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Executive Summary

The main purpose of this research was to find out more about the contributions parent and whānau-led early childhood education (ECE) services are making to children’s learning, parent knowledge/skills and social support, and community, in order to provide the Ministry of Education and parent/whānau-led services with information that could be used to support quality in these services. Parent/whānau led services are playcentres, kōhanga reo, Pasifika early childhood centres and groups, general playgroups, community language playgroups and puna.

Three research questions framed the project:

- How does the learning and development that happens for adults impact on the learning and development for their children?
- How does children’s learning and development impact on the learning and development of the adults?
- What is the interaction between the learning processes happening in services and the home context.

The project investigated these aspects first through interviews in 2003 – 2004 with key informants involved in parent and whānau-led services, government officials and international researchers. The first phase information is detailed in Mitchell, L., Royal Tangaere, A. and Whitford, M. (2005) Investigating quality learning experiences in parent and whānau-led early childhood services. Background Report, and is used here to describe each of the main service’s characteristics. This first phase also pointed to aspects to include in the second phase of the research where we gathered data in mid 2004 from a sample of 28 parent and whānau-led services. This is a small scale research project aimed at showing patterns that appear to be consistent for the centres in the study, and is suggestive of possible factors that may relate to the outcomes the Ministry of Education was interested in. It is not a quantitative study aimed at showing causality.

This overview focuses on

- Providing a portrait of each of the distinctive service types: their history, philosophy and operation, and then the patterns of strength related to the goals of the services in this study on 11 outcomes or contributions that parent/whānau led services can make to children and parents’ learning and wellbeing, as well as community.
- Examining what factors were associated with some individual services making a greater contribution to outcomes than others.
• Discussion of what it means to be a parent and whānau-led service, examination of the three research questions, and discussion of implications of the study.

**Portrait of service types**

We found the service goals and aspirations were distinctive, and were wider than children’s learning. Playcentre was committed to parent learning and support, kōhanga reo to total immersion in te reo Māori and tikanga Māori, Pasifika to maintenance and strengthening of Pacific language and culture, playgroups to providing social support for parents, community language playgroups to maintenance and strengthening their community language and cultural identity. One puna in this study was committed to te reo and tikanga Māori, while the other had goals more similar to general playgroups. The service goals linked to where services put their energy, and tended to be associated with strengths in relation to outcomes in those areas.

**Factors associated with strengths**

Not all services of a distinctive type were uniformly doing well in relation to the same outcomes and to the general pattern of strength for their service type on these outcomes.

**Children’s learning**

In relation to children’s learning, some factors associated with outcomes are structural features of quality that are common to all ECE services, i.e. good quality resources, adult qualifications and training, and participation in professional development/wananga. In services where parents were the educators we found that having a mix of adults with some holding higher qualifications and more years of experience seemed to contribute, perhaps because parents placed store on learning through mentoring and working alongside others. Centres with higher overall quality ratings tended to have a wider range of professional advice and support and often had mutually beneficial relationships with other ECE services in their locality.

Parents contributing to the education programme on a regular basis combined with uptake of professional support for adults as learners contributed to centre-home connections in the interests of children.

All the services had aspirations to support and encourage children in socialising and caring for each other, and we observed co-operative play and children supporting each other in most. However, few of the services in the study were rated highly on more cognitively challenging interactions, such as adults asking open-ended questions and adults scaffolding learning which enable adults to engage with children’s interests and thinking.
There were differences in access to special needs support, with playcentre and kōhanga reo being supported through their structures to obtain early identification of needs and specialist support if appropriate.

**Parent learning and support**

Many services were providing social support for parents and whānau, and some were strong on opportunities for parent learning. Factors associated with strengths in parent learning were:

- parent involvement in the education programme and in other aspects of centre operation;
- parents in training and professional development;
- leadership for adult learning.

**Language and culture**

High levels of language fluency were a contributing factor to language and culture learning and maintenance, underscoring the need for fluent speakers in the language immersion services. Centres that were stronger in helping children to learn had a higher communal level of fluency through paid staff, parents and kaumātua or grandparents. Kōhanga reo with high proportions of whānau who could speak te reo focused their support on encouraging whānau to speak the language at home. Services took active responsibility to support parents to improve fluency where these were low, kōhanga reo through kura reo and wananga, Pasifika centres and community language playgroups through parents learning alongside their children.

**What does it mean to be a parent and whānau-led service?**

The clearest hallmark that was evident from this study was that parents using these services emphasised the importance of their own involvement in, or gain from, the service, whether or not the service used paid staff. For some, this meant full involvement in the educational programme. For others, it means learning from others, either through a growing involvement in the programme itself, or in specific programmes and support provided as part of the service. These gains for parents were not just seen as gains for individuals, but for their communities. This was particularly the case for services whose very reason for being is to ensure the life of te reo or another community language, and the tikanga or values of a particular culture, through their use in family as well as community life.

**How does the learning and development that happens for adults impact on the learning and development for their children?**

Parent learning and development gained through the parent/whānau led service did make a contribution to the overall quality of the education programme for children where parents and whānau were the educators. These contributions were likely to be positively related to children’s learning. Parents did gain useful knowledge and practical ideas that they could also use at home; cultural identity was supported where this was a focus for centres; some gained confidence to
support their child in other educational settings; and their involvement could create links with other families that supported children outside the centre as well as in it.

How does children’s learning impact on the learning and development of the adults?

Parents involved in parent/whānau led centres could identify the part they had played through their involvement, and this encouraged their own continued learning. In immersion services, children’s learning in the language spurred adults to make the effort themselves.

What is the interaction between the learning processes happening in services and the home context?

Interactions between learning processes in home and the ECE service seemed to vary according to service type, to be related to the aspirations and goals of the services, and to the nature of parent and whānau involvement. Interactions were about children’s learning generally, cultural practices and social interactions.

Implications for policy

Data from the study services and findings from other relevant New Zealand research show varying levels of the factors contributing to the outcomes that each service is seeking. These are highlighted as useful aspects to consider in policy and service work aimed at raising quality with general suggestions as well as specific suggestions made for each service type:

• finding ways to support small centres through temporary staffing or a mobile staffing reserve if this is needed to achieve a balanced mix of educators. Some smaller centres seemed to have a limited pool of parents with relevant skills, qualifications and experience on which to draw, and playgroups had no or limited access to professional support. Access to a greater range of expertise would help them.
• perhaps regulating for a maximum playgroup size to avoid having very large playgroups and supporting very large groups to operate as two groups. Playgroups tended to do better when they were of moderate size (20-25 children) rather than very large or very small. There is no maximum playgroup size as there is for licensed centres.
• providing incentives to retain experienced and qualified people as educators in the programme, especially in centres with many transient families or those of small size. Both qualifications and experience tended to be associated with higher quality ratings.
• providing access to good quality curriculum resources, mainly for playgroups. The Ministry of Education Play to Learn newsletters provide useful ideas about equipment and resources, many of which are inexpensive and home-made, and ideas for activities. Playgroup parents in this study would like more of these ideas, alongside a professional support person to work with them directly. Some would like support to purchase resources. Other options (not mentioned by parents) are provision of a mobile resource service with a qualified co-ordinator to
regularly visit centres, similar to the mobile kindergarten concept, and expansion of the Correspondence School early childhood education service to offer curriculum resource advice and professional support.

- facilitating access to special needs support for centres that need such help. The issue this could address for some playgroups and Pasifika centres is their lack of information about what is the meaning of “special needs” and how to go about getting support for children with these needs.
- reducing high levels of volunteer work in playcentres, e.g. for fundraising and administration, where these distract parents from participating in aspects of playcentre that are more important for children’s educational opportunities, and making a greater contribution towards the costs of playcentre education courses and professional advice since these contribute so much to adult learning for work with children both in the playcentre and at home;
- offering playgroups regular access to good quality professional support and professional development/workshops in the community where the playgroup is located, with “hands on” sessions in the playgroup being taken regularly by qualified teachers working alongside parents; assisting playgroups, including Pasifika playgroups that have extra costs such as employing a teacher or rental accommodation, to meet these costs;
- finding ways to address uneven access of Pasifika centres to professional support; supporting staff to become qualified in licensed centres; providing practical advice and support with the licensing process so that staff and parents are not distracted from putting energy into the education programme and adult learning; retaining fluent qualified staff to work in Pasifika centres and playgroups;
- recruiting and retaining fluent qualified kaiako and kaumātua to work in kōhanga reo to support children’s learning of te reo and tikanga Māori and offer pathways to parents for their own learning and encouraging parent involvement in whānau based learning wananga; offering all kōhanga reo ongoing training and professional development focused on the curriculum, planning, assessment and evaluation.

While the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust has a network and system of support for kōhanga reo whānau focused on improving the quality of te reo, and on enabling whānau to understand their role, there are barriers to achieving these aims. Individual kōhanga reo whānau, who are responsible for recruiting and retaining kaiako, are finding it more difficult to recruit fluent, qualified (Tohu Whakapakari) kaiako, or even fluent kaiako, unless a competitive salary is offered. Similarly, the retention of kaiako is related to salary levels. Those kōhanga reo in the study who said they paid “market rates” had to charge higher fee levels than others, which could have the effect of lowering participation levels. Providing ongoing training on te reo and the curriculum through Whakapiki Reo and Te Whāriki contracts with the Ministry of Education also has limitations. Lack of availability of expertise means that not all kōhanga reo can receive support at the kōhanga reo or purapura levels. There are fluent qualified kaiako, who are expert and have specialist skills but to employ them as professional leaders means removing them from the kōhanga reo and reducing the level of quality provision for children’s learning of te reo. An expansion of the Trust’s role to service all kōhanga reo is limited by resourcing, both human and financial. It will take a long time to build up the expertise.
Further research

A fruitful area for research is language learning in kōhanga reo, community language playgroups and Pasifika centres. What approaches to teaching and learning can strengthen language and multi-literacy learning for parents as well as children in these services?

It would be useful to consider the role that might be played by ICT in providing professional support for playgroups and isolated centres, in connecting centres with others, and in providing access to websites. Broadband access in the schools sector has enabled rural schools taking part in pilots for project PROBE to participate in broadband-enabled two-way video-conferencing that allowed advanced subjects to be taught where no local teacher was available. Perhaps a pilot project linking a qualified co-ordinator with a group of playgroups through local school broadband access could be developed and evaluated. Or broadband access in playgroup settings could enable a co-ordinator to observe the setting in action, and advise and respond to parents during and at the end of a session.

A further research project to evaluate the impact of any policy changes made as a result of the review of parent/whānau-led services should be undertaken. It would be useful to consider the same outcomes studied in this evaluation for comparison, and, ideally, return to the same centres and groups.
1. Introduction

Parent and whānau-led early childhood education services in Aotearoa New Zealand are a diverse range: playcentres, kōhanga reo, licensed Pasifika early childhood centres and Pacific Islands Early Childhood Groups, playgroups, community language groups, and ngā puna kōhunghungu (puna). The Ministry of Education commissioned this two-phase study to find out more about the contributions these services make to children, parents, and the community, to provide it and parent/whānau led services with information that could be used to support quality in these early childhood education services. This support for quality is part of the government’s 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education, Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki.

Focus of the report

This report provides a summary of the main findings of this study. First, we outline the material we collected from a cross-section of parent/whānau led services, and how we analysed this material. Next, we look at each of the four main service types included in the study, outlining their particular aspirations, characteristics and strengths, with an illustrative example of how each articulates its philosophy/kaupapa and goals, and how the people, processes and support structures within each service contribute to the outcomes for children, parents and community that each seeks. We then look at these different outcomes and the factors that appear to contribute to them. In the final section, we discuss implications for policy and practice, and suggest further research.

In order to decide which outcomes for children, parents/whānau and community to focus on we undertook an initial scoping phase in which we reviewed information about these services, interviewed key informants and government officials, and discussed issues with UK researchers who had undertaken research on parent-led services in the UK. The goals and aspirations and range of outcomes that parent/whānau led services in New Zealand are aiming to provide, relating to children’s learning and learning opportunities, benefits for parents from their participation, and benefits for the community, and the factors that seemed likely to contribute to these outcomes, were identified. These are detailed in a background report:


The information from this scoping phase was used to frame the data collection in the second phase of the study. In this phase we gathered comprehensive information for 28 services. Full details of the second phase methodology and analysis appear in a technical report:
2. Methodology

Three research questions from the Ministry of Education underpinned the study:

- How does the learning and development that happens for adults impact on the learning and development for their children?
- How does children’s learning impact on the learning and development of the adults?
- What is the interaction between the learning processes happening in services and the home context?

We therefore needed to gather material about what happened in parent-whānau led centres, as well as evidence about its impact for both adults and children.

In collecting material about what happened in centres, and the things that helped it to happen, we were primarily guided by existing research, particularly about early childhood education quality and language learning, by the reflections of the people we interviewed in the first phase of the study, and by existing policy provision.

Sample

Our sample for the second phase was 28 parent/whānau led centres. They were:

- 8 playcentres;
- 8 playgroups (including 2 community language groups and 2 puna);
- 6 kōhanga reo; and
- 6 Pasifika centres.

The sample was chosen to provide a cross-section of services within each type, with regard to location, roll size, the socio-economic status of the families served (using the Equity Index, EQI), and for licensed services, whether they received rate 1 or rate 2 funding (rate 2 funding has higher requirements for qualifications). For playcentres, playgroups, and Pasifika centres, we looked to include centres both with and without paid staff. For kōhanga reo, we consulted with district kaupapa kaimahi to get a range in terms of te reo fluency. For Pasifika centres, we looked to get a cross-section of services in terms of progress towards licensed status, and if the centres were licensed, a high level of parent involvement. For playgroups, we used information from two people who had worked with them to select a range in terms of quality.

All the playcentres and playgroups approached took part in the study. Some kōhanga reo whānau who were approached declined to participate. Four Pasifika centres we approached did not take part: two because they were in the process of becoming licensed (a factor that emerges in relation...
to several of the outcomes we look at in the study). One centre proved uncontactable despite numerous attempts, and one did not feel “ready” to take part in research.

The centres that agreed to participate were located in both North and South islands, across a range of geographic areas. Appendix A sets out the characteristics of the 28 services.

We collected information about each centre from a range of sources:

- Two observations of centre activities and interactions, carried out over the length of a session or half-day if the centre was full-day, and usually a week apart. These observations by fieldworkers were used to assess aspects of centre process quality, using a common rating scale, and provided information about educator:child ratios and group size. The rating scale was first developed in the Competent Children study¹ and used in the Evaluation of the initial impact and use of Equity Funding study.

The scale was further developed for this study and the Locality-based evaluation of Pathways to the Future – Ngā Huarahi Arataki study after observation and videotaping in a playcentre in March 2004, and then in a kōhanga reo and playgroup. The rating scale items are listed in Appendix B, with new items that were developed in 2004 asterisked. The full scale and instructions are provided in the Technical Report. Inter-rater reliability was checked by joint scoring by the project leaders before the start of the study. All NZCER fieldworker researchers were experienced in its use, and the project training included sessions on the scale. However, the Māori dimension to the revised ratings was emphasised in the kōhanga reo and puna ratings, and this tended to give a somewhat higher quality rating overall to those services.

- Group discussion with parents/whānau using the centre about its philosophy, parent involvement, approaches to children’s learning, leadership in the centre, and connections between the centre and home, and the centre and the wider community.

- Discussion with the centre supervisor or equivalent about the centre programme: planning, assessment, special needs provision, professional development, and the transfer of knowledge gained in this centre to other settings.

- A profile of the centre filled in by a person chosen by the centre—often a supervisor or parent leader. This covered the characteristics of the service and its accommodation, of the children on the roll and families served, roll stability and changes, attendance regularity, funding and any financial issues, parent involvement, training and professional development occurring through the centre, adequacy of resources, external support, and relations with other early childhood education centres, government agencies, and community organisations.

- Parent/whānau educator questionnaires were filled in by those who regularly worked with children in the programme. Information was provided about their early childhood education work experience (voluntary and paid), general and early childhood education qualifications,

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¹ The methodology for this study, including the development of the rating scale, is described more fully in (Wylie, 2003). Reports and papers from the Competent Children study can be found on www.nzcer.org.nz
participation in professional development, the nature of their involvement in their service, and the skills and knowledge they thought they had learnt and used in voluntary or paid work. Köhanga reo parent educators also filled in a self-rating of their fluency in te reo Māori, and ability to participate in Māori cultural practices. Pasifika parent educators filled in a similar self-rating for their own language and culture.

- Supervisors, kaiako, and co-ordinators filled in a similar questionnaire, with additional questions about the types of early childhood education services they had worked in, support they received from their service for gaining qualifications and professional development, and their role in the centre.
- Playcentre association staff who provided advice and support to the playcentres in the study filled in a questionnaire about their early childhood education experience, qualifications, professional development, and role.

Response rates and characteristics of participants filling in the questionnaires

**Parent questionnaires**

Response rates were 65 percent in playcentre (113 parents), 33 percent in köhanga reo (30 parents), 31 percent in Pasifika centres (56 parents), and 26 percent in playgroups (61 parents). Two of the playgroups had a large casual roll, some Pasifika centre families and many köhanga reo families did not work regularly in the programme with children, and these families tended not to complete the questionnaire.

The highest level of parent involvement was in work with children on duty in the programme and in setting up and cleaning up. Playcentre parents were most involved in these activities and köhanga reo parents least involved in them.

**Supervisor/kaiako profiles**

There were mostly high response rates for the supervisors/kaiako profile - 100 percent playcentre (13 supervisors) and Pasifika centres (8 supervisors), 92 percent köhanga reo (27 kaiako) and 66 percent playgroup (2 supervisors).

Supervisors/kaiako were all female except in köhanga reo where 15 percent (4) were male. There was a wide spread of ages in köhanga reo (under 20 to 70 years,) and some older supervisors in Pasifika centres. The older aged people were likely to be elders and kaumātua employed for their cultural knowledge. Ethnicity of supervisors/kaiako reflected the patterns found in the parents’ profile.

Supervisors/kaiako work was very much connected to delivering the curriculum, i.e. working with children, preparation of resources, assessment, evaluation and planning, and setting up/cleaning up. In the community language playgroup and köhanga reo and some Pasifika centres, the supervisor/kaiako provided language and cultural support.
Over half the playcentre, kōhanga reo and Pasifika supervisors/kaiako also participated in training and professional development and most playcentre supervisors facilitated training. The educational leadership role in kōhanga reo was generally being played by kaiako rather than parents.

