006 Government Budget. This survey was undertaken before the entitlement to free ECE was announced, but when the Minister of Education was suggesting to sector groups that the Government was considering such an entitlement, and different ways of delivering it. We therefore canvassed views about possible scenarios.

Respondents were asked whether the Government should provide an entitlement to a reasonable amount of free ECE for all children whose family wanted them to attend. Very few respondents did *not* support or were unsure about an entitlement to free ECE.

Table 26 **Views on government provision of an entitlement to free ECE for every child**

View	Managers (n=242) %	Teachers (n=402) %	Parents (n=455) %	Committee parents (n=171) %
Agree	90	88	88	85
Disagree	4	4	4	6
Not sure	3	6	6	6
Other	3	2	2	3

If they supported free ECE, respondents were asked how many hours they thought the Government should provide, and for what age.

Most respondents from all groups were evenly divided between 10, 15, 20 hours, or more.

Table 27 **Hours per week the Government should provide as a free entitlement**

Hours per week	Managers (n=242) %	Teachers (n=402) %	Parents (n=455) %	Committee parents (n=171) %
Up to 10	17	20	28	25
Up to 15	22	21	19	21
Up to 20	24	26	23	29
More than 20	25	19	15	13
No response	10	12	12	11
Other	2	2	3	1

There were service type differences that seemed to indicate respondents were choosing the option that matched the way their service operated:

- More playcentre respondents from each group thought the Government should provide up to 10 hours free ECE.
- More kindergarten respondents from each group thought the Government should provide up to 20 hours free ECE, except that head teachers tended to be divided between up to 20 hours and more than 20 hours.
- Education and care centre and home-based respondents from each group tended to be divided among the options given.

Most managers and teachers thought an entitlement to free ECE should be provided for all children whose family want them to attend, but a sizeable minority thought a free entitlement should be provided for over 3-year-olds only. However, for parent and parent committee members, this pattern was reversed. Most of those who thought free entitlement should be for 3- and 4-year-olds only were kindergarten respondents, and this is the age group that most kindergartens cater for.

Table 28 **Views about ages of child for whom the Government should provide a free entitlement**

Age range	Managers (n=242) %	Teachers (n=402) %	Parents (n=455) %	Committee parents (n=171) %
4→school age	7	8	11	9
3→school age	26	22	27	37
4→school age + 3→school age	33	30	38	46
2→school age	8	9	15	9
1→school age	4	4	8	3
All children whose family want their child to attend	43	44	30	29
No response	12	13	9	13

Impact of 20 hours free ECE per week on ECE services

We asked respondents what impact they thought there would be on their service if government were to provide an entitlement of up to 20 hours free ECE for all preschool children. While the current government policy is for up to 20 hours free ECE for 3- and 4-year-olds only from 1 July 2007, responses to this question indicate some ways in which services may adapt and change their operation, and choices parents may make.

Impact of free ECE on choice of service and hours of participation

Only 24 percent of managers thought nothing much would change in respect to children's participation. The main changes other managers predicted were more enrolments (42 percent) or longer attendance hours (14 percent). Less than 1 percent thought hours of attendance would decrease or some children would leave.

Most committee parents (87 percent) and parents (86 percent) said they would not change the type of service their child attended. Playcentre parents were more likely to want to change or be unsure about what they would do. Fourteen percent of those parents who were using more than one ECE service[10] would use only one if ECE was free. This suggests cost is a factor in parents using more than one service.

[10] Twenty-two percent of parents were using more than one ECE service.

Table 29 **Impact of free ECE on parental choice of service**

Impact on parental choice of service	Parents (n=455) %	Types differing markedly from overall	Committee parents (n=171) %	Types differing markedly from overall
No change in service	86	Playcentre (73%)	87	Playcentre (79%)
Would use a different service	3	Playcentre (8%)	3	
Currently using two services and would use only one	3	Playcentre (7%)	2	
Not sure	6	Playcentre (10%)	5	Playcentre (9%)
No response	2		4	

A fifth of parents said they would increase the number of hours their child attends ECE. There were no significant differences in responses by service type.

Table 30 **Parents' views of impact of free ECE on hours child attends**

View	Parents (n=455) %	Committee parents (n=171) %
Nothing would change	70	73
Would increase the number of hours child attends	20	9
Would reduce number of hours child attends	1	5
Not sure	7	9

Ninety percent of parents who would increase the hours their child attends if ECE was free were currently using less than 20 hours ECE a week. About 26 percent overall of those using less than 20 hours currently would like more hours. Thirty-two percent of those using less than six hours, 34 percent of parents using 6–10 hours, 29 percent of parents using 11–15 hours, and 13 percent of parents using 16–20 hours would increase the hours their child attends if ECE was free. This compares with 6 percent of those using more than 20 hours. This suggests there will be parental demand for more hours from those using less than 20 hours ECE when the up to 20 hours free is implemented.

Parents who were dissatisfied with the hours or times their child currently attends were more likely to say they would increase their hours if ECE was free.

Over half of the parents (57 percent) who said they currently would like more hours of ECE, also said that they would increase the number of hours if ECE was free. This compared with 17

percent of parents who said they liked the number of hours of ECE currently and also would increase hours if ECE was free.

Half of the parents who would prefer hours at a different time said they would increase the number of hours their child attends compared with 18 percent of those who said the times their child attends suited them.

It may be that cost is a barrier to increasing hours for those who would change, or that more hours or more flexible hours are not currently available and parents would expect them to be available if ECE was free.

Impact of free ECE on service operation

Fifty-four percent of managers thought nothing much would change about the way their service operates. A sizeble minority (22 percent) would consider extending their hours of operating. Some (14 percent) would consider introducing sessional options. Twenty percent thought they would be more responsive to the hours families want.

The largest number of written comments from managers and teachers was about the financial impact of changes to fees, salaries, and general funding, followed by impact on operation and staffing.

- *Financial impacts.* These included being able to "lower fees", centre would run at a financial loss, would increase need for fundraising, would not have an impact because already free.
- *Desire to extend operation* and need to recruit staff. Some would find this difficult, e.g.:

  > We would require two or more trained teachers. How could we afford this?

- *Benefits for children*, e.g.:

  > Many families miss out on early education and opportunities in these vital years because they cannot afford to attend, or are unaware of the value of early education. Great inequalities are therefore increased by age of school entry. Affordable, accessible ECE for all would help.

  > We would be able to provide to a wider range of people—low income get subsidised care—those on slightly higher have to pay—these are the ones who are already paying for everything—money only goes so far!!

- *Potential issues* from perception that some services do not provide good quality, or that increasing hours could be at the expense of quality.

Impact of 20 hours free ECE on how parents use their time

Parents and committee members were asked if they would change what they do while their child is at the ECE service if the Government did provide an entitlement to up to 20 hours free ECE. They were able to mark more than one option.

Thirty percent would change what they do: mainly by starting or increasing hours of paid employment, or participating in a training/education course.

Table 31 **Impact of 20 hours free ECE on how parents use their time**

Impact of free ECE for parents	Parents (n=455) %	Committee parents (n=171) %
Nothing would change	70	69
Enrol in training/education course	12	12
Start paid employment	9	5
Increase hours of paid employment	6	5
More time for own interests	10	6
Unpaid voluntary work	5	6

Free ECE for low-income families only

Most respondents did not support a system providing free ECE for low-income families and requiring other families to pay according to their income levels. Across all groups just under a quarter were in support of such a system, and between 53 percent and 63 percent were clearly opposed.

Table 32 **Support for income-tested free ECE**

View	Managers (n=242) %	Teachers (n=402) %	Parents (n=455) %	Committee parents (n=171) %
Yes	24	23	24	23
Not sure	15	22	14	13
No	58	53	61	63

Managers were divided about what would happen to participation if an income-tested free ECE system were adopted. A third thought nothing much would change, but 51 percent thought more children would enrol. This is a similar percentage to views of what would happen if free ECE were provided to all children, suggesting that it is low-income families that managers expect to be most affected. Most thought there would be no change in voluntary work (31 percent), did not use voluntary work (23 percent), or were not sure how voluntary work might change (19 percent).

Parents and committee members were less likely to say they would increase the hours their child attends and more likely to say they would reduce these hours under an income-tested system than under a universal free system.

Table 33 **Parents' views of impact of income-tested free ECE on hours child attends**

Impact on hours of ECE attendance	Parents (n=455) %	Committee parents (n=171) %
Nothing would change	74	74
Would increase the number of hours child attends	10	9
Would reduce number of hours child attends	5	5
Not sure	8	9

Written comments from teachers and management about an income-tested system were in the following main categories:

- *Divisiveness* that such a system could incur, e.g.:

  In our decile 3 community the middle-income earners are the ones doing all the volunteer work. They will become resentful and think why should we do it. (Manager)

  Maybe unsubsidised families would expect free families to do the volunteer work as a means to fulfil their contribution in another way? (Manager)

- *Difficulty in calculating cut-off points* for determining income categories, e.g.:

  How can the Government accurately determine middle income etc? Not a fair system. (Manager)

  Remember middle income doesn't indicate wealth or able to afford ECE provisions—the levels of income need to be re-evaluated. (Teacher)

- *Importance of getting funding levels right*, e.g.:

  More fundraising would need to be done unless funding from the Ministry increased. (Manager)

- *Positive impacts on volunteer work* and spending time in the centre, e.g.:

  If it was not costing some families—maybe they would feel more like volunteering and spending more time with their child. (Manager)

- *Benefits of free ECE* for all children, e.g.:

  Overall children would be better off if 20 hours free childcare was provided. (Manager)

  As a former high school teacher (13 years' experience) I believe all children need access to ECE, and parents should be encouraged to participate. (Manager)

Funding, enrolments, and attendance patterns

It is useful to consider funding issues in relation to the profile of children attending ECE services since the bulk funding formula differentiates on the basis of age, and Equity Funding is intended

to cater for the extra needs of services with children from low-income families, children from non-English speaking homes, and children with special needs.

Age

In July 2003, the year in which the survey was initiated, 180,000 children were enrolled in an ECE service. These numbers have steadily increased since 1990. Of the total number of children enrolled, there is a trend over time towards enrolment of higher proportions of younger children (under one, one year, and two years).

Table 34 **ECE enrolments by age and year at 1 July**

Year	Under one year	One year	Two years	Three years	Four years	Five years
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
1990						
n 118,367	4,912 (4%)	10,446 (9%)	17,437 (15%)	36,556 (31%)	47,253 (40%)	1,763 (1%)
2003						
n 180,000	8,976 (5%)	22,611 (13%)	35,213 (20%)	54,280 (30%)	57,088 (32%)	1,832 (1%)

These trends, coupled with the strong support for free ECE for all children whose families want them to attend, and some support for 2-year-olds, suggest a next policy challenge will be how to extend free ECE to younger children.

Equity Index and characteristics of children

Services receive an Equity Funding component for children with special needs or who are from a non-English speaking home derived from the index of low-income (EQI), rather than on actual numbers. However, *An Evaluation of Initial Uses and Impact of Equity Funding* (Mitchell et al., 2006a) showed that children who are from a non-English speaking home or have special needs were not evenly distributed amongst services catering for children from low-income homes.

Children from a non-English speaking home

Forty-four percent of the services had children from non-English speaking homes. These were distributed as follows:

- less than five children from non-English speaking homes (28 percent)
- 5 to 10 children from non-English speaking homes (6 percent)
- 11 to 20 children from non-English speaking homes (6 percent)
- more than 20 children from non-English speaking homes (4 percent).

None of the playcentres or home-based services had five or more children from non-English speaking homes. (Home-based services cater for a maximum of four children.)

Our data showed that using the EQI to capture services with higher numbers of children from non-English speaking homes does miss some services that have a large number of such children. Although more services classified as low-income through the EQI (16 percent) had 10 or more children from non-English speaking homes, 8 percent of services not classified as low-income had 10 or more such children. It would be reasonably easy to move towards closer targeting of Equity Funding for such services by developing criteria and a system for services to identify these children, and targeting Equity Funding to services that had a higher number of children from non-English speaking homes. Such a system of identification was used by the Department of Education to allocate additional teachers for kindergartens in the 1980s.

Children receiving assistance for special needs

Half the ECE services had children receiving assistance for special needs, with most of these having one, two, or three such children. Kindergartens and education and care centres reported having more of these children than playcentres or home-based services. Thirteen percent had children who could not attend without an Education Support Worker.

A substantial minority (40 percent) would like assistance for children attending whom they thought had special needs, but were not receiving such assistance. The Equity Funding evaluation (Mitchell et al., 2006a) found participants defined "special needs" in a wide range of ways. Some definitions were very broad, and included general health needs that could be best met through medical treatment. In this NZCER survey it was not clear what was being defined as "special needs".

The Equity Funding evaluation found services wanted access to external advice and support through established agencies, especially Group Special Education. Their Equity Funding cannot ensure such advice and support is available and affordable. The large percentage of services wanting such assistance in this survey (40 percent) suggests a need for additional resources for Group Special Education to provide this, in addition to Equity Funding for services.

Bulk funding

The survey was undertaken at a time when a new funding system was being developed. We asked all respondents whether the Government should replace the current system of bulk funding with payment of teachers' salaries and a grant for other costs. However, direct salary payments are relevant only for services employing paid staff, mainly education and care centres and kindergartens (teacher-led services). Managers in these two services, especially kindergarten head teachers, were more likely to prefer direct funding of teacher salaries than other managers. Just over half the kindergarten head teachers and 42 percent of education and care centre managers

preferred direct salary funding. Other managers were likely to be unsure about a change, and playcentre parent management not to want a change.

Table 35 **Managers' views on whether the Government should replace bulk funding with direct salary payment by service type**

View	Kindergarten (n=79) %	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Home based (n=14) %	Overall (n=242) %
Yes	54	6	42	14	39
Not sure	33	41	35	57	36
No	8	53	20	14	20
No answer	5	0	4	14	4

This pattern was largely replicated in teacher, parent, and parent committee responses, with more of these participants being *unsure* of a change (teachers, 52 percent; parents, 52 percent; parent committee, 45 percent).

Participants may have needed more information before they could state a preference. A large number of comments raised queries about how things would operate under a new system, and what the effects would be, especially for hospital ECE services whose boards provide additional support, home-based services which tend to pay reimbursing expenses to educators, and playcentres where educators are mostly parent volunteers. There was a view that grants for operating costs would have to be reasonable.

Comments in support of replacing the current system of bulk funding were mainly about having sufficient funding to pay staff according to their qualifications and experience:

> Teachers' salaries take most of our funding. We would be much better off. Next year four staff will be qualified (Dip Teach); we are really going to struggle to make ends meet. No money in the budget (2004) for new equipment.

> There would be less discrimination against experienced teachers at the top of their pay scale. Staff would not have to work extra child contact hours to fund pay rises—conditions would improve. Huge amounts of funding are being handled by untrained and sometimes unprofessional people.

Typical comments in favour of retaining bulk funding were about centres having freedom to employ who they want and decide how to spend funding:

> Bulk funding has worked for this centre but needs to keep pace with costs, e.g., rising teachers' salaries, as we cannot compete with free kindergarten wages.

> ECE services should remain free to operate from a general funding pool of their own. The teachers' salaries can come from this. This would enable specialists in the community to be

paid, i.e., flax weavers, other crafts people to share knowledge, reo with children. Diversity should remain a feature of early childhood in NZ.

I would like to think the Government sees me as having enough intelligence to decide what is best for my centre, after all it is my business.

Summary

Insufficient funding levels was the major issue confronting ECE services. Services used government bulk funding as the principal source of funding, with parent fees being a second major source for education and care centres and home-based services. Most kindergartens and playcentres, and some community-based education and care centres, added funds through fundraising and charitable donations/grants.

A fifth of services were in deficit at the end of their last financial year and a similar percentage expected to be in deficit at the end of their next financial year. More of these were education and care centres.

Almost a third of parents from education and care centres, home-based services, and kindergartens experienced difficulties in meeting the cost of fees or donations, with low-income families more likely to be experiencing difficulties. Few playcentre parents reported difficulties.

Free early childhood education was very widely supported by all groups, delivered as a universal entitlement, not targeted to low-income families. Participants were equally divided between free ECE for up to 10 hours, 15 hours, 20 hours, or more than 20 hours per week. Most managers and teachers thought free ECE should be available for all families who wanted their child to attend, with a sizeable minority wanting free ECE for 3- and 4-year-olds only. This pattern was reversed for parents and parent committee members.

A fifth of parents said they would increase the number of hours their child attends if ECE was free. The greatest demand for more hours was from parents using less than 20 hours per week, and parents who were dissatisfied with hours and times. If ECE was free:

- Ninety percent of parents who would increase the hours were currently using less than 20 hours ECE a week. Parents using 15 hours or less per week ECE were most likely to want to increase their hours if ECE was free.
- Fifty-seven percent of parents who said they would like more hours of ECE would increase the number of hours (compared with 17 percent who were satisfied with the number of hours). About 26 percent of those using less than 20 hours would like more hours.
- Fifty percent of parents who would like ECE at different times said they would increase the hours (compared with 18 percent who were satisfied with provision times).

Most parents (86 percent) said they would not change the type of service their child attended if ECE was free. Fourteen percent of those parents who were using more than one ECE service[11] would use only one if ECE was free. This suggests cost is a factor in parents using more than one service.

Over half the service managers thought nothing much would change in their operation, but around 20 percent would consider extending their hours and another 20 percent would be more responsive to the hours wanted. Tensions between parent needs and service operation are likely if services are not able to offer the extra hours wanted.

Free ECE is likely to support labour market goals. Thirty percent of parents indicated that free ECE would enable them to enrol in education/training, start employment, or increase hours of employment.

Data gathered on characteristics of children on the rolls of the ECE services showed variable distributions of children from non-English speaking homes, special needs, and from low-income families. Each of these presented particular challenges that have implications for provision of funding and support services. The Equity Index used to capture services with higher numbers of children from non-English speaking homes does miss some services with a large number of such children.

Managers were divided about whether the Government should replace the current system of bulk funding with payment of teachers' salaries and a grant for other costs, with teachers and parents being largely unsure.

[11] Twenty-two percent of parents were using more than one ECE service.

8. Resources and surroundings

Next, we report teachers' ratings of the quality of teaching and learning resources, children's and adults' spaces and furniture, and access to and use of ICT.

Teaching and learning resources

Teachers from all services were reasonably satisfied with the teaching and learning resources at their disposal, particularly for children's needs, with less than 7 percent rating them as poor or very poor. On the other hand, professional reading resources for parents and staff were more limited in most services, except playcentre.

Table 36 **Teachers' ratings of quality of teaching and learning resources**

Resource (n=402)	Overall proportion rating this as: %			Types differing markedly from overall proportion
	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	
Creative play	86	10	2	Kindergarten (very good)
Blocks	85	10	3	
Early literacy	83	12	2	
Early numeracy	81	15	3	None
Outdoor equipment	74	20	6	Hospital (poor)
Expressive play	70	25	5	Kindergarten and playcentre (very good)
Professional publications for staff	58	31	10	None
Parent library	48	31	18	Playcentre (very good)

Hospital services, which are generally for sick children and located in a hospital, rated outdoor equipment as poor. Teachers from education and care centres and home-based ECE services were more likely than kindergarten or playcentre educators to rate the resources as poor or very poor. While this does not show when individual aspects are examined, it shows up when the whole picture is analysed: these teachers made up 55 percent of the sample, but gave 75 percent of the poor or very poor ratings. Kindergarten teachers rated most of the learning resources higher than other groups, and the differences were significant for outdoor equipment and resources for creative play. Both playcentre educators and kindergarten teachers rated expressive play resources

higher than other groups. Playcentre educators rated parent library and publications more highly than other services.

Playcentres and kindergartens are supported by associations offering professional and training advice and support, and access to curriculum resources. This may be one reason for these differences.

Physical resources and space

Children's indoor and outdoor spaces and furniture resources were also well provided for in most ECE services, but adult spaces and furniture were poorly resourced in comparison.

Table 37 **Teachers' ratings on children's and adults' space and furniture**

Spaces and furniture (n=402)	Overall proportion rating this as: %			Types differing markedly from overall proportion
	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	
Outdoor space	79	14	6	Playcentre (very good), hospitals (poor)
Furniture for children	77	19	4	
Indoor space	68	26	7	
Space for resource storage and preparation	37	34	27	Home based (good), kindergarten (poor)
Office space	35	25	37	Playcentre (very poor)
Adults' furniture	32	38	26	Playcentre (poor)
Staffroom space	28	22	45	Playcentre and kindergarten (very poor)

Managers' views on resourcing of adult spaces and furniture were also sought and were similar to teachers in their low ratings, although overall, managers rated most things lower than teachers.

Playcentre parent management were particularly critical of the lack of adequate resources for adults, which may be especially pressing with the numbers of adults who take part in the playcentre programme. Adult facilities in home-based services were generally better than other services because they are based in a home.

