

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Playcentre Education

Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 20 March 2013

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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)
Location:	Wellington
Delivery sites:	Delivered at Playcentre sites nationally
First registered:	1 October 1991
Courses currently delivered	Diploma in Early Childhood and Adult Education (Level 6). The diploma is a 190-credit qualification divided into six component courses: <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) (Course 1 is also delivered by the organisation as a prerequisite to the diploma, although it is not part of the qualification.)
Code of Practice signatory?	No
Number of students:	3,000 approximately
Number of staff:	Six full-time equivalents
Scope of active	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early childhood education

accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult education
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF) is a federation of 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 Education provides training for parents who choose to be involved in this service. Parents train while working at Playcentres located throughout New Zealand. As a result, most students study part-time. The majority choose to do only some of the free courses towards the diploma.</p>
Recent significant changes:	Not applicable
Previous quality assurance history:	Playcentre Education met all requirements at the previous quality assurance visit conducted by NZQA in 2008.
Other:	<p>The licensing agreement with Ministry of Education requires that there must be at least one adult with a course 1 certificate, one with a course 2, and a third with a course 3 certificate to run each session, and therefore, course 3 is the highest minimum licensing qualification.</p> <p>Course 4 is focussed on developing students who want to develop their leadership capacity and provide centre support. Ministry of Education regulations require the presence of both a course 4 and a course 1 person on duty in a Playcentre as a minimum, and many associations require those employed as centre supporters to have a minimum of course 4.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The external evaluation and review (EER) included the mandatory focus area of governance, management, and strategy as well as courses 3 and 4 towards the Diploma in Early Childhood and Adult Education (Level 6). These courses were included in the scope of the EER as the majority of centres provide them. Most students are enrolled in course 2, then enrol in course 3 if they wish to take on more of a leadership role at a centre. These courses, as well as courses 5 and 6, are required to achieve the diploma, although few parents opt to enrol in the higher-level courses.

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. Instead of physically visiting Playcentre sites, the evaluation team conducted the EER with a blend of face-to-face and Skype interviews at the NZQA office in Wellington. This is because Playcentre Education does not itself deliver the training. Instead, training is provided by parents who are themselves trained by the NZPF associations in early childhood education, and then go on to become tutors. The team met personally with the NZPF operations manager, NZPF co-president, the Playcentre Education training coordinator, the Playcentre Education fund manager, the Wellington Playcentre convener, and two Playcentre Education committee co-convenors based in Waikato. The evaluators interviewed the local association education convenors from Otago and Waikato via Skype.

The EER team also reviewed relevant documentation including the organisation's analysis of student achievement, course analysis, programme reviews, and an analysis of all associations' 2011 student course evaluations.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

Playcentre Education measures student success by the skills gained and the completion of courses within the expected timeframe. Analysis of all course results nationally from 2006 to 2011 shows that 65 per cent of all course 3 students completed. The course completion rate for course 4 students was 34 per cent on average for the same period, which is well below the expected 50 per cent completion rate for the organisation overall. The organisation has encouraged each of the NZPF associations to improve completions and feedback, and monitoring reports say that 2012 figures are showing improvements to the course completion rates at association centres.

Students also gain confidence and skills and the knowledge to educate their own children or further their careers. This was shown by the course evaluations and anecdotal evidence tutors receive from previous students. Evidence was also provided that Playcentre Education enhances communities by having parents with the knowledge and skills to help other new parents to raise their children.

Playcentre's philosophy is to train the parents as the 'first and best educators of their children'. Playcentre Education has had a strong presence nationally because it continues to train parents as early childhood educators to help run its centres and to meet Ministry of Education licensing requirements. This contributes to the organisation's vision statement to 'empower adults and children to work, play, learn and grow together'.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

Playcentre Education understands its students' success and has a strong understanding of educational performance and achievement across all of the Playcentre associations. This is facilitated by a number of well-established, robust data collection and analysis processes.

The education team is responsible for managing the training and demonstrated that it uses the data from each association-approved delivery site and analyses it for trends. The education team has analysed feedback from course convenors – tutors as well as students – over a number of years to monitor training effectiveness. The analysis of course outcomes and feedback is used to help the associations to improve the completion rates at the centres. There was strong evidence of many examples of sharing of practices and strategies to enhance teaching and learning, facilitated by the education team's ongoing review and in-depth knowledge of performance across the associations. The education team also has an effective

system to review student achievement using an annual audit and monthly report from the associations.