**Playcentre association staff profiles**

Thirty people providing advice and support to playcentres filled in the association profile. All had playcentre qualifications, and many had other tertiary qualifications, including two with a Bed Teaching (ECE) and three with a Diploma of Teaching (ECE). Their predominant work was in three areas: administration, management and participating in or facilitating training and professional development. These roles reflect the administrative responsibility that associations take for playcentres and their commitment to support playcentres professionally through provision of training and professional development, publications and resources.

Further details are provided in the Technical Report.

**Analysis**

This is largely a qualitative study, with a small sample. This approach allows us to gain insights into the connections between quality provision and outcomes (e.g. gains for parents), and resources, relationships, and processes. A much larger number of services would need to be included in such a study to conclude that the associations we find in this study would hold across the board, but the associations we have found are consistent with other research on ECE quality.

We have used the material collected in two ways. First, to provide the illustrative portraits of each service type used in this report. Second, to analyse relationships between key outcomes for parent and whānau-led services, and the factors that appear to contribute to them being able to achieve these outcomes. This report focuses on 11 outcomes that parent/whānau led services can contribute to. Seven of these are common to all services; two are distinct outcomes for Māori immersion services: kōhanga reo and puna; and two are distinct outcomes for Pasifika and community language services.

These outcomes are:

**Children’s learning**

- Children develop knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions (in line with Te Whāriki)
- Children develop socialisation and caring attributes
- Children with special needs are fully included
- Good connection between the ECE centre and home that supports children’s learning

**Gains for parents**

- Support to develop parenting skills
- Social support for parents
• Parent use of skills learnt at ECE centre in other work

**Te reo and tikanga Māori**

• Children learn and understand te reo and tikanga Māori and develop a sense of their Māori identity
• Support for Māori parents’ te reo, tikanga Māori, and cultural identity

**Community language and culture**

• Children learn and maintain their community language and culture
• Support for parents’ community language and culture.

Ideally, one would measure these outcomes over time, following children and parents to see what changes through their involvement. Our study was a snapshot in time, and so we were reliant on using some indirect measures, for example, using measures of quality that are associated with positive learning for children as an indication that children were gaining knowledge and skills; and on participants’ self-report.

For each outcome, we undertook the analysis in the following way.

• We identified a number of aspects that can serve as indicators of how well a particular service is achieving that outcome. For example, indicators from our data of whether services have good connections with children’s homes that support children’s learning were drawn from what parent educators said about their use of parent knowledge about children in the centre programme and in planning for individual children, the use of centre experiences at home, and how the centre assisted parents to be involved in supporting and extending their child’s learning.

• Across all service types, we sorted the individual centres we had gathered data on into two or three groups in relation to their performance on these indicators of quality. One or two groups were stronger and one less strong in their performance on these indicators.

• We then examined the stronger and less strong groups of centres within service types on the outcomes that were relevant for that type. Where we had two contrasting groups of different performance, we compared the groups in relation to their levels of the contributing factors that were likely to influence the level of the indicator of the outcome, and in relation to contextual factors such as roll size, isolation, socio-economic status of families, financial pressure, able to leave equipment out.

• Where all the centres of a particular type were in the stronger group on an outcome, we examined the contributing and contextual factors to see what patterns of factors seemed to be giving similar results.

• This allowed us to see patterns of likely associations between levels of quality in relation to each of the outcomes, and aspects of centre resources, processes, and relationships. The study cannot establish discrete causal relations (if a centre were to do x, outcome y would result).
Centres in this study represented a continuum in respect to the applicable outcomes. What we were gauging was not whether or not a centre was achieving an outcome, but the extent to which it was performing strongly on indicators of the outcome relative to the other 27 centres in the study.

The quality rating scale items were used to provide an indicator of:

- quality in respect to children’s learning in line with Te Whāriki;
- children learning and understanding te reo and tikanga Māori (kōhanga reo and puna);
- children learning and maintaining their community language and culture (Pasifika centres and community language playgroups);
- children socialising and caring for each other; and
- inclusiveness of settings.

**Limitations of the study**

There are reasons for caution in generalising the results. The study provides descriptive examples from a very small number of centres of each service type. For some centres, low response rates for the parent educator questionnaire suggest that these may be the most involved parents only. In addition, there was a recruitment problem in the Pasifika centres, making it arguable whether their practice may have been different from other Pasifika centres.

For these reasons, it would take further research with a larger sample to come to firmer conclusions about patterns of association. The study can be regarded as contributing to broader understanding of quality and good practice in parent and whānau-led services, and put together with other information, help inform practice and policy, particularly in regard to parent and whānau professional development and training, and support for their role in parent/whānau led services.
3. Portraits of parent/whānau led services

In this chapter, we provide, for each of the four types of parent and whānau-led service: playcentre, kōhanga reo, Pasifika early childhood centre, and playgroup, the following:

- The history, philosophy and operation of the service as a type (summarised information gathered during the scoping phase);
- The philosophy/kaupapa and goals of the parent/whānau led services in this study and the outcomes being achieved. While all centres had goals for children and wanted children to benefit from their participation, some had broader expectations about children’s learning and parent/whānau learning. In addition, each service type had values and goals that were distinctive to that type. What was of interest was the depth of importance placed on different goals and how this impacted on where the centres put their energy and resources. Some services as a type were generally (with some exceptions) doing particularly well for specific outcomes. We discuss these distinctive patterns of strength in relation to their philosophy/kaupapa and goals.
- An example of how one service articulates its philosophy/kaupapa and goals, and how the people, processes and support structures within it contribute to the outcomes for children, parents and community that it seeks. These examples were selected after the analysis, from the services that were doing well in achieving a range of outcomes for their service type.

Playcentre

History, philosophy and operation

In 2004, there were 481 licensed playcentres catering for 15,440 children, and 32 licence-exempt playcentres catering for 530 children. Playcentres serve 8.4 percent of children enrolled in early childhood education. This is less than the 13 percent they served in 1994, when there were 572 playcentres. Playcentre enrolments showed steady decline between 1990 and 2001, when they served 14,786 children, but have shown small annual increases since then.

Playcentre began in 1942. Its philosophy is underpinned by a belief in the family/whānau as the most important setting for the care and education of the child. The educational programme is delivered by parents although some paid supervisors lead playcentres and these are mainly in the South Island. In the North Island playcentres are mostly team or group led and they usually do not employ a paid supervisor. Parents work as a collective to undertake all pedagogical roles, including curriculum delivery, planning, assessment evaluation and self-review. The early
childhood education curriculum framework Te Whāriki is used to develop their educational programmes.

Parent volunteers are responsible for the management of playcentres by electing a president, secretary, treasurer and other office holders with particular areas of responsibility. Each centre is part of a grouping of playcentres called an association. Each of the 32 associations supports its playcentres to ensure property and equipment practices, family support, professional development and the adult education programme proceed according to the philosophy, values and policies of playcentre. The associations are in turn affiliated to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation.

The New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF) has overall responsibility for playcentres throughout New Zealand. It provides adult education where parents, through a flexible system of training, become educators of their children. NZPF holds a service specific professional development contract with the Ministry of Education to provide a programme of professional development to playcentres. These programmes are implemented using action research and participatory methods and approaches. Parents may also participate in professional development with other providers.

Playcentre Education, a subcommittee of NZPF, is a registered training provider so that parents involved in playcentres can study towards a recognised early childhood education qualification, the Playcentre Education Diploma, accredited by NZQA at Level 6. The study programme emphasises self-help and personal development for adults as well as covering areas such as child development, play and learning, parenting skills, planning and delivery of early childhood programmes, group and facilitation skills, and management skills. Parents in training within playcentres make a high level of commitment to complete their Diploma. The advantages of this type of training is that it is centre-based and the skills and knowledge gained can be immediately applied in the centre with the parent’s own child and other children.

In addition NZPF produces educational publications and resources for playcentre members to enhance their parenting skills. It also makes representation to the government on matters concerning parent education and education of children and families.

Playcentres develop leadership by supporting and encouraging individual parents to take on management responsibilities and through a system of individual mentoring. These provisions are important because of the turnover of experienced members and the need for new members/parents to take over the running of the playcentre and the education programme.

Many playcentres are located in rural communities, and provide a community focus for parents living in those communities. In addition, playcentre provided training and skills development can be useful for work in schools, voluntary organisations, and the wider community.

The ratios in playcentres are: 1:5 for over 2½ year olds, and one nominated caregiver or parent for each child under 2½ years. The specified number of children allowed to attend (or regulated group size) is 30 children. Playcentres are all sessional.
Most playcentre buildings are owned by the association they are affiliated to, or are buildings used exclusively by the playcentre. A small number of playcentres rent their premises or have to share them with other community groups.

Patterns of strength for playcentre services

Aims of playcentre

Playcentre parents in this study were seeking learning and development outcomes for children and learning and support outcomes for parents.

The two core goals of playcentre were reflected in the patterns of strength for playcentres in this study. In general, they were making a significant contribution to the development of parenting skills, and to community outcomes (parents using their playcentre experience and training to take up voluntary and paid work in the community). The contribution of playcentres to these outcomes was the most extensive of the parent/whānau led services in this study.

Table 1  Playcentre patterns of strength*

|       | Outcome for children |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | Children learning    | Socialisation | Inclusion of children with special needs | Connection between home and centre | Parenting skills | Social support | Voluntary and paid work skills |
| A     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| B     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| C     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| D     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| E     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| F     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| G     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| H     |                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |

* The shaded areas show that these playcentres were rated as stronger on the outcome indicator

At an individual level, 73 percent of playcentre parents (n=83) filling in the questionnaire stated that they learned new skills/knowledge from their involvement in playcentre. Playcentre parents in the study were most likely to gain parenting skills through their involvement. Sixty-eight percent (56) reported gains, and this was more likely to be across a range of areas², including adults’ role in encouraging learning. For example:

Allowing children the space and opportunity to work out for themselves, to gain their independence, and assisting when the above gets frustrating.

Getting down to the child’s level and focusing on their strengths and interests at the time.

. . . more about child development and how to encourage your child positively.

² e.g. child development and learning, how parents can support, encourage and extend children’s learning, ideas for activities with children, ECE curriculum and working in the centre, behaviour management, improved communication skills, and general “parenting skills” including confidence as a parent.
Fifty-two percent of playcentre parents (59) stated that they used the skills/knowledge in other paid or voluntary work. These were predominantly management, financial, administration or facilitation skills gained through taking on a playcentre position (such as treasurer, president, secretary, education officer), or educational skills that drew on their playcentre qualifications and experience. Examples of their use were in community work such as teaching at Sunday school, Toy Library duty, youth group work, and committee work, and paid employment in other educational settings such as working with children with special needs, working for the playcentre association, and facilitating education courses.

Parents participating in the group interview also said they gained social support through meeting others in their playcentre. In an isolated location, the playcentre provided a venue.

For me, it’s seeing all the girls. If it wasn’t here there’d be no meeting place—we’d have to go far out of the community.

Most playcentres were rated highly in respect to the quality of their education programme and interactions between adults and children. They did especially well in respect to the quality and amount of educational resources, and of equipment and activities that encourage fine and gross motor skills. Generally, children were able to complete activities, and select their own activities. Adults were responsive, participated with children in activities and play, and used positive explanation and reinforcement to guide children. In most the environment was inclusive of all children. Some playcentres were especially inclusive of children with special needs, providing opportunity for parents of these children to work directly with specialists to assess their own child and plan the Individual Education Programme, and for these parents to lead the implementation of their child’s IEP within the playcentre. These items were consistent with the importance placed by participants on child-initiated play and spontaneity, and for the uniqueness of each child to be recognised in the education programme.

Items on which the playcentres in the study tended to be rated less highly were about:

- interactions between adults and children in which adults extend or scaffold children’s thinking and learning dispositions (and this way develop them);
- evidence of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori, and evidence of acceptance of the diversity of the children at the playcentre.

Not surprisingly, given the active engagement of playcentre parents as educators, most playcentres had good connections between home and playcentre in the interests of children’s learning and development. Most playcentres were rated highly with respect to parents following up at home on children’s interests and experiences and approaches to teaching and learning derived from the playcentre, the education programme building on children’s home experiences, and the playcentre helping parents to support and extend children’s learning.
Portrait: An urban playcentre and its community

This playcentre is a parent cooperative with no paid staff. Parents provide the education programme and volunteer to take on office-holding positions such as president, secretary, treasurer and education officer. The playcentre is licensed to take 30 children per session and operates five 2½ hour sessions per week in the morning. Almost twice that number of children attend, with some children coming for only the minimum of two days. The playcentre is situated in a multicultural suburb of a New Zealand city. It serves mostly middle income families. Half the children attending are of Pākehā descent, and most other children are equally of Māori descent and Pacific - Samoan, Cook Islands and Tongan - descent. There are also a few children from the Indian subcontinent. About two-thirds of the children are over two years. Two children with special needs are being supported by Group Special Education (GSE).

The playcentre is owned by the association but leases the land from a city council. It is designed to have a good flow between indoors and outdoors, with a large covered deck for activities. The environment is set up to support children’s exploration and experimentation, and offers a good range of resources and equipment. Some signage, dress-ups and resources reflect the multicultural heritage of the children. All parents work regularly in the playcentre as educators. Only four year olds who are “settled” can be “dropped off” and left during one session a week. Adult:child ratios are therefore very high. Some grandparents are also involved in providing cultural expertise, fundraising and maintenance. There are soft chairs and sofas, and mothers comfortably breastfeed their babies here. Space for administration is poor and there is no office space or computer. Parents use their own home computers for some playcentre business.

Sixty-two percent (13) of parents filling in the questionnaire (n=21) are doing some form of training. All parents have undertaken or are undertaking the compulsory Level 1 Playcentre Course, and many have continued their training to higher levels so that a range of qualifications are held amongst the parent group. Two parents hold a Diploma of Teaching, and one a B Ed Tchg (ECE). A key supporter is a playcentre qualified life member with a “degree in teaching” who “lives down the road”, holds a playcentre key, and is willing to work at the playcentre if the qualification points held by members at any time is insufficient. She comes to training nights, and is helpful in explaining wider association matters.

There is a set schedule for subscriptions but if a family cannot pay, they can still attend.

**Philosophy**

Its charter describes this playcentre as

...a parent cooperative. The centre believes in a mixed age setting, child-initiated play, ratios of not less than one adult to five children, and adults being involved in the care and education of children while in training.

[Playcentre acknowledges and supports parents] as the primary educators of their children, [and encourages parents] to pick up new skills, develop them and then encourage others to explore the same challenge within a supportive environment.
Parents said their playcentre really values children’s learning, especially socialisation, and adult education through playcentre training and swapping ideas and strategies with other parents. Parents also value friendships formed at playcentre. They value making connections with community businesses and with community organisations, and their children learning about the local environment and developing respect for nature.

**Children’s learning and development**

The field researcher ratings and observations show how the mix of parents brought a range of expertise as early childhood educators. Having some experienced and expert educators seemed to be key to providing more challenging interactions that extend children’s thinking. All adults were very responsive and focused on interacting with children and participating with children in their play. But only some asked open-ended questions to encourage children’s thinking, made suggestions and contributed ideas and resources that added complexity and challenge.

Parents said the playcentre experience was of benefit in helping their children to be confident, good communicators and independent thinkers.

> When my son started school the teacher said he had very good interaction with adults – his communication skills were good with adults – he got that from here. He was around other adults and it made him independent.

> They learn not to be shy – to be able to stand up and be able to speak their mind and not feel ashamed of that.

Observations illustrated how parents’ knowledge of their own and other children outside the playcentre enabled them to make connections between activities, interests and ideas at playcentre and in home settings. Conversations were sometimes based on shared memories where adults encouraged thinking and recollection. For example, an adult was heard recalling a family visit to the museum and linking the blocks seen on that trip to a child’s current interest. It was unclear whether parents intuitively held these types of conversation or were aware of their value in encouraging metacognitive thinking.

The playcentre provided opportunity for early identification of special needs, and for parents of children with special needs to work directly with specialists and lead their child’s Individual Education Programme (IEP). The association special needs team offers immediate assessment of children when requested and organises support if appropriate. A mother of a child with special needs worked with the association to select the support worker for two special needs children in this playcentre. The field researcher observed the GSE coordinator who attended a session spending most of the time talking with one of the children’s mothers and support worker. Two parents were observed talking with each other about medical professionals’ views of children with special needs, the value of mainstreaming, and ideas for activities at home. Other parents said they were also learning to support children with special needs.

> We’re getting better at helping so not only one person has to focus on him [an autistic child].
The setting was inclusive of all children, and parents said the mixed age group of babies to four year-olds encouraged older children to be patient with younger ones and the younger ones to learn from older ones. Adults were very positive towards children’s achievements generally, talked a lot with babies and toddlers as well as older children, and the children with special needs were involved in other children’s play. Some features that enabled this close collaboration and support are not available in all ECE services: the local association infrastructure support for special needs, the leadership role of parents in respect to children’s learning and the mixed age groupings. The special needs support for this playcentre does not replace the need for external specialist support that the parents interviewed also wanted from GSE.

What processes supported adults to provide a good education programme? Parents had a shared belief about children’s learning and development, were observed working well as a team within the education programme, and knew the children well. Role modelling and training were key. Parents said they learned to support and extend their children’s learning through seeing how experienced and trained parent educators worked, reading about “inspirational ideas” (these were photocopied for the playcentre library), and through participation in “interesting and relevant” playcentre training courses. Association personnel also emphasised the importance of parent education and placed a high priority on ongoing training and professional development. While a very high proportion of parents were taking part in playcentre training and parents between them held an impressive range of qualifications, maintaining qualification levels to meet licensing requirements is an ongoing task and the playcentre had not always been as well placed. The 2003 association annual report for this playcentre noted the highest qualifications in that year were held by only three people with a Course 3 certificate. This was described as a “stressful situation” since these three people between them had to keep all five sessions open.

A depth of professional support seemed to facilitate an enthusiastic uptake of training opportunities. Association liaison officers, who hold at least Playcentre Course 4, provide training and professional advice. Liaison officers also link the playcentre to other external support where appropriate. An association support person assists parents who are studying. Most of the 21 parents filling in the parent questionnaire said they were supported by the playcentre for study through payment of course fees and discussion/study group. A third used the association support person for mentoring while studying. There were some “rewards” for completion of courses, a free clean up day for Course 1 and a massage voucher for Course 3. Parents said it helped to have low turnover of families attending the playcentre, since it takes time for new families to become familiar with the playcentre processes and to undertake playcentre training.

Parent learning and support
Seventy-six percent of parents (16) responding to the parent questionnaire said they had learned new skills and knowledge from their involvement in playcentre. Learning occurred through participation in formal playcentre training and through session involvement, especially working alongside people who were good role models. The most common adult learning was about
children’s learning, development and behaviour, how adults could support learning, and positive approaches to parenting.