ICT

ICT findings from this survey were discussed in the report, *The Role and Potential of ICT in Early Childhood Education* (Bolstad, 2004). Here we provide a summary of the main findings from the 242 managers and 402 ECE teachers surveyed:

- Most ECE centre managers and teachers have access to a computer in their centre. Over half of managers and teachers have email, Internet access, and digital cameras at their centre, and some have a range of other ICT peripherals.
- Playcentre management and educators reported much lower levels of ICT access in their centres than other kinds of centre, particularly kindergartens. Kindergarten teachers gave higher ratings for their access to ICT hardware, software, and computer consumables than teachers at other kinds of centres. Education and care centres seem to fall somewhere in between.
- Internet access varies between centres. Overall, 42 percent of teachers surveyed said Internet access at their centre was very poor or nonexistent.
- Children's ICT use appears to vary considerably between individual early childhood services. Over half the teachers (52 percent) said that children do not use computers at their ECE service. However, 41 percent specified two or more types of use. The most common reported uses are pattern recognition, alphabet recognition, or other types of games. Very small numbers of teachers reported children using graphics programs, using the Internet to find information, using a computer to write a note or for role play, or using fax or email to communicate with people outside the centre.
- Teachers reported using ICT to support children's learning in several ways, mainly related to documentation and assessment of children's learning, or the creation of resources. Ninety percent of teachers used photography (either digital or conventional) to gather information about children's learning. However, less than 30 percent mentioned use of ICT to help children to revisit and reflect on documentation of their previous work.
- Staff mainly use ICT to communicate with parents, caregivers, or whānau by producing newsletters, pamphlets, or notices. Just over half use ICT to make children's learning visible to parents or whānau through documentation, and just under 25 percent record and document parents' or whānau views.
- The most frequently named problems staff reported with ICT use related to their own expertise, knowledge, or confidence to use ICT, although the percentages of teachers who indicated these were problems was relatively low. These problems were generally more common than technical problems with equipment or access.
- Teachers and managers thought the most important elements for a national ICT strategy for early childhood education were: more resourcing for the provision of ICT; suitable hardware and software for teachers and children, or the funding to buy it; and funding of more teacher time to spend on ICT use and development. Some staff felt that the ICT strategy should provide for staff ICT professional development, including professional development relating specifically to the educational uses of ICT.
- Forty-one percent of managers use an Early Childhood Management System. Some managers specifically commented on the need for an ICT strategy to encompass ICT use for administrative, database, and record keeping purposes, and said that a uniform system across their sector is an important issue.

Summary

Teachers were generally satisfied with their teaching and learning resources. Professional publications and parent library were less satisfactory except in playcentre.

Over half of managers and teachers have email, Internet access, and digital cameras at their centre, and some have a range of other ICT peripherals. Playcentres had lower levels of ICT access, and kindergartens, higher levels. Internet access was poor in 42 percent of services. ICT was used in documenting children's learning, but less than a third used ICT for children to revisit learning. Teachers also used ICT to communicate with parents through newsletters and notices. The most frequent problems teachers reported with ICT use related to their own expertise and confidence.

Staffroom space, office space, space for storage and preparation, and adult furniture were the most pressing needs, especially for playcentre and kindergarten.

There is emphasis in the strategic plan for early childhood education on teachers/educators being critical reflective practitioners, and developing close working relationships with parents and external organisations. It is harder to undertake these roles in the absence of resources to support them and physical conditions to comfortably work in.

9. Ratios, child places and group size

Roll numbers, age of children, and whether the service is all-day or sessional are used to determine regulated age groups and ratios. Currently, there are two age bands: under 2-year-olds and over 2-year-olds. Ratios for under 2-year-olds are 1:5. Ratios for over 2-year-olds are 1:6, 2:20, 3:30 etc. in all-day centres, and 1:8, 2:30, 3:45, 4:50 in sessional centres. The ratios in playcentre (1:5 for over 2½-year-olds and a nominated caregiver or parent for children under 2½ years) are better than those regulated for teacher-led services.

Some additional staffing through provision of an Education Support Worker may be available for children with special needs who meet criteria.

The maximum number of children who can attend an ECE service at any one time is 25 children under 2 and 50 children over 2. In playcentre only 30 children are able to attend at any one time.

A new framework will be implemented over 2009 and 2010, with different age bands: under 2½-year-olds and over 2½-year-olds. From July 2009, ratios for under 2½-year-olds will be 1:5, and ratios for over 2½-year-olds will be 1:10 in all-day centres. From July 2010, ratios for over 2½-year-olds will be 1:14 in sessional centres. This has only recently been announced and participants did not know these details when they responded to the survey. Decisions have still to be made about group size.

These new ratios fall short of recommendations for childcare standards for ratios in the US arising from the longitudinal NICHD study following more than 1000 children (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2002, 2006), which found a relationship between staff:child ratios (alongside qualified teachers and small group size) and child outcomes. These recommended ratios and group size are:

Ratios: 1:3 at 6 and 15 months; 1:4 at 24 months; 1:7 at 36 months.

Group size: 6 at 6 and 15 months; 8 at 24 months; 14 at 36 months.

Ratios

Managers of services were asked to comment on whether their usual adult:child ratios met regulation requirements or were better than these. While over half (59 percent) stated they were better than required, only 15 percent of kindergarten head teachers were in this category. The services that more than met the regulations were playcentre (94 percent—where prescribed adult:child ratios are also better than for other services) and education and care services (82 percent). Services with children under 2 were more likely to state their ratios were better than

regulation requirements (80 percent) than were services with children over 2 only (34 percent). Nevertheless, this still left a fifth of centres with children under 2 with ratios that fall short of research-based recommendations.

Sixty-four percent of managers of all services rated their ratios as adequate, but only 28 percent of kindergarten head teachers thought so. In fact, 37 percent of kindergarten head teachers thought their staff:child ratios were inadequate or at best barely adequate (33 percent). This compared with 3 percent of education and care centre managers rating their ratios inadequate and 3 percent rating their ratios barely adequate. None of the playcentre parent management or home-based managers rated their ratios as inadequate.

Most of those participants who rated their adult:child ratios as adequate also stated that they more than met the regulatory requirements (76 percent). However, 16 percent of those who rated their adult:child ratios as barely adequate or inadequate more than met the current New Zealand regulatory requirements.

Child places

Some managers in services with under 2s wanted more places for this age group:

- Education and care (20 percent)
- Home based (21 percent)
- Playcentre (13 percent).

Few wanted more places for over 2s, although a sizeable minority of kindergarten head teachers (25 percent) wanted fewer places for over 2s. It was unclear whether this was because the kindergartens were operating below capacity or because the head teachers thought the group size was too large.

Groupings and group sizes

According to teachers:

- Most kindergartens grouped children according to age groups (77 percent).
- All playcentres (100 percent) and most home-based educators (77 percent) grouped children in mixed age groups.
- Some education and care services grouped children according to age groups, and some grouped children in mixed age groups.

Around 60 percent of ECE services said children were in these groups for most of the day.

The sizes of groups of children varied depending on the types of services. Home-based services cater for a maximum of four children. Playcentres had on average small group sizes, with almost equal numbers reporting group sizes of up to 10, 11–15, 16–20, or 20–25. Kindergartens reported

the largest group sizes, with most reporting 41–45, a sizeable minority 26–30, and some 36–40. Group sizes may be smaller than this because every child may not attend all the time, and kindergartens were more likely to report irregular attendance. Education and care centres ranged from very small group sizes to 26–30, with few reporting more than 30 children.

Most teachers from all the services except kindergarten were satisfied with the size of these groups. Seventy-two percent of kindergarten teachers thought the groups were too big, but 77 percent of kindergarten parents and committee members were satisfied with this large group size. This could be because parents have historically been accustomed to large group sizes at kindergarten, and prioritise socialisation experiences for their children at this age. However, according to an earlier NZCER study (Wylie, 1999, p. 22), this appears to change when their child enters school and large class sizes were a concern for 37 percent of parents. It may be that in kindergarten where there are two or three teachers, and children are generally free to choose their own activities, parents see children interacting in smaller groups during the session.

Typical comments from kindergarten parents were:

> The mix of ages gives the children a chance to socialise and interact with children of different ages. It also enables my child to interact with others at the same developmental stage and vice versa.
>
> The kindergarten teachers are very energetic women! They are kept busy but are well organised and there seem to be enough teachers to children.
>
> Just right as kids fit in well. All have at least one good friend.

Other research on ratios and group size

In general, studies have shown that low child:adult ratios (few children to adults), small group sizes, and qualified teaching staff are some of the features associated with positive outcomes for children (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, in preparation). These features enable teachers to actively interact with and respond to children, and stimulate them. For example, a large-scale longitudinal study in England, the EPPE study (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggert, 2004), showed that "sustained shared thinking", associated with better cognitive achievement, was more likely to occur with adults working 1:1 with children and during focused small group work. Qualified staff working with children and low ratios of children to teachers linked to better gains for children, although these variables were confounded in some studies. (ECE centres that provide qualified staff may have high ratios of children to staff and vice versa.)

Renwick's (1995) study of kindergarten group size and adult:child ratios following increases in group size in many kindergartens in 1990 showed in general the combination of large group size (especially kindergartens with two groups of 45 children) and adult:child ratios of 1:15 were perceived by teachers as problematic. Teachers identified five major issues:

- They had less time to work individually and in small groups with children.

- Children found the large group overwhelming and teachers found the activities they could offer were limited.
- Relationships with parents were affected because teachers could not get to know and interact effectively with so many families (up to 90).
- Younger age children were being admitted, and this placed demands on teachers.
- There was little training or support for changes in policy.

The evidence presented here indicates that high child:adult ratios continue to be perceived as problematic by kindergarten teachers, and that teachers in services that just meet the current regulatory requirements for ratios tend to perceive these as inadequate or barely adequate. As well, top priorities for change sought by kindergarten respondents were for improved staff:child ratios and smaller group sizes.

The proposed new ratios will not go as far as many practitioners would like. Ratios for babies and toddlers have not been improved, and the current ratios fall short of adult:child ratios recommended for their education and care. ECE services for babies and toddlers need to be of very good quality, given the fast rate of development occurring then, and evidence that an early age of entry into low-quality ECE centres may be detrimental to social-emotional outcomes (Mitchell et al., in preparation).

Summary

Overall, over half the ECE services operated above regulated adult:child ratios, and those that did so were more likely to state their ratios were adequate. Most of these were playcentres and education and care centres. Eighty percent of centres with children under 2 reported their ratios were better than regulation requirements compared with 34 percent with children over 2. This left a fifth of centres with children under 2 with adult:child ratios of 1:5, which by the recommended standards (1:3 for children 9 months and 15 months, 1:4 for children 24 months) from the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network study (2002, 2006) are not adequate. Kindergartens were likely to operate at regulated staffing requirements and to rate ratios as inadequate.

Sizes of groups varied by service type, with home based, followed by playcentre having the smallest group sizes and kindergarten the largest. Most kindergarten teachers thought the group sizes were too big.

About a fifth of education and care and home-based managers, and some playcentre managers wanted more places for under 2s in their centre. Few wanted places for over 2s. This is consistent with the trend over time towards higher proportions of younger children attending ECE services. It suggests education and care for babies and toddlers will continue to expand, warranting close attention to standards for quality for this age group.

10. Teacher employment and morale

ECE services have different practices in relation to employment of teachers/educators:

Kindergartens are required to employ qualified registered teachers. They are employed under a national collective agreement covering all teachers, head teachers, and senior teachers. The Secretary for Education (Ministry of Education) and the teachers' union are party to the agreement. From 1 July 2002, pay parity between kindergarten teachers and teachers in the primary and secondary sector began to be implemented (over three years). Hence in kindergartens there is no variation in pay and conditions nationwide, although there may be some variation in hours of contact time and noncontact time depending on the operation of the kindergarten.

Education and care centres at the end of 2003, were permitted to employ teachers with a range of ECE qualifications, some of which were not approved teaching qualifications. The Government, through the strategic plan for early childhood education had set targets for employment of registered teachers in teacher-led centres, starting with employing as "person responsible" a registered teacher with an approved teaching qualification[12] by 1 January 2005. By 2012, all regulated staff are required to be registered teachers or at least 70 percent of regulated staff are to be registered teachers and the remainder to be studying for an NZTC approved qualification. There is no national collective agreement, and pay rates and conditions vary.

Hospital teachers have the same requirements as education and care centre teachers. There is no national collective agreement, and pay rates and conditions vary.

Home-based co-ordinators have the same requirements as education and care centre teachers. There is no national collective agreement and rates of pay and conditions vary. Home-based educators have a minimal qualification requirement and are either paid a wage or reimbursing expenses.

Playcentres may employ a supervisor, but volunteer parent educators also work in the education programme, or run the programme entirely by themselves. The educators collectively must hold playcentre qualifications up to higher levels. There is no national collective agreement and pay rates and conditions for employed educators vary. Parent educators are generally not employed.

Employment relationships vary depending on ownership. Nationally, over half the education and care centres and some home-based networks are privately owned or managed by a private

[12] Approved qualifications are Bachelor of Education (Teaching) (ECE), Diploma of Teaching (ECE), New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) equivalence to Diploma of Teaching (ECE), New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union Diploma, overseas teaching qualification assessed by NZQA as comparable to a Diploma of Teaching (ECE).

provider with profits paid back to the owner for commercial purposes. Other education and care and home-based services, and all kindergartens, playcentres, and hospital services are nonprofit community based.

The Ministry of Education defines community based as:

> Community-based services are those established as Incorporated Societies, Charitable, Statutory, or Community trusts, or those owned by a community organisation (e.g. City Council). Community-based services are prohibited from making financial gains that are distributed to their members (Ministry of Education, 2001a, p. 3).

Traditionally most for-profit centres had owner operators, with some seeking just a living for themselves. However, at least one private chain has operated since 1972 (Kindercare). During 2002 two new international companies that had bought early childhood centres in New Zealand, Kidicorp and ABC, were listed on the sharemarket. These corporate childcare chains have expanded rapidly: Kidicorp, which was taken over by "Feverpitch International", a gambling software venture that did not survive, now owns 75 New Zealand centres. ABC owns 77 centres in New Zealand, 1158 centres in Australia, 1100 centres in the US and 47 centres in the UK (Campbell, 2006). Forward Steps, owned by Australia's Macquarie Bank, bought 20 New Zealand centres in 2005 (Education Forum, September, 2005).

This development was associated with strong promotion of business opportunities for childcare provision:

> Caring for kids is not just child's play. It's big business with massive revenue and growth opportunities available for private child care agencies. . . . Big players in this game are experiencing high industry growth combined with high market share—a recipe for solid revenue and profits. . . . The dollars going around in this ballooning industry—which is only just emerging from its infancy—make it tempting for the entrepreneurial-type looking for a capital opportunity (O'Rourke, 2002).

New baby boom for KidiCorp

> Kids are the market's little darlings as Feverpitch gives up on gambling.
>
> Like a child discovering the latest hot toy—this year's Bleyblade or Pokemon—the Stock Exchange is finally catching up with the big kid across the Tasman [Australia] and getting into the craze for listing childcare companies. . . . A statement from Feverpitch says that the 'highly fragmented' childcare market is worth more than $500m a year (Panckhurst, 15 January, 2003).

These developments raise questions about whether profits for shareholders detract from investing in the educational service itself, particularly employment conditions which are a costly expenditure item in education and care centres. We analysed teacher pay, employment conditions, and involvement in decision making by ownership within the education and care sample to find out whether the poorer conditions for for-profit centres reported in other studies (Mitchell, 2002) was also occurring in the education and care centres in this national survey.

Employing teachers

As discussed above, all kindergarten associations employ teachers. All but three of the 113 education and care centres employed paid staff (97 percent). The number of playcentres that employed staff was 17 (53 percent). Seven (50 percent) home-based services employed paid staff.

Teacher turnover

The average number of teachers employed by each ECE service is low. Means for the different service types are: kindergarten, 2.81; playcentre, 1.75; education and care, 7.29; home based, 7.71. These means are the number of teachers actually employed: full-time equivalents are lower.

Managers were asked how many teachers left the service in the last 12 months. Many kindergarten head teachers (47 percent) and playcentre parent management (44 percent) did not respond, probably because kindergarten associations employ teachers (so the head teacher may not have felt equipped to respond) and almost half the playcentres did not employ teachers (so the question was not relevant). Nonresponses from education and care managers were low (2 percent).

A high percentage of teachers were reported to have moved. Twenty-nine percent had no teachers leave, 22 percent had one teacher leave, 14 percent had two teachers leave, and 14 percent had three or more leave. Kindergarten head teachers and playcentre parent management were more likely than education and care centre managers to report that no teachers had left.

Within the education and care sector, private service management were more likely than community-based service management to report more than two teachers had left (private, 23 percent; community based, 7 percent), but there was no difference between these groups reporting none had left. There was a high "no response" rate (30 percent) for community-based services, so these findings need to be interpreted cautiously.

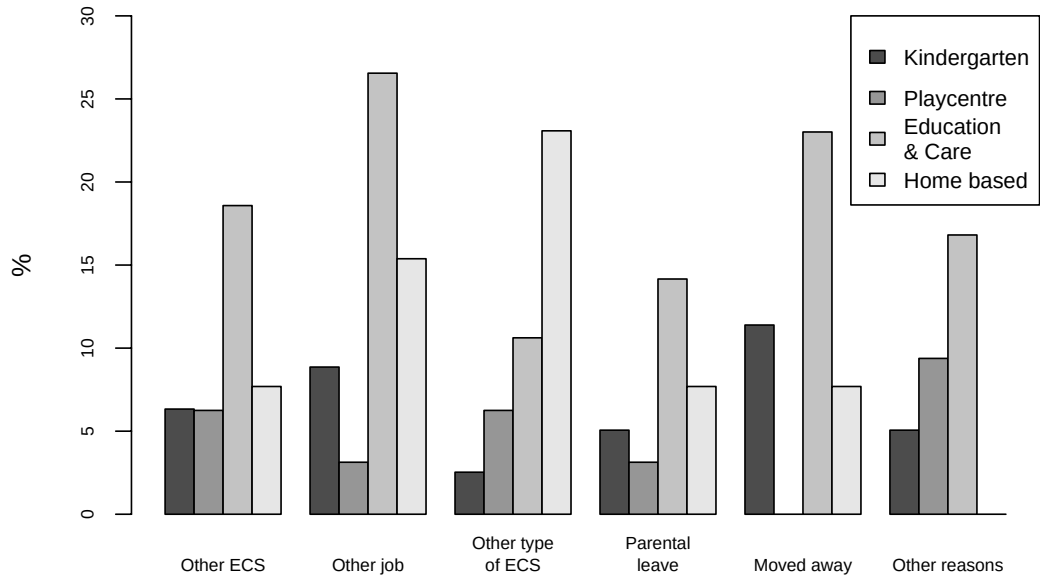
If teachers had left, the most common reasons were reported by managers[13] to be:

- a move to another location (15 percent)
- a change of career to an occupation outside education (11 percent)
- parental leave (10 percent)
- moved to another type of ECE service (8 percent), especially home-based co-ordinators/educators (17 percent)
- another ECE service was more attractive (7 percent), especially education and care teachers (12 percent)
- another ECE service provided better pay (6 percent), especially education and care teachers (10 percent).

[13] This may not be an entirely accurate picture. There may be a different picture if the teachers who left were asked.

Through the strategic plan, the Government is providing incentives for staff to become qualified teachers. A loss of 11 percent to another occupation outside education is high. If these teachers do not return to teach in the early childhood sector, their qualifications will be lost to the ECE sector, and the Government will face the cost of providing incentives for teacher education for replacement staff. There may be costs to quality if qualified, experienced teachers leave the sector.

Figure 1 **Reasons for leaving by ECE service type**



Difficulties in recruiting teachers

Forty-three percent of managers said that they had difficulty finding suitable and qualified teachers for any teaching vacancies. Twenty-eight percent had no difficulty, and the rest were not sure.

Difficulties related to finding suitable and qualified applicants and competition over pay and leave provisions were mainly experienced by education and care centres and rarely experienced by kindergartens. After funding levels, teachers' pay was also identified as the major issue confronting education and care centre managers. Playcentres were more likely to have difficulties because of remote location.

Table 38 **Reasons for difficulties in finding qualified staff**

Reason	Managers (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Limited number of suitable applicants	34	Education and care (57%), kindergarten (9%)
No qualified applicants apply	18	Education and care (33%), kindergarten (4%)
Competition from other ECS that pay more	17	Education and care (29%), kindergarten (3%)
Remote rural location of ECS	12	Playcentre (19%), home based (0%)
Competition from other ECS that have better leave provisions	6	Education and care (12%), kindergarten (0%), playcentre (0%)

When the number of suitable applicants was limited, it was mainly because they had unsuitable qualifications or were too inexperienced in early childhood education. A higher percentage of education and care centre managers reported difficulties associated with applicants not having suitable qualifications, not being registered teachers, and having insufficient experience, including experience with particular age groups and not sharing the ECE service philosophy.

There were a number of comments related to lack of applicants with the values and philosophy of the service:

> We are a pre-school of special character and require staff who are qualified in Montessori or are willing to train plus are qualified in ECE or are willing to obtain a double qualification. (Education and care)
>
> Christian staff hard to get. (Education and care)
>
> Limited number of applicants that share centre philosophy. (Education and care)
>
> Low quality ethics. We have VERY exacting standards. (Education and care)

Three managers commented on applicants' English language competence:

> Not able to speak English intelligibly. (Education and care)

Teachers' views on their work environment[14]

Employment conditions

Hours of work – noncontact time

Effective early childhood teaching is complex and demanding. A forthcoming literature review on outcomes of ECE (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, in press) shows that settings that contribute to positive child and family outcomes are settings characterised by:

- intentional teaching—settings that provide opportunities for "sustained shared thinking" and open-ended questioning to extend children's thinking, responsive teacher-child interactions, engaging educational programmes, peers learning together, and assessments with valued outcomes in mind
- family engagement with ECE teachers and education programmes, where social/cultural capital and interests from home are included, and both family and teachers can best support the child's learning
- a complex curriculum weaving together both cognitive and noncognitive dimensions.