This information shows that improvements in course completions are required, and the organisation has been increasing the awareness of the importance of results at national tutor meetings and is encouraging the centres to adopt strategies to improve student course completions within the expected timeframes. There was evidence that several centres have made improvements as a result.

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**.

Playcentre Education measures students' success against the percentage of the previous year's students that complete a course and the time it takes. The organisation has documented overall course outcomes from 2006 to 2011 showing that 65 per cent of all course 3 participants complete within 52 weeks and 34 per cent complete course 4 within 39 weeks. The low completion rates for course 4 are due to parents with children no longer being enrolled in Playcentres, and therefore choosing not to continue with their training. The completion rate for course 4 is low, and for course 3 is 65 per cent; however, as the table below demonstrates, when considering completion rates for course 3 beyond one year of study, completions have been around the 70 per cent desired benchmark.

Other measures of success include increasing parents' knowledge of young children and gaining skills for taking on various roles, including tutoring, at Playcentres. A study of outcomes that Playcentre commissioned Massey University to undertake (2005) showed that many parents were satisfied with the skills gained, including transferable skills such as management and organisational skills as well as the increased knowledge to empower them in the care and education of their own children.

The standard funding educational performance measures applied by the TEC do not fully reflect the achievements of the students. This is because the diploma, recognised by the TEC for funding, is not the intended outcome for many of the students who enrol. Only a small number of students undertake courses 5 and 6 as required to achieve the diploma. In 2011, no-one completed the diploma, but this was because some students were studying part-time and are expected to complete in 2012. The low enrolment and completion rate is because most parents choose to study while their children are enrolled at Playcentre, for which courses 2, 3, and 4 are more relevant. Courses 5 and 6 require more theory work; parents leave Playcentre when their children move on to primary school, move away, or have another baby, and therefore lower numbers of participants are enrolled in these courses.

The table below shows a breakdown of overall completions for each course by cohort year. This shows that only a small number of students complete within their

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

first year, with the percentage completing nearly doubling in their second year. For instance, 42 per cent of students enrolled in course 2 in 2010 completed within that year, and this went up to 72 per cent for 2011. Students take longer to complete course 4 because it has 30 credits, whereas course 3 has 20 credits and course 2, 10 credits.

Cohort Year	C2 completion percentages		C3 completion percentages		C4 completion percentages	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
2007	82%	83%	74%	77%	37%	26%
2008	75%	80%	67%	72%	35%	32%
2009	70%	73%	60%	71%	17%	37%
2010	42%	72%	27%	46%	4%	8%

Playcentre Education has a comprehensive understanding of learner achievement across all associations, with the resulting information used to systematically seek improved learner achievement outcomes. The PTE analyses all association and centre course results annually to compare results over a number of years. The overall average course completion rate for course 3 was 65 per cent from 2006 to 2011. Course completion rates have steadily improved for this course and were 77 per cent for students that started in 2007.

Playcentre Education purposefully analyses completion rates year-by-year, but also over a five-year period to provide a realistic understanding of course completions, given that students have previously taken over a year to complete their courses. The organisation uses this information to set targets for each association centre and has focussed on improving course completions as a result of its self-assessment. Although the associations are autonomous in their day-to-day operations, they have been encouraged to implement new strategies that have been identified as successful for other associations, in order to share their successful strategies and help students complete their course 3 and 4 outcomes. For example, the Waikato region now offers block courses for each module, and the 30 per cent increase in completions since the introduction is attributed to the courses being more accessible, due to childcare being available for parents in training, while the more frequent block courses help the students to structure their training better and maintain their motivation to complete. Another example is changes made to the delivery of course 2 using block courses where students can have their children cared for while they are training. This has led to an increase in course 2 completions from 65 per cent to 80 per cent. Associations benefit from hearing of these successes and transferring the relevant activities to suit their own operation.

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 **Good**.