Knew about child’s behaviour at specific ages and learn to support them.

If it was not for playcentre, I would have been a different person than I am today. I’ve learnt you’ve got to put yourself in the child’s situation and respect their feelings and think how we would feel at their age—about being patient and thinking outside the square.

I’ve been able to use new strategies at home with my child to reduce both his and my stress levels.

Parents learned about the education programme and 16 areas of play\(^3\) that playcentres aim to have available at every session, and the rationale for these.

Involvement in playcentre generated insights about children’s competencies and ideas for activities and interactions. Parents made connections between settings of home and playcentre and with other families in the community.

I see what my child concentrates on and can do at playcentre, and I know he can do these at home. I take activities home and I bring in activities from home.

Parents learned a range of other skills, e.g. facilitation, accounting, and secretarial, from taking on office holding responsibilities, and through association workshops related to these. They also said they gained confidence through practice in the playcentre setting. There was conscious encouragement for “emergent leadership”, with those in office holding positions “looking out for” and encouraging newer members to take on roles.

Parents regarded “adults helping each other out with problems with their children” as an indicator of quality in their playcentre, and this was evident in field researcher observations. Adults were very respectful towards each other and looked out for each other, such as an adult fetching a high chair and food for a mother holding her baby. Friendships were formed through undertaking activities together, and parents were supported to have time for themselves.

Now my daughter is not so clingy. It gives me freedom to do other stuff and I have more confidence that I can leave her.

However, there were some barriers to the kinds of parental involvement that were associated with the positive features we have described here. Parents said these were:

- a heavy volunteer workload;
- family commitments, that make it hard to stay after session for planning and evaluation and attend meetings;
- insufficient confidence; and
- cultural differences.

\(^3\) Collage, painting, dough, sand, carpentry, blocks, puzzles, family corner, water, books, music, puppets, science, finger paints, physically active play, and clay.
Similar barriers of volunteer workload, family commitments and cultural difference were also identified by association representatives supporting the playcentre, as well as transience. Association representatives said that some parents found the “paperwork” daunting, and that experienced people are being called on for many tasks. Time to show visitors around is another issue. Transience can be a problem, with a high turnover of parents creating difficulties in respect to having access to a pool of experienced people and to those who have done higher level playcentre training.

**Community**

There were four areas where these parents thought their involvement in playcentre contributed to other outcomes. Parents said their involvement in playcentre administration, management and the education programme, participation in playcentre training, and the confidence and skills gained through these experiences enabled these outcomes to occur. Fifty-seven percent (12) gave examples:

- Parents drew on skills learned from their playcentre experience to undertake volunteer work in other organisations. Examples included using financial knowledge as a member of a Music School Committee, serving on a school Parent Teachers’ Association, netball coaching, and using strategies for working with groups in teaching colour therapy.
- Parents gained paid employment or did study where skills and knowledge learned from playcentre were relevant. Examples were facilitating courses for the playcentre association, working as a support worker in a school, becoming an early childhood teacher, and a treasurer doing accountancy papers.
- Parents adopted wider responsibility for children other than their own, through being responsible as educators for all children at the playcentre.
- Children learned about a multicultural society, and became more community wise.

**Themes**

Several themes and issues emerged from the material on playcentres gathered for this study:

The strengths of playcentre in development of parenting skills, playcentre members using their experience and training in other voluntary and community work, and aspects of the quality of the education programme were linked directly to the aspirations of playcentres to promote children’s learning and parent learning and support. The association infrastructure of training and professional support was vital in supporting these two goals.

Playcentre members said they learnt through playcentre courses and professional support, and through being mentored by others and working alongside “expert” and experienced parent educators. In the portrait playcentre, this was facilitated by having a good uptake of training opportunities, a reasonably large pool of parents and stability of families participating in the education programme. In some playcentres in this study, which had a much more limited pool of parents and some transient families, achieving the balanced mix of parents was difficult. Perhaps
ways are needed to support playcentres through temporary staffing if this is needed or to provide incentives for experienced playcentre members to “stay on” in some capacity.

The patterns of strength on the ratings of quality used in this study indicate that in general playcentres are providing good educational resources, and range of activities and equipment, and adults are responsive and positive. Areas where playcentres in this study may need greater support is in interacting with children to scaffold thinking and learning dispositions, and support for te reo and tikanga and cultural diversity. Hill, Reid and Stover (2000) also suggest that there are challenges in ensuring playcentre practices value the diversity of cultures in New Zealand communities, while children and parents continue to feel secure in their own cultures.

In the portrait playcentre, the association provided early identification of special needs and facilitated access to support. Parents were able to take a lead role in implementing their own child’s IEP and working directly with the specialists within the centre. This example suggests ways in which parents in parent/whānau led services can be supported to access and use external support in the interests of their child. It may require a co-ordinator to facilitate such access, which some parent/whānau led services do not have.

Barriers to involvement raised by parents in this study have also been raised by playcentres in other NZCER/TKRNT projects (Evaluation of the initial uses and impact of Equity Funding and Locality-based evaluation of Pathways to the Future – Ngā Huarahi Arataki). The evidence is clear that family and other commitments make it hard for some parents to participate fully in all aspects of the playcentre, and that high levels of volunteer workload are a barrier to involvement.

Playgroups

In 2004, there were 599 licence-exempt playgroups catering for 17,744 children. Playgroups have grown over the past 10 years, from 441 in 1994, serving 13,353 children. In 1994 they served 8.7 percent of the children enrolled in early childhood education, and in 2004, 9.6 percent.

Playgroups began operating in New Zealand in the mid-1960s, originally in “isolated rural areas and where urban isolation was experienced” (Robinson, 2002, p.6). They were often started by Māori and church organisations. They cover a wide range, some general, and some with a special focus such as puna (which may be full immersion or bilingual te reo and English), Pasifika groups (covered in this report with Pasifika licensed centres), community language groups, playgroups in women’s refuges, playgroups for teenage parents, and some fathers’ playgroups. Their main aim is to have “parents providing a play and learning environment for their children” (Robinson, 2002, p.12). Social support for parents is also important.

They are licence-exempt, i.e. exempt from statutory licensing requirements provided they meet certain criteria. These criteria are:

- each playgroup meets for no more than one session of up to 3 hours on any one day;
Funding is provided by the Ministry of Education provided individual playgroups meet the above criteria, use premises which are safe and suitable for children’s play, and operate a broad-based educational programme.

Playgroups are usually managed by a parent committee and affiliated to a body such as a church, iwi organisation, or community organisation that can provide support. Some have access to local services that play a supportive role, such as Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAP) co-ordinators. The Ministry of Education provides support for playgroups. ECD (incorporated within the Ministry of Education since late 2003) has developed a range of resources which are now available through the Ministry of Education. Parents in the evaluation of ECD’s advice and support to licence-exempt playgroups (Mitchell & Mara, 2001) identified the value of ECD resources for the programme, but would particularly have liked more visits from their local co-ordinator, with more of her involvement in the programme and more workshops on educational interactions and activities. The quality of the programme in playgroups will depend on the skills of parents running the programme. Since there is a high turnover of parents in many playgroups maintaining a high level of management and professional expertise can be an issue. Some groups access community funding for resources or to help pay for a co-ordinator.

Venues for playgroups are usually community facilities, although some are provided in buildings on school grounds. Many playgroup parents have to set up and pack away equipment at the start and finish of the session.

In 2002, 38 percent of playgroups were in rural areas, the highest proportion for any early childhood education type.

Patterns of strength for playgroups

Aims of playgroups
Playgroup and puna parents were mainly interested in children having opportunity to socialise and play with other children, and in parents having a chance to meet other parents and make friends. Immersion in te reo Māori was a predominant focus in one of the puna.

Parents from the two community language playgroups in the study wanted their children and themselves to be together learning and using their community language and culture. This was the main reason for being set up—they were not seeking outcomes beyond these. Parents did not expect the community language playgroup to meet all their needs: parents tended to take their children to other ECE centres for general early childhood education experiences.
Playgroups

Parents from general playgroups described their role as being responsible for the children, supporting each other and socialising together. The main contribution of playgroups to outcomes was in the social support they offered.

Table 2  General playgroup patterns of strength*

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<th>Children learning</th>
<th>Socialisation</th>
<th>Inclusion of children with special needs</th>
<th>Connection between home and centre</th>
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* The shaded areas show that these playgroups were rated as stronger on the outcome indicator

Seventy-two percent of parents (44) said they learned about running the playgroup and activities for children, and some learned about how to work with children from playgroup.

Belonging to playgroup has enabled me to watch from other mothers and talk through any problems I have. I have learned to help children experiment in art work, learn to play new games and be happy.

However, learning parenting skills and having good connections between playgroup and home to support children’s learning were not strong outcomes of playgroup participation. This is probably because opportunities for adult learning about children’s development and learning and how to support and extend children’s learning were limited.

We used the same criteria to rate the quality of the education programme and interactions as we did for licensed parent and whānau-led services, on the basis that it is in children’s interests to participate in good quality provision that enhances their learning and development. None of the playgroups were in the stronger group on the overall indicator of quality.

Field researcher ratings of the quality of the education programme and interactions between adults and children to support and extend children’s learning were generally moderate or low. The items these playgroups did best on and where none were rated low were Children support and co-operate with one another in language and actions, Adults are responsive to children, and The environment is inclusive of all children. These items fit well with the goals that parents expressed for playgroup.

Social support was also a goal for playgroups and the area where the playgroups in this study did best. For example, at the end of one interview in a playgroup, these parents told the field researcher the things they really wanted her to know about their group were:

- the fellowship of other women;  
- the importance of social interactions for adults and children;  
- friendships that can be lifelong for children in their area;
- their strong sense of belonging; and
- their need for regular support.

Parents from three playgroups identified the following as barriers to providing the quality of environment and level of participation they would like:

- having to travel to workshops and holding them at night (“They should be coming to us”) and “lack of educated visitors—people who know a lot about early childhood education” – isolated playgroup;
- insufficient funding and night time meetings—urban playgroup;
- parents “just sitting around”, cost of the rent and time – urban playgroup.

**Portrait: a rural playgroup**

This playgroup is in an isolated community, 1½ hours drive from the nearest city. There are 13 children on the roll: four under 2-years and 9 over 2-years, from eight families. Most children stay until they go to school because this is the only early childhood service in this community. There is also only one primary school here so children tend to move on to the same school. There are no health facilities in the community, but a health nurse visits the playgroup every 6 months to check the children’s health. According to parents who filled in the questionnaire, “Every mother is happy with the playgroup and there is a high attendance”. The only irregular attendance described is of children whose parents have seasonal work or whose mothers are having babies. Family incomes were described as a “wide range”. The playgroup operates one three-hour session per week during school terms. Babies, toddlers and young children are educated all together in a mixed age group. Parents from five of the eight playgroup families work regularly in the playgroup to implement the education programme. If a parent cannot come on any day, another parent will pick up and bring their child, but generally it is all five parents together.

The playgroup is held in a community hall used by other groups. This is carpeted and had a warm fire (and safeguard) on the cold day the field researcher attended. There are very comfortable chairs for adults and children. A variety of curriculum resources are stored in large wooden boxes around the edge of the hall and in an outside shed. Outside is a play area with bark chips, a slide, a climbing frame and a merry-go-round.

None of the parents have done training or professional development in the last 12 months. The Ministry of Education provides some professional advice and support, educational resources, management and financial advice. One parent had done the Playcentre Part 1 course, one had 6th form Certificate and three had a 5th form qualification.

The playgroup receives Ministry of Education playgroup funding, parents do some fundraising and the playgroup was recently successful in a grant application. Parents do not have to pay anything for attending and there are no financial pressures. Management is shared. “Everyone gets a job”. Grandparents and extended families visit rather than have an ongoing particular role.
**Philosophy**

Parents said they come to the playgroup primarily for social interaction for mothers and children. The main things they hope to achieve for children is for them to learn and explore new things, such as collage and dough, which are more exciting than what is at home. They also want their children to interact with different mothers and be exposed to different values. Parents see their role as taking responsibility for all children, setting up and supporting each other, and sitting “doing things with the kids”. Parents thought playgroup attendance makes transition to school easier, because it “is right next door and they know the teachers and other children”. They thought more interaction between the playgroup and school could be valuable and they would like their 4½ year olds to be able to attend school. They said most would not travel long distances to attend an ECE service.

The second role of playgroup is social interaction and support for parents. In addition the playgroup parents “invite other ladies without children and new mums in the community to come along for a cup of tea”.

**Children’s learning and development**

The field researcher observations and ratings showed very respectful and positive interactions occurring among children and adults. Adults warmly greeted each other and the children and babies and held each other’s babies. Consistent with its goals, the playgroup’s support for social interactions amongst children and adults was evident. Parents were very responsive to their own and other children, and focused on doing activities with their children. Babies were included in activities and interactions, as the following excerpt from field researcher notes shows.

Mothers hold and talk to babies. Two adults held babies so the babies would interact (wish I’d had a video). Babies smiled at each other and reached towards each other. One baby was very vocal and chortled at the other baby.

Children played happily together or alongside each other, older children touched and smiled at babies, and no fighting or teasing was seen. They interacted with adults other than their own parents and seemed to know them well.

Adults interactions about activities tended to be instructional, e.g. “Use it this way”, Do this”. Adults were not observed to scaffold learning or add complexity and challenge. Story telling and art work did not happen on either occasion when the field researcher was there, and children were not seen problem solving. Parents described their role mainly as “Getting in and doing it with the children and learning with them”.

Parents said that there were no courses available locally for them to learn about child’s learning and development, and that it was too difficult for them to travel to the city for courses. There were also no teenagers in the community to babysit for them, so night-time meetings created problems. Playgroup parents appreciated Ministry of Education written resources but wanted face to face professional support. Parent said they had received a letter from the Ministry of Education saying there was no need to visit.
We need someone to come here to playgroup to help us. We’d like a visit once a month or every six weeks. We want to observe someone working with the children. Even safety issues need a check.

We do our best but we want more guidance and expert help. Especially health and safety and education.

These parents thought that “lack of educated visitors who know about early childhood education” is the single most critical factor that makes it hard for them to provide a good quality programme.

Parent support
The main benefit of playgroup for parents was in the support that it gave in this isolated community. Parents said most families have no extended family in this community and that going to playgroup is the only time many mothers see other females. Parents “can talk about what is happening with their children with other mums”. One parent stated “Belonging to playgroup has enabled me to watch other mothers and talk through any problems I have had.”

Four of the five parents filling in the questionnaire said they learned new skills and knowledge related to working with children from their participation in playgroup.

I have learnt how to help children experiment with art work, learn to play new games, and be happy.

Dealing with other children – Requires patience.

Puna
One of the two puna in this study was offering a strong environment for children to learn te reo and tikanga Māori. This puna with high ratings was bilingual, had more fluent speakers with confidence in cultural practices, and placed priority in its kaupapa on te reo and tikanga Māori. The second puna emphasised readiness for school and socialisation, and was English medium. Consistent with its goals, this puna was contributing to other outcomes for children, parents and community, but not te reo and tikanga Māori.

Table 3  Puna playgroup patterns of strength*

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<tr>
<th>Outcome for children</th>
<th>Outcomes for parents and community</th>
<th>Language and culture outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Children learning</td>
<td>Socialisation</td>
<td>Voluntary and paid work skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion of children with special needs</td>
<td>Connection between home and centre</td>
<td>Te reo and tikanga (children)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting Skills</td>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Te reo and tikanga (parents)</td>
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* The shaded areas show that these puna were rated as stronger on the outcome indicator

Seventy percent of puna parents (7) stated that they learned new skills/knowledge from their involvement. These were about children’s activities, playgroup organisation, and in a puna that was aiming to become licensed and chartered, the process of licensing and chartering. While four parents (40 percent) stated that they used skills learned in puna in voluntary or paid work, only
one parent described this use—this was in a Ministry of Education Promoting Participation Project.

Inclusion of children with special needs, parenting skills and having good connections between playgroup and home to support children’s learning were not strong outcomes of puna participation. In one puna, a co-ordinator held a Diploma of Teaching (ECE). While some parents had taken part in mainly Ministry of Education workshops in the last 12 months, puna parents wanted better quality advice and support.

The puna co-ordinators said the puna would like advice and support on:

- How to be better parents, nurture their children in being confident. Upskilling themselves in early childhood education/care. Provide support and guidance to parents in a holistic sense.
- We would like recognition of the quality we do provide, not only for our tamariki, but for our whānau and community as a sole entity. To get the support to enable us to further develop would be awesome, and beneficial for all.

Access to professional advice was the main barrier to providing the environment they would like to provide identified by puna parents.

**Community language playgroups**

Both the community language playgroups were providing a learning environment where the children’s community language was predominantly used and their own culture was strongly evident within the curriculum. The stronger of the two community language playgroups in respect to the use of the community language within the playgroup environment was a playgroup where parents were all mainly fluent in the community language.

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<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Community language playgroup patterns of strength*</th>
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<td><strong>Outcomes for children</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outcomes for parents and community</strong></td>
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* The shaded areas show that these community language playgroups were rated as stronger on the outcome indicator

At an individual level, a high percentage of community language playgroup parents (67 percent) described benefits from participation in playgroup related to their language and culture: these were learning new methods of fostering children’s community language, encouragement to learn and maintain their language, and sharing their knowledge and making cultural connections with other parents.

Parents from one of the playgroups tended to be second language learners of their community language, and were learning alongside their children. Parents said they learned:
Increasing my knowledge of [community language] and early childhood songs and specific vocab in [community language] for little ones.

Methods to encourage/facilitate the learning of mother tongue.

Language and cultural skills in [community language].

Maintaining and promoting the community language was the prime reason for the establishment of these playgroups and the emphasis on this within the education programme, and the benefits identified by parents showed they were making a good contribution to this primary goal.

In addition, one of the playgroups was doing well on a range of other outcomes for children, and for parents.

The supervisor from one of the community language playgroups would like a greater level of professional support comparable to that offered by the former ECD. Both employed a teacher.

**Portrait: an urban community language playgroup**

This community language playgroup was established to maintain the community language and cultures of the families. It was first set up as a weekly coffee morning, for parents who wanted their language to be maintained at home and in public areas. Members of the playgroup are nationals of many different countries, sharing the common language. Some families speak it at home, some speak it and English, and some speak mainly English. Parents are described as having a “wide range” of incomes. Many children also attend another early childhood service on other days of the week.

Parents attend with their children, and the playgroup has a membership of 29 families. Fifteen children are over 2-years and 14 under 2-years, with usually about 15 children attending at any one time. The roll has fluctuated over the years, “growing when the playgroup was better organised and dropping when it was not so well organised” according to the teacher. The playgroup is situated in a city suburb, and draws its membership from the wider region. It operates for two hours, one day a week, in a community centre room that is used by other playgroups on other days. The equipment does not have to be set up each day, and there is a good outdoor area.

