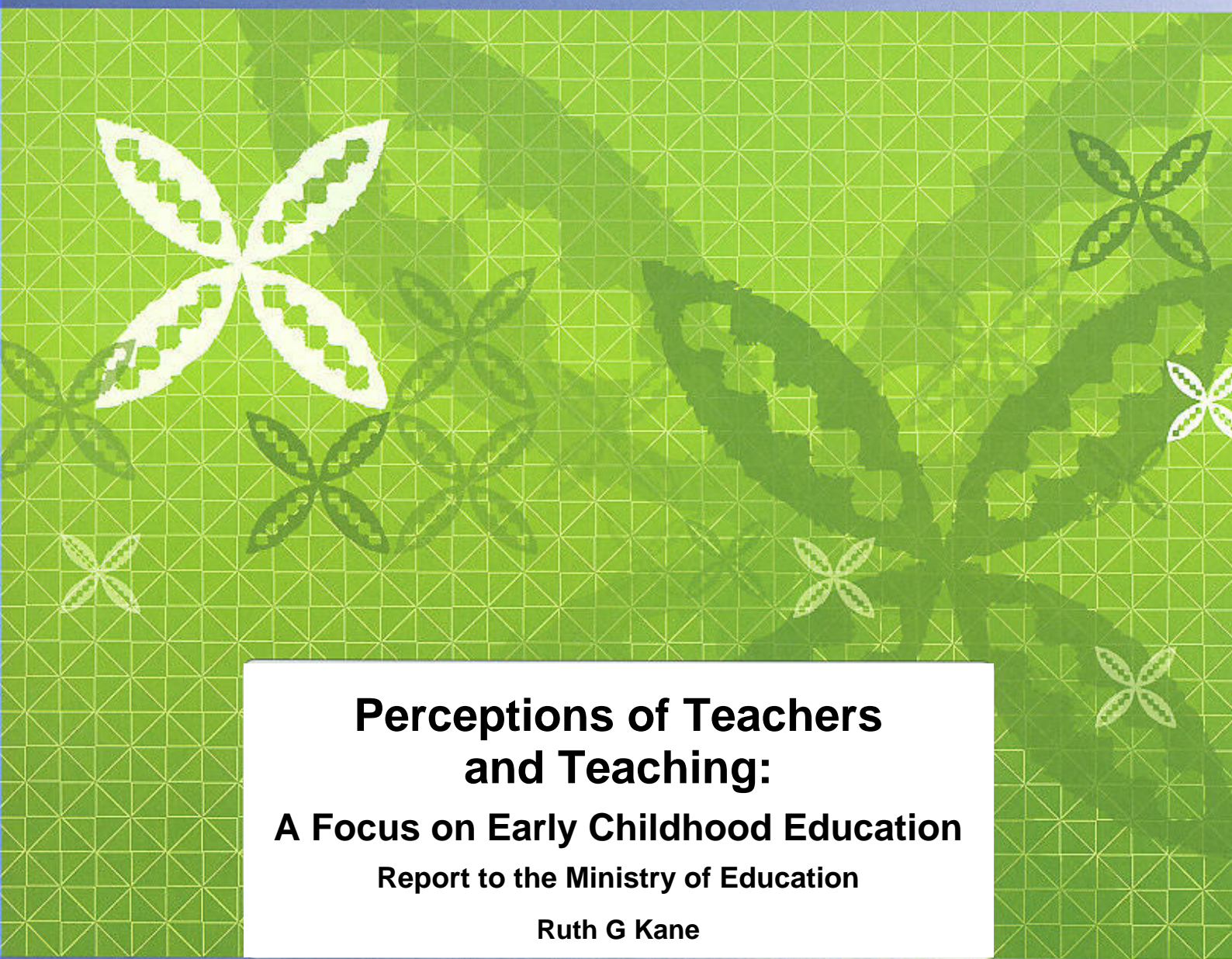




MINISTRY OF EDUCATION NEW ZEALAND

*Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga Aotearoa*



**Perceptions of Teachers  
and Teaching:  
A Focus on Early Childhood Education**

Report to the Ministry of Education

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## **Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching: A Focus on Early Childhood Education**

*“The young children of today are the adults that will one day run this country; let’s give them every opportunity to learn.” (ECE Teacher)*

Ruth G. Kane



## Acknowledgements

This reanalysis of the early childhood data of a large national research project would not have been possible without the contribution of a significant number of teachers, head teachers, management committee members, and student teachers throughout New Zealand who agreed to complete questionnaires and participate in interviews in the original Kane and Mallon (2006) study. The careful thought and time that colleagues from across New Zealand have committed to responding to the original project is acknowledged. The richness of the data provided advances understanding of the work of early childhood educators and the factors which impact on recruitment, retention and performance decisions. It is hoped that findings will contribute to enhanced provisions for early childhood educators, children, parents and whanau.