A high number of child-contact hours for staff in a working week taxes physical and mental reserves and reduces the amount of time available for staff to work individually and collaboratively on important pedagogical tasks outside of direct work with children. These tasks include assessment, planning, evaluation, resource preparation, liaison with external agencies, schools, and community organisations, and working with parents and whānau. In the *Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Mitchell et al., in press), the amount of paid noncontact time was related to ECE service strength of assessment, planning, and evaluation, self-review and use of *Te Whāriki*.

Education and care and home-based services had the longest paid contact hours with 56 percent working over 30 hours per week. Most of these were full-time staff (94 percent). A higher percentage of teachers in private education and care centres worked over 30 contact hours per week (66 percent compared with 50 percent in community-based education and care centres). Playcentre educators had the shortest with most employed less than 10 contact hours per week. The usual paid contact hours for kindergarten (full-time) in 2003 was 22.5 hours to 26 hours per week.

Kindergarten teachers had the most paid noncontact hours, with almost all reporting more than three hours and many reporting 6–15 hours. There is unexpected wide variation in the number of hours, since in 2003 most kindergartens were operating fairly standard sessional hours. This could

[14] We gathered data on teacher pay, but some participants reported pay in hourly rates, and some in annual salaries. Teacher pay is also complicated by often being linked to qualifications, years of experience, and position of responsibility. The data is not reported here because we were not able to make a meaningful analysis.

be accounted for if some kindergarten respondents were counting time from the end of the traditional afternoon session to the end of the working day as noncontact time, and others were not. Most playcentre, home-based, and education and care teachers responding to this question had no noncontact time or up to three hours a week.

Table 39 **Number of paid noncontact hours per week**

Noncontact hours	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %
None	2	33	25	64
1–3	6	42	49	9
4–6	33	2	15	0
7–10	21	0	3	0
11–15	20	0	4	0
16–20	5	0	1	0
21 or more	1	0	0	10
No response	13	23	5	18

A quarter of playcentre educators did not respond to this question, which was not particularly relevant to them since most are volunteers. Teachers in private education and care centres had lower amounts of paid noncontact time than teachers in community-based centres. Thirty-two percent had no paid noncontact time compared with 20 percent in community-based centres.

We asked teachers how many unpaid hours were worked by teachers outside work time. Over half the teachers from all services said they did up to six hours unpaid work extra per week, 17 percent did between 7–10 hours, and 10 percent did 11 hours or more. Kindergarten teachers were more likely to put in 7–10 hours above paid time than teachers from other services. Kindergarten teachers have more noncontact time than most other teachers when tasks additional to working directly with children can be undertaken. A factor in the longer hours reported by kindergarten teachers may be that kindergartens cater for more children and have poorer staff:child ratios than most other services. This is likely to place greater workload demands on those teachers with respect to tasks carried outside session times.

Table 40 **Number of unpaid hours of work per week**

Unpaid hours per week	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall (n=402) %
None	1	0	16	5	8
1–6	53	58	64	59	60
7–10	32	10	10	18	17
11–15	9	6	5	5	6
16–20	4	0	3	0	2
21–25	0	2	1	0	1
26 hrs or more	0	2	1	0	1

Planning was the activity most teachers did in their paid noncontact time, followed by assessment and evaluation, and collecting data about children's learning. Kindergarten teachers, who get more paid noncontact time on average, were most likely to spend this time on planning, assessment, evaluation, data collection, resource preparation, staff discussions, and working with parents. These processes can contribute to enhanced teaching and learning (Sylva, 1999).

Table 41 **Use of paid noncontact hours per week for processes linked to curriculum implementation**

Use of paid noncontact hours	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall (n=402) %
Planning	94	31	58	18	63
Assessment and evaluation	93	31	49	18	58
Collecting data, documenting learning	83	29	55	14	57
Preparing resources	87	21	44	14	53
Discussing work with other staff	91	17	35	18	49
Working with parents	69	15	12	9	30

Staff meetings

Staff meetings offer essential opportunities for staff to plan and evaluate together, develop shared understandings and goals, learn from each other, discuss issues and concerns, and strengthen team

work. In larger services, where staff do not all work together at the same time, they offer opportunity for liaison between staff members.

Most ECE services held staff meetings at least once a month, with 30 percent holding them once a week and 28 percent once a fortnight. Only 3 percent said they never held them, and of these, 18 percent were from home-based services and 8 percent from playcentres (probably because in answering the question they did not regard "educator" meetings as "staff meetings"). It was more common for playcentre educator meetings to be held once a month (42 percent) and for kindergarten meetings to be once a week (44 percent).

Private education and care centres held less frequent staff meetings than community-based centres. Thirty-seven percent of community-based centres held staff meetings once a week compared with 9 percent of private centres.

Table 42 **Frequency of holding staff meetings**

Frequency of staff meetings	Community-based education and care (n=123) %	Private education and care (n=68) %	Total education and care (n=191) %
Once a week or more	37	9	27
Once a fortnight	34	37	35
Once every three or four weeks	22	32	26
Every five weeks to once a term	5	15	9
Never	1	2	1

Timing of staff meetings tended to reflect the organisation of the service. Forty percent of services held staff meetings after work, especially education and care services (68 percent); 38 percent held them in their noncontact time, especially kindergartens (93 percent); and 23 percent were held in the evenings, especially playcentres (62 percent).

Annual leave

The statutory minimum annual leave requirement in 2003–2004 for New Zealand workers was three weeks annual leave per year. This was raised to four weeks on 1 April 2007.

Most hospital teachers and a substantial minority of education and care centre teachers responding had three weeks annual leave per year. This was also the most common entitlement for those playcentre educators who were employed. The next most common entitlement was four weeks annual leave. By comparison, kindergarten teachers had more generous provisions of six weeks annual leave and an additional day between Christmas and New Year. Only 23 percent of teachers in other services received more than four weeks annual leave.

Teachers in community-based education and care centres were twice as likely to have four or more weeks of annual leave entitlement as those employed in private education and care centres.

Table 43 **Annual leave entitlement by private and community-based education and care types**

Length of annual leave	Private education and care (n=68) %		Community-based education and care (n=123) %		Total (n=191) %	
3 weeks	66		28		40	
4 weeks	19		28		25	
5 weeks	2	23	11	51	8	41
6 weeks	2		5		4	
7 weeks or more	0		7		4	
Term breaks	0		4		3	
Not sure	2		8		6	
Other*	4		5		5	
No response	6		5		5	

* "Other" responses included temporary contract, none, and hourly rate.

Teacher workload, morale, and involvement in decision making

Workload

Arguably, workload may be expected to increase in the ECE sector, at least in the short term, as new policy initiatives are implemented and teachers/educators take up challenges to enhance assessment, planning, and evaluation processes, and integrate new ideas within their practice such as using ICT for children's learning. The survey was undertaken at the end of 2003, before major actions within the strategic plan for early childhood education had been implemented, but targets for qualified teachers had been set which may have imposed extra work on teachers.

A third of teachers stated their workload was "fine", 43 percent stated it was "bearable", and 21 percent stated it was "excessive". Kindergarten teachers (35 percent) were the most likely to describe their workload as excessive, and home-based educators were the most likely to state it was "fine" (55 percent). The higher rating of workload as excessive by kindergarten teachers may reflect pressure from the greater number of children and poorer adult:child ratios in kindergartens, e.g. to undertake a larger number of assessments, or form relationships with more parents.

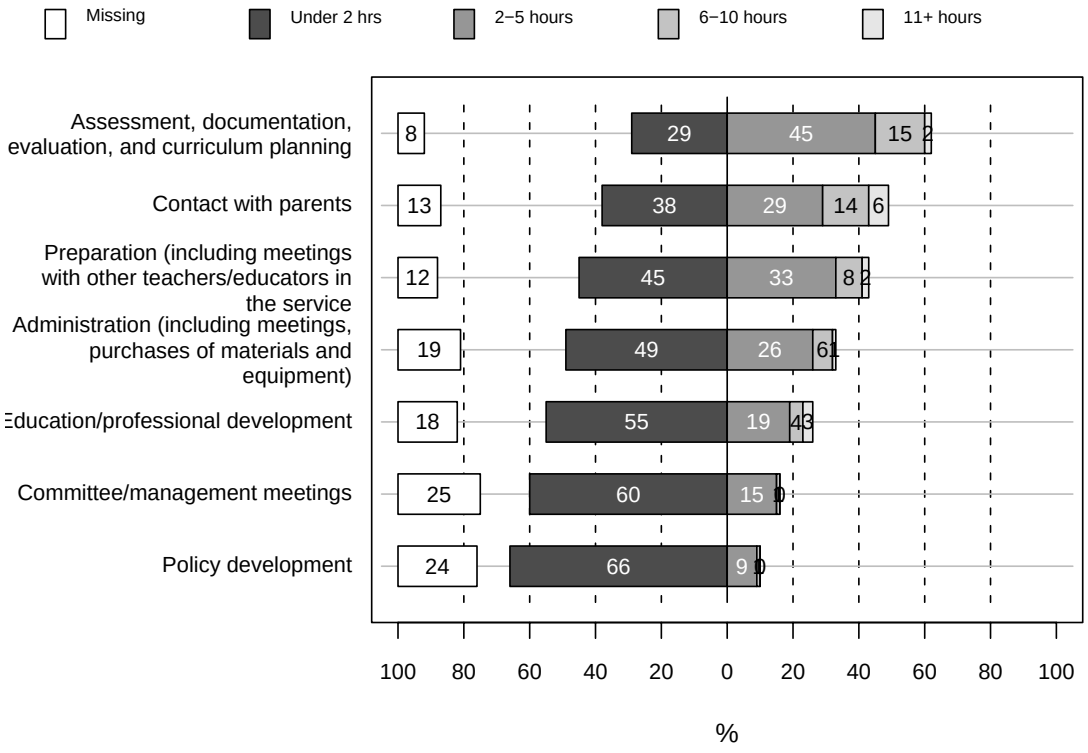
Table 44 **ECE staff workload**

View of workload	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall (n=402) %
Excessive	35	12	15	14	21
Bearable	54	40	40	14	43
Fine	8	40	44	55	33

Within education and care centres, a higher percentage of teachers in private centres described their workload as "excessive" (22 percent private, compared with 11 percent community-based).

We asked teachers to state how much time per week they spent on different tasks, in addition to working with children. Overall, most time was spent on assessment, documentation, evaluation, and curriculum planning. The amount of time spent on these processes ranged from under two hours per week (29 percent) to over 11 hours per week (17 percent). This range may reflect the staff:child ratios and overall number of children in different service types, amount of noncontact time, or emphasis placed on these processes. About half the teachers spent more than six hours per week in contact with parents.

Figure 2 **Teachers' use of time outside working with children**



Kindergarten teachers spent more time per week than other services on preparation, assessment/planning, and administration.

Hospital teachers and kindergarten teachers spent more time than other services on contact with parents.

Playcentre educators spent less time than teachers from other services on preparation, assessment/planning, contact with parents, and administration, but more time in committee/management meetings. In respect to contact with parents, we need to bear in mind that playcentre parents also work alongside other parents on a daily basis.

Teacher morale

Almost three-quarters of the teachers described their morale as good or very good, with home-based educators more highly represented in the very good bracket. The teachers most likely to describe themselves as having low morale were education and care and kindergarten teachers, but these were low percentages.

Table 45 **Teacher/educator morale**

Morale level	Kindergarten (n=127) %		Playcentre (n=52) %		Education and care (n=191) %		Home based (n=22) %		Overall (n=402) %	
Very good	24		37		34		50		32	
Good	44		46		39		23		41	
Satisfactory	21		10		20		9		18	
Low	8	30	0	10	4	26	0	9	4	23
Very low	1		0		2		0		1	

Morale of early childhood teachers is higher than morale of primary and secondary teachers who were also surveyed in 2003. Fifty-eight percent of primary teachers and 43 percent of secondary teachers described their morale as very good or good, compared with 73 percent of early childhood teachers. 2003 was early in the introduction of the NCEA affecting secondary teachers, but also a time of great policy change in the early childhood sector. These findings suggest the initial policy focus on early childhood education was being well received.

There were associations between excessive workload and low morale. Fifteen percent of teachers describing their workload as excessive rated their morale as low or very low, compared with 4 percent of teachers rating workload as bearable, and 2 percent rating workload as fine.

Teachers were asked to rate how they would describe their part in their ECE service's decision making, by choosing one item from five categories: part of decision-making team; listened to by those making decisions; views not sought by those making decisions; don't want to be consulted; and other.

Most teachers felt they were part of the decision-making team on most processes directly related to the curriculum: planning for children's learning; assessment and evaluation; curriculum resources; and communication with parents. Many (50–70 percent) felt they were part of the decision-making team with respect to planning for special needs, strategic planning, policy development, professional development and staff appraisal. Only 30 percent felt they were part of the decision-making team with respect to budget allocation.

Kindergarten teachers and playcentre educators were more likely to feel they were part of their ECE service decision making team. Home-based educators were least likely to feel they were part of their ECE service decision-making team, except communicating with parents. They also tended to say more often that their views were not sought by those making decisions.

There were some differences between teachers in private and community-based education and care centres. Teachers in private centres were less likely to feel part of the decision making team and more likely to feel only that their views were listened to with respect to the following: curriculum resources (private, 59 percent; community-based, 72 percent); policy development and review (private, 34 percent; community-based, 60 percent); professional development (private, 47 percent; community-based, 68 percent); assessment and evaluation (private, 60 percent; community-based, 81 percent); planning for children with special needs (private, 41 percent; community-based, 56 percent); communicating with parents/whānau about children's learning (private, 63 percent; community-based, 77 percent); strategic planning and evaluation (private, 41 percent; community-based, 57 percent); and staff appraisal (private, 37 percent; community-based, 55 percent). They were more likely not to be consulted on budget allocation (private, 38 percent; community-based, 28 percent).

Overall, 67 percent of teachers from all services said there were no areas of their ECE service where they were not involved where they thought they should be, especially playcentre (83 percent). Eighteen percent were unsure, and a small percentage (9 percent) said there were areas where they felt they should have been involved in decisions.

Summary

ECE teachers/educators' morale was generally high; higher than the morale of primary and secondary teachers. Morale was associated with workload—fifteen percent of teachers describing their workload as excessive also rated their morale as low or very low, compared with 4 percent of teachers rating workload as bearable, and 2 percent rating workload as fine.

Kindergarten teachers and playcentre educators were more likely to say they felt consistently part of the decision-making team, and home-based educators were less likely to say this, except for communicating with parents. Home-based educators were more likely to say their views were not sought by those making decisions.

Most services employ few staff. Means for the different service types are: kindergarten, 2.81; playcentre, 1.75; education and care, 7.29; home based, 7.71. These means are the number of teachers actually employed: full-time equivalents are lower. There were high levels of teacher turnover. Half the services had one or more teachers leave in the last 12 months. This level of turnover is a large percentage in a sector where most services employ a small body of staff. Staff turnover is likely to be associated with instability for children, administrative costs, and time spent on recruiting staff. Turnover makes it harder for services to sustain service wellbeing and build on professional development undertaken if new staff members have not participated in the professional development experiences.

Among those who left, the main reasons were the teacher moving to another location (15 percent), changing career to another occupation outside education (11 percent), or taking parental leave (10 percent). Common reasons for changing to another ECE teaching position were another service was more attractive (7 percent) or better pay (6 percent), especially in education and care centres (12 percent and 10 percent respectively). Teacher turnover was higher in private education and care services than community-based services. There is a cost in the need to train more teachers, where teachers are lost to another position outside of education.

Relatively unattractive pay and conditions within a competitive environment are also making it difficult for services to recruit staff in the education and care sector. Almost half the education and care service managers had difficulty in finding suitable and qualified teachers for any teaching vacancy, because of competition with other ECE services over pay, better leave provisions in other ECE services, and better noncontact provisions in other ECE services. Playcentres were more likely to have difficulties because of remote location.

A sizeable minority of teachers in paid employment had only the statutory minimum entitlement of three weeks annual leave. In some centres, there was very little or no noncontact time, and staff meetings were held infrequently (once a month or less). These opportunities provide conditions to support processes of planning, assessment, evaluation, and review that contribute to effective teaching and learning.

Teachers in private education and care centres had poorer working conditions (annual leave, noncontact time, frequency of staff meetings) than teachers in community-based education and care centres, were less likely to be involved in decision making as a member of the team, and more likely to rate their workload as excessive.

11. Volunteer Work

Traditionally, volunteers have worked in community-based early childhood services in a range of capacities. The 1996 Future Directions project (Early Childhood Education Project, 1996), found volunteers were involved in the education programme, administration, maintenance, management, fundraising, training, and professional development. The pool of people for this work was almost always the parents/caregivers (usually women) of the children attending the centre. The project team found that as a consequence of the *Before Five* changes in educational administration, volunteers were facing increased workload, such as administering funding returns, acting in an employer role, and management of salaries. Evidence of difficulties of recruiting and retaining parents and caregivers onto management committees/boards was reported.

In the schools sector, the Government provides some resourcing and support for volunteers:

- an operational grant from which a sitting fee can be paid
- a contract for training of trustee members paid to the NZ School Trustees Association
- funding for the NZ School Trustees Association to provide certain outputs ranging from industrial advice to administration of study awards.

In early childhood services, there is no representative body like the NZ School Trustees Association. Some umbrella organisations such as playcentre and kindergarten associations offer support for volunteers. The Ministry of Education published a print resource in June 2004: *Governing and Managing your Early Childhood Service,* and offers advice and support in relation to licensing.

ECE services vary in their use of volunteers, and this variation reflects differences in management structures and responsibilities.

Playcentres are parent- and whānau-led centres. Parent educators work voluntarily as a collective to undertake all pedagogical roles, including curriculum delivery, planning, assessment evaluation, and self-review, and undertaking training, although paid supervisors work alongside parents in some playcentres. Parent volunteers are responsible for the management of playcentres, and usually elect office holders to different roles.

Education and care centres vary in management structure depending on whether they are community-based or private. Those that are community-based generally have an elected parent committee/board of trustees to undertake a governance and management role. Private education and care centres generally do not usually have an elected committee and are managed by the owner/s, or may be part of a chain of centres.

Kindergartens, like community-based education and care centres, have a parent committee/board of trustees, but kindergarten associations are responsible for staff employment and management. Committee members may have a say in staff appointments, and are involved in the everyday running of the kindergarten.

Home-based services are part of a network, with professional support from a co-ordinator. They may be private or community-based.

Hospital services are managed by a District Health Board.

Use of volunteers

High levels of voluntary work were reported in many aspects of ECE operation. More than half the managers reported volunteer involvement in the education programme (63 percent), fundraising (60 percent), maintenance (56 percent), working bees (54 percent), and management (53 percent).

Areas of lowest volunteer involvement for services other than playcentres were parent/whānau inductions to the service (17 percent of services other than playcentres) and training and professional development (10 percent).

Over 90 percent of playcentres used volunteers in every area, except consulting with the community (72 percent). Playcentres and kindergartens had higher levels of volunteer involvement in the education programme and fundraising than other service types.

Sixty-one percent of private education and care centres compared with 17 percent of community-based education and care centres were not using volunteers in any aspect of their operation. Other services not using volunteers were home based (43 percent), kindergartens (2 percent), and three of the five hospital services.

Table 46 **Areas volunteers are involved in**

Area	ECE managers (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Education programme	63	Playcentre (100%), kindergarten (91%), home based (0%)
Fundraising	60	Kindergarten (92%), playcentre (91%), home based (14%)
Maintenance	56	Playcentre (97%), home based (0%)
Working bees	54	Playcentre (94%)
Management	53	Playcentre (100%), home based (0%)
Organising volunteer activities	49	Playcentre (94%), home based (7%)
Administration	36	Playcentre (97%), home based (0%)
Working closely with parents	34	Playcentre (94%), home based (0%)
Consulting with the community	32	Playcentre (72%), home based (0%)
Promoting the ECE philosophy	32	Playcentre (91%), home based (7%)
Involvement in parent inductions	27	Playcentre (97%), home based (7%)
Training and PD	21	Playcentre (94%), home based (0%)
No volunteers	20	Home based (43%), education and care (35%)
Other	9	Home based (43%)

"Other" areas described by some were translation of written materials for ESOL families, interpreting, sharing of cultural knowledge, language, and celebrations, life skills and work experience, and working as caregivers.

When asked to mark a list of areas where they would like more volunteer involvement, 39 percent of all managers said that there were areas where more involvement would be desirable, 29 percent of them said there were no areas, and 9 percent were not sure. Kindergarten head teachers (59 percent) were more likely than other service managers to want more volunteer involvement. Those who wanted more involvement mainly wanted it in the same areas that volunteers are already highly involved in, such as the programme (26 percent), working bees (25 percent), fundraising (23 percent), and maintenance (21 percent).

