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External Evaluation and Review Report

Playcentre Education

Date of report: 14 May 2021

About Playcentre Education

Playcentre Education is a wholly owned subsidiary of Playcentre Aotearoa. Playcentre Education's core role is the delivery of formal entry-level early childhood and care qualifications to parents and employees of Playcentres throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment
Location:	341 Main Road, Tawa, Wellington
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 2049 (2020) ¹ (140 equivalent full-time students) Māori 7.6 per cent, Pasifika 0.7 per cent International: nil
Number of staff:	One full-time and two part-time, national-level staff are specifically dedicated to Playcentre Education. ² Others engaged with Playcentre Education are mostly part-time tutors or markers, on casual agreements, employed on an as-needs basis linked to individual Playcentre regions. A few are volunteers.
TEO profile:	See Playcentre Education (NZQA website)
Last EER outcome:	Playcentre Education's previous EER outcome in 2016 was Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of this evaluation:	New Zealand Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 4) ³

¹ Students are all part-time; predominantly female; and almost all over the age of 25 years.

² There were also five part-time regional staff although at the time of the EER were planned to be disestablished.

³ This is the only programme delivered by Playcentre Education. It is a 60-credit programme taught in 10 modules. The Playcentre Introductory Award (PIA) is awarded after completion of the first two modules, and the Playcentre Educator Award (PEA) after modules 3 and 4.

MoE number: 8809

NZQA reference: C45360

Dates of EER visit: 16 and 17 March 2021

Recent significant changes: Since the last EER in 2016, there has been a change to the context in which Playcentre Education operates. In 2016, the organisation operated as a highly devolved organisation where the national body supervised the operation of the quality management system in 33 different associations, each of which arranged delivery of the locally approved qualification, the Playcentre Diploma in Early Childhood and Adult Education. This has since been retired and replaced with the New Zealand Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 4).

A structural review of New Zealand Playcentre Federation has led to the amalgamation of all 33 associations under one umbrella, now called Playcentre Aotearoa. This has involved setting up a new structure for Playcentre Education, including disestablishment of the head office and regional roles and establishment of new head office educational leadership positions. At the time of this EER, appointment to the first of these positions (pedagogical lead) had just begun.

Summary of results

Playcentre Education is delivering valuable education and training to its students. Achievement rates are high, and students apply their skills in the playcentres, family, life and employment. Playcentre Education is making a worthy contribution to the wellbeing and futures of whānau and tamariki throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

A greater commitment to resourcing and educational leadership and a more comprehensive approach to self-assessment is needed to guide and inform future development and improvements.

Confident in educational performance

- Playcentre Education has high course completions, along with good completion rates for the Playcentre awards.
- Students are highly engaged in their learning and well supported to succeed in both gaining confidence, parenting and interpersonal skills, and achieving formal assessment outcomes.
- Regional Playcentres confirm that Playcentre Education students and graduates are making positive changes in their Playcentre roles, and subsequently in the lives of Playcentre tamariki, as a result of the education and learning they gain.

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

- The programme taught by Playcentre Education is well structured and delivered to match the needs of both students and the parent organisation.
- Playcentre Education courses are taught by experienced, qualified staff who use their experience and expertise to ensure the education delivery is relevant and engaging.
- The organisation is responsibly managed, although throughout the lengthy transition of the current restructuring, the leadership of Playcentre Education has been inadequately resourced. Purpose and direction are not formalised and there are some gaps in shared understanding between head office and the regional Playcentres.
- Playcentre Education has distributed responsibility for its compliance accountabilities, leading to a few

important obligations being overlooked. A more centralised oversight would mitigate this risk.

- Although Playcentre Education has a culture of reflection and continuous improvement, this is largely informal, intuitive and individual. The organisation is not relying on data to inform improvements. A more systematic approach is required for NZQA to have confidence in Playcentre Education's self-assessment capability.