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

Playcentre is based on a philosophy aimed at supporting children's early learning through empowering parents to develop skills for the lifetime job of parenting. Ultimately, the value of the training is demonstrated by the increase in parents' confidence and abilities to become educators of their own children. The courses that make up the diploma introduce early childhood education concepts and develop parents' practical and theoretical knowledge of child development. The knowledge that students develop is used to enhance the practices of the centres in which they work, and which is of immediate benefit to parents and children. This evidence of the value of the training is supported by the feedback from course evaluations analysed for each association by Playcentre Education. For example, comments include statements from parents who have completed courses that they were able to relate what they knew about children's play and behaviour and align it with the theory of childhood development.

In addition, many that have completed Playcentre Education courses have the skills and abilities to take on positions of greater responsibility within their Playcentre association, including as tutors, or to volunteer in their communities as well as take on more responsibilities and advance their careers. These results were noted in the feedback to the survey conducted by Massey University in 2005. Destination outcomes are not collated at a national level, but there is an informal awareness of the achievement of these outcomes at association level.

The majority of Playcentre associations offer the initial course 2, which gives students a basic understanding of how NZPF operates to meet its bicultural vision. Many students who complete course 2 continue on to course 3, which provides them with the minimum level of training that early childhood centres require for their educators to meet Ministry of Education licensing requirements. Around 50 per cent of students that complete course 3 go on to course 4 to gain further skills to provide leadership and centre support or to transfer the skills and knowledge gained to volunteer or paid work. Very few students will undertake courses 5 and 6 to gain the diploma, and the organisation is reviewing the value of offering the diploma to parents and the centres in the future.

Playcentres help establish a community for new mothers to receive advice and support, including parents of children with special needs. Overall, without trained parents, Playcentres would not be able to survive, as the childhood educators are also the parents.

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 **Good**.

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

The students and associations benefit from the training being delivered in real time, that is, the students are learning about early childhood education theory while applying the practice in their roles as parents and Playcentre workers. This helps to reinforce the learning to ensure that the students gain practical skills and knowledge that are transferrable.

Information from Playcentre Education staff and associations has identified that the training is usually undertaken by two types of students. One group wants to be involved in their children's learning and hold an academic qualification and usually work in a professional role. The other identified student group are those seeking to increase their academic qualifications to improve career opportunities within the early childhood education area.

Playcentre Education provides courses 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, which make up the Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Adult Education, at no cost to the student. The course curriculum is aligned to the Ministry of Education's Te Whāriki curriculum for early childhood education. The diploma takes up to two years full-time or four years part-time study. Most students choose to study part-time as this suits people who are working full-time or have young families to look after. Course 1 was developed to provide an introduction to Playcentre and its role in the community and is a prerequisite for enrolment in course 2.

Each course consists of set theory and practical exercises, appropriate to the students' level of training. Each Playcentre offers different delivery options, from a self-paced learning approach through to block courses and/or night classes to cater to differing students' needs. The associations have been reviewing what works for their group of students according to their location (urban/rural), the availability of tutors, and the level of the courses. For example, Otago Playcentre provides block courses for people in rural areas, whereas students living in city centres, such as Wellington, can attend evening classes.

Courses are delivered at the accredited centres using a pool of tutors with the relevant experience and backgrounds. Playcentre Education has accredited the centres or associations to deliver specific components of the diploma courses depending on the organisation's audit findings and availability of facilities and regional need. This means that not all centres offer all the courses.

Graduate and student feedback affirmed that the course content was relevant to their needs. The feedback included, 'It made me understand my own child's development', and that the special needs content was helpful for students working in early childhood education centres with their own and others' special needs children. Graduates of the diploma and courses 3 and 4 also commented that the

skills, particularly management skills taught in course 4, were highly useful as they could use them in their current work or to advance their career.

Although the associations are responsible for reviewing programme delivery and activities at the regional level, Playcentre Education monitors overall course performance. Information from tutor and trainee feedback, tutor self-appraisals and performance reviews, and completion statistics is used to review programme content and learning materials and to measure overall satisfaction with the courses delivered. This information is used in conjunction with overall course completions and centre annual programme reports to identify strategies that lead to better outcomes for students.

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**.

Each association selects course tutors from the pool of qualified early childhood educators within the centre. As pool members, the staff understand the Playcentre philosophy and processes and have an adult education and early childhood education qualification. New tutors are provided with a mentor to help familiarise them with the tutoring role. The Playcentre education training coordinator conducts annual performance appraisals using feedback from students as well as tutors' self-appraisals. The organisation supports the tutors' professional and personal development.