Few managers (4 percent) said that there were areas where they would like volunteers to be less involved, and they were maintenance, fundraising, administration, and the programme. One manager said, "sometimes volunteers lack experience in ECE, and want to override teacher feelings/decisions".

Volunteer responsibility, training, and workload

Thirty-six percent of managers said volunteers had been given training over the previous 12 months, 36 percent said they had not, and 7 percent were not sure (there were many no responses). Playcentres (75 percent) and kindergartens (53 percent) were more likely to give training, and education and care centres were less likely to give training (15 percent).

Just over half the managers thought volunteers had about the right amount of responsibility. Fourteen percent thought they had too much responsibility, and 5 percent thought they had too little. (Five percent were not sure, and 21 percent did not answer the question.) Playcentre management were more likely to state that volunteers were given too much responsibility (28 percent).

Just over a third of the managers (37 percent) thought the overall volunteer workload was about right, but 28 percent thought it was too high. Kindergarten (41 percent) and playcentre managers (63 percent) were more likely to think the workload was too high. Thirty-five percent thought volunteers were coping, and 21 percent believed they were doing well. Sixteen percent thought they were struggling, with high representation from kindergarten (27 percent) and playcentre (25 percent).

Nearly half of all managers (46 percent) reported volunteers giving up to four hours per week to their ECE service. With the exception of the high number of hours for some home-based volunteers (doubtless these were for caregivers who were volunteers being paid reimbursing allowances), playcentre volunteers were on average typically working for longer hours per week, with a sizeable minority giving 11 hours or more per week.

Table 47 **Average hours per volunteer per week**

Hours per week	Kindergarten (n=79) %	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Home based (n=14) %	Overall (n=242) %
Under 2	38	0	27	7	26
3–4	32	25	12	0	20
5–6	8	16	8	0	8
7–10	6	22	3	0	6
11–14	3	16	0	0	3
15–18	0	9	4	0	3
19–23	1	3	1	0	2
24–29	0	0	1	0	0
30–35	0	0	0	21	1
46 or more	0	0	1	7	1

Volunteers serving on committee or as office holders

All kindergartens and playcentres had committees or office holding positions, while 50 percent of education and care services did, and only 17 percent of home-based services did. Those that did not have a committee were largely private: 91 percent of private education and care services did **not** have a committee, compared with 19 percent of community-based services. Committees offer parents a say in the management and/or governance of many aspects of their service operation.

Of those that had committees, 75 percent had six or more members (six or seven members, 27 percent; eight or nine members, 21 percent; 10 or more members, 26 percent). More playcentres than other services had 10 or more members (63 percent).

Twenty-eight percent of managers from all services said they quite often had problems recruiting and retaining volunteers on their committees, more from kindergarten (41 percent) and playcentre (47 percent). The two main reasons for this were because the workload fell on too few people, and parents were in paid employment and not available.

Levels of voluntary help

Most committee members provided voluntary help for their ECE service. Those few committee members who said they did not may not have counted serving on the committee as volunteer help. Sixty-one percent of parents said they provided volunteer help, particularly from playcentre (98 percent) and kindergarten (83 percent).

Committee members from kindergarten, playcentre, and education and care were mainly involved as volunteers with:

- management work (planning, policy development, committee meetings, and related work)—81 percent
- fundraising—75 percent
- involvement in the programme (parent help, setting up/cleaning up, preparation of resources, excursions, assisting with children with special needs, evaluation, and planning)—68 percent.

Parents were mainly involved with:

- involvement in the programme (parent help, setting up/cleaning up, preparation of resources, excursions, assisting with children with special needs, evaluation, and planning)—51 percent
- Fundraising—38 percent.

The lower level of involvement in these aspects reported by parents compared with managers' reports probably reflects the fact that managers were providing an overall view of parents as a group, and parents were responding as individuals.

Positions of responsibility on ECE committee

All playcentre office holders (100 percent), most kindergarten committee members (89 percent), and 70 percent of education and care committee members responding had held positions of

responsibility on their ECE service's committee. Fewer parents responding had held such positions (27 percent of all services), although 74 percent of playcentre parents had held positions of responsibility.

Hours of voluntary help

Levels of volunteer work in early childhood services were high, with most committee members and over half the parents reporting that they had undertaken some volunteer work in the last fortnight.

The committee volunteers in all services[15] worked longer hours for their ECE service than parents did. About half the committee members gave five or more hours in the last fortnight compared with 20 percent of parents.

Playcentre parents and committee members reported longer hours of voluntary help than those from other services.

Table 48 **Number of hours worked in last two weeks by parent and committee volunteers**

	Committee members				Parents			
Hours per week	**Kinder-garten (n=73) %**	**Play-centre (n=43) %**	**Ed. and care (n=53) %**	**Overall (n=171)**	**Kinder-garten (n=149) %**	**Play-centre (n=86) %**	**Ed. and care (n=191) %**	**Overall (n=455) %**
Under 2	14	7	23	15	39	16	21	26
3–4	36	12	17	24	23	24	5	15
5–6	16	14	21	17	9	16	4	8
7–10	15	23	9	15	5	22	2	7
11–14	8	16	6	9	1	9	0	2
15 or more	8	29	6	12	2	9	1	3
No response*	3	0	19	8	20	2	68	40

* Many of these were people who did not do volunteer work.

Parents who did not provide voluntary help said it was because they worked (16 percent of responses) or did not have the time (10 percent of responses). Eight percent said it was because no-one had asked them to, and 26 percent of education and care parents and 48 percent of home-based parents said their ECE service did not use volunteer help.

Sixty-seven percent of committee members thought the current level of parent/whānau involvement in the ECE service was satisfactory, but the areas where they would like to see more

[15] We have not reported on home-based and hospital parents in the table below as the numbers responding were very small.

involvement were fundraising (68 percent), committee work (65 percent), ECE service maintenance/working bees (47 percent), and helping in the centre (44 percent). The reasons why they did not think the level of parent/whānau involvement was satisfactory were mainly because the same parents/whānau always helped, and some were not interested in helping.

Over half of the parents and committee members of all services (52 percent) felt there was about the right level of responsibility for volunteers, but 22 percent of parents and 11 percent of committee members said the responsibility was not evenly shared. Many did not respond to our question asking about volunteer work. Playcentre parents and office holders were more likely to state the responsibility was not evenly shared (parents, 30 percent; office holders, 42 percent).

Most parents and committee members who responded thought there were about the right number of hours of voluntary help for their service, although a sizeable minority of parents were not sure and or did not respond. Playcentre parents and committee members were more likely to mark that the hours were too many (parents, 26 percent; committee members, 33 percent) compared with 9 percent parents and 16 percent committee members overall.

Benefits of voluntary work

When asked to choose from a list, many committee members and parents indicated that they got benefits for themselves and their child from volunteering. A higher percentage of committee members marked benefits, probably because they were more involved. The exception was playcentre where both parents and committee members were extremely involved, and all gave high responses to the positive benefits.

The highest percentage rating was for *enjoyment* (committee members, 71 percent; parents, 46 percent). Many committee members and a sizeable minority of parents marked benefits from volunteering for their child. They also gained better understanding of the child's progress and of the education programme, and companionship and sense of belonging.

Table 49 **Benefits from volunteer activities**

Benefits	Committee members (n=171) %	Parents (n=455) %
Enjoyment	71	46
Benefit for child	50	41
Companionship/support/friends	67	36
Better understanding of child and his/her progress	56	35
Better understanding of ECE service programme	66	29
Sense of belonging	51	29
Sense of achievement	56	20
Confidence in abilities/skills	54	20
Training/qualifications/skills	29	17
Financial reward	2	2
Decreased confidence/frustration	1	1
Nothing overall	2	1

A majority of playcentre parents and parent office holders marked that they gained every positive benefit listed, with higher percentages of office holders (over 79 percent) marking benefits in every category compared with over 59 percent of playcentre parents.

Summary

High levels of volunteer work were supporting and sustaining community-based ECE services, especially playcentre and kindergarten. Most volunteer work was in the education programme, fundraising, maintenance, working bees, and management. Parent committee members reported the longest hours of volunteering. At the high end, some parents were working voluntarily for more than 15 hours per fortnight.

All playcentres and kindergartens had committees or office holding positions, but only community-based education and care centres and few home-based services had committees. Most parents in private education and care centres and home-based services did not volunteer. The main reason for not volunteering was parents not having such an opportunity because the ECE service did not use volunteer help. Other reasons were that the parent was in paid employment, did not have time, or was not asked.

Most playcentres and over half the kindergartens provided training for volunteers, but few education and care centres did.

Volunteering is placing some pressure on services where volunteer levels are high, especially playcentres. A substantial minority of playcentre participants thought their volunteer workload was too great, there was too much responsibility, and that volunteers were struggling. A sizeable minority reported difficulties in recruiting parents, mainly because the workload fell on too few parents or parents were in paid employment.

A third of committee members were not satisfied with levels of parent involvement in their service, especially in fundraising and committee work. They also thought the volunteer workload fell on a small group of parents.

Yet many parents gained an array of benefits for themselves and their child through involvement as a volunteer, with more committee members reporting gains. Benefits for parents were primarily from the enjoyment, companionship, and sense of belonging that involvement engendered. Many committee members also gained heightened confidence in their abilities and a sense of achievement. Parents reported overall benefits for children, better understanding of their child's progress, and better understanding of the education programme. Most playcentre parents and committee members gained benefits in every aspect asked about, as well as in training and qualifications. These benefits for parents from voluntary involvement and the sense of community engendered from working alongside each other and teachers for a common cause are not possible in those services (mainly private) which do not use volunteers.

12. Assessment, planning, evaluation, and curriculum matters

New Zealand's ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki*, published in 1996, is a bicultural curriculum for all children from birth to school starting age. It is founded on aspirations for children to:

> . . . grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

The emphasis is on children's competencies, dispositions, and theory building, and the child as a participant within a social world. It is a framework, rather than a prescriptive curriculum, and defines curriculum broadly as "the sum total of the experiences, activities and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10). It "requires attention to every aspect of every child's experience within the early childhood setting" (Nuttall, 2003, p. 162), and may therefore be difficult to operationalise. It rejects more traditional notions of curriculum that prescribe aims and content, and expects services to create their curriculum in a culturally situated way. The word whāriki in the name is a "woven mat" reflecting the view of curriculum as "distinctive patterns" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 11).

The early childhood curriculum is not mandatory. Recently, however, the Education Amendment Act 2006 was passed, allowing the Minister of Education to prescribe a curriculum framework for licensed services after consultation. The desire to make *Te Whāriki* mandatory came from the consultation on the strategic plan for early childhood education.

Currently, the mandatory document is the Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) (Crown, 1996) which sets out national objectives for early childhood education, and is used by the Education Review Office in their three-yearly review of each ECE service.

Planning, assessment, evaluation, and self-review

A focus of the NZCER survey was on processes of planning, assessment, evaluation, and self-review. These processes are intended to support high-quality teaching and learning by offering opportunities for teachers, managers, and parents/whānau to gather and examine evidence/information and use it to enhance the quality of the curriculum and operation of the ECE service.

Since the Curriculum Development Project 1991–92 co-ordinated by Margaret Carr and Helen May (1992), and publication of *Te Whāriki*, 1993 (draft), 1996 (final), Ministry of Education policy initiatives and contracted research projects, publications, and professional development have put emphasis on curriculum enactment, especially planning, assessment, evaluation, and self-review (Carr et al., 2000). The 2003–2004 NZCER national ECE services survey was undertaken after useful research and resources for teachers were available (Carr, 1998; Carr, May, & Podmore, 1998; Carr et al., 2000; Ministry of Education, 1996, 1998, 1999), but before publication of *Kei Tua o te Pae, Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Lawrence (2004) has described the shift in ECE centre planning over the last two decades, from "keeping children busy" with activities in the 1980s, planning activities and events from children's interests in the 1990s, to planning that nurtures the dispositional learning that is situated within *Te Whāriki*. She argued that teachers must know what a child is thinking about an interest (not simply that teachers think they have identified a child's interest) and that planning is "reflectively responding to children's thinking". Then the teacher can plan how to support and resource learning.

Processes of effective evaluation in ECE centres include use of tools linked to children's learning dispositions, e.g., the child's questions from learning and teaching stories (Carr et al., 2000, p. 9), reflective discussion about data, and consideration of the role of teachers in the programme as well as children's learning dispositions. In a cycle of evaluation, practitioners put in place "structures, systems, and processes as appropriate to improve the implementation of Te Whāriki, and consequently enhance the experiences of children" (Podmore, May, & Carr, 2001, p. 8).

A curriculum framework based on *Te Whāriki* would expect children and parents to be involved in curriculum processes because principles of empowerment for children and families, and working with families' "funds of knowledge" are key principles.

In this section we report on teachers' decision making about the education programme, data gathering and use made of data, and issues and barriers about these curriculum processes. We also report on responses to use of te reo Māori and Māori content, emphasis given to biculturalism, and emphasis given to multiculturalism. Finally, we look at teachers' views of their achievements in the last three years.

Teachers' views on decisions about the education programme

In most ECE services it appeared that most participants contributed to some degree in making decisions about what is offered in the education programme. Most teachers (89 percent) indicated teachers/educators made programme decisions. In playcentres, parents are educators in the programme and mostly made decisions.

In services other than playcentres, more than half the parent group contributed to decisions about the education programme. Children also contributed, especially in kindergartens.

Table 50 **Teachers' views of who contributes to decisions about the education programme**

Participation in decisions	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall (n=402) %
Head teacher/supervisor	77	40	75	36	69
Teachers/educators	99	48	92	96	89
Children	79	60	64	59	68
Parents/whānau	61	94	57	64	64

Others involved in making decisions about the programme through consultation were the parent committee (34 percent), and the community (19 percent). Kindergarten teachers were more likely to mention consultation with these two groups, and education and care teachers were less likely to do so. Only 11 percent said that decisions were made by teachers/educators without consultation.

Gathering data about learning

Most teachers (80 percent) gave between six and 10 methods that they use to gather data about children's learning. The main methods being used were related to the focus in professional development and resources at the time on credit modes of assessment, use of photographs and narrative stories that could be used in a range of ways to analyse learning and share with parents and whānau, and working together as a team to analyse teaching and learning.

The seven most frequent methods were:

- photographs/digital photographs (90 percent)
- conversations with children (90 percent)
- examples of children's work (89 percent)
- discussion among teachers/educators (87 percent)
- consultation with parents (86 percent)
- learning stories[16] (78 percent)
- anecdotal records (75 percent).

Event recording/scatter plotting and time sampling were indicated by 41 and 40 percent respectively. Other formal means of gathering data were selected by smaller numbers—own tests/checklists (22 percent), video recordings (13 percent), audio recordings and published tests (4 percent each).

[16] A Learning Story is "a documented account of a child's learning event, structured around five key behaviours: taking an interest, being involved, persisting with difficulty, expressing a point of view or feeling, and taking responsibility (or taking another point of view)… A Teaching Story, on the other hand, is about evaluating practice" (Carr et al., 2000 pp. 7–8).

Uses made of documentation about children's learning

Most teachers (76 percent) selected six to nine different uses they made of data gathered about children's learning. Most used the data to provide feedback for parents/whānau, develop individual plans/programmes, monitor children's progress, and for evaluation.

Table 51 **Teachers' use of documentation about children's learning**

Documentation	Teachers (n-402) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Provide feedback for parents/whānau	92	
Develop individual plans	87	
Monitor children's progress	87	Playcentre (75%)
Evaluate the programme	85	
Develop a relevant programme for individual children	85	Kindergarten (95%)
Develop a relevant programme for group/s of children	83	Kindergarten (94%), home based (59%)
Provide feedback for children	62	Kindergarten (81%), home based (46%)
Evaluate the teachers' practice	61	Kindergarten (81%), home based (32%)
Provide information to school/kura when child enrols	31	Playcentre (19%), home based (18%)

Fewer teachers were using data to provide feedback to children or to evaluate teachers' practice. The exception was kindergarten teachers who reported a high level of use of data to provide feedback to children and evaluate their practice. This may be because kindergarten associations have expected these processes will be followed and provided professional support for them.

There was a low use of data to pass on to schools or kura when the child enrols there.

Most teachers said they communicated with parents about the child's learning by using a child profile book/portfolio (92 percent), or regular informal contact (88 percent). This was validated by the parents when they were asked the same question. Fifty percent of teachers said they used formal discussions with parents, and 41 percent made written reports. Teachers in the various service groups were very alike in their ways of communicating with parents.

Barriers to assessing, planning, and documenting

Sixty-two percent of teachers said that there were barriers to assessing, documenting, and planning in the way they would like to, and often there was more than one barrier. Only 29 percent said that there were no such barriers.

Lack of time was the main barrier:

- Fifty-seven percent of all teachers reported not having enough time for assessing, planning, and documenting.
- Twenty-three percent indicated that having no noncontact time during the working day was a barrier for them, particularly teachers in education and care services. Kindergarten teachers were less likely to mention this as a barrier.
- Eleven percent of teachers did not have access to appropriate tools, such as photocopiers and cameras.
- Five percent did not have access to relevant frameworks for documenting learning.

In comparison with other teachers, a higher percentage of teachers who stated that there *were* barriers to assessing, documenting, and planning in the way they would like were also more likely to be using data to monitor progress, develop individual and group programmes, provide feedback to parents and children, provide information to schools/kura, evaluate their programme, and evaluate their own practice. This suggests that teachers who engage comprehensively in these processes may be under pressure from time barriers.

Other issues about curriculum, assessment, planning, and evaluation

Teachers were asked for further comments about curriculum, assessment, planning, and evaluation. There seemed to be some real issues with some teachers feeling rather overwhelmed, as follows:

- Time/noncontact periods/staffing issues:

  Time and staffing provide real barriers in relation to assessment and planning. (Home based)

  There isn't enough time in the day to evaluate and assess 45 children. (Kindergarten)

- Professional development and skill-related barriers to successful planning/assessment:

  Professional development is needed on a regular basis to keep up to date with current practices required by MOE. (Education and care)

  Each of us have different training, skill levels, values, computer literacy, familiarity with L/S (Learning Story) approach. A closer support group would be good to stimulate planning. (Kindergarten)

- Problems with systems:

  The systems used in centres must be manageable and useful. (Kindergarten)

  Always changing. Very hard to keep up! (Kindergarten)

There were also positive views of planning and assessment:

- Positive comments on value of narrative credit-based approaches:

  I very much enjoy the learning story method of assessment, planning, and evaluation. (Kindergarten)

- Positive comment on starting to develop planning/assessment systems:

  We have just started profile books on the advice of ERO. Consulted with other early childhood centres/kindergartens, and are pleased we are on track. (Education and care)

Biculturalism

Te reo Māori in ECE service

Te reo Māori was spoken every day at least some of the time in 63 percent of the ECE services.

Playcentre and home-based educators were more likely than kindergarten or education and care centre teachers to report only occasional use of te reo Māori. This is consistent with other evidence: the six playcentres in the *Quality in Parent/Whānau-led Services* study (Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara & Wylie, 2006b) were rated low on evidence of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori.

Table 52 **Te reo Māori spoken in ECE service**

Frequency of speaking te reo	Teachers (n=402) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Every day, a lot of the time	6	Playcentre (2%)
Every day, some of the time	63	Home based (41%), playcentre (46%)
Occasionally	29	Playcentre (48%), home based (50%)
Never	1	Home based (5%)

The main uses of te reo were for:

- greetings and farewells (90 percent), commands (70 percent)
- waiata and karakia (36 percent)
- communication about activities and ideas (20 percent), questioning (18 percent), books and stories (6 percent), and numbers and counting (6 percent).

One teacher commented:

> The teachers and leadership are keen to include Māori phrases, words, tikanga, etc. but help we get is only on a temporary basis. It seems that unless we have a Māori member of some sort on a regular and frequent basis even our best intentions are not enough.

Biculturalism in ECE service

Ritchie (2003) has analysed how *Te Whāriki* can be regarded as a guiding document for bicultural development. She notes the overview statement that "In early childhood settings all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritages of both parties to the Treaty of Waitangi" (p. 9) and the explicit requirements to support the use of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and particular Māori content (activities, stories and events, and Māori ways of knowing and making sense of the world). Educators are expected to be aware of bicultural issues, and proactive in identifying racism. Critiquing practice and programmes should include reflections about bicultural aspects. Bicultural development should involve local Māori.

Our survey examined a limited aspect of biculturalism in ECE services: teachers' perceptions of use of te reo Māori and Māori content.

The largest number of responses (52 percent) was that *a little* emphasis was given to biculturalism. Kindergarten teachers were somewhat more likely, and education and care teachers and home-based educators somewhat less likely, to report that a lot of emphasis was put on biculturalism.

Thirty-eight percent reported *that a lot* of emphasis was given to biculturalism, compared with the 6 percent who said te reo was spoken every day for a lot of the time.

Table 53 **Emphasis given to biculturalism**

Degree of emphasis	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall n=402) %
A lot	47	44	31	27	38
A little	47	46	57	59	52
Not sure	0	0	4	5	2
None	1	2	2	9	5

Multiculturalism

Similarly, 59 percent of teachers said that a little emphasis was put on multiculturalism by their ECE service, and 29 percent said that a lot of emphasis was put on it. Responses to this question did not differ by ECE service.