All the parents and a paid teacher participate in the programme. The parent co-ordinator of the playgroup is studying for Diploma of Teaching (ECE) and another parent holds a Bachelor of Education (ECE). Some parents have participated in Ministry of Education playgroup courses, which parents still referred to as “ECD4 (Early Childhood Development) courses”.

Parents described playgroup management and administration as “not too onerous”. There is a president and treasurer and a small committee. Funding is Ministry of Education playgroup funding, parent donations, a COGs grant, and a fair held at the end of each year. Suggested parent

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4 ECD has been integrated within the Ministry of Education.
donations are $2 per child per session, or $3 per family where there is more than one child. This largely pays for the teacher and rent.

**Philosophy**

Parents came to the playgroup to learn and use their own language and maintain their cultures: this is the main purpose. While parents speak the same language, they said there are some different words for the same thing and different “costumes, traditions, and national identity”. Parents said the playgroup provides a social meeting place for parents with the same culture, support from others who know how it is to be living in a different culture, and a place where children can associate with other children from the same culture “without feeling isolated or unusual.”

When raising children, the culture becomes really important because you want to raise your children in the way you were raised. It’s like a bridge when raising children between two cultures—you can talk to each other.

The playgroup had a singular focus on language and culture.

We need to remember we are only here for two hours a week. A lot of the older children also go to other early childhood provisions with water, messy play etc so they get those other things somewhere else and it doesn’t matter if we don’t have them here.

There is an emphasis on reinforcing vocabulary, paying attention to meaning with themes planned to extend children’s knowledge, and musical and rhythmical activities and children’s games.

**Language and culture learning**

The field researcher described this playgroup as having “a warm happy atmosphere with much singing, and movement and dance.” There was a balance between free choice for children and opportunity for children to participate in planned cultural activities. Field researcher notes described one of these activities:

This day, the focus was on the home country of the teacher and one of the mothers. The teacher wore a T-shirt of the colours of that country’s flag. There was also a flag, opportunity for children to paint their own flag, make hand prints with these colours, and eat two types of traditional biscuits. The parents sang the national anthem and the teacher dressed up in a beautiful costume and danced to music from the country, which entranced both children and adults.

The teacher played a key role in leading the education programme in this playgroup, and fully involved the parents in planning, gaining feedback and participating in the programme itself. The field researcher noted:

The teacher was very skilled, competent and warm and related well to children and parents. Children enjoyed and participated in the cultural activities and were ‘bathed in language’, with adults speaking the language all the time. The playgroup provided a rich learning environment that met the goals of supporting and teaching the language and cultural aspirations of the families.
Parents explained how their participation in the programme and use of the community language by all parents helped this playgroup to be a strong environment with respect to language and culture. The teacher’s leadership and positive encouragement helped generate enthusiasm for participation.

Our teacher organises the activities and we all speak (the language). She’ll say “Okay we’re going to do this and every mum and dad has to help do this because your babies cannot do it by themselves.” Otherwise everyone will sit back and be shy.

Parents believed their involvement contributed to their child’s learning.

Parents need to be there to back up what the teacher does, e.g. explain to a child what a word means.

Parents also said the environment was very welcoming for themselves and their child. Adults were seen to be quick to address discriminatory attitudes, using explanation and getting children to think about other perspectives and situations. An occasion observed by the field researcher was when two boys laughed at a photo of indigenous people and were helped to understand that people do look different but “that’s not for laughing at.”

The parents thought their children became more “greedy for other languages” and made a contribution to society through learning their community language. Some commented that their own children teach words and songs from their language to children when they go to their other early childhood centres. They also spoke of the pride they feel about their cultural heritage.

**Parent support**

The playgroup offered parents an opportunity to make friends and be with others from their own culture. Parents loved attending it.

Every week I like going to the group. I get really excited to go as I know I can speak my own language.

I enjoy being with people I can relax with.

It’s not only the learning, but developing social confidence and forming what I hope will be lasting friendships. [Children will] always be in touch with their peers and other (language speaking) families.

ECD in the past and the Department of Ethnic Affairs had been a valuable support to this playgroup. Parents spoke very highly of an ECD staff member who had been helpful and supportive, was aware of the needs of the playgroup from her own background, and was keen to support language and community groups.

**Themes**

Several themes and issues emerged from the material on playgroups.

Parent support for isolated families, families with young children and parents from cultures outside of New Zealand was a valuable contribution being made by some playgroups.
The key issue with respect to playgroup was their need for professional support. All the playgroups in this study wanted better support than they were currently receiving, particularly “hands on”, from experienced and educationally knowledgeable people, carried out in their own playgroup. Only one of the playgroups was strong in providing a good quality education programme. Professional support could help lift levels of quality and offer opportunities for parent learning and support if it were appropriate, ongoing and timely.

The qualified fluent teachers played a key role with respect to educational leadership in teaching the language and culture and encouraging parent participation in the community language playgroups. In one of these, parents were not themselves fluent and were learning the language alongside their children. Parents in one of the playgroups would like to have better funding, to pay for most of the teacher’s time, so that a longer session could be held.

**Kōhanga reo**

In 2004, there were 513 licensed kōhanga reo catering for 10,418 children, and 13 licence-exempt kōhanga reo catering for 191 children. In 1994 773 licensed kōhanga reo served 12,508 children, or 8.2 percent of early childhood education enrolments. Numbers have shown a small increase since 2001. In 2004, kōhanga reo served 5.6 percent of early childhood education enrolments.

The first kōhanga reo opened in 1982, with rapid growth until 1994. Kōhanga reo were set up to play a proactive role in the revitalisation of *te reo me nga tikanga Māori* (Māori language and culture) and this revitalisation is pursued through the social context of whānau. For many parents in kōhanga reo this can also mean learning te reo alongside their children.

The kaupapa or philosophy of kōhanga centres around “*te mana o te whānau*” (the dignity of the family, including the extended family). *Tino rangatiratanga* (self determination), a fundamental principle of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, is also the foundation of the kōhanga movement. Embodied in Te Korowai are four *pou* (or posts) which are the cornerstones of the kaupapa: total immersion in te reo Māori, whānau decision-making, management and responsibility, accountability to all cultural, financial and whānau members and groups, and ensuring the health and well-being of the mokopuna and the whānau.

The educational programme is based on Te Whāriki. In addition the kōhanga model emphasises the importance of strong spiritual and cultural wellbeing of the child and the whānau. It focuses on quality cultural interactions between adults, between adults and children, and between children. Whakapapa and genealogy of the child and whānau are important and mihimihi (or greetings) are an important part of the programme.

The ongoing involvement of kaumatua or kuia (elders) is very important because it is usually the older generations who have the reo and tikanga knowledge that the kōhanga whānau wish to pass on. In some kōhanga the kaumatua or kuia are also the kaiako (teachers) who are paid educators.
Kaiako competency for their work is assessed by the kōhanga reo whānau. Kaiako are also expected to either have the qualification of the Tohu Whakapakari or be enrolled in the Whakapakari Training Programme. This is a three-year course NZQA approved course focusing on traditional Māori child-rearing practices, Māori pedagogy of learning and teaching, Māori assessment processes, whanaungatanga (inter-relationships), whaioranga (health) and te reo and tikanga Māori. In addition parents can take two further NZQA approved one-year courses. The first is a certificate course (Te Ara Tuatahi) for kōhanga whānau who speak little or no reo, and it includes components on child development and management, and the second (Te Ara Tuarua) focuses on Māori language skills for staff who are semi-fluent.

Wānanga are also held at the request of kōhanga reo whānau, on a wide range of topics. These are often organised in conjunction with the National Trust. Kura reo that all kōhanga reo are expected to participate in are also held several times a year.

Each kōhanga is managed by the kōhanga whānau. The parents are the employers, owners, users or stakeholders and they are responsible for ensuring their kōhanga meets all requirements, both kaupapa and legislative. Each kōhanga elects office bearers and working groups are established to address and be responsible for different areas of operation such as the curriculum, property, personnel, finances and training. The whānau appoints the licensee for the kōhanga. Whānau who are able to, participate in the daily programme alongside the kaiako and kaimahi and attend wānanga organised by the purapura or district.

Purapura are clusters of kōhanga reo within a geographical area that provide support for each other, share ideas, resources and hold wānanga. They usually meet monthly. Every kōhanga whānau has access to the Kōhanga Reo National Trust, which is their parent funding body either directly or through the kaupapa kaimahi who is an employee of the Trust based at the local level.

The National Trust is the umbrella organisation for all kōhanga reo in New Zealand. The Trust sets policies, oversees, supports, advocates for and monitors the kaupapa. The main role of the Trust is to ensure the survival of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori and āhuatanga Māori through the strengthening of whānau.

Kōhanga reo are an important part of Māori communities with some kōhanga based on or close to marae where hui, wānanga and other community events are held including tangi.

All kōhanga reo charter to the National Trust before applying for their licence with the Ministry of Education. The National Trust recommended adult: child ratios are 1:3 for children under two, and 1:6 for children over two years of age. Most kōhanga reo are all-day services, five days a week.
Patterns of strength for kōhanga reo

Kaupapa of kōhanga reo

Te reo, tikanga Māori and whanaungatanga were the kaupapa of kōhanga reo. Parents wanted te reo and tikanga Māori learning for their children and themselves. This role was a clear and dominant purpose.

The predominant strength of kōhanga reo in this study was in children’s learning of te reo and tikanga Māori, socialisation outcomes for children and inclusion of children with special needs. These three aspects fit with the kōhanga reo kaupapa. Kōhanga reo were rated highly on the items *Children learn to socialise and care for each other* and *Inclusion of children with special needs*. These items are related to the concept of “whanaungatanga”. “Whanaungatanga” draws on the importance of whakapapa or genealogical ties and the collective responsibility that this cultural pedagogy expects. All children are seen as important members of the whānau, including babies and children with special needs. We found similar high ratings on both these items in our *Evaluation of initial uses and impact of Equity Funding* and *Locality-based evaluation of Pathways to the Future – Ngā Huarahi Arataki*.

Items on which kōhanga reo in the study tended to be rated less highly were about the education programme, especially:

- Children work on problems and experiment with solutions;
- Stories are read, told and shared;
- Children are encouraged to explore mathematical ideas and symbols;
- Children engage in child initiated creative play; and
- There is evidence of opportunities for children to write.

These findings are consistent with Education Review Office (ERO) reports that identified many kōhanga reo need more support with their mokopuna learning programme, Te Whāriki. Support is needed in planning, assessment, evaluation, and curriculum implementation.

The two kōhanga reo where these items were rated highest had parents and kaiako holding an early childhood education teaching qualification in addition to Whakapakari and fluency. Two held Equivalency to the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) and one held a BEd Teaching (ECE). None of the parents and kaiako in the other kōhanga reo who filled in the questionnaires marked that they held an early childhood education teaching qualification.

Another item where ratings were somewhat lower was “Children co-construct learning with other children.”
Köhanga reo, especially those with parents who had predominantly moderate te reo language ability (but were not fluent) and limited ability, were also making a contribution to adult learning of te reo and tikanga Māori.

Sixty percent of köhanga reo parents (18) responding to the questionnaire said that they learned new skills/knowledge through being involved in the köhanga reo. Forty-one percent of these said they gained higher levels of te reo and tikanga Māori knowledge. Other learning was mainly related to management—facilitation, financial and management skills. Some of those participating in the education programme stated they learned about working with children and positive approaches to discipline.

Forty-three percent of parents (13) said that they had used skills/knowledge learned from köhanga reo in volunteer or paid work, mainly drawing on their competence in respect to te reo and tikanga Māori, or management skills. Examples of work gained by köhanga reo parents and based on their köhanga reo experience were as a Plunket kaiāwhina for Māori children, teaching te reo in a mainstream school, as itinerant teacher Māori, and teaching te reo groups. Voluntary work included an after school programme, therapeutic horse riding, and work for a church.

Köhanga reo parents were less likely than parents from other parent/whānau led services to report parenting skills gained from their involvement in their child’s ECE centre. This is not surprising since te reo and tikanga Māori were the main focus of wananga, and kaiako and kaimahi, sometimes with a small group of parents and kaumatua, tended to be responsible for the education programme in these köhanga reo.

Limited parent and whānau involvement in the education programme is a reflection of the reality that many parents in köhanga reo are not able to participate with the children on a regular basis during the day because of work commitments or limited competency in te reo Māori, making them feel whakamā or embarrassed. Parent and whānau involvement was primarily through whānau management and decision making, participation in kura reo and other wananga, language and cultural support, and supporting the köhanga reo in ways such as fundraising and working bees. Nevertheless, five of the six köhanga reo in the study had current kaiako who began their

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Table 5 Köhanga patterns of strength

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<th>Centre Type</th>
<th>Children learning</th>
<th>Socialisation</th>
<th>Inclusion of children with special needs</th>
<th>Connection between home and centre</th>
<th>Parenting skills</th>
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* The shaded areas show that these köhanga reo were rated as stronger on the outcome indicator
career as a kaiāwhina or parent volunteer and assisted in the mokopuna learning programme and/or the kitchen. For example, in a rural kōhanga reo, the kaiako and three kaiāwhina were parents. Another employed two kaiako who were parents of past children attending the kōhanga reo and two kaiāwhina who were parents of current children, and had a roster of parents participating at least once a week. Parents were often the pool of relievers when staff were away sick, on leave or attending wananga. Some kaiāwhina had very little or no te reo Māori but learned through being immersed in the language, and through being enrolled in kōhanga reo training programmes such as Te Ara Tuatahi or Te Ara Tuarua.

Portrait: an urban kōhanga reo

This kōhanga reo is a total immersion te reo and tikanga Māori environment for children from birth to five years. Children learn te reo alongside their whānau. It is situated in a large urban area and is open 30 hours a week (six hours a day) and for more than 40 weeks of the year. The kōhanga is licensed for 38 children and has 21 children on the roll. All children are of Māori descent. Four of these children are under two years of age and 17 are over two. The weekly fees are $50.

The kōhanga reo building is owned by Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust. It is open plan and the large room has been divided into specific areas using low storage cupboards, or carpeted and lino flooring. The indoor area is well equipped with Māori language resources and they are easily accessible to children. The walls are covered with te reo posters, children’s artwork and the kaiako/kaiāwhina assignments from their training courses. The lino area is mainly used as a ‘wharekai’ and is next to the kitchen. Parts of the carpeted area are sectioned off for the under two year olds. Space for storing and preparing resources was considered satisfactory. A computer is set up in the office. It is used mainly for administration purposes and is also available for making educational resources and for kaiako/kaiāwhina who are in training for their course assignments. The computer is connected to Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust network and whānau have access to the internet as well as to information on their intranet designed for kōhanga whānau only. The whānau said the office is satisfactory although at times it is too small for meeting specialists.

There is a deck, which enables good flow between the indoor and outdoor area. A large outdoor climbing frame dominates the outdoor area and a fenced off vegetable garden is in one corner.

The kōhanga belongs to a purapura with three other kōhanga reo. They are all within close proximity of one another. They meet once a week to support one another, discuss events and issues and for wananga on such topics as Te Whāriki, te reo, taxes, financial management, fire safety, and the three kōhanga reo courses—Whakapakari, Te Ara Tuatahi and Te Ara Tuarua. The purapura also offers the opportunity for the different kōhanga to share ideas and resources and plan for the next year.

(We take information) back to the whānau and encourage the whānau to attend the workshops. Whakawhanaunga at the workshops and purapura’.
Kaupapa

The whānau charter (Tutohinga) adheres to the four kaupapa statements in Te Korowai. The three main things whānau said they wanted their children to learn in their kōhanga reo were “te reo, tikanga and respect”. Whānau and staff felt that whānau support, a full “understanding of the kaupapa, Tutohinga and Te Korowai”, ongoing training, a mokopuna learning programme and being part of a support network were factors which helped them achieve their kaupapa.

Te kōhanga reo whānau

Twelve families, all low income, manage the kōhanga and all attend their monthly whānau management hui.

Whānau make decisions at the whānau hui with 100% turn out…If an emergency comes up quick decisions are made and we call our whānau reps. All the different roles are very clear.

Whānau hui are run by an elected chairperson, treasurer and secretary. These hui make decisions about the management of the kōhanga, and discuss the learning programme for the children, staff and parents. Whānau also participate in supporting their kaiako in their studies for Whakapakari, a rōpu awhi to assist whānau with any concerns, fundraising, working bees, general maintenance and social events. All new whānau are interviewed, provided with a handbook, introduced to current whānau and then inducted into the kaupapa in relation to the children’s learning, the management of the kōhanga and their role. One parent has completed the TKRNT course Te Ara Tuatahi.

Two kaumatua support the kōhanga reo on a regular basis and visit at least once a week. Their support includes advice and guidance on te reo and tikanga, sharing cultural experiences, working with the mokopuna, fundraising, maintenance repairs and making resources.

Kaumatua play a big part in the kōhanga, tuturu Māori to pass on to the tamariki. (They are) the backbone of the kōhanga. The tamariki respect the elders.

The kōhanga reo employs five staff. Four are kaiako and kaiāwhina and one is the office administrator who also assists in the programme when required. Two whānau members are also able to support the kōhanga regularly in the children’s programme. The whānau who were interviewed said other parents are either working, too “shy” to participate because they “have no understanding of te reo”, or have other commitments.

All five staff either have a kōhanga qualification or are in kōhanga reo training. Of the four staff working mainly with the children one kaiako has the Tohu Whakapakari, and another kaiako has the Te Ara Tuatahi certificate and is enrolled in the Whakapakari three-year training. One kaiāwhina has Te Ara Tuarua and the other kaiāwhina has almost completed her Te Ara Tuatahi course. The administrator has the Te Ara Hiko Level 1 certificate as well as Te Ara Tuatahi certificate. Three staff are competent speakers of te reo Māori and the other two are semi fluent. All staff except one have had at least 5 years experience in kōhanga. One of these kaiako has been in kōhanga reo for more than 10 years. Two kaiāwhina have also had up to 5 years experience in
playcentre. All staff except one have attended professional development courses on a regular basis including Kura Reo, purapura wananga, Te Whāriki workshops, and a local te reo course.

**Children learning te reo and tikanga Māori**

The whānau were clear that they needed to contribute to their children’s learning of te reo and said that they did this through learning and speaking Māori themselves, learning waiata, showing an interest in the children’s learning and giving encouragement. It was an important cultural value to encourage children to look after and respect one another. The kōhanga whānau saw respect for one another, the environment, food, welcoming visitors and the development of their wairua as being important. Hurting others was not permitted:

> If hitting is happening, (we) explain to them if they are really upset, then we take them aside and awhi.