Two national education meetings are held each year and provide valued opportunities for tutors and associations to come together to share practices and experiences. Professional development activities are also facilitated by the Playcentre national education team.

The training coordinator is also responsible for arranging the moderation of assessments between sites and at national education team meetings. The training coordinator pairs each site with another to encourage tutors to help upskill each other and develop their own teaching and assessment practices. Moderation and assessment results provide a further source of information which is analysed at a national level and used to encourage specific assessment support for tutors and/or to review course content. A recent example of where this has led to an improvement in teaching practices was the introduction of a standardised form to provide students with better assessment feedback to assist them with their learning. The organisation as a whole has met national external moderation requirements.

Convenors at each association review student feedback to see whether there are any issues with the training and to monitor the effectiveness of new initiatives in teaching. A report is provided to the national education team which analyses individual course feedback and outcomes to identify whether associations and

individual centres are achieving the expected outcomes. The results of this show that the centres have increased course 3 completions, although there is still work to be done to increase course 4 completion rates.

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**.

Playcentre associations and centres have autonomy in the way they support their learners to achieve; therefore, there are various strategies to ensure that students are receiving the support they require to complete the courses. Because students are parents of children enrolled at Playcentre, some centres offer childcare for students who need to attend block courses either during the day or at night, minimising barriers to engagement in learning. This has been an effective way of enabling students to attend relevant block courses, and also encourages collective peer learning. The organisation is aware from its analysis of student feedback, tutor feedback, and course results that attendance at block courses leads to greater success in completions. Other associations are adapting this model to suit their regional needs.

Another approach to student support is applied by the Otago association. The course convenor monitors the progress of individual students, many of whom live in remote rural areas, to follow up and ensure they are able to attend block courses. Contact is maintained by regular phone contact and email support for assessments.

All potential students are provided with time to settle into Playcentre before they are given information about the diploma training pathway. This means that parents understand the Playcentre environment before they start training and are aware of how they can achieve the requirements to meet their needs and the centres' need for trained parents to help run the centre. Each centre provides support for students for whom English is a second language, which is a need mostly found at Auckland associations.

Overall, student support has been sufficient in the past to meet the differing needs of students while they are raising their family or working, and this support has improved as a result of understanding that better support leads to increased motivation and thus completion rates.

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**.

The extensive insight provided by the self-assessment processes established at the national level contributes to strong performance information and monitoring of educational achievement. This knowledge is disseminated across the associations to encourage and support them to enhance outcomes for learners in line with the national direction.

Playcentre Education's strategic plan falls under the guidance of the national body, NZPF, and is designed to meet Ministry of Education guidelines for early childhood education centres. Associations align their strategy to the national plan, in addition to reflecting their own regional priorities. Playcentre Education provides opportunities for associations and the centres to understand the overall NZPF vision and strategic aims. This is achieved through convenors who provide oversight to each centre for ensuring the philosophy is applied at regional level. Twice-yearly Playcentre Education meetings enable staff to share teaching approaches and strategies to improve course completion rates as well as to encourage students to finish within the expected timeframe.

Following a review of the NZPF organisational structure two years ago, a tangata whenua caucus and tangata tiriti caucus were established to provide advice, which reflects the organisation's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Playcentre Education team also includes a tiriti-based co-convenor. These mechanisms aim to increase the participation of Māori students by providing an environment where Māori feel valued.

Each association operates under the Playcentre Education set of principles and practices contained in the quality management system, against which the national education team training coordinator audits each association on a cyclical basis. This maintains consistency of curriculum delivery and helps to ensure that the NZPF objectives of parents running centres in accordance with the philosophy and practices of the organisation are being met.

The overall organisational structure of NZPF provides an environment where individual associations can operate autonomously in order to make appropriate decisions on how the standard courses are delivered to suit regional and community needs. Interviews with staff also confirmed that effective mechanisms are in place to enable them to provide feedback on leadership, and which they feel is heard and responded to appropriately.

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 **Good**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Early childhood education courses 3 and 4 (Level 4)

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

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.

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 EER process approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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