Table 54 **Emphasis given to multiculturalism**

Degree of emphasis	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall (n=402) %
A lot	27	33	30	27	29
A little	66	58	54	55	59
Not sure	1	6	5	14	4
None	5	0	7	5	5

We categorised centres as "high NESB" if they had five or more children from non-English speaking homes (these were only found in kindergartens and education and care centres), and "low NESB" if they had fewer than five. A higher percentage of teachers in centres rated "high

NESB" placed a lot of emphasis on multiculturalism in their service compared with those rated low:

- Kindergarten (58 percent rated "high NESB" placed a lot of emphasis on multiculturalism compared with 21 percent rated "low NESB").
- Education and care (56 percent rated "high NESB" placed a lot of emphasis on multiculturalism compared with 25 percent rated "low NESB").

Teachers' main achievements in last three years

The achievements identified by teachers/educators were similar to the focus of Ministry of Education resources and professional development emphasis being offered at the time. The majority of teachers from all services felt that increasing their own knowledge and skills had been one of their main achievements in the last three years. Most teachers/educators regarded creating a more positive learning environment as a main achievement. Home-based educators were less likely to rate this and other aspects of curriculum implementation such as developing a more creative programme and confidence in use of *Te Whāriki* as major achievements. Playcentre educators' increased confidence in using *Te Whāriki*, and kindergarten teachers' higher ratings of achievement in respect to assessment and evaluation, involvement of parents in children's learning, and collaborative activities may have reflected service priorities placed on these. The three items rated higher by kindergartens may have been linked if these teachers were strengthening their assessment and evaluation practices by involving parents and community.

Table 55 **Main achievements as a teacher/educator in last three years**

Achievement	Teachers (n=402) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Increase in my own knowledge and skills	83	Playcentre (73%)
Creating a more positive learning environment	76	Home based (64%)
Better at meeting needs of individual children	70	
Improved assessment and evaluation practices	68	Kindergarten (84%), home based (46%)
More confident using *Te Whāriki*	64	Playcentre (75%), home based (50%)
Involvement of parents with children's learning	60	Kindergarten (72%)
A more creative and responsive programme	57	Home based (46%)
Better at meeting needs of a particular group	47	Home based (27%)
Improved collaboration with community organisations	20	Kindergarten (30%)

Summary

Since publication of *Te Whāriki* in 1996, Ministry of Education publications, resources, and professional development have put considerable emphasis on curriculum, especially assessment that engages teachers, families, children, and others so they can be involved in fostering learning, and in planning, evaluation, and self-review.

The Ministry focus on assessment was reflected in the teachers' reports of collection of data which could be shared with others and used formatively, i.e., photographs, records of children's conversations, examples of work, learning stories, and anecdotal records. Teachers also placed store on discussion amongst themselves and consultation with parents to gather information about children's learning. A small percentage of teachers were using tests and checklists, which do not lend themselves well to formative assessment.

Just over half the teachers were involving parents and children in making decisions about the education programme. Playcentre parents were more involved than other parents in these processes.

Insufficient time was the main barrier to assessing, planning, and evaluation. Insufficient time was also linked to having little/no noncontact time in the working day, especially for teacher/ educators from services other than kindergarten. Teachers who engaged more comprehensively in assessment, planning, and evaluation processes were also more likely to state that insufficient time was a barrier, suggesting that they were hard pressed to do this work.

Te Whāriki is a bicultural curriculum. In most ECE services, at least a little te reo Māori was spoken every day. However, the main usage was limited to greetings and commands. About half the teachers said they placed a little emphasis on biculturalism.

Over half the teachers said they placed a little emphasis on multiculturalism, but teachers in services with five or more children from non-English speaking homes said they placed a lot of emphasis on multiculturalism.

Teachers' main achievements over the last three years were related to improvements in teaching and learning practices. These were increasing their knowledge and skills, creating a more positive learning environment, becoming better at meeting needs of individual children, improved assessment and evaluation practices, greater confidence in using *Te Whāriki*, and involving parents in children's learning.

13. Professional development

The Ministry of Education offers contestable contracts for delivery of professional development linked to the ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki*. Professional development providers include universities/colleges of education, some ECE representative organisations, and some private providers. In addition, professional development and support is provided for kindergarten teachers through kindergarten senior teachers, and for playcentres through playcentre associations. Teachers/educators are not required to undertake professional development and in some isolated localities they have to travel to participate in professional development.

In late 2003, 14 ECE professional development providers were approaching the end of the first year of a two-year contract with Ministry of Education. The overarching aims of this professional development were to increase quality of teaching and learning for diverse children, in partnership with families/whānau. The objectives included strengthening understanding of the bicultural nature of *Te Whāriki* and building bicultural pedagogy and practice. There was focus on Pasifika early childhood services, effective governance and management systems, and practices and support for struggling and newly licensed services. However, in practice, the focus of professional development was diverse, because services had different needs.

In this section, we examine the delivery, uptake, and value of professional development from management and teacher perspectives.

Managers' professional development

Managers' uptake of professional development

Most managers had undertaken professional development in the last 12 months for their management role, and this was usually considerable. Forty percent of managers had received 30 or more hours of professional development in the last 12 months, and 26 percent had received between 15 and 30 hours. The most common professional development had been in staff appraisal (58 percent), self-review/quality improvement (56 percent), and educational leadership (45 percent). Playcentre parent management had had less on staff appraisal (16 percent) and self-review (28 percent), but more on administration (47 percent, compared with 32 percent for other services).

For those also in a teaching role the two most frequent types of professional development for managers were assessment (49 percent), and evaluation (46 percent). About a third had also had

professional development in educational theory (37 percent), teacher appraisal (36 percent), te reo and tikanga Māori (33 percent), and children's behaviour (30 percent).

In most cases (72 percent) the early childhood service paid for managers' professional development. However, 36 percent of managers reported paying for it themselves, and this was particularly so for kindergarten head teachers (54 percent).

Delivery of professional development to managers

Managers received their professional development in different ways, with some service variations, but the most common form of delivery was one-off seminars or conferences (62 percent), followed by service-wide professional development and personal study.

Table 56 **Form of managers' professional development**

Form	ECE managers (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
One-off seminars or conferences with specific focus	62	Kindergarten (76%), playcentre (31%)
Service-wide PD focused on own practice	49	Kindergarten (63%), playcentre (25%)
Personal study	46	Kindergarten (60%), playcentre (19%)
Annual conference of an educational organisation	24	Playcentre (0%)
Action and inquiry-based learning	18	
Internet groups/List-serve	3	Playcentre (0%), home based (0%)

Thirty percent of managers sometimes participated in two or more programmes or courses at the same time, with playcentre managers less likely to do so (9 percent).

Professional development took place in the evenings (60 percent), during ECS hours (55 percent), after ECS hours (52 percent), and weekends (48 percent).

Managers' preferred professional development providers

Managers were asked who they would most like to receive professional development from in the next year. Professional development providers were the top preference. Experienced teachers in the service were also among the top preferences for playcentre parent management and kindergarten head teachers.

Differences emerged between services on preferences, with playcentre parent management wanting professional development from someone skilled within their own service, and home-

based co-ordinators having no particular preferences. The kindergarten head teachers and education and care managers appeared to be more open to a wide variety of expertise from different organisations. Unfortunately we omitted to ask about playcentre associations, likely to be the main form of professional development for playcentres. This helps explain why playcentre parent management did not express preferences other than for working with experienced educators from their playcentre.

Table 57 **ECE managers' preferred professional development providers**

Preferred professional development provider	ECE managers (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Professional development provider	55	Playcentre (19%)
Experienced teachers within own ECS	39	Kindergarten (53%), Playcentre (47%)
Experienced teachers from other ECSs	32	Kindergarten (48%), playcentre (9%)
Teacher education providers	34	Playcentre (3%)
University/tertiary providers	38	Playcentre (13%)
MOE	29	Home based (0%), playcentre (9%)
Group Special Education	18	Home based (0%), playcentre (6%)
Kindergarten senior teacher	15	Home based (0%), education and care (2%), playcentre (7%), kindergarten (43%)
No preference	16	

Face-to-face delivery was the almost universally preferred form of professional development (91 percent of managers). The distance delivery option using e-learning and the Internet was chosen by 18 percent, and only 3 percent chose videoconferencing.

The preferred professional development opportunities managers would like in the future were in order of preference:

- one-off seminars/workshops/conferences (75 percent)
- whole service professional development (69 percent)
- access to readable research evidence on current ECE theory and pedagogy (54 percent)
- access to a wider pool of ECE knowledge and research (48 percent).

Two-thirds (68 percent) of all managers said they intended doing some training for their work in ECE over the next 12 months, in their own time, and the most frequently mentioned areas of training were educational leadership (31 percent), and upgrading ICT skills (30 percent).

Outcomes of professional development for managers

Managers were asked if their new professional learning over the past year had resulted in trying new strategies in their ECE service, and most said it had. Kindergarten head teachers, education and care managers, and home-based co-ordinators were more likely to say it had.

Table 58 **ECE managers' views of whether new strategies have resulted from their past year's professional development**

Result of professional development	ECE managers (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Most of it has resulted in new strategies	29	Playcentre (13%)
Some of it has resulted in new strategies	58	
None of it has resulted in new strategies	2	
Not sure	5	
Did not have any	2	

About half the managers said that all the staff participated in professional development together and shared their knowledge.

Fewer playcentre management reported this, probably because playcentre parents tend to participate in playcentre association course work, which covers different levels. Within any playcentre, different parents are working at different levels.

Table 59 **ECE managers' views on opportunities to share their knowledge from professional development with their staff**

View	Kindergarten (n=79) %	Playcentre (n=32) %	Education and care (n=113) %	Home based (n=14) %	Overall (n=242) %
All the staff participated together and shared their knowledge	47	19	56	57	48
Manager actively sought the opportunity to share	52	38	47	43	47
It was expected of manager	39	28	29	29	32
No sharing of knowledge	9	16	4	0	7

Teachers' professional development

Teachers varied considerably in how many hours of professional development they had received over the previous 12 months. About a third had less than 15 hours (31 percent), a similar number had between 15 and 30 hours (31 percent), and just over a third had 31 hours or more (35 percent).

Education and care centre teachers tended to have less professional development, and kindergarten teachers to have more. Thirty-nine percent of education and care centre teachers had less than 15 hours, whereas only 20 percent of kindergarten teachers did. Conversely, 62 percent of kindergarten teachers had over 21 hours of professional development, whereas the figure for education and care centre teachers was 41 percent.

The three most frequent areas of professional development for teachers were assessment for learning (48 percent), teacher appraisal/performance management (42 percent), and evaluation (41 percent). Other areas in which more than a third of teachers had professional development were educational theory (36 percent), te reo and tikanga Māori (33 percent), and children's behaviour (33 percent).

There were some differences between the ECE service types in how many teachers had received professional development, and they were as follows:

- More kindergarten teachers had received professional development in three areas—upgrading their ICT skills, teacher appraisal/performance management, and current pedagogy.
- Education and care centre teachers were less likely than others to have received training in upgrading their ICT skills, and te reo and tikanga Māori.
- More playcentre teachers had professional development in te reo and tikanga Māori, but less in teacher appraisal/performance management, and current pedagogy.

Twenty-three percent of teachers mentioned other areas in which they had professional development. Six percent did courses or other learning in first aid, health and safety, or children's physical development. Six percent also had professional development in various specific methodologies or approaches—e.g. learning stories, narrative therapy, teaching thinking, Montessori teaching. Five percent of teachers studied for formal qualifications such as BTchg/BEd, qualifications for registration, ECE diploma, postgraduate child advocacy study.

Sixty-six percent of teachers had never participated in more than one programme or course at a time, but 29 percent were in two or more courses at some point.

Professional development was usually paid for by the ECE service or in a third of cases by the teacher herself.

Other funders of professional development were the kindergarten and playcentre associations and GSE, SES, REAP, MUCE, and WINZ.

Kindergarten teachers were more likely to have their professional development paid for by a professional development provider, and this was less likely to be the case for education and care centre teachers. Playcentre educators were more likely than other groups to have professional development provided by voluntary organisations although the total numbers were small.

Delivery of professional development for teachers

The most common delivery style for teachers' professional development, as with the managers' professional development, was one-off seminars or conferences. Over half the teachers had had service-wide professional development focused on their own practice, and 13 percent reported undertaking action and inquiry-based learning. A best evidence synthesis of research evidence on professional development found that investigating teaching and learning within the early childhood setting is one characteristic of effective professional development linked to enhanced teaching and learning (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). Action research methods have been emphasised in Centre of Innovation work and in Ministry of Education resources.

Table 60 **Form of teachers' professional development**

Form	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall (n=402) %
One-off seminars or conferences with a specific focus	76	56	57	55	64
Service-wide PD focused on own practice	57	56	38	36	47
Personal study	47	46	41	46	44
Annual conference of an educational organisation	12	15	14	23	14
Action and inquiry-based learning	14	15	9	18	13
Internet groups/List-serve	3	0	1	5	2

Service-wide professional development focused on teachers' own practice was a more common way of having professional development for kindergarten teachers and playcentre educators, and a less common way for education and care centre teachers and home-based educators.

Eleven percent of teachers described other ways they received professional development including individual sessions with a senior colleague, a tutor, or an adviser; a series of seminars

and hui; various university or college of education courses and workshops; and as a part of staff meetings.

Thirty-five percent of teachers indicated they had received professional development through only one method of delivery, and 32 percent through two different methods.

Teachers' professional development took place after ECE service hours (55 percent), in the evening (54 percent), during ECE service hours (52 percent), in the weekend (41 percent), or during term breaks (28 percent). Kindergarten teachers accounted for most of those (78 percent) who had professional development during term breaks. Playcentre educators were somewhat more likely than others to have professional development during the evenings.

Teachers' main preferences for professional development opportunities are similar to what they currently receive, and also similar to managers' preferences. Teachers would like to have available:

- one-off seminars/workshops/conferences (75 percent)
- whole service professional development (53 percent)
- access to readable research evidence on current ECE theory and pedagogy (49 percent)
- access to a wider pool of ECE knowledge and research, e.g., links with universities, colleges of education, etc. (41 percent), scholarships for overseas study (14 percent), and secondment to other ECE services (11 percent).

Kindergarten and playcentre teachers wanted access to a wider pool of ECE knowledge and research more than other teachers, and kindergarten teachers were more interested in secondment to other ECE services.

Teachers' preferred professional development providers

Teachers favoured quite a range of providers to deliver their future professional development. Thirty percent specified only one provider they would like, but 67 percent indicated two or more providers they would like to receive professional development from in the coming year.

In general, the service groups had similar preferences, but in respect of experienced or skilled teachers/educators *within* their own ECE service, playcentre educators were more likely to favour them as providers of professional development, and education and care centre teachers were less likely to. More kindergarten teachers (and fewer playcentre and home-based educators) wanted university or other tertiary providers.

Table 61 **Preferred professional development providers for teachers**

Preferred professional development type	Teachers (n=402) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Professional development provider	45	Home based (28%)
Experienced teacher within own ECE service	41	Playcentre (65%), education and care (30%)
Experienced teacher from other ECE service	34	Kindergarten (44%)
University/tertiary providers	33	Kindergarten (45%), playcentre (27%)
Teacher education providers	30	Playcentre (12%), home based (19%)
Ministry of Education	27	Home based (6%)
No preferences	18	
Group Special Education	17	

Just like their managers, 88 percent of teachers preferred to receive their professional development face-to-face, and far less (21 percent) said they would choose distance learning, e-learning, and the Internet (16 percent). Only 4 percent only chose videoconferencing.

Teachers' plans for their own education and training

Sixty-four percent of teachers said they planned to do some education or training in their own time over the next 12 months. Playcentre educators were the most likely to indicate that they would do this (80 percent), and education and care centre teachers were the least likely (57 percent). They were asked in which area they might like to do further education and professional development. The intended areas ranged widely, from aspects of teaching and learning, to administration and management. The two most frequently selected areas were children's behaviour, and te reo and tikanga Māori.

Table 62 **Professional development topics teachers intend to study**

Topic	Teachers (n=402) %
Children's behaviour	31
Te reo and tikanga Māori	30
Creative arts	23
Assessment	23
Educational theory	23
Early literacy	23
Early numeracy	23
Upgrading my ICT skills	23
Current pedagogy	22
Evaluation	21
Administration/management skills	21
Expressive arts	20

Playcentre teachers had a particular interest in assessment (42 percent), evaluation (39 percent), and special education (25 percent). Kindergarten teachers were more interested than others in upgrading their ICT skills (37 percent), and education and care centre teachers in outdoor play (20 percent).

Those who were not planning to do any professional development or training in their own time were asked for their reasons. The most common reason was that they could not afford it (9 percent). Four percent had no energy for study after work, or no time (4 percent), no need for further education at present (3 percent), were about to retire (3 percent), or training was unavailable in the area (2 percent). Teachers made various other comments and 2 percent said they could not undertake further training at the present time because of personal circumstances such as pregnancy or family responsibilities. Six had just completed a qualification:

> Have just finished degree, will think about it in six months' time. (Education and care)
>
> After three years' training and full-time work I need a break. (Education and care)

Three could not find a suitable qualification:

> What is required and what is offered does not always correspond. (Education and care)

One commented:

> There is no financial benefit after training. (Education and care)

Qualifications study

Thirty-five percent of teachers were studying for a qualification, mostly a Bachelor's degree (15 percent of all teachers) or a diploma (15 percent). Relatively more playcentre educators and fewer kindergarten teachers were studying. Kindergarten teachers who were studying were mostly doing a Bachelor's degree, whereas playcentre educators were mostly doing diplomas or certificates. Education and care centre teachers were mostly studying towards diplomas or Bachelor's degrees. Five teachers commented that they were studying for teacher registration.

Of those who were studying for qualifications, the largest group (21 percent of all teachers) were or will be studying by distance learning, 19 percent face-to-face, 11 percent in centre-based learning, 3 percent by e-learning/Internet, and 3 percent by a mix of face-to-face and e-learning. Playcentre teachers primarily studied through centre-based learning or face-to-face. Others were more likely to be involved in distance learning.

Professional development outcomes for teachers

Nearly all teachers (93 percent) said that some or most of their professional development, education, or training over the past year had resulted in their trying out new strategies in teaching and learning at their ECE service.

Table 63 **Teacher reports of whether new strategies have resulted from their past year's professional development**

Extent of professional development usefulness	Kindergarten (n=127) %	Playcentre (n=52) %	Education and care (n=191) %	Home based (n=22) %	Overall (n=402) %
Most of it	36	52	40	32	40
Some of it	59	40	52	55	52
None of it	1	0	1	5	1
Did not have any	2	4	3	5	2

Forty-four percent said that they had been able to share their new knowledge with other staff by all the staff participating together and sharing their knowledge. Forty-one percent had actively sought the opportunity to share knowledge, and 24 percent said it was expected of them.

Six percent said they had not had an opportunity to share knowledge, and 6 percent also made comments, most of which indicated limitations on sharing, e.g:

> Have graduated through teachers college but feel my training is undervalued, most staff have trained through polytechs or some other 'open training option'. Don't want to step on toes. (Education and care)
>
> Only some staff interested. (Kindergarten)

> Yes I have shared some knowledge I have gained however, there is little time to share and/or discuss anything in depth. (Kindergarten)
>
> As a long-term reliever I am not in a position to influence changes in the centre in a big way, but there have been opportunities to share knowledge/ideas. (Kindergarten)
>
> Only a very few parents at centre are interested in the deeper WHY of things. Three or four of us. But then other ECE services would have the same number of people doing this I expect. (Playcentre)

Teachers' most useful ideas for their ECE programme over the previous two years had come from other teachers or educators in the service. The finding highlights the importance of teachers sharing and discussing their work together. This could be a way that individual professional development is able to influence other teachers since teachers learn so much from each other. This evidence also reinforces the value of teachers having internal learning conversations, acting as professional learning communities, and of teachers sharing work from the Ministry of Education-funded Centres of Innovation and Education Leadership Project.

Other important sources were teachers' own reflective thinking, one-off courses, conferences (especially for playcentre) or professional development, and their reading.

Table 64 **Sources of teachers' new useful ideas in the last two years**

Source	Teachers (n=402) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Other teachers in the ECE service	76	
Own reflective thinking	58	
One-off courses, conferences	56	Playcentre (71%)
Reading	52	
Ongoing whole service PD	41	Home based (9%)
Visit to another ECE service	39	Kindergarten (52%), home based (0%)
Research findings	25	
Tertiary study	22	Playcentre (4%)
Internet	18	

A visit to another ECE service was one important source of ideas, especially for kindergarten teachers, but educators involved in home-based early childhood services were less likely to use this as a source of ideas.

Teachers were asked how they accessed research information on ECE issues. The most frequent method was by personal contacts (50 percent). Early childhood organisations (48 percent), colleges of education and other teacher education providers (47 percent), journal subscriptions (44

percent), and seminars and conferences (39 percent) were also common means. The Internet and libraries were next with 33 percent using each of these. Playcentre teachers relied more on early childhood organisations and journal subscriptions than did teachers from other services, and less on colleges of education and other providers.