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The Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching research project (Kane and Mallon, 2006) was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Teachers Council to examine the relationships between key groups' perceptions of teachers and teachers' work, and the recruitment, retention, performance and capability, and professional status of teachers. In 2007 the Ministry of Education commissioned a re-analysis of data from this study to focus on ECE. That re-analysis is presented in this report.



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## **Executive Summary**

The Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching study completed by Massey University professors Ruth Kane and Mary Mallon in 2006 serves as the “original study” of this report. The Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching research project (originally named Teacher Status Stage Two) was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Teachers Council to examine the relationships between key groups’ perceptions of teachers and teachers’ work in early childhood and school sectors, and the recruitment, retention, performance and capability, and professional status of teachers. The project responded to the need for research that clarified the nature and influence of key groups’ perceptions of teachers and teaching and identified priorities for action with respect to recruitment and retention of quality teachers.

The Focus on Early Childhood research project was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to provide a separate analysis and report on the early childhood data generated in the Kane and Mallon (2006) project. This final report also draws on the early childhood related data from a national study conducted by the author and colleagues on initial teacher education in New Zealand (Kane et. al, 2005), thus bringing together data from those involved in the practice of early childhood education and the New Zealand initial teacher education context within which early childhood educators are prepared.

In a project such as this it is difficult to reduce the volume of quantitative data and idiosyncratic nature of the qualitative data to present a fair and authentic account of such a diverse group of people. Never the less, this is the task of this report and in a more focused way, of this executive summary. This re-analysis does not claim to represent or give voice to the very diverse participants within ECE. Rather, it provides evidence from a group of early childhood teachers, head teachers, management members and student teachers of their perceptions of the nature and status of early childhood teaching in New Zealand in 2005. When data were generated in 2005, those involved in ECE had been working with the Te Whāriki (or its draft) for a nearly a decade and were two years into the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan. As such the early childhood sector was continuing to live with and through a period of focused political attention involving administrative and curriculum reforms. This report brings together data from a sample of early childhood educators to relate how they perceive the nature of their work, and to identify factors that may enhance recruitment, retention and the status of early childhood teachers within Aotearoa New Zealand.

This report is presented with some limitations due to its location within a larger study which necessarily affected its size and scope and impacted on the specific focus of questions and findings. Being a re-analysis of a sub-set of data from a much larger study which involved participants from the compulsory school sector as well as early childhood education has some implications both for the methodology and the findings. There are a number of aspects of the study that need to be drawn to a reader’s attention including: the generic nature of data collection instruments meant that terminology was not always a good “fit” with early childhood; questions did not always specifically ask for responses related to a specific sector; the size of the early childhood sample (146 teacher/head teacher questionnaires and 66 management committee questionnaires) required analyses that were validated through factor analysis of the larger population; and, in terms of the interview data there is also the need to acknowledge that interviews were conducted with 5 head teachers, 15 teachers and 4 management committee members.

It is not a claim of this study that such interviews are representative of head teachers, teachers and management across New Zealand early childhood centres. Early childhood centres within New Zealand are extremely diverse

and one could not hope to encompass the breadth of perceptions through such a limited sample. The interview participants contributing to this study do herald from different ECE contexts including education and care centres and free kindergartens in different geographical locations (Christchurch, New Plymouth and South Auckland), however they are by no means reflective, or representative of the wide diversity of ECE settings and personnel. While questionnaire responses were received from home-based childcare and Te Kōhanga Reo, teachers from these settings did not contribute to the interviews. Although some questionnaire respondents did identify as Māori or Pasifika they are under-represented in the questionnaire data and absent in terms of interview data. Thus the most notable omissions in this data are the perspectives of Māori and Pacific peoples.

The limitations imposed by the above require that the findings in this report are indicative rather than conclusive or representative. The findings are strengthened through the mixed method approach adopted and that the qualitative data do reinforce and lend a measure of authenticity to the broader-based quantitative analyses.

There is no doubt from the evidence provided that the nature of early childhood teachers' work in contemporary New Zealand has undergone significant reconceptualisation over the recent decades, is increasingly complex, physically and intellectually demanding, and may well be misunderstood by those outside of the immediate early childhood community. There is definite homogeneity in the ways in which teachers, head teachers, student teachers and management committee members construe effective early childhood teachers. According to them, effective teachers establish caring relationships with children, enjoy their work, and are trusted and respected by parents. Expertise in facilitating learning is considered to be inextricably linked to providing for a child's care, wellbeing and holistic development.