Key evaluation question findings⁴

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Course completions have been between 78 and 90 per cent for 2017-2019 (refer Appendix 1). The rate dropped by 8 percentage points in 2018 then bounced back up by 11 percentage points the following year. Course completion for Māori students during this period was consistently 4-7 percentage points below the rest of the cohort. Unfortunately, the PTE's efforts to understand and maintain or improve its educational performance without meaningful data are unlikely to be effective.</p> <p>There is a strong focus on student achievement at all levels of the organisation, but self-assessment practices around student achievement are informal rather than systematic. Staff in some regions have formed communities of practice where they discuss teaching and learning and ideas for improvement, but this good practice is not necessarily replicated in other regions.</p> <p>There are few formal systems or processes to periodically monitor and report student progress. Staff regularly explore areas for improvement, but a lack of clear and accurate achievement data for analysis limits the effectiveness of this self-assessment. Playcentre Education may benefit from review and analysis of student achievement data at a wider institutional level.</p>
Conclusion:	Playcentre Education's educational performance is mostly strong. However, analysis is mixed and data collection is incomplete. The PTE would benefit from more reporting and use of achievement data to identify areas of strength and weakness to make improvements.

⁴ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Playcentre Education saw its value in students learning early childhood education skills and knowledge to gain PIA and PEA module awards that enable them to apply this capability through participating and leading some Playcentre learning activities. With the introduction of the New Zealand Certificate, the value focus, by both Playcentre Aotearoa and the Tertiary Education Commission, has shifted to qualification completion.</p> <p>Graduates so far appear to be getting good value from the New Zealand Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care, although formal measurement of this is a recent occurrence. Playcentre engaged with a group of 32 graduates in late 2020, which provided useful intelligence on the value of the programme and confirmation of the alignment with the graduate profile outcomes. The process is new and has only been tested on one group of graduates but shows good promise.</p> <p>There is good anecdotal feedback from Playcentre regional managers about the increased skills and knowledge of graduates and the value that brings to the centres as well as increased contribution to whānau and communities. A more formal review of outcomes – for instance by mapping programme impact against ERO⁵ reports – may provide useful insights for the organisation.</p> <p>Students gain Playcentre awards for the first components of the programme, which is recognised by the Ministry of Education for licensing purposes.</p>
Conclusion:	Students at Playcentre Education are gaining good value from their study through learning valuable early childhood education skills and knowledge. Feedback from Playcentre regional managers also signifies that they value the outcomes for students.

⁵ The Education Review Office of the Ministry of Education evaluates and reports on each of the 410 centres on a cyclical basis.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The move to an NZQF⁶ programme and a common delivery approach across the organisation have been welcomed by both students and Playcentre staff. The new programme is well structured and learning activities are purposefully organised and focussed on learning outcomes. The common delivery has enabled Playcentre Education to dedicate resources to develop good quality learning and assessment material. The new curriculum has brought a significant and more explicit focus on Te Ao Māori perspectives.</p> <p>The quality of material has been particularly highlighted in the roll-out of the online version of many of the modules. Playcentre Education has adopted the Open Polytechnic's iQualify learning management system to deliver the modules. Students have reacted positively to its usability, albeit with a few caveats regarding their initial difficulties in engaging with e-learning. To date, Playcentre Education has not undertaken any analysis of these barriers even though iQualify has this functionality.</p> <p>The availability of asynchronous online options has made a positive difference to accessibility to the programme modules, particularly in regional and rural areas. This has been borne out by a significant increase in enrolments in the second half of 2020. The drawback of this has been that the numbers of students wanting face-to-face classes has declined, resulting in insufficient numbers to run these classes in some regions. This is a substantial barrier to students who do not have the technological access or who find online study challenging. In future, a more planned approach to the offering of face-to-face and blended classes may better serve some students.</p> <p>In the absence of a documented cycle for post-assessment moderation, it has been ad hoc at best. Subsequent to an NZQA monitoring visit and report in mid-2020 – which identified a number of gaps in assessment and moderation processes and</p>