Teachers' advice needs

Forty-six percent of teachers had a particular area of advice/information that they felt they needed for their work but did not have. They identified one or more areas from a list of 20 possibilities, with a wide range chosen. Stress management was the most frequently selected item (13 percent of all teachers), followed by ICT use (11 percent). The next most frequent items were becoming a registered teacher, staff appraisal, and special needs children (each chosen by 9 percent).

Becoming a registered teacher was more likely to be an issue for education and care centre teachers than others.

Between 4 and 8 percent of teachers identified each of the following areas of teaching practice as ones where further advice or information was needed: teaching strategies/practices; planning; children's behaviour; evaluation; assessment; reflective practice; and implementing *Te Whāriki*.

The teachers' final question about professional development referred to any advice/information that they felt their ECE service may have been missing out on, and even though 26 percent said there were areas they were missing out on, most of the responses echoed the previous responses about the individual teacher's needs. Responses fell into the following categories:

- stress management (13 percent)
- pedagogical resources (11 percent)
- improving children's behaviour and social skills (9 percent)
- planning (8 percent)
- educational leadership (8 percent)
- evaluation (8 percent).

Summary

Uptake of professional development by managers and teachers in the previous 12 months was very high. Most had undertaken more than 15 hours professional development. Management professional development commonly focused on management roles of staff appraisal, self-review, and leadership. Teachers' professional development commonly focused on teaching and learning, i.e., assessment, evaluation, educational theory, te reo and tikanga Māori, and children's behaviour, as well as staff appraisal.

The most common delivery of professional development for managers and teachers was through one-off seminars or courses with a specific focus, followed by whole service professional development.

Teachers favoured a range of professional development providers, but a higher percentage of playcentre educators and parent management preferred professional development from someone skilled within their own service.

Almost all managers and teachers thought that professional development resulted in their trying new strategies. Teachers gained their most useful ideas from other teachers in their service. This reinforces the value of opportunities for teachers to work and learn together, and of teachers sharing work through the Ministry of Education-funded Centres of Innovation and Education Leadership Project.

Teachers' greatest needs for advice and information were about stress management, ICT use, staff appraisal, and special needs children. Information about becoming a registered teacher was especially important for education and care teachers.

Service differences in hours and focus were evident. Education and care centre teachers tended to have fewer hours of professional development, and kindergarten teachers, more. Playcentre parent management were less likely to focus on staff appraisal (because often they do not employ staff) and self-review, and more likely to focus on leadership and administration.

14. Reviews of ECE service provision

In this section, we report survey information on self-review undertaken by ECE services themselves, and survey participants' views of external review undertaken by the Education Review Office (ERO).

The Government's Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) (Crown, 1996) sets out mandatory requirements for ECE services in respect to learning and development, communication and consultation, and operation and administration. Under the DOPs, management is required to develop and regularly review a statement of the service's philosophy and charter, and self-review of all DOPs areas is encouraged. At the time of the survey, Ministry of Education resources to support self-review were *The Quality Journey. He Haerenga Whai Hua* (Ministry of Education, 1999) and *Quality in Action. Te Mahi Whai Hua* (Ministry of Education, 1998). *Te Whāriki* reflective questions may also be used to review aspects of teaching and learning. Since the survey was undertaken the Ministry of Education has published *Ngā Arohaehae Whai Hua. Self Review Guidelines for Early Childhood Education* (Ministry of Education, 2006).

An external evaluation of the education and care provided for children in all ECE services is provided by ERO. The nature of the review process had changed in the year before our survey was undertaken. In April 2001, Cabinet approved the report of the Ministerial Review of the Education Review Office that recommended that:

- the Education Review Office (ERO) remain as a stand-alone department
- ERO's reviews focus on educational improvement
- ERO's compliance function is maintained
- ERO and the Ministry of Education work closely together to support improvement in schools and early childhood services.

This replaced a review process which was largely focused on compliance and did not include an improvement support element. ERO began to use the new review process in reviews of all early childhood services from early October 2002 (www.ero.govt.nz/ero/publishing).

Not all services had had these "new style" reviews when we carried out the survey, but we asked those who had what their perceptions of them were.

Self-review/quality improvement

Most managers (90 percent) reported that their ECE service regularly evaluates and reviews its implementation of the DOPs and/or other aspects of the ECE service policies and operation, and most teachers (78 percent) were also aware that this happened. Education and care teachers and home-based educators tended to be less aware.

In the previous 12 months, ECE service managers and teachers reported that they had reviewed teaching, learning, and development (managers, 84 percent; teachers, 72 percent), communication and consultation (managers, 68 percent; teachers, 65 percent), and operation and administration (managers, 67 percent; teachers, 57 percent).

The philosophy had been reviewed by 64 percent, and the charter by 40 percent. Playcentre parent management were less likely to report that the philosophy had been reviewed and kindergarten more likely to have done this. Over two-thirds of managers had reviewed assessment, planning, and evaluation processes (80 percent), policies related to children's learning (68 percent), and workplace health and safety (67 percent).

Specific areas mentioned as reviewed by more than half of the teachers were: assessment, planning, and evaluation processes (67 percent); workplace health and safety (61 percent); communication and consultation with parents/whānau (56 percent); policies related to children's learning (53 percent); teachers/educator interactions with children (51 percent); children's physical environment (50 percent); and ECE service philosophy (50 percent).

The areas reviewed by the smallest numbers of ECE services, according to managers, were communication and collaboration with community (35 percent), meeting needs of Māori (33 percent), and meeting needs of Pasifika (9 percent). Teachers confirmed this. These are also areas that many respondents are not confident about. As well, only about a third of teachers said they reviewed the charter and financial management policies. They said areas that were least reviewed were the ECE service charter (33 percent), financial management policies (31 percent), communication and collaboration with the community (29 percent), meeting needs of Māori (28 percent), and meeting needs of Pasifika (10 percent).

Ministry of Education resources *Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua*, *The Quality Journey: He Haerenga Whai Hua*, and *Te Whāriki* reflective questions were used most to guide self-review, with managers using them somewhat more than teachers, except for high use of *Te Whāriki* reflective questions by kindergarten teachers and playcentre educators. Kindergartens and education and care services used Ministry of Education resources most; playcentres tended to use resources more from their playcentre association (and playcentre educators made much use of reflective questions in *Te Whāriki*); and home-based services tended to use a range of resources along with their own and those from contracted organisations.

Table 65 **Managers' and teachers' views on resources used to guide self-review**

Resources	Managers' use of resources for self-review (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion	Teachers' use of resources for self-review (n=402) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Quality in Action	73	Playcentre (38%)	56	Kindergarten (68%), home based (36%)
Te Whāriki reflective questions	71	Home based (57%), playcentre (59%)	67	Playcentre (81%), kindergarten (78%)
The Quality Journey	62	Playcentre (16%)	47	Kindergarten (65%), home based (32%)
Reflective questions from learning and teaching stories	45	Playcentre (28%)	36	
Own resources	56	Playcentre (41%), home based (43%)	45	
Resources provided by umbrella organisation	42	Playcentre (97%), kindergarten (71%)	44	Playcentre (83%), kindergarten (83%)
Resources provided by contracted organisation	24	Playcentre (3%)	19	

Self-review processes

Teachers and management were usually involved in self-review, but teachers reported involving parents less often than did management. External advisers, community, and children were usually not involved.

Most managers (87 percent) said their self-review had involved teachers, management (73 percent), and parents (69 percent), but fewer said they had involved children (26 percent), external advisers (21 percent), or the community (12 percent). Kindergartens were more likely to have involved children, and education and care centres and home-based services were more likely to have involved external advisers.

Most teachers (78 percent) indicated that self-reviews involved teachers/educators, 66 percent said they involved management, 52 percent mentioned parents/whānau, 24 percent said external advisers, 18 percent involved children, and 10 percent involved the community. Kindergarten teachers were more likely, and education and care teachers less likely, to indicate that teachers or children were involved in self-reviews. Parents/whānau were more likely to be involved in playcentre reviews than in other services.

Managers and teachers found self-review very useful (managers, 41 percent; teachers, 59 percent) or useful (managers, 48 percent; teachers, 32 percent). Most said it had led to positive changes in the service (managers, 83 percent; teachers, 77 percent). Five percent of managers and 6 percent of teachers found them not generally useful or a waste of time, and 4 percent of teachers said that there had been no changes.

Education Review Office (ERO)

Managers were asked if they had had one of the "new style" ERO reviews focused on education improvement which began in 2002, and 40 percent had (5 percent were not sure), although only 14 percent of home-based services had. Most had seen the ERO report from this review. Most of these found it helpful (38 percent) or very helpful (48 percent).

The main value of the review seemed to be in affirming what the service already did, although about half used it to make positive change. When asked to choose from a list, managers marked the main reasons why the review was thought to be helpful as:

- affirmed current practice (64 percent)
- reinforced confidence in the ECE service (53 percent)
- provided an objective view of the ECE service (51 percent)
- provided impetus for positive change to the ECS programmes (47 percent).

Very few (seven managers in total) found the review unhelpful.

The main areas where changes were made were in education aspects:

- planning (38 percent)
- assessment (36 percent)
- evaluation (36 percent)

followed by self-review (22 percent), strategic planning (22 percent), and health and safety (20 percent).

Nineteen percent of the managers who had had "new style" reviews said their review had been reported in the media. None marked that this had a negative impact.

Parents' views on ERO

Parent committee members (94 percent) were more aware than parents (77 percent) that ERO reviewed their service regularly. Both groups were less sure about how to contact their local ERO office, with 59 percent of parents and 37 percent of committee members being unsure or answering they did not know how to contact ERO. Fifty-nine percent of committee members and 37 percent of parents had read their latest ERO report. Over half of those who had read the report found it useful and had used it (parent committee, 57 percent; parents, 59 percent), and 25 percent of parents and 29 percent of committee members thought it should be useful. This finding

suggests the value to parents of encouraging more parents to read or discuss their latest ERO report.

Summary

Self-review against the Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs)' three strands of learning and development, communication and consultation, and operation and administration, was being undertaken by most services. The aspects least likely to be reviewed were communication and collaboration with community, meeting needs of Māori, and meeting needs of Pasifika. These were also aspects where participants were lacking in confidence. Many were using Ministry of Education resources (*Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua*, *The Quality Journey: He Haerenga Whai Hua*, and *Te Whāriki* reflective questions) to guide service review. Kindergartens and playcentres used resources from their associations, and education and care centres and home-based services were more likely to involve external advisers. Parents were more likely to be involved in reviews undertaken by management, than reviews undertaken by teachers, and community and children were rarely involved. On the whole, reviews were perceived as useful, with most reporting positive change occurring as a result.

A substantial minority of managers said their service had had a "new style" ERO review, focused on educational improvement as well as compliance. Of these, most found the review helpful, largely because it affirmed what they were already doing. Almost half thought their ERO review provided positive impetus for change to the ECE programme, with changes being most prevalent in processes of assessment, planning, and evaluation, followed by strategic planning and self-review processes, and health and safety.

Only about half of the committee members and parents had read the most recent ERO report on their service or knew how to contact their local ERO office, although most parents knew that ERO reviewed their service. Where parents had read the report, most thought it was helpful and had used it. Data on parent choice indicated that few parents used ERO in making choices about ECE services. In combination, these findings suggest that a useful source of information is not being accessed by parents.

15. Relationships with other local ECE services and schools

One of the goals of *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Crown,2002), the strategic plan for early childhood education, is to promote coherence of education between birth and age 6, to support continuity in education. The strategic plan focuses on ECE and primary school teachers developing greater understanding about each other's pedagogical approaches and curriculum, and finding out about effective transition practices. Another consideration, however, in terms of coherence between educational settings, is linkages between ECE settings where children attend more than one.

Linkages between ECE services may also offer opportunity for professional support. We asked teachers about their relationships with other ECE services, including where children attend more than one service, and schools.

Relationships with other local ECE services

Over a third (36 percent) of teachers said that they had limited or no contact with other ECE services. Fewer kindergarten teachers (23 percent) said that this was the case. Comments suggested that where there was contact, this was generally with the same service type.

Kindergartens appeared to have the greatest contact with other ECE services on several counts. Fifty-three percent of kindergarten teachers shared professional development with other services, compared to 30 percent of the others in total (playcentre being the exception with 39 percent); 50 percent had social contact with other teachers/educators compared to 31 percent; 47 percent said they shared resources and provided mutual support, compared to 30 percent; and 35 percent shared specialist support compared to 21 percent.

ECE teachers rarely formed professional links if children were attending more than one ECE service. Only 4 percent reported regular meetings occurring between teachers from both ECE services. Fifty-one percent of teachers reported that no relationship existed between the two services when this was the case. Forty-one percent reported not even knowing if children were attending another service. At best 15 percent reported occasional phone calls when something unusual happened. From the written comments, the most usual connection concerned children with special needs, and the most common link was through parents, e.g. "Often the child's parent/caregiver is the key link with sharing interests/needs."

Twenty-five percent of teachers believed there could be stronger linkages developed between ECE services where children attended more than one, but 59 percent were not sure. Communication between centres using phone, email, visits, meetings, seminars, group visits, exchanges, and network building were suggested ways of developing stronger linkages. Sharing information such as children's IEPs and profiles as well as discussing developmental and behavioural issues was another idea mentioned by many teachers, although several responses suggested it was parents' responsibility to ensure this happened.

Obstacles of time, resources, competition, and insufficient parent involvement were identified as making it difficult to develop stronger linkages between services:

> Sounds ideal but means another meeting, another phone call, more paperwork. (Kindergarten)

> This one rests on the personal and professional integrity of the management staff. If a service is threatened and manipulates and bullies parents to choose one service over another in their own interest, rather than that of the family or child concerned, then it takes very strong parents to stand up for their rights to choose and resist such unprofessional tactics. This makes it a challenge for us to relate professionally to the other local ECE setting. (Kindergarten)

Suggestions on how to solve these ranged from more resourcing and funding for time and meetings, better communications, more parent involvement and support, to a need to understand the value of a holistic approach to care and education:

> Teachers having more time, more inclination to share knowledge and resources etc. It occurs in areas of child's health care, but in education, that communication between services is limited or nonexistent. Need to understand and appreciate the value of holistic care and education. (Hospital)

> Paid group meetings for services in same area, specifically kindy and ECE institutions that care for same children. (Education and care)

> We are hoping to work with a local kindergarten, which will operate in mornings. We are hoping to transport children to our afternoon sessions. (Education and care)

Relationships with local primary schools/kura

A third of teachers said their ECE service had no or limited contact with local schools. Twenty-seven percent of teachers shared information on individual children with their local schools, with kindergarten teachers most likely to do so. Twenty-four percent of kindergarten teachers also shared resources and provided mutual support.

Table 66 **Teacher perceptions of ECE service relations with local schools/kura**

Relations	Teachers (n=402) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
No/limited contact	33	Playcentre 48%
Varies	28	Kindergarten (39%)
Share information on individual children	27	Kindergarten (43%), home based (0%)
Share resources, provide mutual support	16	Home based (5%)
Social contact with staff	11	None
Share specialist support	9	None
Share professional development	5	Home based (0%)

Some thought primary school teachers' perceptions were a barrier to contact:

> Limited by some teachers' perception of ECE. (Senior teachers in junior school)

Where comments were positive, they indicated reciprocal visiting and shared resources and professional development:

> Local school junior staff visit us, we visit school—always welcome! (Kindergarten)

> School encourages us to use resources like ICT. Also involved in an early literacy programme with school. (Kindergarten)

School transition practices

For many ECE services, establishing good transition practices with local schools would be demanding, because they contribute to more than one or two schools. In over half the ECE services (54 percent) teachers reported children went on to three or more local schools/kura. Some services said their children went on to up to 10 local schools.

The majority of ECE teachers saw the transitioning process as mainly parents' responsibility and encouraged parents/whānau to visit the schools they were considering with their child. One-third of teachers overall (33 percent) (rather more playcentre educators at 44 percent) reported visiting the school or schools with the children, and 28 percent of teachers reported visits from school children back to their service.

In ECE services that contributed to only one or two local schools compared with those contributing to three or more local schools, teachers were more likely to:

- take the children to visit the school (46 percent compared with 30 percent)
- work with school teachers to understand each other's curriculum (23 percent compared with 13 percent)

- work with school teachers to understand each other's approaches to teaching and learning (19 percent compared with 9 percent).

Twelve percent of teachers reported other ways of supporting transition, including teaching staff involvement, and sharing of documentation about the child:

> Kaiako goes with child on first day. (Education and care)
>
> Child's portfolio encouraged to give to new teacher. (Kindergarten)
>
> Principal is now coming over twice a term to talk and read to children. (Kindergarten)
>
> Children who will attend Montessori primary have approximately six weeks of transition time visiting their new class. (Education and care)

Just under half the teachers surveyed (45 percent) believed there were ways that stronger links could be developed to assist transition between their ECE service and primary schools/kura, but 37 percent did not believe there were. Suggestions for developing stronger links fell into four main themes:

a) *Sharing of curriculum and student information*. Many teachers commented on the need to share knowledge about each sector's curriculum, professional development, processes, profiles, practices, and attitudes. A comment that summed this up was:

> Need to be committed to developing understanding of each other's curriculum and each other's approaches to teaching and learning. (Education and care)

Some thought that *Te Whāriki* was beginning to be understood in the schools sector:

> Curriculum links—*Te Whāriki* and the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (the school's curriculum). Schoolteachers are beginning to take on board the ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki*. (Education and care)

There was also recognition that student information could be usefully shared, as the following comment illustrated:

> Personal profile sent with child from ECE. At least one meeting of ECE, school, and parents/whānau. (Education and care)

b) *More communication and interaction of staff* between ECE services and schools/kura, via reciprocal visits, workshops, phone, email, and meetings. Typical comments included:

> Visits by teachers into session and the return of school visits by centre staff and their pupils. (Kindergarten)
>
> More formal discussion between schools and ECE—put in place by schools perhaps. (Education and care)

c) *Increasing child familiarity with the school* they will transition to. Comments here referred to school visits, resources, parent/whānau involvement, and creating community relationships, such as:

> More visits, certain children are fine, others need a little extra time and support. (Education and care)
>
> Whānau link to the kura. Child to have regular visits to the kura. (Education and care)
>
> Children from ECE being invited to classes, concerts, etc. (Education and care)

Suggestions of ways to implement stronger transition of children to school programmes usually involved more resources in terms of time and money, e.g. so that staff could be released, or lower staff:child ratios to give more time to do these things.

Sharing activities and outings was another set of suggestions such as cultural events, shows, sports days, pet days, folk dances, and concerts. Having a liaison person to service all ECE centres was one proposal:

> Liaison person to streamline and support children's transition to school from ECE centre and to liaise with teachers. One appointed in local area to support all schools and ECEs in the area. (Kindergarten)

A few teachers' responses were, however, rather pessimistic because of perceived obstacles such as time, limited resources, attitudes, and logistical problems. Some of these comments included:

> We feed into so many schools we need to remain fair to all schools and not favour one against another. (Kindergarten)
>
> Offer information to try to get better relationships, but most of the time teachers don't really want to know. (Kindergarten)
>
> Zoning is an issue in this area to many children, so schools don't feel as if they need to encourage ECE links. (Kindergarten)

Summary

Collaboration between ECE services of different types was minimal. Where there was collaboration this was mainly to share professional development, followed by sharing resources, and providing mutual support. Kindergartens reported the highest levels of collaboration, and this was with other kindergartens in their association. Main obstacles to forming closer relationships with other ECE services were time, resources, and competition between services.

When children attended more than one ECE service, about half of the teachers/educators reported no relationship with the other service existed. The most usual contact in this situation was through parents. A substantial minority did not know whether any of their children attended more than one service.

A third of ECE services had no or limited contact with their local school, and most regarded transition of individual children to school as largely a parental responsibility. Over half the services had children graduating to three or more schools. Where ECE services had specific transition practices these were mainly visits to one school with children or visits from school

children to the service. These practices and working with school teachers to understand teaching and learning approaches and curriculum were more likely in services where children graduated to only one or two schools, indicating the difficulties in undertaking such transition practices where there are more schools to relate to.

Teachers thought continuity for children would be strengthened through primary and ECE teachers sharing curriculum and pedagogical understanding, and sharing ECE assessment information about individual children.

16. Major issues, priorities, and changes wanted

Major issues

Managers, parent committee members, and parents were asked to mark from a list the three major issues confronting their ECE service. Insufficient funding stood out as the major issue for all three groups.

Managers

Insufficient funding levels were identified as the major issue confronting their ECE service by almost two-thirds of managers. Playcentre and home-based management were less likely to identify this as a major issue than kindergarten and education and care management.