The kōhanga plan together in purapura and then share the chosen themes or topics with the whānau. The topics are often influenced by “what is happening in the Māori world … nga atua, seasons, fire safety”. An aromatawai anga (assessment) is completed for each child for each theme. The kaiako ask children for their feedback on the programmes and interact with the children to assess their level of acquisition of te reo and tikanga in relation to the theme.

The field worker ratings and observations showed how the kaiako, kaiāwhina, parents, and children related with one another. Respectful relationships or “whanaungatanga” were very strong in the kōhanga between staff and children; staff and staff; staff and parents; parents and parents; children and children; and kōhanga and manuhiri/visitors. The staff interacted positively with the children and with one another at all times. They were responsive to children’s needs and talked in a calm manner especially with children who were upset. When an older child tried to nudge another younger child out of the way the kaiako said calmly “kaore te tikanga o tenei kōhanga. Awhi i te teina” (That is not this kōhanga’s way, care for the younger child).

Generally the children were observed interacting positively with one another. A tuakana guided younger children during karakia. Children were continuously exchanging ideas with each other during their cooking activity. Children interacted in mixed age groupings as well as specific age groupings for under twos and over twos. The activities were varied and consisted of karakia, mihimihiti, waiata, panui pukapuka, tunu paoroa, putaiao, takaro i waho, pangarau, and poi. The children were intensely involved in their prepared activity, taking the initiative and asking questions. Here are excerpts from two observations:

Without being prompted an older child took a tissue and wiped a younger child’s nose. He then looked for the special plastic bag that dirty tissues were placed in. It took him a few minutes to locate it with one of the kaiako in another part of the room and he promptly placed the tissue in the bag receiving praise from the kaiako.

An older child comforted a new child and took her outside where she was met by a second older child. Both children then led the new child hand in hand, out to the playground to her
older brother (also his first day) where they all played on the climbing frame. Neither child was prompted by an adult to comfort the new children.

Community
The kōhanga have frequent contacts with the local kura kaupapa Māori, immersion unit and primary school, with local iwi community agencies and government departments. The kōhanga also contributes to the community through participation in cultural and community events.

Themes
Several themes and issues emerged on the material for kōhanga reo gathered for this study.

As a group, kōhanga reo in this study were strongest on children’s learning of te reo and tikanga Māori, socialisation outcomes for children and inclusion of children with special needs. These three aspects fit with the kōhanga reo kaupapa and link to the concept of whanaungatanga.

This was demonstrated in the portrait kōhanga reo where te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, understanding the kaupapa and the whānau working together were emphasised. Whanaungatanga based on tikanga Māori—respectful relationships with one another including the children, was always evident. High adult: child ratios seemed to contribute to these positive relationships.

Having some adults with high levels of language fluency matters. Fluency and cultural knowledge enables adults to contribute to the complexity of language that is spoken, children’s language learning and good quality cultural interactions. In the portrait kōhanga reo, the five kaiako/kaimahi were fluent or semi-fluent in te reo, and had had previous experience in kōhanga reo and kōhanga reo training or were in training. The kaumatua cultural support and advice was making a valued contribution.

Some kōhanga reo parents were learning te reo and tikanga Māori alongside their children.

A key issue for kōhanga reo is recruiting and retaining fluent speakers to work in the kōhanga reo education programme, if parent and whānau fluency levels are limited or fluent parents and whānau are unable to participate, which many said they were not.

Pasifika centres
In 2003, 21 percent of the Pacific children attending early childhood education attended licence-exempt centres. In 2004 there were 113 licence-exempt Pasifika centres catering for 2392 children. There has been a shift from licence-exempt centres over the past ten years, from 183 in 1994. In 2003 there were 91 licensed Pasifika centres.

The first Pasifika early childhood education group was set up by a group of Samoan and Cook Islands mothers in 1972. These groups are often located in church facilities where most Pacific communities gather. Churches and Pacific cultural associations play key support roles. The move
for licence-exempt groups towards obtaining licensed status has been lengthy for those that wanted it, and there have often been management and administration challenges for those who have obtained it. Pasifika services have varied in the rate of their progress towards licensing and chartering. There is still a shortage of fluent staff with early childhood education qualifications. Maternal participation in licensed centres is reported to sometimes lead to training and further education.

Pasifika early childhood education services are usually, but not totally, immersion services. Some services are not total immersion because they are serving families where English is the first language. Each of the services centres around the maintenance of its language and culture.

Licensed Pasifika services provide both all-day and sessional education; Pasifika playgroups are sessional.

Patterns of strength for Pasifika services

Aims of Pasifika services

Pacific parents wanted their community language and culture used and maintained for themselves and for their children. They wanted early childhood education outcomes, especially learning and socialisation opportunities, and preparation for school. All mentioned the central role of spiritual values in their child’s learning. Some also wanted their child “to be good in English as well”. Their needs and expectations were somewhat wider than those of other parents. We found a similar wide range of expectations of Pacific parents responding to questionnaires in the locality-based evaluation of *Pathways to the Future—Ngā Huarahi Arataki*.

In general, consistent with their philosophy and goals, the main strengths of Pasifika centres in this study were in maintaining and strengthening their Pacific language and culture and in providing an education programme for children. They were also making a contribution to parents developing skills and knowledge that were being used in other paid or voluntary work.

Table 6  Pasifika patterns of strength*

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* The shaded areas show that these Pasifika centre were rated as stronger on the outcome indicator

All Pasifika centres were contributing to children learning their Pacific language and culture, with the three immersion Pasifika centres making stronger contributions probably because the language
was being spoken all the time. Most parents interviewed felt great pride that they now hear their children speak in their own Pacific language and sing Pacific songs and chants.

At an individual level, 22 percent of parents (12) responding to the parent questionnaire said they benefited from their involvement in respect to language learning and making cultural connections.

I can help the baby under two and help them about their language.

Sixty-four percent (36) of Pacific parents stated they were learning about child learning and development and behaviour management through their involvement.

Child’s play. Various stages of their development. Using tasks, i.e. reading at their level, playing.

How to get along with the children, communicating with the kids.

A few were also learning management and communication skills through their work in the centre.

Fifty-five percent (31) marked they used their skills/knowledge in other volunteer paid work, but many did not say how. Examples where these were specified were mainly about drawing on management, administration or financial skills for example, working with a church youth group, preparing a financial statement for a Trust, and developing good relationships “with the community that I’m serving”.

A strength of most Pasifika centres was the good quality of their education resources and environment, and responsive interactions between adults and children. Less time was spent in adults scaffolding learning through asking open-ended questions, adults adding complexity, and children being able to work on problems themselves and experiment with solutions.

Portrait: Pacific Islands Early Childhood Group

This Pacific Islands early childhood group calls itself a community pre-school and is run for Pacific families from one Pacific ethnic group. The group is run by an unpaid supervisor, supported by family members who also take care of the administration, collection of fees and assist with the teaching. The group operates three mornings per week. Ages of the children range from babies up to four year olds and the group size varies each session but averages about 12 to 15 children per session. Parents and grandparents attend and stay with their children.

The supervisor and parents have to set up their equipment and learning activities two days a week in a large, bright, modern, well-appointed community hall. The community centre where they operate is located in an urban, multicultural suburb where most of the families are in middle to lower income bracket. They receive playgroup funding from the Ministry of Education and with small parent donations, and a lottery grant, they are able to continue to operate. They pay rent to the local city council for the use of the community facilities. Their materials and equipment are stored in a large cupboard down the hallway and all the adults participate in unpacking and packing away again.
The location is also convenient for families because Plunket and other services operate within the same complex. The cost is $1 per session.

**Philosophy**

What the parents value most is that their Pacific language and culture is being taught and the group was set up largely for that reason. A number of the young parents are learning their language alongside their children and this is a very relaxed environment in which to do so. Therefore the level of fluency and the strong leadership of the supervisor is important to them in achieving that goal. The second aspect that parents value is the quality of teaching and the new skills and knowledge their children gain. As a consequence, parents say they also learn more about their children and how they as parents can help the children to be more engaged in learning.

Flexibility of attendance is accepted and enables the parents to attend when they can. Parents reported they liked the convenience of having the playgroup near the busy shopping centre, and within walking distance from their homes. Parents like to be able to come when they can because sometimes other family responsibilities can prevent them from attending with their children. Affordability was another reason why parents brought their children.

**Children’s learning and development**

The supervisor is a mature woman, held in high regard by her Pacific community, a fluent speaker and steeped in her cultural knowledge. At the time of the study the supervisor had just graduated with her Bachelor of Education (Teaching ECE) degree and had started up a new organisation for Pacific early childhood teachers. She did not wish to work fulltime teaching and decided to run this playgroup in her “spare” time. Her grandchildren also attend the group.

On the third morning of each week the children and parents go on outings such as to the park, to the zoo, on the train and other venues in the community. They do this in order to avoid the rental expenses for the hall and to get out into the community. The group are able to make these excursions because of the high parent and grandparent involvement. Ratios are usually 1 to 1. The supervisor said it encourages the parents to take their children out, and to have fun with them. Photographs of the trips are taken and displayed on charts for children and parents to look at and the charts are brought out each session.

The supervisor and the parents place high value on education for their children as well as their desire for them to maintain their Pacific language. The equipment and resources for the playgroup are all new and well-cared for, and the supervisor along with the parents had selected and purchased equipment and resources such as books to extend the children (some in Samoan, others in English), providing for their gross motor skills with tunnels to climb through, trikes, hoops and balls, as well as blocks, paints, puzzles, dressing up clothes, writing and drawing materials, and collage activities to stimulate them. At the beginning of the session the parents also pin up charts of numbers, shapes, poetry cards, Samoan alphabet, photos of past trips and they set out all the
play and mat areas. There is a special babies corner set up where mothers (and grandmothers) can sit with the babies.

The parents and children arrive at about 9am and help to set up. They have to set out a row of chairs to place a border around their space as the hall is quite large. Outside the perimeter of the chairs is the area for play with the balls, hoops, trikes and other activities designed to develop gross motor skills. When everything is set up, parents interact freely with the children.

All the interactions with parents and children are in their Pacific language as far as possible. The younger parents who are not fluent try to practice their Pacific language with the children and the supervisor.

Each child has a scrapbook into which their art and written work is pasted and dated so parents and children can see their progress. The writing table is a popular place for the children as well as the dressing up wardrobe and the mat with the big blocks. The supervisor moves around talking with the children, asking questions and prompting them. At mat time the children sing Samoan songs and do action songs, they have stories told and read to them. If the book is in English the teacher tells the story using the Samoan language. At one of the observed sessions the supervisor’s daughter told stories using a felt board, and on another day the supervisor retold a story she had read from a book with little finger puppets and songs which the children really enjoyed. The process quality ratings were high for this group across a range of items, particularly in adults’ responsive interactions with children and their participation in children’s play, adults using positive guidance and reinforcement, encouraging language development. Children supported and co-operated with each other.

Another aspect of the programme that is important to the parents in this group is the teaching of Christian values. The children are told stories about Jesus and on occasions a local church minister visits and takes a reading and a prayer. Before their morning tea, which is provided by the parents, the children sit down at their tables and sing their lotu/grace. Before leaving the session they also have a prayer.

**Parent learning and support**

Parents said they help out with setting up and putting away equipment, and learn from watching the supervisor as she teaches and interacts with the children. They also learn about how to communicate better with their children. One parent said that she had been involved in managing the finance of the group. Three parents are in training to become early childhood teachers and one parent is doing Montessori training.

Seventy-eight percent of the parents (14) responding to the parent questionnaire reported that they had learned new skills by coming to the group and that they were encouraged to learn by the other parents there. They liked being with their children and being guided by the supervisor. Parents liked to see their children “reading”, writing and taking part in activities that gave them experiences in Samoan language such as learning the Samoan alphabet sounds and letters and
taking part in the singing and dancing. Some of the parents have expressed an interest in extending the group to five mornings per week.

Several of the younger mothers report that coming to this playgroup provides an opportunity for them to learn and/or maintain their Samoan language. Several of the parents reported having attended resource development, child development and child health and safety workshops that they found very interesting. As a result a number of parents said they enjoy making resources for the children. Parents feel more confident about getting along with other parents and playing with their own child and with other children who come to the group. They can provide learning experiences for the children and were observed constructing an obstacle course, and creating games with the balls and hoops. Parents sit together and talk about their children’s growth and development and one parent reported that she now understands how her involvement is important to her child. One parent still comes to help even though her child has gone to school because she wants to learn more from the supervisor about children’s learning.

**Community**

The supervisor reports that she has established good communication and an ongoing working relationship with other Pasifika early childhood services. They hold social events, competitions and workshops in conjunction with other groups.

Parents said the skills and knowledge they learn here can be applied with their own children at home and with children within their extended families. The playgroup is welcoming for mothers and grandmothers who can get away from the house for a few hours while still being with their children. They are able to meet with others who spoke their language and could also learn from the supervisor.

The group had links with a local church minister and congregation that had assisted in the setting up of the group. This link is maintained by visits from the minister.

The parent who reported helping with the finance management reported how this helped her in her other voluntary community work.

**Themes**

Several themes and issues emerged from material on Pasifika centres gathered for this study.

Parents had a range of aspirations for use and maintenance of their community language and culture, and good early childhood education and preparation for school for their children. Their patterns of strength tended to reflect these aspirations, although those that were stronger in respect to teaching and learning the Pacific language were immersion centres. There may be value in researching how to strengthen language learning in bilingual settings.

The patterns of strength on the ratings of quality used in this study indicate that in general these Pasifika centres have good quality education resources and environment, and responsive
interactions between adults and children. Areas where Pasifika centres in this study may need greater support is in interacting with children to scaffold thinking and learning dispositions.

The provision of the high quality programme in the portrait Pasifika centre, as indicated in the process ratings, is dependent on the supervisor, both her qualifications and her own standing in the Pacific community. These attract parents. Her skills and knowledge of early childhood education and child development and learning provide a strong base to her significant language and cultural skills. The supervisor is unpaid, which is her own choice. Her ongoing leadership is dependent on her continuing good health and the ability of her family to forego her income while she is responsible for this group. Her family helps in the day-to-day running of the playgroup and should she and her family become unavailable for any reason, the group may not be able to continue. There is insufficient playgroup funding to pay for a supervisor.

Some of the parents would like to increase the three sessions per week to five sessions. However, the group pays about $2,000 a year for the rental of the premises for two of their three sessions per week and is only able to sustain this by getting a lottery grant. The donations from the parents, although small, are added to that grant and to the Ministry grant to enable it to survive financially. Increased days would mean increased rental costs. As the premises are a community facility they may not be able to increase their bookings anyway.

This group is not intending to become a licensed centre and therefore has time to concentrate on delivering the programme. Parents in this group are not required to give their energies, and considerable time and attention to policy development, serious fund-raising activities or preparations for licensing, unlike other groups and centres in this study.
4. Factors that support quality in parent and whānau-led services

As described in the previous section, the philosophy/kaupapa of the different parent/whānau-led services is linked to the emphasis each placed on different outcomes and to the patterns of strength for each service type in relation to these outcomes. But not all services of a distinctive type were uniformly doing well in relation to the same outcomes, so philosophy and service type is just part of the story. This section explores what factors supported some services to make a greater contribution to different outcomes than other services were making. Some of these factors could be strengthened by services themselves and others are outside their control and may need external support.

Only one of the 28 parent and whānau-led centres in the study, a playcentre, was stronger on all four outcomes for children and all applicable outcomes for parents. A community language playgroup, a licence-exempt Pasifika centre, a kōhanga reo and two other playcentres also had strengths on most applicable outcomes.

At the other end of the quality spectrum in terms of the outcomes focused on in this study, there were some centres of each service type that showed few strengths. These centres often had distractions that were making it hard for them to operate well. For example, one Pasifika centre faced the challenge of becoming licensed and meeting playground standards. A playcentre had had a divided parent body and was just beginning to address long-standing issues, through a newly appointed supervisor.

We look at each of the outcomes included in the study in turn, starting with the four outcomes for children.

Outcomes for children

Children develop knowledge, understanding, skills and learning dispositions (in line with Te Whāriki)

We used the ratings of aspects of process quality as indicators of the outcome Children develop knowledge, understanding, skills, and learning dispositions (in line with Te Whāriki). The items chosen were related to different aspects of the learning environment associated in research evidence with outcomes for children, or culturally valued interactions and environments in Aotearoa New Zealand. They cover:

- adult interactions that are responsive and extend children’s thinking;
• children having opportunity to concentrate and complete work and indications they are developing learning dispositions;
• children supporting and cooperating with each other, co-constructing learning, and showing leadership;
• aspects of the education programme and interactions focusing on early literacy, mathematical understanding, problem solving and creativity; and
• recognition and acceptance of every child’s culture, Māori language and culture, and inclusiveness.

At 16 of the 28 services, the average quality rating across all these aspects was around the medium mark or higher, with 12 services rated lower.

Few centres, even in the group with the higher ratings, were rated highly on more cognitively challenging interactions, such as adults asking open-ended questions and adults adding complexity and challenge through scaffolding and co-constructing learning which enable adults to engage with children’s interests and thinking. In Siraj-Blatchford et al’s (2003) comprehensive study of effective early childhood education settings in the UK, and in the Competent Children study, open-ended questioning was associated with better cognitive achievement. Some rich conversational exchanges and positive, responsive interactions seemed to have drawn on parents’ understanding and knowledge of their child’s interests and experiences. These interactions included:

• parents basing conversations on shared memories; and
• parents understanding and responding quickly to their child’s non-verbal cues.

While these were positive, on other occasions interactions which the field researchers rated as lower quality were observed. These may have reflected habitual ways of parents interacting with their own children. The following are examples:

• In a playgroup with a lower average rating, an older sibling was dominating a younger sibling in her play—none of the parents intervened or made suggestions, possibly because in this playgroup each parent was responsible for their own child, or because they did not see this as an issue.
• In some centres parents tended to manage behaviour through rules and use of warnings, and to “do activities for children” rather than encourage their thinking and exploration.

When we examined differences between the higher and lower rated groups, we found some consistent factors that seemed to contribute to higher ratings.

Educators/kaikōmata in the centres with higher quality ratings tended to be more focused on children and worked purposely as a team to provide the education programme. They had good equipment...
and curriculum resources, including in Pasifika centres and kōhanga reo, cultural resources made by adults.

