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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Playcentre Education

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 27 October 2016

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Final Report

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Playcentre Education
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1 October 1991
Location:	Wellington
Delivery sites:	Delivered at locations nationwide
Courses currently delivered:	<p>Diploma in Early Childhood and Adult Education (Level 6). The diploma is a 185-credit qualification divided into six component courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course 2 (Level 4) (10 credits)• Course 3 (Level 4) (20 credits)• Course 4 (Level 5) (30 credits)• Course 5 (Level 5) (45 credits)• Course 6 (Level 6) (80 credits) <p>(Course 1 is also delivered by the organisation as a prerequisite to the diploma, although it is not part of the qualification.)</p>
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	<p>Domestic: 2,461 (2015)</p> <p>Ethnicity: New Zealand European/Pakeha 76 per cent, Māori 8.7 per cent, Pasifika 1.9 per cent, Asian 6.8 per cent, British 7.4 per cent</p>

Number of staff:	Two part-time staff work at the national level specifically dedicated to Playcentre Education. Others engaged with Playcentre Education as trainers or assessors who are mostly part time, on casual agreements, employed on an as-needs basis by individual Playcentre Associations.. A few are volunteers
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Education • Adult Education
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF) is a federation of 32 regional Playcentre Associations, each association covering a number of local centres. NZPF provides an early childhood education service which is a cooperative, parent-led model. Playcentre is unique to New Zealand in the early childhood field and has operated for more than 60 years. Playcentre Education provides training for parents who choose to be involved in this early childhood education service.</p> <p>Playcentre Education sits under the NZPF. Playcentre Education approves Playcentre Associations as delivery sites for courses within the diploma. Playcentre Education's national training coordinator manages and monitors the training that associations deliver in a variety of ways to suit the learners and their community. Tutors and assessors are parents or Playcentre members who hold the required qualifications and meet their association's requirements. Trainers and assessors have mostly completed their own qualifications and training through Playcentre.</p> <p>Learners, who are mostly parents, train while participating at playcentres located throughout New Zealand. As a result, almost all learners study part-time. The majority choose to do only some of the free courses towards the diploma to enhance their knowledge and skills and to support Playcentre to meet Ministry of Education licensing requirements.</p> <p>Playcentre has a licensing agreement with the Ministry of Education which stipulates the minimum</p>

licensing qualification (course/s) adults attending Playcentre must have to allow operation of an early childhood education session at every approved centre, of which there are 468 nationwide. Completing courses contained within the Diploma in Early Childhood and Adult Education ensures Playcentres can operate and meet these licensing agreements.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has a unique funding arrangement with Playcentre Education where learners do not need to complete the diploma qualification, and educational performance indicators and funding are focused on course completions.

Recent significant changes: This external evaluation and review (EER) has come at a time when Playcentre courses and NZPF itself are in transition. By mid-2017 the transition will be complete.

Following the Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ) there will be a move to new qualifications in early 2017. This is a significant change for Playcentre Associations and Playcentre Education. The new programme is currently being written and other related qualifications are being considered and scoped.

In July 2016 NZPF ratified its new constitution. The key impact on Playcentre Education is the changes to key areas of bulk funding and the centralisation of decision-making currently held by all associations, giving Playcentre Education more direct authority to require implementation of improved practices. Previously, associations have had a large degree of autonomy in these areas to reflect what they believe is best for members of that association and the community.

Previous quality assurance history: The previous EER was conducted in November 2012. At that visit, NZQA was Confident in Playcentre Education's educational performance and Highly Confident in its capability in self-assessment.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included three focus areas. These were the focus area of governance, management and strategy, and Course 3 (Level 4) (20 Credits), and Course 5 (Level 5) (45 Credits) of the Diploma in Early Childhood and Adult Education (Level 6).

During the EER it became evident that focusing specifically on Course 3 and Course 5 was providing a view of all the courses offered by Playcentre Education. The processes and practices – management and academic – and support for each are consistently applied and there were a very small number of learners in the Course 5 programme. Playcentre Education and the NZQA evaluators agreed that ‘All courses’ would replace the two courses as the second focus area.

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA’s published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

The EER was conducted by a team of two evaluators over two days. NZPF and Playcentre Education do not have offices. Instead of physically visiting local Playcentre sites, of which there are nearly 500 nationwide, the evaluation team conducted the EER with a blend of face-to-face and Skype and telephone interviews at the NZQA office in Wellington. The evaluation involved engagement with:

- NZPF co-presidents (in person and by phone)
- Playcentre Education training coordinator (in person and by Skype)
- Playcentre Education committee convenors (in person and by phone)
- Canterbury association convenor and manager (by phone)
- Tamaki association convenor and training records person (by Skype)
- TEC advisor (by phone)

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In addition to documents provided for the EER scoping, the EER team sighted relevant documentation including strategic, business and annual plans; reports and meeting minutes; self-reviews including risk management assessment and ratings; internal moderation and annual programme review. They also viewed statistics, data, analysis and trends pertaining to achievement, courses, feedback, tutor and assessor performance, and a wide range of evaluations and surveys.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Playcentre Education**.