⁶ New Zealand Qualifications Framework

	<p>systems⁷ – Playcentre Education has responded positively by contracting an experienced external specialist who has independently moderated assessments and is strengthening assessment capability in the organisation.</p> <p>Student evaluations are conducted at the completion of every module and record students’ feedback on their experiences of different aspects of their courses, including content, delivery and staff effectiveness. The results of this feedback are summarised but systematic action as a result was not evident. There were variable responses from staff when asked whether they had received the summaries and whether they had had a senior staff member debrief with them.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Playcentre Education’s new programme and modules are effectively designed and delivered to match the needs of the students and the Playcentres in which they operate. However, a more planned approach to the offering of face-to-face and blended classes may better serve some students.</p>

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>There is evidence of good teaching practice at Playcentre Education. Staff are enthusiastic and passionate about their teaching, and students are highly engaged. Student learning goals are well understood, and they have opportunities to apply skills in a range of contexts relevant to their needs. The strong rapport between students and staff was evident from discussions and evaluation survey outcomes.</p> <p>Staff identify that some students come with low levels of literacy and/or specific learning challenges. Although the nature of the organisation is such that students are innately supported by staff and peers, there is no socio/ethnic analysis of support needs or a structured, proactive response to the identified needs.</p> <p>Tutoring and facilitation staff are supported in their professional learning and development (PLD), the majority of which is in-</p>

⁷ That said, while there were clearly some gaps in assessment and moderation processes and systems, they did not bring into doubt the validity of results.

	<p>house and ad hoc rather than linked to strategic intent or resulting from individual performance review and planning. A more robust PLD structure linked to organisational strategy and individual performance/need is essential to ensure that good teaching continues.</p> <p>The previous qualification, delivered by Playcentre Education until 2018, included a component on adult teaching, which is not included in the New Zealand Certificate. Playcentre Education could benefit from supporting its education delivery staff to undertake formal adult educator training.</p> <p>Playcentre Education has completed a self-review of its implementation of the Interim Domestic Code⁸ and submitted an attestation to this effect to NZQA before 1 March 2021 as required. However, two of six self-review ratings differ between the working documents and the attestation; the student support coordinator was not involved in the self-review; and the self-review was completed by only two people. This is another indication of the under-resourcing of leadership in the organisation.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>There is effective support and student engagement imparted by the programmes and activities provided by Playcentre Education. Students generally have a positive experience and most of them complete the modules, awards and programmes successfully. A greater level of analysis is needed to ensure that intervention and support is provided at points in the student journey where it will have the most positive effect.</p>

⁸ The Education (Pastoral Care of Domestic Tertiary Students) Interim Code of Practice 2019

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

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Although Playcentre Aotearoa has a clear purpose and direction, there is no formalised strategic plan for Playcentre Education, despite the quality management system referencing it. There are some gaps in shared understanding between head office and the regional Playcentres.</p> <p>Reporting lines in Playcentre Education are unclear – educational delivery staff were not sure whether they reported to regional managers of Playcentre Aotearoa or to the Playcentre Education training co-ordinator. If the latter is the case, having over 80 part-time educators reporting to a single part-time co-ordinator is unrealistic. Likewise, being responsible to regional managers, who acknowledge that they have had little say in the management of Playcentre Education, is also unsatisfactory.</p> <p>Reporting lines are much clearer in the proposed new structure for Playcentre Aotearoa, which includes Playcentre Education. However, it is concerning that Playcentre Education is not specifically delineated within that structure. Unfortunately, the move to the new structure has suffered from many delays, some of which have been outside the control of Playcentre Aotearoa. Nevertheless, the effect of beginning the restructuring process by disestablishing positions such as regional education co-ordinators in 2019/2020 and not commencing implementation of the replacement structure until very recently, has left a telling void in educational leadership.</p> <p>The current governance responsibility for Playcentre Education falls under the remit of the Playcentre Aotearoa Trustee Board whose primary focus is the leadership and operation of their 410 Playcentres. The Trustee Board only sporadically receives educational performance information or analysis from Playcentre Education, and trustees indicate that the reporting format has been difficult to comprehend. The Trustee Board has had minimal input into planning and strategy for Playcentre Education. A separate governance structure for Playcentre Education, possibly a subcommittee of the Trustee Board along with independent membership who have specific tertiary education management expertise, could be considered.</p>