This survey was undertaken before the change to a cost-drivers funding formula and substantial increases in funding of $307m announced in the May 2004 Budget and implemented from 1 April 2005, so these views may have changed. On the other hand, concerns have recently been expressed about funding rates for the 20 free hours for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Other major issues were priorities for particular services and reflected unique pressures on these service types:

- Teachers' pay was a major issue for education and care centre managers. These managers were also more concerned than others with recruitment of teachers and the quality of teachers. While the same requirement to employ registered teachers as currently exists for kindergarten teachers is being extended to education and care centres, the national collective employment agreement providing pay parity with school teachers that exists for kindergarten teachers has not been negotiated for education and care centre teachers. The Government is not a party to education and care centre teachers' employment agreements as it is for kindergarten teachers. Only some education and care centre teachers belong to the union and employer-negotiated Consenting Parties Collective Employment Agreement which offers pay parity rates. Others are covered by a range of agreements. Inevitably there are variations in rates of pay. In addition, this survey has shown that leave provisions, contact hours, paid noncontact time, and provision for staff meetings are variable in this sector. Thus, some education and care services may be less attractive to qualified ECE staff.
- Insufficient parents available for office holding positions and support from parents/ community was a major concern for playcentre and kindergarten management. Property was also a major issue for playcentre. Kindergarten and playcentre in this survey were shown to

have higher levels of volunteer input than other service types, and parent volunteers play a major role in all aspects of playcentre. This finding is likely to reflect the workload pressures on volunteers. We have also found similar volunteer workload pressures for playcentres in three recent studies.[17] Since these studies were undertaken, the Government has increased playcentre funding from 1 July 2006 in order to ensure playcentres are more financially sustainable, and help reduce the time playcentre volunteers currently need to spend on administration, so they can spend more time with children.

- Teacher:child ratios was a major issue for kindergarten head teachers. This priority is consistent with this survey's finding that kindergarten head teachers were much more likely than other service managers to rate their adult:child ratios as inadequate or barely adequate. Research by Renwick (1995) indicates that high child:adult ratios (many children to adults) and large group size is a perennial issue for kindergartens.

Table 67 **Major issues confronting ECE service managers**

Issue	Overall percentage (n=242) %	Types differing markedly from overall proportion
Funding levels	65	Playcentre (50%), home based (50%)
Teacher/educator pay	41	Education and care (61%), playcentre (3%)
Insufficient parents available for office holding positions	35	Playcentre (59%), kindergarten (57%)
Property maintenance and development	33	Playcentre (47%), home based (7%)
Recruitment of teachers/educators	33	Education and care (49%), kindergarten (14%), playcentre (16%)
Assessment, planning, and evaluation practices for children's learning	30	
Support from parents/community	29	Playcentre (47%), kindergarten (43%)
Teacher/educator to child ratios	29	Kindergarten (66%), playcentre (0%)
Quality of teachers/educators	28	Education and care (40%), playcentre (9%), kindergarten (18%)

[17] *An Evaluation of Initial Uses and Impact of Equity Funding* (Mitchell et al., 2006a), *Quality in Parent/Whānau-led Services* (Mitchell et al., 2006b), and in *A Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki – Phase 1* (Mitchell et al., in press).

Committee members

Committee members reflected managers' priorities on funding levels with 57 percent identifying it as the major issue. Other issues related to their role within the ECE service. A higher percentage of committee members than managers (47 percent compared with 35 percent) had concerns over the number of parents/caregivers available for office holder positions, especially playcentre (56 percent) and kindergarten (51 percent). Forty-five percent of committee members prioritised support from parents/community, and 37 percent felt recruiting volunteers was a major issue. Volunteer workload was a major issue for 49 percent of playcentre committee members, whereas it was an issue for 27 percent of all service committee members. Two comments from playcentre committee members that backed up the volunteer issue were:

> The number of parents who are in the workforce juggling work and playcentre. (Playcentre)
>
> Amount of paperwork now required to please ERO puts extra pressure on already overworked volunteers, turns people away from playcentre because of time commitment. (Playcentre)

Property maintenance and development was an issue for about a third (32 percent) of committee members.

Other issues for committee members included difficulty in attracting quality and qualified staff, personnel problems, fundraising, an increase in children with special needs, and administration demands.

Parents

The biggest issue for parents was insufficient funding levels with 63 percent overall indicating this. More kindergarten parents (80 percent) regarded this as an issue than other parents. Twenty-six percent of parents in all services indicated that the next two major issues were property maintenance and development, and support from parents and community. Again, kindergarten parents (44 percent) counted this latter issue as more significant than parents from other services. Volunteer workload stood out for 36 percent of playcentre parents as more significant an issue, than other services (15 percent). A typical response was:

> Playcentre is very labour intensive for parents—many opt for easier options and some administration requirements are top heavy and cumbersome for our programme. We lose children at three and a half-four, because people want 'time out' which loads up committed members and peer group when most needed. Administration then weights down the experienced members, but rewards are great! (Playcentre)

The next two most commonly cited "other issues" for parents included:

> Lots of special needs kids. (Hospital care)
>
> Lack of information to parents about child. (Education and care)

Changes participants would like

Committee members and parents

Although parents and committee members were generally happy with their child's ECE education, when asked was there anything they would like to change at their ECE service, 46 percent of committee members and 37 percent of parents said there was. When asked to respond to a list of areas for change, more kindergarten parents (52 percent) and kindergarten committee members (62 percent) tended to want changes than other service parents.

Services differed in their responses to the things they wanted to change. Top priorities for change were:

Kindergarten: better teacher:child ratios (parents, 26 percent; committee, 33 percent); smaller group size (parents, 24 percent; committee, 22 percent); better pay and employment conditions (parents, 24 percent; committee, 30 percent); a more structured programme (parents, 22 percent; committee, 25 percent).

Playcentre: more structured programme (parents, 20 percent; committee, 16 percent); individual help with children (parents, 5 percent; committee, 21 percent); more challenging programme (parents, 16 percent; committee, 19 percent).

Education and care: better pay and employment conditions (parents, 19 percent; committee, 23 percent).

Home based: better pay and employment conditions (parents, 13 percent).

Teachers/educators

When asked to respond to a list, there were six main things that teachers/educators would most like to change. These areas were:

- better pay (34 percent in total), but particularly for education and care teachers (46 percent) and home-based educators (38 percent)
- more funding for ECE service (30 percent in total), but particularly for playcentre educators (35 percent) and education and care teachers (34 percent)
- reduced administration and paperwork (29 percent in total), but particularly for playcentre educators (50 percent)
- reduced group sizes (24 percent in total), but particularly for kindergarten teachers (56 percent)
- more noncontact time (22 percent in total), but particularly for education and care teachers (35 percent)
- improved teacher:child ratios (20 percent in total), but particularly for kindergarten teachers (44 percent).

Managers

When managers were asked if there was anything they would like to change at their ECE service 72 percent said there was. Kindergarten head teachers were the most likely to want changes, but at least one-third of managers from all services would like:

- more individual help for children (46 percent of all managers, but 67 percent of kindergarten head teachers)
- better pay and employment conditions (43 percent of all managers, but 57 percent of education and care managers)
- better ratios (37 percent of all managers, but 80 percent of kindergarten head teachers);
- smaller group sizes (34 percent, which included 81 percent of kindergarten head teachers);
- more use of ICT (31 percent)
- more/better teaching resources (30 percent)
- more emphasis on te reo Māori and Māori culture (30 percent, but 42 percent of kindergarten head teachers)
- more challenging programme or activities for children (30 percent).

The greater emphasis of kindergarten head teachers on wanting more individual help for children may be linked to their desire for smaller group sizes and better ratios emphasised throughout this survey, and the emphasis of education and care centre managers on pay and conditions is also consistent with this aspect being a priority issue for these managers.

Priorities for government action

Managers, committee members, teachers, and parents were asked to assign a priority rating from 1 (extremely low) to 7 (extremely high) to 16 areas for potential government action.

There was consistency among the four groups regarding the three highest priorities. They were:

- teacher quality
- funding levels
- teacher pay and conditions.

Parents and committee members gave slightly lower ratings than teachers and managers on those issues but all saw them as top priority. Teachers and managers from all services rated staffing issues as high priority for government action.

Table 68 **High-priority issues for government action**

Issue	Teachers (n=402) %	Managers (n=242) %	Parents (n=455) %	Parent committee (n=171) %
Teacher quality	75	75	64	64
Funding levels	72	76	58	63
Teacher pay and conditions	73	70	57	49
Staffing ratios	68	64	42	40
Qualifications	66	66	49	50
Teacher workloads	66	64	50	46
Special needs funding and staffing	63	52	36	37
Availability of teachers	61	62	47	46
Support staff funding and professional development	60	47	37	36

There were some variations between services about priorities. The most pronounced differences were:

- more kindergarten respondents than other respondents tended to rate funding, ECE service group size, and staffing ratios as extremely high priority
- more playcentre respondents rated volunteer workloads as an extremely high priority, and property as moderately high, but teacher registration, qualifications, pay and conditions, and staffing ratios lower than other respondents.

Summary

The major issue confronting managers, parents, and parent committee members at the end of 2003/early 2004 was insufficient funding. Top priorities after funding levels reflected pressures that were distinctive for service types:

- Kindergarten respondents wanted improved staff:child ratios and reduced group sizes.
- Education and care respondents wanted better pay and employment conditions.
- Playcentre respondents wanted reduced administration and paper work.
- Home-based respondents wanted better pay and employment conditions.

Overall, from all groups—managers, teachers, parents, and committee members—there was agreement about the highest three priorities for government action. These were improving:

- teacher quality
- funding levels

- teacher pay.

Playcentre respondents were more likely to regard volunteer workload as a major issue than other respondents, and education and care management were more concerned about teacher pay and conditions. Committee members were also concerned about issues surrounding recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Improving teacher quality and funding levels are both issues that the strategic plan is trying to address. The main focus on improving quality is through qualified teachers in teacher-led services, professional development and resources for all services, leadership programmes where teachers can learn from each other, and slightly improved staff:child ratios. The new funding formula based on cost drivers, and free early childhood education (depending on funding levels) may help address funding concerns. Strategic plan actions to date have addressed teacher pay only for kindergarten teachers through centralised negotiation of a national collective employment agreement and parity with school teachers. Pay rates and conditions are variable in the education and care and home-based sectors, reflecting the range of employment agreements for staff in these sectors. Without a common collective employment agreement covering all teachers, it is unlikely that this variability will be addressed, which seems to be affecting education and care service teacher turnover and ability to recruit qualified staff.

17. Conclusion

In this conclusion, we analyse themes and issues from the survey findings in relation to the strategic plan policy goals of increasing participation (including provision of ECE services), improving quality, and enhancing collaborative relationships, and comment on the funding systems and regulations that underpin these. Although the survey was undertaken in 2003, it is very relevant in 2007 since the issues and patterns found at that time can be evaluated against subsequent and proposed strategic plan actions. Responses to survey questions asking about views of free ECE and regulatory change contribute to current debate.

Key findings

The survey offers some very positive findings.

Overall, parents were very positive about their relationships with their ECE service. ECE services had established induction practices to help parents and children settle in, and parents felt welcome. Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with their child's education. Most parents had discussions with their teacher/educator about their child's interests, learning, and behaviour, and just over half were participating in assessment and planning for their child. Children benefit when teachers and parents share and reinforce teaching and learning strategies and efforts.

The survey findings show teachers/educators were picking up on Ministry of Education initiatives to benefit the quality of their teaching and learning practices. Many teachers/educators were participating in professional development and undertaking study for ECE qualifications. Professional resources and professional development opportunities have helped teachers develop their assessment approaches. Early childhood teacher morale was high—higher than morale of primary and secondary teachers.

There was widespread support for free ECE for at least two years before school starting age, and further substantial support for free ECE for younger ages. This support is in accord with the Strategic Plan Working Group and subsequent Technical Working Group vision[18] for "An entitlement to a reasonable amount of free early childhood education for all children before they start school, implemented in stages" (Ministry of Education, 2001b). The working groups did not recommend free ECE should be restricted to teacher-led services.

[18] The working groups based their recommendations on widespread consultation within the sector.

The survey also signals some pressures that challenge the strategic plan goal of promoting participation, improving quality, and enhancing collaborative relationships.

Provision and participation

Overall, existing ECE service arrangements were not meeting the needs for places, times, and hours, and for different types of ECE provision for a small percentage of parents in our survey. Further pressures will emerge from implementation of free ECE, particularly from parents using less than 20 hours per week ECE. These pressures on provision arise from reliance on the market for provision, and from issues about ongoing sustainability of some services.

Pressures on provision

The main pressure from parents was for more places for under 2-year-olds. Managers in services catering for this age group also wanted more places for them. This demand is consistent with the trend over time towards higher proportions of younger children attending ECE services. It suggests education and care for babies and toddlers will continue to expand, warranting close attention to provision for this age group and high standards of quality.

Consistent with other evidence (Department of Labour/NACEW, 1999; Mitchell et al., 2006b), a small proportion of parents wanted different hours, times, or days, or different types of provision than they were able to access. Six percent of parents wanted different times, 8 percent wanted more hours of ECE, and 14 percent wanted to use a different type of ECE service, but were not able to access these. The parents in our survey were existing users: we have no information about parents whose child did not attend an ECE service. It may be that some parents whose children are not accessing early childhood education are deterred by barriers of cost or not having access to the kind of provision they would like. In addition, our survey did not include playgroup or kōhanga reo parents who were both part of the Department of Labour/NACEW survey where a higher percentage of parents wanted different provision.

A fifth of parents said they would increase the number of hours their child attends if ECE was free. The greatest demand for more hours was from parents using less than 20 hours per week, and parents who were dissatisfied with hours and times. If ECE was free:

- Ninety percent of parents who were currently using less than 20 hours ECE a week said they would increase their hours. Parents using 15 hours or less per week ECE were most likely to want to increase their hours if ECE was free.
- Fifty-seven percent of parents who would like more hours of ECE said they would increase the number of hours (compared with 17 percent who were satisfied with the number of hours). About 26 percent of those using less than 20 hours would like more hours.
- Fifty percent of parents who would like ECE at different times said they would increase the hours (compared with 18 percent who were satisfied with provision times).

Three percent of parents would change the type of service their child attended if ECE was free.

Over half the ECE service managers thought nothing much would change in their operation if ECE was free, but around 20 percent would consider extending their operation and another 20 percent would be more responsive to the hours wanted. It is unclear whether these changes would cater for needs of all parents wanting change.

Around a fifth of parents were using more than one ECE service. Programme considerations were a predominant reason why different combinations were chosen.

These findings raise issues about the market approach, which dominates ECE provision, and has not ensured the kinds of services that suit aspirations for children and families are available in all localities. As long as provision is left to the market and relies heavily on the private sector for education and care services, which in our survey catered for higher proportions of high-income families, there will be no guarantee of having suitable ECE provision available for all children whose families want them to attend. The Ministry of Education has undertaken network analyses in selected localities, identified need for new provision in areas of low ECE enrolment, and made it a priority to support establishment of provision there. But in order to address current needs for ECE and likely needs when free ECE is implemented, systematic planning in all localities, and support for adaptation of existing services and establishment of provision is warranted.

A comprehensive planning process could be trialled in localities experiencing pressures on existing provision, such as sustainability issues or high demands. A locality-wide planning process could offer opportunity to develop new forms of provision, such as services integrated with health, social and community services, flexible provision to meet parental needs, and structures to enable ECE services to access and share resources, facilities, and professional support. There could be benefit in sharing ideas about successful models of operation that enable flexibility for parents while offering high-quality ECE. For example, Toroyan et al. (2004) have described a Centre of Excellence in Hackney that offered such flexibility. It was better able to cater for a larger number of children (through rostering teachers) and offer hours to suit parental employment than solely sessional ECE services.

Free ECE

Access to free ECE was very widely supported by parents, parent committee members, managers, and teachers, delivered as a universal entitlement, not targeted to low-income families. Most supported an entitlement up to 20 hours per week. There was support for free ECE for all ages (managers, 43 percent; teachers, 44 percent; and parents, 30 percent). About a third of participants thought free ECE should be restricted to 3- and 4-year-olds. Parent responses showed it likely that free ECE will impact positively on labour market goals, enabling some parents to enrol in education/training (12 percent), start employment (9 percent), and increase hours of employment (6 percent), provided they can access places for the times they want. There are also likely to be some changes in participation. A fifth of parents would seek longer hours of attendance, and some

parents would enrol their child in a different service (3 percent). Fourteen percent of those parents who were using more than one ECE service[19] would use only one if ECE was free.

A recent review of ECE in 20 OECD countries (OECD, 2006) discussed arguments in favour of treating ECE as a public good:

> Early childhood education and care contributes to the public good, e.g. to the general health of a nation's children, to future educational achievement, to labour market volume and flexibility, and to social cohesion. . . . Government involvement is also justified by the fact that the benefits delivered to societies by high-quality early childhood services are greater than the costs (p. 37).

Provision of high-quality free ECE is regarded as a strategy to promote equality of educational opportunity. Most European countries provide all children with at least two years free high-quality ECE before compulsory schooling. With the exception of Netherlands and Ireland, access to ECE programmes in Europe is generally a statutory right from the age of 3 years, and in some countries from an earlier age (OECD, 2006).

The policy of free ECE for 3- and 4-year-olds signals recognition of the benefits of ECE for children, families, and community in New Zealand, and puts children's interests at the forefront. If the aim is to enable all 3- and 4-year-olds to access ECE as an entitlement, issues in implementing the policy will need to be worked through.

In Quebec, the introduction of universal childcare with low capped fees in the late 1990s was associated with a very large increase in the use of childcare, including shifts from informal to formal childcare (Baker, Gruber, & Milligan, 2005). There the number of subsidised places was expanded through creation of new places.

New Zealand's policy does not include a planned expansion of places, and relies on the ECE sector to respond to demand for new places or changed provision (e.g. more hours) in order for children to access free ECE. If children are to have effective access to free ECE, places need to be available for families who want their child to participate.

The free ECE policy does not extend to playcentre and kōhanga reo, which also cater for 3- and 4-year-olds. These children will miss out on free ECE by virtue of attending a parent/whānau-led service unless the policy is extended to cover these services.

Currently there is some debate amongst service providers about whether they will offer free ECE. One issue under discussion by kindergarten and education and care managers is whether the rates are high enough to cover the cost of free ECE. Another related issue, within the private education and care sector, is whether the rates are high enough also to make a return on investment. When the policy was announced, Bruce Woodward, the chief financial officer of the large private

[19] Twenty-two percent of parents were using more than one ECE service.

education and care chain, Kidicorp, indicated that the company had not decided whether to offer free hours:[20]

> We don't know whether the funding will meet the cost of providing the free hours, particularly for operations such as ours that have a return on investment (Hill, 2006, A6).

High-quality early childhood education is not cheap. Making a "return on investment" detracts from investing fully in the service itself. Forecasted profits of some private providers are predicted to grow; for example, the Kidicorp trading profit forecast for the year ending 31 March was $3.6m (a temporary reduction "in the face of higher wage costs" from the previous forecast of $4.8m), and the company predicted a trading profit of $6.6m in 2008, and $8.7m in 2009 (New Zealand Herald, 2007).

The greatest expansion in ECE provision in the last decade has been in the education and care sector, and the private ECE sector has expanded at a faster rate than the community-based sector. If the Government remains reliant on private education and care provision to ensure all children can access up to 20 hours free ECE, then it becomes vulnerable to those services' demands for higher government funding, not to spend solely on ECE provision, but also so that they can offer private investors (who may not even be New Zealanders) a "return on investment".

It would be a sad irony if the free ECE policy resulted in the unintended consequence of insufficient places for children or erosion of quality.

Improving quality

Curriculum processes

The strategic plan aims to improve quality through several measures that are associated in research evidence with a good-quality teaching and learning environment, and positive outcomes for children. These measures include professional development, and assessment processes on which we gathered data. We found most teachers/educators were gathering assessment data about children's learning and using this data to develop plans for learning, evaluate the education programme, and communicate with parents about children's learning. The most popular forms of data were those that are able to be understood by a wider audience, including children and families. The use of assessment data is likely to have reflected the resources that the Ministry of Education had provided at that time[21] to support assessment, evaluation, and self-review (Ministry of Education, 1998, 1999) and compatible Ministry of Education-funded professional development contracts.

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[20] Kidicorp has since decided to offer the 20 hours free for 3- and 4-year-olds.

[21] Further resources have since been published, i.e. Ministry of Education. (2005). *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*. Wellington: Learning Media; Ministry of Education. (2006). *Ngā Arohaehae Whai Hua. Self Review Guidelines for Early Childhood Education*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Teachers gained the most useful ideas for their education programme from other teachers in their service. This suggests the importance of opportunities for teachers to work and learn together, and suggests that the Ministry of Education-funded Centres of Innovation and the Educational Leadership Programme, which both involve teachers teaching others, will be valuable for teacher learning.

Staffing

Teacher turnover

Teacher turnover was high, especially in education and care centres, where it was exacerbated by competition over employment conditions. High levels of teacher turnover can be detrimental for children's development, since children's wellbeing is supported by secure relationships with adults who know them well. High turnover can also erode the ECE service culture and capacity of staff to build on professional development experiences. Whitebrook and Sakai (2003) provide US evidence that high turnover is linked to poorer quality of education and care and affects children's social-emotional and language development.

Turnover is likely to continue as long as pay and conditions vary widely. A main reason why a sizeable minority of education and care centre managers could not recruit appropriate qualified teaching staff was competition over employment conditions—competition over pay, better leave provisions, and competition from services that provided more noncontact time. Whitebrook and Sakai's (2003) study of childcare centre teaching staff and directors found that directors were more likely to leave if they earned lower wages. In another Canadian study (Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, & Tougas, 2000), associations were also found between teaching staff turnover rate and the average hourly wage of teaching staff.