The key reasons for this judgement include the following.

Playcentre Education is comprehensively meeting the needs of its key stakeholders: parents attending Playcentres nationwide, the NZPF and government stakeholders including the Ministry of Education which licenses and monitors each of the approved 468 local Playcentres to deliver quality early childhood education.

Highly valued outcomes for parents participating in courses include developing their knowledge and skills for their role as parents/caregivers. The impact of learning is immediate and directly benefits the learner and their child/children. Learning is meaningful and shared within families and communities. Graduates contribute to the running of early childhood education sessions at Playcentre, which ensures the sustainability of each local Playcentre and meets NZPF needs and Ministry of Education licensing requirements.

Playcentre Education is able to clearly demonstrate consistently strong course completions for a widely dispersed organisation staffed almost entirely by volunteers. It is in a unique position that in the current relationship with the associations, Playcentre Education has some limits on its ability to influence practices in the areas of teaching and support. This is mitigated in the comprehensive self-assessment activities that ensure these areas are monitored.

Playcentre Education has a clear vision and strategy which drives the work of the PTE and links directly with NZPF philosophy, culture and strategic direction including compliance requirements. Playcentre Education alongside NZPF is posed for change, leading a large and almost fully voluntary organisation through significant changes with a changing profile of Playcentre parents and learners. These changes have been carefully planned over an extended period of time and include the amalgamation of associations, ratification of a new constitution, and budgeting and course changes following TRoQ. There is clear evidence all have been well managed.

Playcentre Education strongly supports the educational performance of learners, matches and meets the needs of stakeholders within its sphere of influence, and has progressed significant changes to ensure that the quality of educational performance can be maintained and enhanced.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Playcentre Education**.

Key reasons for this judgement include the following.

Playcentre Education knows itself thoroughly through the multiple and strong approaches it takes to gathering feedback, which is genuine and authentic. Playcentre Education values the data collected. The feedback and information is analysed in ways that are meaningful to the PTE and shared throughout the organisation, then used extensively to identify areas that require improvement.

Playcentre Education develops and implements strategies which are actively monitored. Examples of areas where Playcentre Education has made recent changes include improvements in teaching, the delivery of courses, resources, and communication. The effectiveness of these changes is evident, for example, in the reduction in time it is taking learners to complete courses. An area that Playcentre Education is aware of and can improve further is in the analysis of outcomes for learners who identify as Māori.

Systematic and robust processes are longstanding and effective. Nonetheless, Playcentre Education continues to be inquisitive and expand its understanding. An outcomes framework is in development and is expected to be useful for managing significant changes to the organisation and the Playcentre diploma.

Several factors ensure the quality of the educational performance of Playcentre Education: highly effective activities and processes that are streamlined across associations; an evaluative quality assurance approach; and the dedicated focus and review by Playcentre Education on areas that have an impact on the quality of training.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**

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

Considering the context, achievement of courses at Playcentre Education is generally strong.

Learners undertake Playcentre courses on a part-time basis, mostly out of personal interest, and are typically parents attending and participating in Playcentre who have preschool child/children and a range of responsibilities and demands in their lives. There has been a decrease in the number of parents choosing Playcentre as their early childhood education option in recent years, and those who do are staying for shorter periods. Parents are having fewer children (reducing the time engaged at Playcentre) and leave when they return to work or move on to other childhood education that does not require the same level of commitment. These factors have an impact on achievement, particularly the higher-level courses which take at least two years to complete.

The TEC recognises this and Playcentre Education has a unique arrangement with the TEC whereby learners do not need to complete the diploma qualification, and achievement and funding is focused on course completion. Courses range from level 4, 10 credits (Course 2) to level 6, 80 credits (Course 6). TEC data on course completions for 2012-2015 demonstrates a consistent pattern of achievement.

Table 1. Course completions 2012-2015 (TEC data)

	2012	2013	2014	2015
% Course completion	82	83	80	81
% Māori completion	75	84	74	73

The achievement of courses by learners overall is well meeting the needs of all stakeholders including learners. Playcentre Education is in a unique position in that currently it is unable to enforce practices that it considers may improve achievement in teaching and support. Therefore, the PTE has limited ability to have full influence in areas affecting educational performance. This circumstance

¹ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

will change when the new constitution takes effect at the end of 2016, but it has an impact on the rating for this key evaluation question.