	Playcentre Education encourages reflection on its role and how to continue to make ongoing and continuous improvements in meeting the needs of students and of Playcentres. However, much of the self-assessment is informal, individual, fragmented and intuitive rather than systematic, strategic and informed by high quality data across the organisation.
Conclusion:	The governance and management of Playcentre Education do not have a formal and clear vision and understanding of the enterprise, and leadership is not providing effective support for educational achievement. Self-review of performance within Playcentre Education is insufficiently resourced, irregular and does not show evidence of being used to inform improvements in educational performance. A review (delayed and partially implemented at this point) has identified some of the key areas requiring attention.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Responsibility for compliance is distributed among Playcentre Education staff and tends to be reactive and irregular rather than proactive and systematic. Compliance activity has not been reported to the governance body. Playcentre Education meets most of its important compliance requirements – for instance, in financial reporting, health and safety, and criminal history vetting of students to meet the requirements of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.</p> <p>However, the approach to compliance management has contributed to some important compliance accountabilities being overlooked. For example: Fit and Proper Person and Conflict of Interest statutory declarations for some senior staff, including the general manager, and some trustees, have not been submitted to NZQA⁹; and some agreed actions from the NZQA programme monitoring visit in June 2020 have not been implemented in the agreed timeframes. It was concerning to</p>

⁹ It is a requirement under Section 248(1)(c) of the Education and Training Act 2020 (and previously the Education Amendment Act 2011) that all governing members, trustees and senior staff complete these statutory declarations before commencing their roles.

	<p>learn that the contracted assessment specialist referred to in 1.3 had not been provided with the June 2020 monitoring report and was not aware of the agreed action plan.</p> <p>These gaps and weaknesses may not have had a significant impact on educational delivery to date, but they do constitute a risk to the organisation and its students.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Playcentre Education's effectiveness in managing its compliance accountabilities has been variable. It has not systematically reviewed its approach to meeting its statutory requirements.</p>

Focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 4)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory, but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that Playcentre Education:

Governance:

- Review the effectiveness of the current governance structure for Playcentre Education, including ensuring that Playcentre Education is clearly delineated within the overall Playcentre Aotearoa structure.
- Address with urgency the implementation of its new structure (with sufficient resourcing) including the appointment of adequate educational leadership staffing.
- Add structures such as a compliance calendar and bring-up system, to enable proactive compliance monitoring processes. Updates of the compliance calendar should be periodically reported to the governance body.
- Strengthen the analysis and periodic reporting of educational achievement to the board, regions and teachers/facilitators.

Teaching and learning:

- Continue to develop the collection of data for self-assessment and build organisation-wide capability in analysing this data.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive, whole-of-organisation self-assessment regime that leads to knowledge and actions around continuous improvement of educational performance, including improvement of outcomes for Māori learners.

Final

- Investigate and put in place ongoing opportunities for educational delivery staff to further develop their teaching qualifications and practice. This could also include the development of networks with other tertiary education providers both within and outside of the early childhood education sector.
- Develop a post-assessment moderation schedule that is monitored and reported.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. These include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

NZQA requires Playcentre Education to:

- Ensure that all governance, trustees and senior staff complete Fit and Proper Person and Conflict of Interest statutory declarations and submit these to NZQA.
- Ensure that outstanding actions from the June 2020 programme monitoring report are completed.

Appendix 1

Table 1.

Playcentre Education Summary Course Completion Rates from TEC data

	2017	2018	2019
	Playcentre Dip	Dip & 1/2 yr NZ Cert	Last yr Dip & NZ Cert
By Ethnic group			
All Students	86.80%	78.60%	89.30%
Maori students	81.10%	71.80%	86.00%
Non Maori Non Pasifica	87.30%	79.40%	89.60%

By Qual level

Playcentre Dip (L6)			
All Students		78.60%	82.80%
Maori students		71.80%	sample too small
Non Maori Non Pasifica		79.40%	83.00%

NZ Cert (L4)

All Students		no data	98.30%
Maori students		no data	sample too small
Non Maori Non Pasifica		no data	98.60%

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud¹⁰*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

¹⁰ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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