Some contributing factors—qualifications and ratios—are structural features that have been found in much other research evidence (reviewed in Smith et al., 2000) to be linked to quality. What seemed to matter for quality ratings, was that the group of educators/kaiako who were delivering the education programme had among them some qualified and experienced adults, and focused on the children during the session. Services where some of the adults who were responsible for the education programme held or were in training for higher level qualifications, e.g. Whakapakari in kōhanga reo, Playcentre Association Certificate in playcentre, PIEC Diploma in Pasifika centres, or a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) were in the group with the higher ratings. In some services it was paid staff holding the qualification and working alongside parents and whānau. Experience also seemed to count: on average staff and parent educators in this group had more years of experience in their own service or in other ECE services.

Centre size was a contributing factor for kōhanga reo and playgroup, which tended to do better with moderate numbers of families (20 to 25) rather than very many or very few. A smaller centre may have only a limited pool of parents with qualifications and experience, especially when the centre has no access to external advice and support, as is true of many playgroups. Playcentre have a maximum size of 30 children, and while some higher rated playcentres were very small, they also had good professional support from their association and sometimes from life members who could be available if the pool of qualified people was not sufficient. The following excerpt from field researcher notes about a large service illustrates how hard it may be to develop adult-child interactions that support children’s learning in larger groups.

A very large playgroup had 51 children, 35 mothers, two fathers, and three grandparents present at one of the observations. Parents sat together, watching and responding to their own children while talking among themselves. The supervisor used a microphone for music, and followed it with morning tea. Parents chatted and laughed while waiting in line for their morning tea, which is served by church helpers.
External professional support was a key contextual factor enabling access to relevant professional development and training, and helping sustain higher levels of quality. The centres with higher ratings tended to have a wider range of professional advice and support, combining support from an umbrella organisation or Ministry of Education with support from other sources such as REAP, professional development advisers and community organisations. These centres often had mutually beneficial relationships with other ECE services in their locality, especially in relation to sharing training, professional development and resources, and social contact.

Playcentre respondents counted their playcentre association as the main source of external professional support. Playcentres in associations with more qualified and experienced association personnel were stronger. Playcentre association professional support was provided through workshops and courses, and in most, access to a support officer who visited her allocated playcentres to offer on the ground professional advice. We saw this working well in an urban playcentre, where the association support officer attending one session was observed moving around amongst the parents, encouraging attendance at a workshop, and describing and explaining how babies “talk” to get attention and communicate, and things adults could do to keep babies interested and involved. She aimed to encourage greater responsiveness to babies in this playcentre.

Access to support for other centres depended on their own networks and joining in voluntary associations such as kōhanga reo in purapura and Pasifika centres with Pasifika organisations. Pasifika centres and playgroups in particular wanted better external professional support. Supervisors from Pasifika centres wanted professional support from advisers who understood the needs of Pacific children and preferably could speak the Pacific language of the centre. Playgroups, which had little external support, were stronger if they employed a teacher.

Socialisation and caring
The scoping phase of this study identified that parent/whānau led services may be in a good position to support and encourage development of children’s socialisation and caring attributes, through taking responsibility and caring for others, and playing with, co-operating and extending each other through tuakana-teina support. Features we thought could support this outcome are provision for mixed ages, a family and whānau organisational structure and parental belief that opportunities for children to interact with others and develop socially are prime reasons for participation in parent/whānau led services.

To consider this aspect, we examined the four items focused on children’s interactions with each
other. We found that all the parent/whānau led services were achieving some socialisation objectives. All had moderate or high ratings on the item *Children support and co-operate with one another*. All but three centres had moderate or high ratings on the item *Non sex stereotyped play among children is observed*. Excerpts from observations in a playgroup illustrate these items:

Children seem pleased to see each other and play together happily. There is no fighting or teasing. Children play together and alongside one another. Older children touch and smile at babies. All children play with available resources. Dress-ups are used by both boys and girls.

Ratings were lower overall for the two items *Children co-construct learning with other children* and *Children display emergent leadership*. According to Rogoff, Turkanis and Bartlett (2001), engaging in shared thinking and decision making with others contributes to collaborative learning.

We found that in the centres that were doing well on these two items, educators/kaiako said they encouraged children to respect and look after one another through role modelling respectful and caring relationships, drawing attention to the perspectives and feelings of others, and encouraging children to resolve issues and conflict themselves. Those with lower ratings tended to be less analytic, saying for example “Children ‘just do’ respect and care for each others, and children learn through ‘awhi’. We also observed that in the higher rated environments, adults addressed discriminatory play and negative attitudes, positively reinforced each child and their relationships with others and were responsive about children’s contributions to their own and others’ learning.

We found the services that were doing better on these items also had experienced and qualified adults.

**Children with special needs are included**

Services where children with special needs were enrolled, where parents did not think there were insurmountable barriers to enrolling children with special needs, and which were rated as having an inclusive environment were identified as stronger in respect to including children with special needs. Some approaches were more likely to be found in these services: adults tended to have an open attitude towards accepting children with special needs, were responsive in their interactions with children, and tended to involve parents in assessment and planning for their own child. The fact that these approaches were more likely to be found where centres currently had one or more children with special needs attending raises the question of whether confidence in including them
comes with experience. Those without experience may perceive the task as more demanding than it is.

There were differences between service types in access to special needs assistance, with most stronger playcentres using such assistance (often obtained through the playcentre association, which levies playcentres so it can provide special needs support) and most kōhanga reo using such assistance. One stronger kōhanga reo involved whānau in wānanga about health special needs. Some playgroups did not know how to access special needs assistance and less strong Pasifika centres were unsure about what the term “special needs” means and who it refers to. Some of the special needs definitions used by centres such as “a child with English as a second language” and some health problems would probably not meet the MOE definition of “special needs”.

Connections between centre and home

We assessed connections between home and centre from three sources of information: parents’ discussion of follow up at home of children’s interests and experiences and approaches to teaching and learning from the centre; the extent to which the centre considers children’s home interests and experiences in assessment and planning, and how strongly the centre supports parents as learners. The following summary from field researcher notes is how one group of parents in a supervisor-led playcentre described connections:

In respect to planning for every child’s interests, the playcentre uses both formal and informal approaches (telling the supervisor). During the morning “team chat” there is opportunity for input from the team and also from the supervisor. An overview of the plan for the session is discussed and parents are encouraged to contribute ideas. The team tries to follow through children’s interests from home and parents may bring activities and resources from home, e.g. K brought in her car for children to wash—a great success. Some older children like to have “news” at the end of the session.

Parents are given a form telling them when their child will be observed and when the planning meeting will be held—parents contribute to the observations and the plan. If a child has “challenging” behaviour, the team discusses it with the parent and agrees on a strategy that is followed through at home and at playcentre.

Parents gave many examples of enjoying doing activities at home that they had done at playcentre.

Not surprisingly, parents contributing to the education programme on a regular basis combined with take-up of good professional support for adults as learners contributed to centre-home connections to support children’s learning. What seems to matter is parents making an active contribution
to the education programme, not simply being there. For example, one group of parents asked how parents’ knowledge of their children is used in the education programme said:

Half of them don’t say anything—they leave it to J and others. It’s an opportunity for some to come and have coffee and chat with others.

Since opportunities for socialisation and social support were the main purpose of this group, it seemed to be meeting its goals. However, as we saw in the strong playcentres, connectivity between home and service has the potential to be used more in parent and whānau-led services, particularly in relation to parents gaining useful knowledge and understanding for their role, and in relation to providing continuity between what children do at the centre and what they do at home, e.g. when there are strong interests sparked by centre opportunities.

Outcomes for parents and community

Parenting skills and knowledge of child learning and development

Levels of parental participation in playcentre, kōhanga reo or ECE training and participation in the education programme were expected to be relevant to this outcome, contributing relevant training and practical experience. We used these as indicators, and also the extent to which parents involved felt the service was a place where

- parents learn about children’s learning and development and how parents can support learning;
- parents are supported in their role as parents; and
- parents gain confidence and appreciation of their role in respect to educating their child.

The centres having higher ratings on these indicators emphasised adult education opportunities and encouraged take-up of opportunities through a formal induction programme, and/or having a person/s responsible for encouraging adult learning. Some examples:

- Playcentres had organised induction programmes emphasising the playcentre philosophy of adults as first teachers, playcentre association courses relevant to all levels of training, and had an education officer who let parents know of the courses being held and encouraged them to participate, and an association education support team.
- A Pasifika centre that was highly rated on this outcome had an experienced fluent supervisor encouraging parents to be involved in the education programme and in workshops.
- The teacher in a community language playgroup enabled parents to take books and videotapes home and encouraged them to sing songs and do activities at home. She was active in encouraging parents to participate in the education programme.

For example she would say, “Okay, everybody, now we are going to sing and you all have to come and do this.” Otherwise everyone will sit back and be shy.
Pasifika centres and kōhanga reo tended to be stronger in respect to this outcome if they had higher percentages of under twos, perhaps reflecting parents’ commitment to being involved in the education of their very young children.

A depth and range of external professional support was associated with adults developing parenting skills. Sharing resources, training and professional development with local ECE services also helped centres to support adult learning. Most playgroups and Pasifika centres and some kōhanga reo and playcentres wanted more external support to suit their needs.

A contributing factor in supporting parents and whānau to develop parenting skills was the quality and depth of informal discussion about children and learning that occurred amongst parents and staff or co-ordinators. This discussion was more likely to occur at the beginning and end of session. There were missed opportunities for offering ideas and support to parents in most of the study playgroups. Playgroup parents valued being socially connected with other adults, and knowing that “someone else is in the same boat”, but most playgroup discussions we observed did not seem to have input from people with deep knowledge and experience of children’s development and learning.

In most centres in the study, adult team work and adult interactions were positive. Where these relationships and ways of working were poor, there were problems in supporting adults to learn.

At an individual level, 62 percent (161) of the parents responding gave examples of what they had learnt from their involvement in early childhood education that supported their parenting. These fell into the following categories:

- child development and children’s learning;
- how parents can support, encourage and extend children’s learning;
- ideas for home activities;
- ECE curriculum and working in the centre;
- communication skills; and
- general “parenting skills”.

The group of parents who said they gained most tended to have higher levels of involvement in ECE training, and in the education programme and assessment, planning and evaluation. Beginning courses may not be so accessible to playgroup and Pasifika parents since only playcentre and kōhanga reo provide such specific recognised courses for parents. In addition, although kōhanga reo courses have ECE content, they are particularly focused on te reo and tikanga Māori, and this may account for the lower proportion of kōhanga reo parents noting some learning for them in relation to parenting skills.
This group of parents also were more likely to take part in professional development, and tended to be more likely to be supported by their centre to participate in training and professional development, either through mentoring or discussions, or financially.

More of the parents who gained most from their involvement in terms of parenting skills also had more years of experience in community work and health and social services. This experience could have contributed to their higher gains from their involvement in their service, their openess to being involved; but since we do not know when the involvement occurred, it could equally be the case that their gains from the ECE service supported their involvement in other community work.

A much higher percentage of playcentre parents were in the very strong group on this outcome, a finding that is reflective of the high level of support and commitment provided through playcentre for parent education.

Social support

A community has been defined as a relatively stable network of relationships among a group of people who have common interests, a network from which they draw support, friendship and a sense of identity or connectedness greater than that provided in a family alone. From a societal perspective, it is communities (and families) that create and preserve social cohesion (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003, p. 15).

The scoping report for this study found potential for parent/whānau led services to build a socially supportive network of adults. Parents may get to know each other well and build up a more diverse social network of adults. Enduring friendships can be made because of involvement in running the centre and putting different people together in new ways. The ECE centre may give parents an entrée into their local community, into new networks. These networks may grow and reform in ways that are helpful for community cohesion. Jack and Jordan’s (1999) synthesis of UK and US research shows that incidences of abuse and neglect are associated with families lacking mutually supportive relationships and social support. Social support for families is increasingly important in an urbanised society like New Zealand where there is high mobility and many families do not have the support of extended family or whānau.

Parents asked to describe how their ECE centre contributes to social support, identified the following:

- provision of a local meeting place where adults with responsibility for care of young children could meet together in a social network and provide mutual support about their children;
  
  It’s in our community. It’s like an extra family—we all get in and do things. (Playcentre).

- contributing to development of a sense of belonging through, for example, offering opportunity to interact with others of the same cultural group, and opportunity to develop friendships with others in a similar situation;
It brings the children [from the same culture] together and is linked to the whole cultural centre [where the playgroup is located]. From here they go on to the sports club and sporting facilities and the language school when they turn five. They become part of the [cultural] community. (Community language playgroup).

It’s about meeting new people and getting time out—my daughter will run and do her own thing and then won’t be chasing me. She’s knackered when we get home and I get a chance to do some housework. Also it’s close and I can walk. (Playgroup).

Yeh, you can bitch and moan—it’s venting time for me. Always someone to listen. (Playgroup).

- offering a service to families who might otherwise be isolated, such as immigrant families, and teenage parents.

  Immigrant families look us up in the yellow pages and come to the language class. We have a website too. (Community language playgroup).

- building community identity through contributing to other community organisations and events such as taking part in cultural festivals or fundraising for the local school.

  We are contributing members of society. We do powhiri at the marae and perform in the community. (Kōhanga reo).

At least one of these ways of supporting parents was described in the parent discussion for most services in this study and most aimed to support parents as well as children. But the centres that were “stronger” in terms of mutual social support for parents made sure there was comfortable provision for adults as well as children and shared leadership responsibilities (neither excluding not overburdening). They offered opportunity for parents to participate regularly, and were mainly sessional centres. A higher proportion of playgroups and playcentres were “stronger” on this outcome.

Rural centres were more likely to emphasise strong social support.

Use of experience and skills in voluntary or paid work

Many people in both the scoping and second phases of this study said that experience and skills gained from participating in the parent and whānau-led service were later used in volunteer or paid work for other organisations.
The centres where parents were more likely to use skills and knowledge gained through their participation in their child’s early childhood education service for other work (paid or unpaid) were, not surprisingly, those where high proportions of parents said they had gained new skills, and which put an emphasis on parents training for qualifications or taking part in professional development, and which offered parents a wider range of roles within the centre. This was a common pattern across all service types. The service that emphasised these three things most was playcentre.

The contextual factors that may make it easier for parent/whānau led services to offer these opportunities to parents to gain skills did differ somewhat for each kind of service. Stronger kōhanga reo and playgroups were more likely to be using more than one source of external support. Stronger kōhanga reo and playcentres were less likely to experience financial pressure. Having paid staff made a positive difference for playgroups with regard to the passing on of skills useful in other contexts. Immersion programmes, and not currently coping with the transition to licensed status seemed to support the stronger Pasifika centres in regard to providing parents with opportunities to expand their skills.

**Language and culture**

Children learn te reo and tikanga Māori and develop a sense of their Māori identity

May and Hill (2004) saw strong parental involvement in immersion settings as an important factor in the revitalisation of te reo. Baker (2003) stated that a strong commitment to a minority language can foster confidence and identity, as well as a more positive attitude to learning.

To consider this aspect, we examined a subset of nine rating scale items that are important for te reo and tikanga Māori practices. Tikanga Māori practices were observed in the six kōhanga and two puna, with some variation in type and frequency. Karakia, mihimihi, waiata and whanaungatanga practices were observed in all six kōhanga reo and one puna, and karakia and whanaungatanga in the other puna. Adults prompted, supported, encouraged and guided children in tikanga practices such as morning and afternoon karakia, mihimihi sessions, karakia before eating, removing their shoes, and demonstrating caring and respect for others (manaaki tangata). Babies were observed placing their hands together in readiness for karakia before eating food.
Of the eight köhanga and puna, five köhanga reo and one puna were stronger in supporting this outcome. They all had fluent staff, with relevant qualifications or who were in their final year of training for those qualifications. There was slightly more kaumatua involvement and whänau participation in wänanga in the stronger ones, longer staff experience in köhanga or early childhood education, and more support from purapura or the local community. Parental levels of fluency were low in all the study centres, underlining the crucial role of kaiako fluency and training to support children to learn and understand te reo and tikanga Mäori. In one köhanga reo where staff had very little Mäori language or were semi-fluent, the children chose to speak English to some of the kaiako and Mäori to their parents. The children seemed to recognise that some of the kaiako did not have the language fluency of their parents and chose the language (English) that the kaiako would understand.

Support for Mäori parents' te reo, tikanga Mäori, and cultural identity

There were variations in the level of te reo fluency of parents in the eight köhanga reo and two puna, and parents’ identification of benefits related to te reo, tikanga and Mäori identity that had come from their involvement in the köhanga reo or puna.

For the köhanga reo, the factors we had identified as potentially contributing to this outcome seemed in the analysis more likely to identify responses to existing levels of parent fluency, rather than seeming to contribute to those levels of fluency. Köhanga reo where parents have low fluency levels were taking active responsibility to support them to improve their fluency. They had higher participation in training or wänanga related to language and culture. These köhanga saw limited te reo Mäori as a barrier to participating and encouraged parents to attend te reo classes, spend time in the köhanga reo with their children, attend wananga, or enrol in a köhanga relevant training programme. They also had kaumatua to support and advise them.

The two köhanga reo with high proportions of whänau who could speak te reo focused their support more on encouraging whänau to speak the language at home with their children. Whänau taking part in the köhanga programme also had the opportunity to use te reo with each other.

Levels of parent involvement in formal training and professional development were almost non-existent in both puna. It seemed that parental fluency and gains were more likely for puna where the programme was bilingual, emphasised te reo and tikanga, and volunteers were fluent.
At an individual level, 37 percent (18) of kōhanga reo and puna parents responding to an open ended question about what they had learned from involvement in their service identified te reo and tikanga Māori learning. The following were areas of learning:

- learning te reo and tikanga Māori through participation in korero Māori, waiata, powhiri, kōhanga reo kaupapa, and te kawa o te marae;
- picking up Māori words, phrases and waiata to improve a very basic level of understanding;
- contributing to their sense of whanaungatanga through working and sharing with whānau;
- learning how and why to speak te reo to tamariki, creating cultural resources and learning about the strands of Te Whāriki in relation to children’s te reo and tikanga Māori learning.

Kōhanga reo parents were more likely than puna parents to state they had learned something in this respect.

Looking at the contribution that kōhanga reo and puna could make from the perspective of individual parents, we found consistent patterns that it was the less fluent speakers who were relying on the kōhanga reo or puna to support their own learning. Those who identified some learning related to te reo or tikanga were also more likely to participate more in professional development or training related to te reo and tikanga, and have support from their kōhanga reo or puna for this.

**Children learn and maintain their community language and culture**

Language and culture are intrinsic to cultural identity. The goal of children learning and maintaining their community language and culture through their early childhood education service is to strengthen their identity and community by teaching values, traditions, beliefs and concepts that are grounded in the culture of that community.