In addition to paying close attention to TEC performance indicators – including under and over-delivery which have an impact on funding – Playcentre Education looks at data and achievement in ways that is meaningful and useful for the organisation.

Playcentre Education collects, analyses and reports on data across years by course, against enrolment and over the time, in weeks, it takes to complete. Analysis includes factors that have an impact on achievement such as workshops offered and attended and progress from one course to another. Comprehensive review provides rich and useful information enabling Playcentre Education to convincingly demonstrate that over the past three years there has been a steady reduction in the time it is taking learners to complete, indicating the effectiveness of Playcentre Education strategies. The exception is the two highest-level courses, Courses 5 and 6. The impact of this is mitigated by the very small number (single figures) of learners on these courses. Courses 2, 3 and 4 have the vast majority of learners. Completion is monitored beyond the reporting timeframe required for the TEC and demonstrates that at least 85-98 per cent of all part-time learners in these courses complete.

Clear and comprehensive analysis provides information that is used to understand variances between the 35 associations, and looks at trends that have emerged and changed over time. In particular, attention is focused on regions where course completions and timeframes are out of step with Playcentre Education targets. The findings are reviewed and discussed by the regional associations, Playcentre Education's national education committee, and the NZPF. Actions are taken at both national and association levels to improve achievement.

Reasons for non-completions are well known for each individual learner, but could be more deeply understood. Playcentre Education is aware there is a gap in the achievement of Māori learners (Table 1), and systematic analysis of achievement is not occurring beyond the individual or association level. This is an area that could be improved. The overall comprehensive and meaningful self-assessment of achievement mitigates this gap to the extent that it does not significantly affect the self-assessment rating for this key evaluation question. The small number of Pasifika and learners under 25 years makes it difficult to draw clear conclusions about their performance.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

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

The needs of all key stakeholders are comprehensively met.

Positive and important outcomes result from engagement with Playcentre courses beyond the specific context or intention of the course. Analysis of surveys, feedback and data indicate life-changing, confidence-building outcomes including the progression of some learners to further study and employment.

Learners acquire useful and practical skills and knowledge as parents and as the first educators of their child/children. This matches the philosophy and purpose of the NZPF and is the primary focus of learners enrolling in courses. Learners enhance their capabilities and gain confidence in their parenting skills. These skills and knowledge are actively shared in their homes as well as contributing to and having a positive impact on the local community – specifically, the ability of local Playcentres to continue to run quality early childhood education licensed sessions by parents on a voluntary basis. Learners and graduates become more proficient in running sessions for children, improving the quality of the sessions. There is good evidence for this at some associations and is anecdotally understood at others.

NZPF benefits from learners' successful completion of the higher-level courses, which is integral to the continuation of Playcentre as a model of early childhood education. Graduates gain skills that enable them to effectively run, manage and lead local Playcentres, associations and, nationally, the NZPF, as well as ensure the PTE, Playcentre Education, has people with the capability to deliver training and undertake assessment to the standards required.

Successful completion of courses ensures Playcentres can meet the required Ministry of Education licensing agreements. Through the Education Review Office, the Ministry of Education undertakes evaluations of approved Playcentres and validates the quality of the early childhood education provided at these centres.

Playcentre Education has developed an outcomes model to support associations to think about further evidencing their value and contribution, specifically in terms of social outcomes. Once implemented, this initiative will enhance the strong self-review that currently occurs through survey and data collection.

Overall, the most valued outcome is the provision of quality early childhood education to 468 communities, including rural communities, around New Zealand by parents who are trained and developed at no or low cost.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

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

The Playcentre Education diploma, and the courses contained within it, are highly relevant and were developed specifically to meet the needs of parents and the NZPF, and the educational requirements for parents to deliver early childhood education. The programme is the key for NZPF, Playcentre Education and Playcentres to meet Ministry of Education and TEC outcomes.

The courses are structured logically, with theory and practical components, and build on knowledge and learning. They also reflect the commitment NZPF has to its biculturalism vision and Te Whariki (the Ministry of Education's policy statement on the early childhood curriculum). Courses are focused directly on parents as first educators of their child/children. Learners benefit from engaging in play in a structured environment with their children whom they are teaching and guiding, as they are simultaneously learning as parents and engaged as adult learners. All courses are offered part-time, recognising the many competing priorities parents of pre-school children have, and this increases the likelihood of engagement and completion of courses.