What can be said with absolute confidence is that early childhood teachers, head teachers, management and student teachers believe that they have responsibility for an important service within society. They give strong support to the notion that the sector would benefit from attracting well informed, caring and committed teacher candidates. While they generally embrace the goals of the strategic plan and view the adoption of Te Whāriki as key evidence that early childhood is on an upward trajectory, they do have constructive suggestions of how the status of early childhood teaching could be enhanced.

## **Key Findings**

### **Being An Early Childhood Teacher**

1. Early childhood teachers are motivated to become teachers primarily through their passion for working with children, their desire to have a rewarding and worthwhile career and their commitment to contributing to children's development and learning.
2. Early childhood teachers are at times recruited as parents whose involvement in the early childhood centre that their child attends serves as the initial introduction to the importance of the role of an early childhood teacher.
3. Student teachers report that they are also attracted by the perception of job security, regular family-friendly holidays<sup>1</sup>, a reliable income, and the possibility of having a lifelong career.

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<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind that this is probably a reference to Kindergarten, where teachers receive regular school-based holidays rather than for other centres who offer child care and education all year round.

4. Early childhood teachers love the core aspect of their job, the interaction with young children, colleagues and parents, professional development opportunities, and daily opportunities to make a difference to the lives of children and parents.
5. Early childhood teachers identify building relationships with children as fundamental to their role, they celebrate the collaborative nature of their work and their partnerships with parents.
6. The capacity to contribute to the work of the centre in a collegial and positive way is an essential element within ECE where teachers operate daily in concert with colleagues, parents and others.
7. Early childhood teachers and head teachers perceive the highest levels of respect from parents, from the children they teach and from their colleagues.
8. Early childhood educators are confident in the efficacy of their own contribution to children's development and learning and hopeful that the recent attention afforded to early childhood education as signalled by the Government's ten-year strategic plan, *Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki*, (Ministry of Education, 2002) and associated administrative and curriculum reforms, are evidence of an upward trajectory for the early childhood sector.
9. Early childhood teachers promote professional development and ongoing learning as critical aspects of being a successful early childhood teacher. The centre environment is pivotal in this goal as it influences the extent to which professional development is valued by management and colleagues and is facilitated for teachers. There is an over-riding sense that early childhood teachers view professional development and feedback from colleagues as essential elements of their work.

#### Challenges Within Early Childhood Teaching

10. Early childhood teachers are concerned about the degree to which their role is widely misunderstood by both members of the general public and, perhaps more importantly, their colleagues in primary and secondary schools.
11. While aforementioned reforms, including those related to curriculum, qualifications and registration are generally welcomed, the associated changing expectations of the early childhood teacher give rise to concerns regarding escalating workload and what are perceived as inadequate, and at times inequitable, support in terms of resourcing across different types of early childhood services.
12. Early childhood teachers look forward to more consistent and favourable teacher/children ratios and equity in terms of salary, working conditions and holidays within the system.
13. Appraisal of early childhood teachers is variable in nature due in part to the wide diversity of contexts and contracts within which early childhood teachers operate. Some teachers welcome the Kindergarten Association's adoption of teaching standards and view these as an opportunity to gauge their own professional advancement with the support and mentoring of centre leaders.

#### Retention Of Early Childhood Teachers

14. Early childhood educators remain in the profession due to perceived rewards that are intrinsic, altruistic and collegial.
15. There is a clear sense that even though early childhood teachers find the workload has increased in recent years (in response to new curricular and reporting requirements), is demanding physically and is not yet

rewarded financially at a level they would prefer; there is little that would cause them to leave the profession that they judge to make such a critical contribution to society.

16. There is a sense that early childhood educators are more than willing to be active in “growing” their own profession and are very likely to encourage others to consider a career in early childhood.