Children’s language learning has been identified as involving four areas of skill: listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Foster-Cohen (2003), adapted from Ashworth & Wakefield (1994), an optimal language curriculum in an early childhood education setting would include these skills interwoven into everyday activities, and language would be used as a means of communication with children learning through play, games, make believe, story-telling and games.

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To consider this aspect, we examined four items that are important for community language and culture learning: adults fostering children’s community language, recognition and affirmation of the culture of the children, children engaging in creative play, e.g. story telling, making music, pretend play, singing in their language, and adults sharing stories in the community language. All
six Pasifika centres and two community language playgroups were promoting their language and culture but some had higher ratings on these items.

In three Pasifika centres and one community language playgroup, the community language was spoken most of the time. Two of the other three Pasifika centres were bilingual (in two Pacific languages, and in English and the Pacific language respectively) and the third was multilingual (in two Pacific languages and English). In one community language playgroup, the community language was spoken by the teacher, and parents mainly spoke English.

The centres in this study that were strongest in supporting children’s community language and culture had:

- adults with language and cultural knowledge directly contributing to the programme and working with children.
- good quality language resources; and
- a high take-up of professional development and training towards an ECE qualification.

This qualification was not specifically about language and culture, but generated ideas and insight about teaching and learning.

The strong Pasifika centres were all immersion centres, while those that were less strong were bilingual or multilingual. Both the strong Pasifika centres and the strong community language playgroup in the study had a higher level of fluent community language speakers and implemented the programme in their own community language.

All centres had good adult:child ratios but the strong centres on the outcome indicator tended to have smaller group sizes and slightly higher adult:child ratios. The strong Pasifika centres had a higher average level of parent educators’ ECE experience. The Pasifika centres that were in the less strong category were either newly licensed or provisionally licensed and coping with the new requirements of being licensed.

Support for parents’ community language and culture

All parents who were interviewed from the Pasifika centres and community language playgroups felt their own culture was sustained through their involvement in the centre and contact with others from their culture.

Parental fluency and parental involvement in the community language development of their children appear to be key to their own language maintenance and development. Centres that are stronger in supporting this have a greater communal level of fluency, through paid staff, other parents, and elder involvement.

Communal level of fluency, including paid staff, other parents, and elders, is important in supporting language maintenance and development.
At an individual level, 31 percent (23) of parents from Pasifika and community language playgroups responding to an open-ended question about what they had learned from involvement in their service identified language and culture learning. The following were areas of learning:

- helping children learn their community language. They were now able to do this through songs, games, talking with their children and using appropriate vocabulary, knowing what resources to use, understanding how children’s community language fluency develops and responding to these approaches;
- learning more about their language and culture themselves;
- sharing their cultural knowledge and making language and cultural connections with other parents.

There may be some ‘virtuous’ cycles at work, with fluency encouraging confidence, and therefore involvement in their child’s language early childhood education centre. This would also support immersion programmes. However, for parents who lack fluency, the cycle is negative, since the very lack of fluency can make it more difficult for them to participate, and have the opportunities for adult and child interactions that would improve their fluency. This negative cycle does not just affect individuals, but also centres. Strong fluency attracts the fluent (parents, elders, and paid staff), but weaker fluency may not.
5. Issues and implications

In this final chapter we emphasise the caveats to this study. We then analyse what it means to be a parent and whānau-led service, and address the three research questions:

- How does the learning and development that happens for adults impact on the learning and development for their children?
- How does children’s learning impact on the learning and development of the adults?
- What is the interaction between the learning processes happening in services and the home context?

Finally, we identify some factors that could be strengthened through external support, specific professional development and parents having greater awareness of their role and influence.

Caveats

A number of caveats need to be remembered:

- The study cannot establish causal relations (if a centre were to do x, outcome y would result). Rather it suggested patterns of association between factors, which are non statistical and descriptive.
- We are comparing small numbers within each type of parent/whānau led centre, and thus there is the likelihood that some of the differences we found (or lack of difference) may simply be due to chance, and the particular centres that comprise the sample. That is why patterns that were found across types, and patterns that are consistent with other relevant studies are important in this analysis, since they are likely to be indicating relationships between factors and outcomes that would be found with much larger samples.
- For some centres, low response rates for the parent educator questionnaire suggest that those who replied may be the most involved parents only. In addition, there was a recruitment problem in the Pasifika centres, making it arguable whether their practice may have been different from other Pasifika centres.
- For these reasons, it would take further research with a larger sample to come to firmer conclusions about patterns of association. The study can be regarded as contributing to broader understanding of quality and good practice in parent and whānau-led services, and put together with other information, help inform practice and policy, particularly in regard to parent and whānau professional development and training, and support for their role in parent/whānau led services.
What does it mean to be a parent/whānau-led service?

What does it mean to be a parent/whānau-led service? The clearest hallmark that was evident from this study was that parents using these services emphasised the importance of their own involvement in, or gain from, the service. For some, this meant full involvement in the educational programme. For others, it means learning from others, either through a growing involvement in the programme itself, or in specific programmes and support provided as part of the service. These gains for parents were not just seen as gains for individuals, but for their communities. This was particularly the case for services whose very reason for being is to ensure the life of te reo or another community language, and the tikanga or values of a particular culture, through their use in family as well as community life.

In the scoping report for this study, we suggested one of the distinctions between teacher-led and parent/whānau led services is whether paid staff or parents and whānau provide the education programme. We found this was not always true. In licensed Pasifika centres and kōhanga reo, paid kaiako/supervisors were largely responsible for the children’s education programme, with parents and whānau participating to different degrees. Paid teachers also played an educational leadership role in community language playgroups.

The commitment of each of these services to maintaining, strengthening and passing on their own language and culture was one main reason why staff were providing the education programme for children. The kōhanga reo commitment is to total immersion in te reo Māori and kōhanga reo daily operations. But many whānau in this study were not fluent; they were learning alongside their children and through attendance at wananga and kura reo. By learning te reo Māori themselves, they were also in a position to contribute to their own child’s learning. We saw the same situation in a community language playgroup where many parents who were New Zealand born did not know their community language. The teacher’s role was to teach the language to both children and parents. In licensed Pasifika centres, having an early childhood qualified teacher who was fluent in the Pacific language was common. Here too, parents who were not fluent themselves could learn the language with their children and also learn about child development.

There were roles for paid staff in some playcentres and playgroups too, with staff working alongside parent educators. In playcentre, one role was sometimes to boost the pool of qualified teachers so that the playcentre reached regulatory standards.

It did seem easier for parent/whānau led services to meet a range of outcomes for both children and parents if those participating shared a common purpose and their centre provided them with opportunities for both parents and children.

Parent/whānau led service aspirations and goals extend beyond providing learning opportunities for children and are distinctive for each type. We found these service goals and aspirations were linked to where services put their energies, and tended to be associated with outcomes in those areas.
Playcentres were especially strong on contributing to parent learning and support and providing social support. This in turn linked to parents acquiring knowledge, skills and dispositions that they used in other volunteer and community work.

Te reo and tikanga Māori learning for children and adults, was the major strength of kōhanga reo.

Playgroups were providing social support for families, including for parents without wider social support networks.

Community language playgroups had a distinctive role in helping children learn their community language and culture, in supporting cultural connections and identity, and sometimes in helping parents to learn their community language for the first time.

In Pasifika centres, strengths were in maintaining and strengthening the Pacific language and culture, offering cultural and social support, and parent education.

The relation between parent and children’s learning

The three research questions that framed this study also focus on this role of parent/whānau led centres to support parents’ learning and children’s learning through interactions between them, and between the home and centre contexts. We return to them now.

How does the learning and development that happens for adults impact on the learning and development for their children?

Parent learning and development gained through the parent/whānau led service did make a contribution to the overall quality of the ECE service education programme where parents and whānau were the educators. Parents did gain useful knowledge and practical ideas that they could also use at home; cultural identity was supported where this was a focus for centres; some gained confidence to support their child in other educational settings; and their involvement could create links with other families that supported children outside the centre as well as in it.

The rating of the quality of the education programme and interactions within parent/whānau led services tended to be higher overall where adults who were responsible for the education programme were in training and held playcentre, kōhanga reo or ECE qualifications, and where the adults were accessing relevant professional development and support through the service. Parent groups where a higher proportion had participated in such formal learning opportunities and where parents said they learned from other adults providing “good role models”, tended to be more aware of processes to encourage and sustain children’s thinking and the value of taking a positive approach to behaviour management. Having these insights into teaching and learning were features of services that were rated higher in observations of overall quality. Adult learning opportunities provided by the centre contributed to these insights. Many parents who reported that they learned from involvement in their ECE centre reported on understanding more about child development and learning, about how to support and extend children’s learning, about activities to
interest children and behaviour management. We do not have direct evidence about the positive impact for children, but these gains for early childhood education quality and for parents’ home practices are likely to be positively related to children’s learning.

Self-report measures showed parents also thought the learning and development they gained through their participation in their service was having an impact on the learning and development of their children. Parents who gained insights and understanding about how children develop and their role in supporting, encouraging and extending children’s learning, and who were supported to practise within the centre were able to use their knowledge and experience with their own children at home and with other children. Some parents found their children were happier because they were more actively engaged when activities that had been used in the centre were introduced at home, and managing behaviour positively reduced stress levels for the whole family.

It is now well accepted that human wellbeing depends on many factors, but among indigenous peoples the world over, cultural identity is considered to be a critical prerequisite. (Durie, 2003)

Parents’ language and culture learning had very positive spin-offs for children, with parents better able to guide and encourage their children in their language learning because they were learning too. Parents’ own cultural identity was strengthened, parents were able to practice their own tikanga and traditions, and in turn felt pride in their children’s efforts and reinforced their children’s cultural belonging. The services that did this well made a pathway to the cultural objectives that parents and whänau valued.

In kōhanga reo, children gained access to te ao Māori, with strong whänau support and guidance. For parents who were from a culture outside New Zealand, belonging to a community language playgroup or Pasifika centre helped reduce the sense of isolation and difference parents experienced when cultural norms and values are different. They were also able to offer their children access to their own language, culture and cultural organisations.

Some parents described attitudinal changes, especially greater confidence in themselves as parents, and an appreciation of the importance of their role in their child’s education. This has potential to contribute to parents being more assertive as advocates for their child, better equipped to help with transition to other education settings, to work with specialists, and to gain the health and social services they need for their child.

When parents became involved in the centre, they became part of a community with children and other adults, linked together through common goals and often developing mutual friendships with other families that endured outside the setting itself. At the 1998 international conference, “The city of the possible”, held in Naples, Bruner (1998) spoke about the admiration in which he held Gian Battista Vico and Vico’s recognition of ways in which human beings both live in reality and create the reality in which they live. Childhood is one arena, he argued, in which we can make it possible to create a world. He reflected on views coming through the conference that “having a sense of place, knowing where you are, somehow helps you develop a sense of your own personal identity, your uniqueness, as well as your place in the world”. The parents’ descriptions of the
worlds created in these parent/whānau led services that had high levels of parent involvement and friendships between families suggested they contributed to “a sense of place” for parents and children. These ideas link to Te Whāriki’s strand of belonging, and principles that “The wider world of family and community are an integral part of the curriculum” and that “Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.”

How does children’s learning impact on the learning and development of the adults?

Parents involved in parent/whānau led centres could identify the part they had played through their involvement, and this encouraged their own continued learning. In immersion services, children’s learning in the language spurred adults to make the effort themselves.

Parents viewed children’s learning very positively, gaining a sense of pride from seeing children learn in a parent and whānau-led service. This was partly because every parent likes their child to learn, but also where communal responsibility was held for children, parents knew their contribution and those of others had supported the learning. Parents had first to notice the learning and development and then to recognise the part they and others had played in relation to it. The processes that enabled children’s learning to become noticeable seemed to be associated with parents developing greater understanding of how children learn, being involved in the education programme where they could see what was happening, seeing children in relation to each other, and working alongside others who could mentor and support them.

Parents who noticed their child’s learning and recognised their own role were also likely to continue to play an active role in respect to learning and development. When things worked well, such as a parent who described the value of a “no hitting” policy in respect to children alongside learning new ways of managing behaviour, she was reinforced by seeing the impact on the child’s behaviour and was therefore more likely to continue these approaches.

In some immersion services, parents were spurred to learn the language because they saw their own children learning and wanted to keep up with them. The children’s learning encouraged parents to participate in the programme alongside their child and attend language workshops and wanangas. There was a lovely sense of adults and children learning together.

There was confirmation to parents from seeing children’s learning and development that the values and aspirations parents had for their children were being realised.

What is the interaction between the learning processes happening in services and the home context?

One of the goals of the government’s strategic plan for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2002) is to promote collaborative relationships, in recognition that “Children’s interests and development are fostered if well-being of their family is supported; if their family, culture, knowledge and community are respected; and if there is a strong connection and
consistency among all aspects of the child’s world.” The Desirable Objectives and Practices have a range of requirements for management and educators to work in partnership with parents/guardians and whānau, and to communicate and consult with them. There is evidence of positive effects for children, families and the education programme that come when parents and teachers work together in the interests of children (Mitchell, 2003; Whalley & the Pen Green Centre Team, 2001). The Competent Children study found associations between home number activity and home writing activity with a number of cognitive and communication competencies at ages 5 (Wylie, Thompson, & Kerslake Hendricks, 1996), and indicative associations between literacy related activities with some competencies and dispositions after family income was taken into account, at age 6 (Wylie & Thompson, 1998). Siraj-Blatchford (2004) found a range of activities that parents undertake at home have a positive educational effect. These activities include reading to children, library visits, painting, drawing, playing with letters and numbers, and teaching songs and poems.

The interactions between learning processes in home and ECE service seemed to vary according to service type, to be related to the aspirations and goals of the services, and to the nature of parent and whānau involvement.

Some parents were following up at home on children’s centre experiences and interests, providing some of the same activities at home that interested their child in the centre, taking home resources from the centre for children, and adopting approaches to teaching and learning from the centre that worked well. They were taking consistent positive approaches to behaviour management in both settings.

I try reading to N at home now. She used to not want to sit still, then I saw her reading while at morning tea. I do that at home and now she listens.

If J has been painting at playcentre that’s what he wants to do at home. It’s the same with dough, library books, tapes, videos.

A lot of parents sing the songs at home and in other early childhood settings. They take videos and books home.

Some parents identified experiences that were not readily available at home and provided these in the centre.

They’re off farms so you don’t have to have a lot of outside play. Imaginative play is what they like.

The children can do different things at the playgroup than at home. There’s tents and climbing equipment to use.

There was sometimes greater tolerance of messy play in the centre than would be permitted at home.

Some of the conversational exchanges and interactions in parent/whānau led centres drew from parents’ knowledge of their child’s interests and experiences at home, which parents knew and

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could respond to, because the parent was also participating in both settings. Home interests and experiences were also being used in assessment and planning at the centre, and parents were contributing resources and ideas from home.

The connection between learning processes at home and in the centre did not happen automatically: parents being encouraged and contributing to the education programme on a regular basis, combined with take-up of good professional support for parents as learners contributed to centre-home connections to support children’s learning in general. Support for professional development and training was also key, with usually a person designated as responsible for adult learning. There was a depth and quality of discussion about child development and learning in centres that were making strong connections and the discussion was well informed.

In those centres where there seemed to be few interactions between learning processes at home and in the centre, parents had little or no involvement in the education programme, or were unwilling to be involved, although they may have contributed to other aspects of the management and operation of the centre. These centre parents identified barriers to involvement as:

- their own work commitments making it hard for people to participate;
- parents attending “not because they want to be there but because it’s all that’s available” (so that parents may have been physically present, but had little interest in making a contribution);
- being whakamā about limited te reo Māori in kōhanga reo and puna; and
- having a large centre - “too many children” for supervisors/kaiako to know parents well and for parents to make a contribution to the education programme, rather than simply take responsibility for their own children.

Cultural learning was occurring at both service and home for children participating in kōhanga reo, Pasifika centres and community language playgroups. Children learned karakia, waiata, songs, chants, dance and language from the service and took these home, and also vice versa. Parents participating alongside the children in the service, use and enjoy their language and culture and can reinforce the learning at home.

Parents described the friendships that occurred through involvement in the service, including participation in parent learning, and the relationships that extended through interactions outside the service that also contributed to home ECE centre connectedness.

Friendships developed through playcentre means that those who are on session tell other parents what the children have been doing outside the playcentre, even if a child’s parent is not there.
Support for quality

The study identified some factors that seemed to contribute to the outcomes that each service was seeking and that could be strengthened through external support, specific professional development initiatives, and parents having greater awareness of their role and influence.

The data from the study services and findings from other relevant New Zealand research show varying levels of these. They would seem to be useful aspects to be considered in policy and service work aimed at raising quality in parent/whānau led services.

In general, all centres aimed to support children to learn and develop. Building support for those factors that were associated in our analysis and in other studies with higher levels of observed quality could augment learning environment quality in parent/whānau led services.

- finding ways to boost the levels of ECE, playcentre or kōhanga reo qualification training held by adults working in the education programme and opportunities for professional support and advice are key.
- Very small centre size tended to be a limiting factor, perhaps because of the small pool of parents on which to draw. Perhaps ways are needed to support small centres through temporary staffing or a mobile staffing reserve if this is needed to achieve a balanced mix of educators. Access to a greater range of expertise would help them.
- Incentives for experienced and qualified adults to stay on in some capacity after their own children have left could assist centres to retain these people as educators working in the education programme, especially in centres with many transient families or those of small size. Qualifications and experience tended to be associated with higher quality ratings.
- Good quality and adequacy of curriculum resources contributed to higher ratings of learning environment quality – some centres, especially licence-exempt playgroups did not provide these and would benefit from having access to them. The Ministry of Education Play to Learn newsletters provide useful ideas about equipment and resources, many of which are inexpensive and home-made, and ideas for activities. Playgroup parents in this study would like more of these ideas, alongside a professional support person to work with them directly. Some would like support to purchase resources. Other options (not mentioned by parents) are provision of a mobile resource service with a qualified co-ordinator to regularly visit centres, similar to the mobile kindergarten concept, and expansion of the Correspondence School early childhood education service to offer curriculum resource advice and professional support.
- In some playcentres, the association provided early identification of special needs and facilitated access to special needs support. But most parent/whānau led services do not have such help and may benefit from a co-ordinator to facilitate access to special needs support. The issue this could address especially for some playgroups and Pasifika centres is their lack of information about what is the meaning of “special needs” and how to go about getting support for children with these needs.
**Playcentres** have a sound infrastructure, with associations providing very extensive professional advice and support including their own playcentre specific training. This contributes to adult learning for their work with children in the playcentre setting, and at home as parents.