A range of systems ensure the programmes and activities meet the needs of key stakeholders while maintaining consistency and quality. Playcentre Education approves associations and Playcentres that met their criteria to deliver courses. Associations have autonomy in how courses are delivered that best meet the needs of the community, such as through night classes, block classes, during sessions and online. The PTE maintains quality through oversight and self-assessment, including nationwide student feedback – benchmarked and analysed – and systematic internal audits. Playcentre Education notes trends and identifies any gaps in performance. For example, learners in more isolated communities generally achieve less well. Playcentre Education attempts to address this alongside the relevant associations. In this case, the PTE does this through increased access to online delivery and increasing communication and information to encourage learners to look outside their own association to access workshops.

Playcentre Education has actively participated in TRoQ and has been exploring how the new Playcentre programme/s will align with the new qualifications and match their stakeholders' needs. Input and feedback from associations is being actively sought as this process continues. The rich sources of feedback routinely available are also being used to inform development of the new programme to ensure it will continue to match the needs of all stakeholders and has merit.

Playcentre Education has multiple and authentic avenues from which it reliably gathers worthwhile information from current and past learners, tutors, commenters (assessors) and associations. Methods used to collect information are changed in response to the quality of feedback received, with the focus on continuous improvement.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

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

Courses are delivered at the accredited centres using a pool of trainers and commenters with the relevant and required experience and backgrounds. Playcentre Education has accredited Playcentres to deliver specific courses based on audit and self-assessment findings and availability of facilities and regional need.

There is some variation in delivery for learners due to the authentic and community-specific nature of Playcentre. Currently associations have control over the implementation of some aspects that Playcentre Education can only advise on. This limits Playcentre Education's ability to enforce or ensure the uptake of some practices by trainers and commenters, such as participation in specific professional development opportunities, improving lesson plans, and developing exemplars. This unique situation reflects the ratings in this key evaluation question. However, Playcentre Education has a wide range of comprehensive and systematic self-assessment approaches which include self-review, peer review, feedback through observation, survey, audit, data collection, robust internal moderation and evaluation to review the effectiveness of each association's capability to manage the quality of the teaching and assessing in their area. There is no significant risk in that Playcentre Education approves associations to deliver courses and can and does withhold this approval if compliance and important areas such as meeting internal reporting requirements are not met.

This situation is in a state of change with the implementation of the new constitution which has been ratified. Playcentre Education is well underway with plans to tighten up identified processes and raise expectations to ensure consistency and highly effective teaching in all associations.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

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

Different associations have different approaches to understanding the needs of learners and how to support those needs. Although associations are given useful and relevant information, guidance, encouragement and support from Playcentre Education to address learner needs, each association follows up and supports learners in their own way using approaches they believe will be most effective in their community and context. This reflects the philosophy of NZPF which promotes the autonomy of communities to determine for themselves their needs and how best they are met.

In the context of the PTE, however, this approach has potential to affect achievement if specific learner needs for support and guidance are not identified or effectively met by the associations. For example, Playcentre Education's self-review of each association indicates that some associations have commenters who do not provide feedback promptly, and the quality of the feedback to learners meets only minimum standards. Other associations are very aware of and are responsive to challenges for learners that have an impact on achievement – such as the need for childcare to support attendance at workshops – and they strive to support the learners in their communities. The variance in support is evident from Playcentre Education's own self-assessment, which could be improved to more fully explore the extent to which the academic needs of the learners are being met.

Overall indications are that, generally, learners are well supported and guided which is evident in the rate of achievement and how well regarded and valued courses are, which is also convincingly demonstrated in Playcentre Education's comprehensive self-assessment.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

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

Playcentre Education has a clear vision and strategy which drives the work of the PTE and links directly with NZPF philosophy, strategic direction and the annual plan. Identified challenges in the structure of NZPF and autonomy in some decision-making areas at association level are recognised. The planned and

carefully prepared amalgamation of associations, in progress the last two years and due to be implemented at the end of 2016, and ratification of the new constitution, specifically address these challenges and mandate Playcentre Education's ability to ensure ongoing quality education.

Playcentre Education anticipates and responds to change in a timely and consultative manner. Changes to legislation – the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 – and TRoQ have an impact on both the programme and delivery of Playcentre Education courses. These changes are well understood. There are clearly identified policies, systems and processes to monitor and report effectively to government stakeholders in areas of compliance and funding, including the Ministry of Education licensing agreement for all 468 Playcentres.

Throughout this time of significant change for the large, mostly volunteer organisation, there is clear evidence that information is shared and reported to all key positions within Playcentre Education, NZPF and the associations. Changes are well managed and the organisation is effectively led.

Comprehensive and effective self-assessment has provided a strong basis on which Playcentre Education has been able to make these changes. Authentic and rich information collected is shared and scrutinised. Playcentre Education is open and transparent in its findings, and use of the information leads to worthwhile improvements that are important to key stakeholders and the PTE.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: All courses

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

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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Final Report

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