Competition over pay and working conditions of teachers in the education and care sector does not work in the interests of retaining teachers in individual ECE services and providing optimal conditions for children's development.

National collective employment agreements covering kindergarten, primary, and secondary teachers' pay and working conditions are negotiated in the kindergarten and schools sectors, with the Secretary of Education a party to the agreements. But in the education and care sector, the Consenting Parties Collective Employment Agreement, negotiated between the union and childcare employers, is the only multiemployer collective employment agreement for education and care teachers. It covers just 192 of 1842 education and care centres. (Over 95 percent of these centres are community-based.) Many individual employment agreements exist. In order to receive higher funding rates linked to registered teachers, education and care service employers are required to pay at least the minimum level of the Consenting Parties Collective Agreement. The requirement is only the first step of the Consenting Parties Collective Agreement, covering three qualification levels:

> Missing as a 'requirement' were the higher steps that recognised service or supervisory roles. There was therefore no 'requirement' to pay any staff higher than the first step. . . . At the worst, the low level of requirement would allow centres to receive additional monies without the requirement of paying salaries on a path to pay parity by 2008 (May, 2005, p. 16).

Without a national collective employment agreement covering pay and working conditions of all teachers in education and care services, the variability in employment conditions and the competitive environment is likely to remain.

Another issue related to turnover is that a high percentage of services (11 percent) in our survey had lost teachers to another occupation outside education. If these teachers do not return to teach in the early childhood sector, their qualifications will be lost to the ECE sector, and the Government will face the cost of funding incentives for teacher education for replacement staff. There may be costs to quality if qualified, experienced teachers leave the sector.

Staff meeting and noncontact time

Staff meeting times and noncontact time are conditions that can support teachers/educators to engage comprehensively in assessment, planning, and evaluation processes, and critically discuss curriculum and other issues relevant to their ECE service. The amount of time available was very poor in some services, especially in education and care centres. In primary and secondary schools, the teachers' collective employment agreements now specify noncontact time as a teacher entitlement, and the arrangement of kindergartens enables kindergarten teachers to have some noncontact time. The *Locality Based Evaluation of Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki (*Mitchell et al., in press) found paid noncontact time is a condition that was associated with higher levels of assessment, planning, self-review, and understanding of *Te Whāriki*.

Ownership differences in employment conditions within the education and care sector

Over the last 15 years the education and care sector has been characterised by rapid growth, and this is fastest in the private sector. For example, from their establishment in 2002, Kidicorp owns 75 centres, and ABC owns 77 centres (Campbell, 2006). Macquarie Bank owns 20 centres. In 1992, 48 percent of 852 education and care centres were private for-profit. This rose to 51 percent of 1558 in 2001, and 57.5 percent of 1884 at 1 July 2006. Private services are owned or managed by a private providers with profits paid back to the provider for private purposes. All other services are community-based. Community-based ownership prohibits the service from making financial gains that are distributed to members.

Private education and care centres offered poorer working conditions than community-owned not-for-profit centres on many measures, i.e. annual leave provisions, noncontact time, staff meeting frequency, and involvement in decision making about professional matters. This adds evidence to a consistent pattern of findings from New Zealand, Australian, Canadian, and United States

research[22] which share a market provision policy framework, that for-profit centres are more likely to offer poorer pay and working conditions, employ less appropriately qualified staff, and have poorer ratings on well-established measures of quality, compared with community-based ECE services.

A US study (Gelles, 2002) found that directors of community-owned centres value quality above all other factors and make their decisions accordingly. Having a return on investment is a key factor in decision making for the Kidicorp chain as illustrated in their response to providing free ECE. ABC, which owns 77 ECE centres in New Zealand, is another large chain that is listed on the sharemarket and expects a return for investors. A recent survey of ECE staff in Australia (Rush, 2006) showed that most staff considered the quality of care in their centre to be quite high. However, staff in community-based centres rated their centres most highly in relation to providing quality care,[23] followed by independent private centres (for-profit small businesses), and then the corporate chains (for-profit publicly listed corporations) on these quality factors. Follow-up interviews (Rush & Downie, 2006) with 20 staff employed by ABC in Australia (the same chain that operates in New Zealand) revealed that the quality of care was variable and taken as a whole, food budgets were low, cooks were poorly paid, administrative requirements were very heavy, and the equipment budget had to be spent on an ABC-owned toy company that did not provide enough variety for programming. These findings raise more questions about the expansion of for-profit centres and particularly corporate private chains in New Zealand's education and care sector.

High regulatory standards for teacher qualifications, staff:child ratios, and group size, may counteract differences associated with centre ownership and help raise levels of quality across the board (Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997). However, the issue of variable employment conditions remains. On balance, although government initiatives will increase teacher supply, this variability is unlikely to be addressed under current government initiatives.

Qualifications, ratios, and group size

Teacher qualifications, low child:adult ratios, and small group size are structural features associated in research evidence with higher levels of quality and benefits for children. In this respect New Zealand's teacher qualification targets[24] are excellent. New adult:child ratio requirements, announced recently, will offer better ratios for 2–2½-year-olds, but the 1:5 ratio

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[22] (Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, & Tougas, 2000; Gelles, 2002; Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, & Tougas, 2000; Helburn, 1995; Mitchell, 2002; Rush, 2006; Rush & Downie, 2006; Smith, 1996.)

[23] Time staff had to develop relationships with children, centre programme meeting individual needs and interests, equipment quality, quality and quantity of food, staff turnover, and staff to child ratios.

[24] 2005—all persons responsible are required to be registered teachers; 2007—50 percent of regulated staffing to be registered teachers; 2010—80 percent of regulated staffing to be registered teachers or services can count teachers studying for an NZTC approved qualification as up to 10 percent of the 80 percent requirement, 2012—all regulated staff to be registered teachers or at least 70 percent of regulated staff to be registered teachers and the remainder to be studying for an NZTC approved qualification.

proposed for babies and toddlers is much poorer than ratios for these age groups recommended by the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (ECCRN) in the US.

The NICHD ECCRN found linear associations between the number of standards[25] for quality (teacher training, teacher education, group size, and teacher:child ratios) met and children's language comprehension scores at 36 months. There was no evidence of threshold effects. Not meeting any of the quality standards was related to lower than average scores at 36 months for language comprehension, and meeting all of them with above average scores. Child outcomes were best predicted by staff:child ratio at 24 months and caregiver training and education at 36 months (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1999). In the New Zealand context, it is concerning that low child:adult ratios associated with better outcomes for babies and toddlers will not be expected to improve under the proposed new regulations. Government decisions about regulations for group size have not yet been made.

Collaborative relationships

The survey explored collaboration between ECE services, between ECE services and schools, and collaboration with parents and other groups.

It found little collaboration between ECE services when children attended more than one ECE service, with the most usual contact being through parents. A third of ECE services had no or limited contact with their local school, and most regarded transition of individual children to school as largely a parental responsibility. Where ECE services had specific transition practices these were mainly visits to the school with children or visits from school children to the service. One barrier to these kinds of transition practices for many ECE services was the large number of schools children went on to attend. In over half the ECE services (54 percent) teachers reported children graduated on to three or more local schools/kura, and some teachers reported children graduating on to 10 schools.

From a policy perspective, the OECD (2006) review of ECE policies in 20 countries has noted that continuity for the child can be strengthened through teachers sharing curriculum and pedagogic understanding. Teachers in this survey also thought these practices would support transition to school. The common administrative and regulatory framework and early childhood education curriculum for all ECE services, and the shift to a common qualification requirement in teacher-led services is likely to strengthen coherence for children between settings within the ECE sector. Nevertheless, finding ways for ECE services that share the education and care of the same children to exchange information regularly may be valuable. In respect to relationships with schools, the replacement of the essential skills in the school curriculum with five key

[25] Ratios: 1:3 at 6 and 15 months, 1:4 at 24 months, 1:7 at 36 months.
Group size: 6 at 6 and 15 months, 8 at 24 months, 14 at 36 months.
Qualifications: formal post-high training in child development, ECE, or related field at all four ages.

competencies that parallel the five strands of the early childhood education curriculum in *Te Whāriki* may help forge a new continuity. As well, pilots of exemplary transition practice could be useful for ECE centres and schools.

Parent responses indicated that there was a reasonably high level of satisfaction with information from teachers. However, a sizeable minority wanted more information, especially about ideas for how they could support their child's learning, and information about their child's progress. We found similar patterns in parent responses in the evaluation of the ECE strategic plan (Mitchell et al., in press). The longitudinal English Effective Provision of Preschool Education study (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2003; Sylva et al., 2003) found that excellent ECE settings "shared child-related information between parents and staff, and parents were often involved in decision making about their child's learning programme" (Siraj-Blatchford et al., p. vi). When ECE services promoted a relationship with parents in terms of shared pedagogical aims, and efforts were made at home to support the child's learning, good developmental outcomes were achieved for children.

The early childhood exemplars *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning* (Ministry of Education, 2005) offer a useful source of approaches to working with families in assessment practices. Another useful publication discusses a recent research and professional development project (Mitchell et al., Haggerty, Hampton, & Pairman, 2006) carried out in New Zealand education and care centres and kindergartens. The project explored different approaches to sharing information and integrating action between home and the ECE centre, strategies teachers found helpful in finding out parent views, and how teachers built a relationship with parents focused on teaching and learning. This study also discussed the professional development processes that helped teachers learn and improve their working relationship with parents and whānau.

Areas where teachers felt uncertain about collaboration were working with Māori, and with Pacific and other ethnic communities. These could usefully be targeted as aspects for professional support, since similar findings were made in the ECE strategic plan evaluation (Mitchell et al., in press).

Service-specific findings

The survey highlighted some service-specific findings.

Education and care: Education and care centres had the highest turnover of staff. They were most likely to have difficulty in recruiting suitable and qualified teachers because of competition with other services over pay, better leave provisions, and better noncontact provisions. Education and care teachers had variable pay and conditions and fewer hours of professional development per year than other teachers. The highest priority for change after funding levels was better pay and employment conditions.

Kindergarten: Kindergartens had the largest group sizes and the highest child:teacher ratios of all services. Improving these aspects was kindergarten respondents' highest priority for change. The

Government's proposed ratio changes (from 1:15 to 1:14 for over 2½-year-olds in sessional services) will not make a significant difference to kindergarten ratios.

Kindergarten parents were more likely to say their concerns were not listened to and committee members to want more say in decision making. Possibly the larger sizes of kindergartens made communication harder for kindergarten parents.

Overall, kindergartens had more hours of professional development than other teachers. They collaborated with teachers in their association, sharing professional development, resources, and offering mutual support. They also have a nationally negotiated collective employment agreement, so there is not the variability in pay and conditions that exists in other sectors.

Playcentre: Playcentre parents gained an array of benefits for themselves and their child through involvement as a volunteer. They reported overall benefits for their child, better understanding of their child's progress, and better understanding of the education programme. As adults, they benefited from enjoyment, companionship, a sense of belonging, confidence, training, and qualifications. Playcentres offered training for volunteers. Playcentre parents were more likely to feel consistently part of the decision-making team, to have the highest levels of contact with teachers/educators, and were most satisfied with information about their child.

Pressures on playcentre parents from high volunteer workload, especially administrative work, were evident in this survey and other recent studies. Playcentre parents were also most likely to want to use another ECE service and leave playcentre before their child started school. Their highest priority for change was reduced administration and paperwork.

The May 2006 Budget increased playcentre funding to improve financial sustainability and "help reduce the time Playcentre volunteers currently need to spend on administration, so they can spend more time with children" (Maharey, 2006). Playcentre training is now funded at its full EFT value (the Playcentre Education Diploma was previously funded at about a third of its EFT value). This may reduce the amount of levies that playcentres need to pay to their associations for training, and so reduce their need to fundraise. Our next survey will continue to monitor issues for playcentre and see what difference these policy changes are making.

Home based: The top priority for change for home-based educators was improving pay and conditions. Home-based educators were less likely to feel part of the decision-making team and say their views were not sought by those making decisions, except communicating with parents.

Challenges

The survey suggests the strategic plan emphases on quality, participation, and collaborative relationships are appealing to ECE services. Participants are generally very positive, and are making use of Government initiatives, especially professional opportunities and resources.

Next challenges for the strategic plan are:

- *Ensuring every 3- and 4-year-old has effective access to free ECE*. This would necessitate an extension of the policy to parent/whānau-led services and ensuring good-quality ECE services are available in all localities for every child whose parent wants them to participate. The support shown in this survey for free ECE to younger ages suggests extension to 2-year-olds could be a next policy development.
- *Addressing issues of uneven access and provision to meet needs*. Reliance on the market for provision has produced unevenness in supply and has not ensured services are responsive to family needs. Systematic planning and support in all localities could help address current and forecasted needs. Locality-based planning could help existing services to be more responsive to community needs and to develop and strengthen relationships between ECE services and other educational, social, and health services and organisations.
- *Addressing teacher turnover and variable pay and conditions in education and care services.* Competition over pay and conditions was linked to teacher turnover within individual services and teachers leaving the ECE sector altogether, and to teacher recruitment difficulties in the education and care services in this survey. High turnover is associated with poorer quality of education and care and is detrimental to children's development. The Ministry of Education currently pays higher funding rates for ECE services employing higher percentages of registered teachers on attestation that teachers are paid at the minimum level of the Consenting Parties Collective Employment Agreement. There is no requirement for employers to pay the higher steps on that agreement that recognise experience and supervisory roles, or to offer favourable employment conditions in that agreement. Although Government initiatives will increase teacher supply, the variability in teacher employment conditions is likely to remain under the current policy measures.
- *Strengthening collaboration*. Aspects of collaboration that could be strengthened were: collaboration between ECE centres sharing the same children; transition to school, especially where children graduate to three or more schools; sharing information and integrating action between home and school; and working with Māori, Pasifika communities, and other ethnic communities. These could usefully be targeted as aspects for professional support.
- *Addressing issues associated with private provision of ECE services*. Ministry of Education statistics show expansion of ECE services is greatest in the education and care sector, and private services are expanding faster than community-based services. The survey has raised two key issues: evidence of poorer employment conditions in private centres; and the capacity of private centres to make profits for private gain (sometimes for absent investors) from taxpayer funding. If employment conditions are left to the market, discrepancies between private and community-based teachers' employment conditions are unlikely to be resolved. Even if these discrepancies were to be addressed, the potential remains for private centres to make a return for investors, and so limit using the profits for sustaining and improving the service itself. Profits may detract from spending fully in the ECE service itself, and be at the expense of quality. Profits may also be made through raising parent fees, so that fewer ECE places are available for low income families. This would undermine strategic plan goals of increasing participation. Prentice (2005) has argued that it is inefficient to use public funds to

support for-profit childcare, and that evidence about lesser quality in the for-profit sector in Canada raises questions about the effectiveness and accountability of using public funds to support for-profit childcare. In New Zealand, operating profits and capital gains can be enhanced through Government bulk funding and parent fees that are subsidised by the Childcare Subsidy. One option could be a moratorium on any expansion of private provision, while solutions to these issues are developed.

- *Addressing issues related to ECE provision for babies and toddlers.* Provision for under 2-year-olds is a growth area, and warrants close attention to standards for this age group, given the fast rate of development at this age and detrimental effects of poor quality. The proposed new ratios do not meet standards recommended for this age group. Provision for babies and toddlers needs to be considered alongside other policies to support families with young children, including paid parental leave which is more extensive in many countries than in New Zealand.

A key message from the survey is that the opportunities being offered through the strategic plan, especially for professional support, are being welcomed and used by the sector to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

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Appendix A: Characteristics of survey responses

Table 69 **Characteristics of survey responses: Services from which one response received**

	2003 Ministry ECE statistics %	2003 Sample ECE statistics %	2003 Returns %
Type			
Education and care	56	54	45
Kindergarten	20	20	29
Playcentre	16	15	18
Home based	7	7	5
Casual	1	4	3
Hospital	0.59	3	3
Size			
Under 11	0.8	2	2
11–25	25	22	19
26–30	25	28	31
31 or more	49	47	48
Location			
Main urban	74	72	68
Secondary urban	6	6	7
Minor urban	11	13	15
Rural	9	9	9
% Māori			
Under 10	45	40	38
10–19	25	25	27
20–29	12	13	15
30 or more	14	14	13
Pacific*			
Under 10	82	76	81
10–19	7	8	8
20–29	2	2	2
30 or more	5	7	4

	2003 Ministry ECE statistics %	2003 Sample ECE statistics %	2003 Returns %
Ownership			
Community-based	67	69	80
Privately owned	33	31	20
Equity index			
1	3	6	5
2	3	4	3
3	5	5	5
4	6	8	12
None	83	77	75
Isolation index			
Yes	15	18	24
No	85	81	75
Language and culture other than English			
Yes	3	4	2
No	97	94	98

Table 70 **Characteristics of survey responses: Managers/head teachers**

	2003 Ministry ECE statistics %	2003 Sample ECE statistics %	2003 Returns %
Type			
Education and care	56	54	47
Kindergarten	20	20	33
Playcentre	16	15	13
Home based	7	7	5
Casual	1	4	2
Hospital	0.59	3	2
Size			
Under 11	0.8	2	0.8
11–25	25	22	17
26–30	25	28	32
31 or more	49	47	51
Location			
Main urban	74	72	67
Secondary urban	6	6	7
Minor urban	11	13	17
Rural	9	9	7
% Māori*			
Under 10	45	40	38
10–19	25	25	27
20–29	12	13	17
30 or more	14	14	14
% Pacific			
Under 10	82	76	82
10–19	7	8	8
20–29	2	2	2
30 or more	5	7	4
Ownership			
Community-based	67	69	80
Privately owned	33	31	19
Equity index			
1	3	6	4
2	3	4	4
3	5	5	5
4	6	8	12
None	83	77	65
Isolation index			
Yes	15	18	25
No	85	81	75
Language and culture other than English			
Yes	3	4	2
No	97	94	97

Table 71 **Characteristics of survey responses: Parent committee**

	2003 Ministry ECE statistics %	2003 Sample ECE statistics %	2003 Returns %
Type			
Education and care	56	54	31
Kindergarten	20	20	43
Playcentre	16	15	25
Home based	7	7	0.6
Casual	1	4	0.6
Hospital	0.6	3	0.6
Size			
Under 11	0.8	2	0.6
11–25	25	22	19
26–30	25	28	32
31 or more	49	47	49
Location			
Main urban	74	72	63
Secondary urban	6	6	8
Minor urban	11	13	19
Rural	9	9	11
% Māori			
Under 10	45	40	39
10–19	25	25	30
20–29	12	13	15
30 or more	14	14	14
% Pacific			
Under 10	82	76	85
10–19	7	8	7
20–29	2	2	2
30 or more	5	7	5
Ownership			
Community-based	67	69	96
Privately owned	33	31	4
Equity index			
1	3	6	5
2	3	4	4
3	5	5	6
4	6	8	14
None	83	77	72
Isolation index			
Yes	15	18	32
No	85	81	68
Language and culture other than English			
Yes	3	4	2
No	97	94	98

Table 72 **Characteristics of survey responses: Parents**

	2003 Ministry ECE statistics %	2003 Sample ECE statistics %	2003 Returns %
Type			
Education and care	56	54	42
Kindergarten	20	20	33
Playcentre	16	15	19
Home based	7	7	5
Casual	1	4	1
Hospital	0.59	3	1
Size			
Under 11	0.8	2	1
11–25	25	22	17
26–30	25	28	32
31 or more	49	47	50
Location			
Main urban	74	72	65
Secondary urban	6	6	8
Minor urban	11	13	17
Rural	9	9	10
% Māori			
Under 10	45	40	37
10–19	25	25	29
20–29	12	13	15
30 or more	14	14	15
% Pacific			
Under 10	82	76	83
10–19	7	8	7
20–29	2	2	2
30 or more	5	7	4
Ownership			
Community-based	67	69	82
Privately owned	33	31	18
Equity index			
1	3	6	4
2	3	4	3
3	5	5	6
4	6	8	12
None	83	77	75
Isolation index			
Yes	15	18	25
No	85	81	74
Language and culture other than English			
Yes	3	4	1
No	97	94	99

Table 73 **Characteristics of survey responses: Teachers/educators**

	2003 Ministry ECE statistics %	2003 Sample ECE statistics %	2003 Returns %
Type			
Education and care	56	54	47
Kindergarten	20	20	32
Playcentre	16	15	13
Home based	7	7	5
Casual	1	4	3
Hospital	0.59	3	3
Size			
Under 11	0.8	2	2
11–25	25	22	17
26–30	25	28	29
31 or more	49	47	51
Location			
Main urban	74	72	70
Secondary urban	6	6	8
Minor urban	11	13	16
Rural	9	9	6
% Māori			
Under 10	45	40	40
10–19	25	25	25
20–29	12	13	16
30 or more	14	14	13
% Pacific			
Under 10			
10–19	82	76	81
20–29	7	8	7
30 or more	2	2	2
	5	7	4
Ownership			
Community-based	67	69	82
Privately owned	33	31	18
Equity index			
1	3	6	6
2	3	4	2
3	5	5	6
4	6	8	12
None	83	77	75
Isolation index			
Yes	15	18	24
No	85	81	76
Language and culture other than English			
Yes	3	4	2
No	97	94	98