Our analysis indicated that the playcentres that were stronger with respect to quality combined association support with support from other external organisations, had more experienced and qualified association personnel providing them with advice, and shared training and professional development with other ECE services. This raises questions about how well the association infrastructure is itself supported through funding, resources and advice.

Main issues with respect to training raised by playcentre participants were financial. Funding for the Playcentre Education Diploma is about a third of its EFT value (Playcentre Federation Charter), and other adult education is funded by playcentre associations from levies on playcentres, which in turn come out of playcentres’ bulk funding. This reduces the amount of bulk funding available to playcentres and increases the need for playcentres to fundraise and undertake most tasks voluntarily.

Parents in half the playcentres in this study said the high level of volunteer work was problematic. Similar volunteer workload pressures in playcentres were found in the scoping phase for this report, and two recent evaluations by the authors: *An evaluation of initial uses and impact of Equity Funding* (Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara, & Wylie, in publication) and in a *Locality-based evaluation of Pathways to the Future – Ngā Huarahi Arataki – phase 1 – baseline report* (in draft).

The findings from the Equity Funding evaluation suggest one way of helping to reduce volunteer workload is through providing extra funding that playcentres can choose to spend on some aspects that would otherwise have to be done voluntarily or for which fundraising would have to be undertaken. Another support would be for a greater contribution to be made to the costs of playcentre association education courses, which contribute so much to outcomes for parents and children.

**Playgroups** were largely reliant on the Ministry of Education for workshops, with a few parents also accessing training courses from external providers. The two community language playgroups, a puna and a general playgroup employed teachers to take responsibility for the education programme, but other playgroups were run entirely by the parent group. The greatest need identified by playgroup parents was to have regular access to good quality professional support and workshops, in the community where the playgroup was located. The *Evaluation of two ECD services* (Mitchell & Mara, 2001) highlighted the benefits to playgroup parents of “hands-on” sessions with ECD staff members who were qualified teachers, and the hunger of parents for helpful resources to support them in the education programme. Mitchell & Mara noted that

> The work ECD is able to undertake in a few visits every year does not provide opportunities for realising the full potential of trained teachers offering action-based learning within an early childhood education programme (p.xi).
The level of support for adult learning for those who needed it could be lifted through a knowledgeable, ECE qualified and experienced professional support person or co-ordinator making regular and frequent visits to work with playgroup parents, participating alongside adults in the education programme (much as experienced adults mentor and provide role models for less experienced adults in playcentres), making suggestions and offering professional development and training.

Some playgroups employing a qualified teacher and wanting to extend their sessions had financial pressures.

A very large playgroup (90 families) in this study had lower ratings of quality seemingly because of the difficulty of establishing close, reciprocal relationships (this finding is consistent with research evidence on the importance of small group size e.g. Smith, et al., 2000). Regulations for playgroups could provide a maximum centre size, with perhaps assistance for very large groups to operate as two groups.

**Pasifika** centres that were stronger in supporting language maintenance and development and the quality of their education programme also had a greater uptake of training and professional development, good quality language resources and adults with cultural knowledge and expertise directly contributing to the programme. Although there are a number of Pacific early childhood associations to offer professional support for Pacific centres, these are not umbrella organisations like the NZ Playcentre Association and the Te Köhanga Reo National Trust and purapura, and access for such support was not always available. Finding ways to address issues of uneven access to professional support is a challenge especially for Pasifika centres and playgroups.

The greatest pressures for Pasifika centres were supporting staff to become qualified in licensed centres and coping with requirements of becoming licensed or newly licensed. Licensing requirements seemed to detract from being able to put energy into the education programme and adult learning. Pacific participants in the *Evaluation of two ECD services* (Mitchell & Mara, 2001) project also highlighted the high workload they incurred in the licensing process and their need for more help in this respect.

Some Pacific parents said they liked the Pacific Islands early childhood group because flexibility of attendance is accepted. They did not feel pressures to come if prevented by family responsibilities. This raises issues about whether the funding based on attendance rules of licensed services are causing barriers for some parents.

**Kōhanga reo** fluency levels were a key factor in meeting the goals of kōhanga reo for te reo and tikanga Māori learning for adults and children and an active role for kaumātua and fluent kaiako and whānau was vital. Many whānau in kōhanga reo were not fluent in te reo and had limited knowledge of tikanga Māori. The kōhanga reo movement had a network of wananga and training courses which supported the whānau, including kaiako and parents, in learning or strengthening their te reo as well as in the curriculum, administration and management. Purapura (cluster of kōhanga reo) support was active for four of the six kōhanga in the study and these Purapura
provided an avenue for whānau to meet regularly, share ideas and resources and organise wananga on areas which met their immediate needs. Te Köhanga Reo National Trust also organised kura reo and Te Whāriki wananga. However the greatest issue was the declining number of kaiako and kaiāwhina with a high level of te reo coupled with a Tohu Whakapakari. Finding ways to recruit and retain competent fluent speakers of te reo Māori is necessary.

The kaiako and parents saw te reo, tikanga and whahaungatanga as the priority for their children’s learning. Parents who could not participate in the programme alongside their children or in wananga felt that needing to work, personal commitments or their lack of te reo competency made participation difficult. Whānau members who were not learning te reo alongside their children were usually also less able to support their children’s learning by participating in the programme, on trips, or speaking Māori at home. A focus on whānau based learning wananga for parents enables them to gain deeper appreciation of the kaupapa of köhanga reo and their responsibility to their children, köhanga reo, whānau, hapu and iwi. In addition, where whānau involvement in the köhanga reo monthly hui was limited, a few parents and staff carried the responsibility for decision making and management. This placed a double burden on them, as these same people usually had to focus on the education programme as well

The process quality ratings indicated a need for training and professional development or wananga on curriculum areas. Education Review Office reviews now focus on curriculum delivery and are also indicating that köhanga reo need ongoing support in assessment, planning and curriculum implementation. Parent participation in assessment and planning is also key.

Some further issues need to be addressed. Individual köhanga reo whānau, who are responsible for recruiting and retaining kaiako, are finding it more difficult to recruit fluent, qualified (Tohu Whakapakari) kaiako, or even fluent kaiako, unless a competitive salary is offered. Similarly, the retention of kaiako is related to salary levels. Those köhanga reo in the study who said they paid “market rates” had to charge higher fee levels than others, which could have the effect of lowering participation levels. Providing ongoing training on te reo and the curriculum through Whakapiki Reo and Te Whāriki contracts with the Ministry of Education also has limitations. Lack of availability of expertise means that not all köhanga reo can receive support at the köhanga reo or purapura levels. There are fluent qualified kaiako, who are expert and have specialist skills but to employ them as professional leaders means removing them from the köhanga reo and reducing the level of quality provision for children’s learning of te reo. An expansion of the Trust’s role to service all köhanga reo is limited by resourcing, both human and financial. It will take a long time to build up the expertise.
Professional development

As a general comment, while the observed interactions and strategies reported by parents and whānau included both “socially related interactions”\(^5\) of encouragement and responsiveness, there were much fewer “cognitive interactions” (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002, p.143–144) of extending, discussing, modelling, and playing. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education [EPPE] project (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002) showed that adult:child interactions involving some level of sustained shared thinking interactions (involving scaffolding\(^6\), extending, discussing, modelling, and playing) may be especially valuable in terms of children’s cognitive learning. Open-ended questioning is also associated with better cognitive achievement. The centrality of adult:child interactions for long-term outcomes was also a feature of the Competent Children study where open-ended questioning, adults joining children in their play, adults guiding children in centre activities, and adults being responsive to children appear to have long-term benefits. (Wylie & Thompson, 2003). Claxton and Carr (2004) describe “potentiating” (powerful) environments as “those that not only invite the expression of certain dispositions, but actively ‘stretch’ them and thus develop them” (Claxton & Carr, 2004, p.92).

Observational evidence suggested that some of the richer conversational exchanges and positive responsive interactions in parent/whānau led centres draw from the knowledge that parents have of their child’s interests and experiences at home. These included parents basing their conversations on shared memories, quick responsiveness to their own child’s non-verbal cues, and parents affording babies and toddlers opportunities for risk taking and independence. Parents having greater awareness of the value of such exchanges, interactions and opportunities and how to develop them further could contribute to quality in these services.

Support for positive behaviour management would be valuable in those playgroups where parents were keen for practical guidance, and were tending to manage behaviour through use of warnings, physical removal and rules.

These aspects could well be a focus for professional development and support for parent/whānau led centres.

Further research

A fruitful area for further research would be language learning in community language playgroups, kōhanga reo and Pasifika centres. What approaches to teaching and learning can strengthen language and literacy learning for parents as well as children in these services?

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\(^5\) “Socially related interactions” include encouragement, physically caring for the child, social conversation which is not related to the activity, and behaviour management.

\(^6\) Scaffolding is an interaction which requires the teacher to know the target child’s level of knowledge, and to stretch his or her abilities through a series of questions or comments in order to take the child to a higher level of knowledge than s/he would have had before (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002, p.143).
It would be useful to consider the role that might be played by ICT in providing professional support for playgroups and isolated centres, in connecting centres with others, and in providing access to websites. Broadband access in the schools sector has enabled rural schools taking part in pilots for project PROBE to participate in broadband-enabled two-way video-conferencing that allowed advanced subjects to be taught where no local teacher was available. Perhaps a pilot project linking a qualified co-ordinator with a group of playgroups through local school broadband access could be developed and evaluated. Or broadband access in playgroup settings could enable a co-ordinator to observe the setting in action, and advise and respond to parents during and at the end of a session.

A further research project to evaluate the impact of any policy changes made as a result of the review of parent/whānau-led services should be undertaken. It would be useful to consider the same outcomes studied in this evaluation for comparison, and perhaps return to the same centres and groups if they agree.
References


## Appendix A: Characteristics of the sample services

### Table 7: Characteristics of the eight playcentres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Funding rate and EQ Index</th>
<th>Roll</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Supervision arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural, South Island</td>
<td>Rate 1 EQI 3</td>
<td>9 over 2s, 3 under 2s</td>
<td>Two sessions per week</td>
<td>Supervisor-led. All 11 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural, South Island</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>28 over 2s, 7 under 2s</td>
<td>Four sessions per week</td>
<td>Supervisor-led. All families work in at least 3 sessions per term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated, North Island. Isolation index 2.05</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>16 over twos, 3 under 2s</td>
<td>One session per week</td>
<td>Group supervision. All 19 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated, North Island. Isolation index 1.74</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>5 over 2s, 2 under 2s</td>
<td>Two sessions per week</td>
<td>Group supervision. All 6 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban, North Island</td>
<td>Rate 1 EQI 2</td>
<td>15 over 2s, 17 under 2s</td>
<td>Three sessions per week</td>
<td>Team supervision and paid supervisor. 17 of the 20 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban, North Island</td>
<td>Rate 1 EQI 4</td>
<td>34 over 2s, 18 under 2s</td>
<td>Five sessions per week</td>
<td>Team supervision. All 33 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban, South Island</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>20 over 2s, 10 under 2s</td>
<td>Five sessions per week</td>
<td>Supervisor-led. All families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban, North Island</td>
<td>Rate 2</td>
<td>32 over 2s, 11 under 2s</td>
<td>Five sessions per week</td>
<td>Supervisor-led. All 31 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Funding rate and EQ Index</td>
<td>Roll</td>
<td>Operation</td>
<td>Supervision arrangements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marae based</td>
<td>Rate 2</td>
<td>Tuakana köhanga</td>
<td>6 hours/day</td>
<td>Seven paid kaiako. Three of these are kaumatua who are qualified as kaiako.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two köhanga reo on one site</td>
<td>EQI–1</td>
<td>3 under 2s</td>
<td>Mon–Fri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language and culture</td>
<td>25 over 2s</td>
<td>46–50 weeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teina köhanga</td>
<td>6 hours/day</td>
<td>None of the 33 families work regularly in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19 over 2s</td>
<td>Mon–Fri</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>46–50 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>4 under 2s</td>
<td>6 hours/day</td>
<td>Four paid kaiako. 16 of 18 families work regularly in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EQI–1</td>
<td>17 over 2s</td>
<td>Mon–Fri</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language and culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>41–45 weeks</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>4 under 2s</td>
<td>9.5 hours/day</td>
<td>Four paid kaiako. No parents work regularly in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equity Funding</td>
<td>17 over 2s</td>
<td>Mon–Fri</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language &amp; culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>41–45 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>4 under 2s</td>
<td>9.5 hours/day</td>
<td>Four paid kaiako. Two of these kaiako are parents. No other parents work regularly in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equity Funding</td>
<td>17 over 2s</td>
<td>Mon–Fri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language &amp; culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>41–45 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marae-based</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>Tuakana köhanga</td>
<td>6 hours/day</td>
<td>Five paid kaiako. 2 kaumatua and 2 of 12 parents work regularly in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwi-based</td>
<td>Equity Funding</td>
<td>14 over 2s</td>
<td>Mon–Fri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two köhanga</td>
<td>EQ I–3.1</td>
<td>Teina köhanga</td>
<td>41–45 weeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation 1.7</td>
<td>5 under 2s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language &amp; culture</td>
<td>3 over 2s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marae-based</td>
<td>Rate 1</td>
<td>4 under 2s</td>
<td>6 hours/day</td>
<td>Three kaiako are also parents. 5 of 8 families work regularly in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwi-based</td>
<td>Equity Funding</td>
<td>8 over 2s</td>
<td>Mon–Fri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EQ I–3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>36–40 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation 1.7</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Language &amp; culture</td>
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</table>
### Table 9  Characteristics of the eight playgroups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Roll</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Supervision arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban North Island</td>
<td>Community Language</td>
<td>36 over 2s, 4 under 2s</td>
<td>Two sessions per week</td>
<td>1 paid parent teacher, and 10 out of 28 families regularly work as educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban North Island</td>
<td>Community Language</td>
<td>15 over 2s, 14 under 2s</td>
<td>One session per week</td>
<td>1 paid supervisor and all 25 families regularly work as educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban North Island</td>
<td>Playgroup</td>
<td>19 over 2s, 6 under 2s</td>
<td>One session per week</td>
<td>No paid supervisor, 4 out of 13 parents regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial North Island</td>
<td>Playgroup</td>
<td>34 over 2s, 22 under 2s</td>
<td>Three sessions per week</td>
<td>No paid supervisor, all children with a family member regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural South Island</td>
<td>Playgroup</td>
<td>9 over 2s, 4 under 2s</td>
<td>One session per week</td>
<td>No paid supervisor, 5 out of 8 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban South island</td>
<td>Playgroup</td>
<td>53 over 2s, 37 under 2s</td>
<td>One session per week</td>
<td>1 paid supervisor. All families work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban North Island Puna</td>
<td>Puna</td>
<td>35 total roll</td>
<td>Three sessions per week</td>
<td>No paid supervisor. 15 out of 25 parents regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-rural North Island</td>
<td>Puna</td>
<td>24 over 2s, 6 under 2s</td>
<td>Three sessions per week</td>
<td>Paid co-ordinator. 4 out of 18 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10  Characteristics of the six Pasifika group/centre case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Funding rate, EQ Index and type</th>
<th>Roll number</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Supervision arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Newly licensed centre (3 weeks)</td>
<td>24 Under 2's 24 Over 2's</td>
<td>Whole day, 6 hours per day; 5 days per week, 30 hours per week</td>
<td>Paid supervisor and 4 teachers 17 out of 48 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>(3 months) EQ</td>
<td>15 under 2's 39 over 2's (up to 30 in each session)</td>
<td>Sessional, 2 sessions per day (3 hours); 5 days per week, 30 hours per week</td>
<td>Paid supervisor and 4 teachers 7 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Playgroup</td>
<td>32 (mixed ages)</td>
<td>3 morning sessions per week (Mon, Wed, Fri)</td>
<td>Unpaid supervisor works with 4 year olds  All 25 families regularly work in the programme and are responsible for the 1–2 years group and the 2–3 years group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Licensed for 3 years EQ</td>
<td>4 under 2's 34 over 2's</td>
<td>Whole day, 7 hours per day; 5 days per week, 35 hours per week</td>
<td>Paid supervisor and 4 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Playgroup – working towards licensing</td>
<td>4 under 2's 11 over 2's</td>
<td>3 hour morning session; 5 sessions per week, 15 hours per week</td>
<td>No paid staff 4 out of 10 families regularly work in the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Island</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Final stages of full licensing</td>
<td>25 over 2's</td>
<td>Whole day, 8 hours per day; 5 days per week, 40 hours per week</td>
<td>Paid supervisor and 3 teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B: Rating scale items

### A  Adult: Child Interactions

1. Adults are responsive to children
2. Adults model - and encourage children to use - positive reinforcement, explanation and encouragement as guidance/discipline techniques
3. Adults model/guide children within the context of centre activities
4. Adults ask open-ended questions that encourage children to choose their own answers
5. Adults encourage/ foster children’s language development*
6. Adults participate with children in activities and play
7. Adults add complexity and challenges for children*

### B  Adult: Adult Interactions

8. Adults interact respectfully and positively with each other
9. Adults draw on each other’s knowledge of child development
10. Adults work as a team to provide the education programme*

### C  Child: adult interactions

11. Children participate in interactions with adults other than their own parents/whānau*

### D  Child: Child interactions

12. Children support and co-operate with one another in language and actions
13. Children co-construct learning with other children*
14. Children display emergent leadership/leadership skills*

### E  Education programme

15. Tikanga Māori (culture) and/or te reo Māori (language) is evident
16. Non sex-stereotyped play among children is observed
17. There is evidence of recognition/acceptance of the cultures of children at the early childhood service. The ethnicity of the children at the early childhood service is taken into account and their cultures are represented.
18. There is evidence that the setting is inclusive of all children.
19. Children display purposeful involvement in learning episodes*
20. Children are encouraged to explore mathematical ideas and symbols
Children are allowed to complete activities
Children can select their own activities from a variety of learning areas
Children work on problems and experiment with solutions
Children engage in child-initiated creative play (e.g. storytelling, singing, pretend play, drama, making music)
Stories are read/told/shared
There is evidence of children's creativity and artwork
The centre is a "print-saturated" environment
There is evidence of opportunities for children to write*

F Resources
There are enough age appropriate toys/books/equipment (resources) to avoid problems of waiting, competing, and fighting for scarce resources
Equipment and activities encourage fine motor skills development
Equipment and activities encourage gross motor skills development
Provision of space for children to explore the physical world*
A balance of safety and freedom is achieved to ensure access to equipment, materials and learning episodes*
There is comfortable provision for parents, including parents with babies and toddlers*