### Enhancing Recruitment Retention And The Status Of Early Childhood Teachers

17. Develop public education programmes (including use of television and other media) that promote children’s early years as a time of critical development and learning for young children and consequently, early childhood teachers as pivotal to children’s development.
18. Promote early childhood teaching as a rewarding and challenging career through making explicit how early childhood teachers are valued in our society thus enhancing the intrinsic motivation, satisfaction and self-image of current teachers and presenting a positive and informed view of teaching to potential teacher candidates.
19. Promote early childhood teaching as a job at the cutting edge of society’s achievements and challenges. Thus demonstrating that the government and wider community do in fact value the contribution early childhood teachers make and the importance of the work they do with children in our society.
20. Promote early childhood teaching as a complex, challenging job that requires candidates to have multiple skills and capabilities – this is not a job for just anyone, it requires intelligent, competent, confident, skilled, enthusiastic candidates who would step up to and enjoy the challenge and privilege of working with parents and colleagues in the care and education of young children.
21. Continue to promote and support professional development and ongoing professional learning opportunities for early childhood teachers.
22. Do not disguise the complexity and challenges early childhood teachers face daily. Acknowledge the challenges of working with children from all facets of society and responding (with appropriate and informed support) to the challenges they bring to the classroom, whilst also supporting their development and learning – do not construe early childhood teaching as being just about fun.
23. Use current successful and motivated early childhood teachers to advertise teaching. Make explicit the motivation behind these dedicated teachers who thrive in these complex working environments – reveal what makes them stay teaching in the face of the daily challenges, the heavy workload and the long hours.
24. Invite early childhood teachers to talk about what the wider community including senior students contemplating career choices cannot intuit – the core reasons and intrinsic satisfaction gained from working in a dynamic, collegial, demanding but rewarding career.
25. Be open about the variable working hours and holidays and acknowledge that they are more generous (for some) than what is available in other professions – have early childhood teachers talk about how there is time with children and time away from them, where you can plan, read and think. Emphasise that depending on the area within the early childhood system, there can be flexibility and regular planned breaks to engage in other interests, to spend time with family, to gather energy and plan for another term ahead.

- 
26. Confront the ambiguity and scope of early childhood teachers' work. If early childhood teachers are primarily expected to support children's learning, development and achievement then it is important to identify other duties that can be withdrawn from the teacher's day to day responsibilities, or, alternatively, that teachers are given the support to accomplish these tasks. This could include administrative and cleaning duties so prevalent in the work of some centres.
  27. Explore the range of flexible working arrangements possible so that experienced teachers who are seeking to transition out of full-time work as a lead up to retirement or due to physical demands of the job can continue to work on a fractional basis. Thus, signalling the value of their experience and enabling current teachers to view early childhood education as a lifelong career.
  28. Continue to work towards salary consistency across the early childhood sector. This would counter current feelings of inequity among some early childhood teachers, especially those in child care centres.
  29. Use evidence from current research to work with providers of initial teacher education, teacher unions, head teachers and teachers to consider ways to enhance the quality of initial early childhood teacher education across the number of providers within New Zealand.





## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching study completed by Massey University professors Ruth Kane and Mary Mallon in 2006 serves as the “original study” of this report. The Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching research project (originally named Teacher Status Stage Two) was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Teachers Council to examine the relationships between key groups’ perceptions of teachers and teachers’ work in early childhood and school sectors, and the recruitment, retention, performance and capability, and professional status of teachers. The project responded to the need for research that clarified the nature and influence of key groups’ perceptions of teachers and teaching and identified priorities for action with respect to recruitment and retention of quality teachers.

The original project identified the following two research questions:

*What do key groups identify as the major factors that affect decisions of recruitment, retention, capability and performance of teachers?*

*In particular, what if any is the impact of perceptions of teachers, teachers’ work and the status of teachers and the teaching profession on behaviours of key groups?*

The project was conducted in two phases: the first, a pilot project completed with the purpose of clarifying the key groups and refining the research instruments. The key groups chosen represent those currently engaged in teaching and administration of schools or early childhood centres (teachers, principals and head teachers), those involved in governance of and recruitment of teachers (board of trustees and centre management committee members), those currently preparing for teaching (student teachers), and those who are making choices about their future work and careers (senior secondary students).

In seeking to identify key factors that influence recruitment, retention and performance decisions, the Kane and Mallon (2006) report provided evidence of: why teachers, head teachers, principals and student teachers choose a career in teaching and what would attract (and conversely repel) senior students to teaching as a career; what are the triggers that cause teachers to leave teaching; to what degree are teachers satisfied with teaching; and, the ways in which key groups perceive teachers, teaching and the status of teachers. The report was inclusive of data from all sectors (early childhood, primary and secondary) and as such did not provide the separate analysis of any one data-set that would illuminate distinctions at a micro level.

The Focus on Early Childhood research project was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to provide a separate analysis and report on the early childhood data generated in the Kane and Mallon (2006) project. This final report also draws on the early childhood related data from a national study conducted by the author and colleagues on initial teacher education in New Zealand (Kane et. al, 2005), thus bringing together data from those involved in the practice of early childhood education and the New Zealand initial teacher education context within which early childhood educators are prepared.

This report is a synthesis of the early childhood evidence structured to highlight the key findings that pertain to early childhood teachers and teaching. The report is presented as follows. Chapter 2 provides an account of the place of early childhood education both internationally and within New Zealand. A brief review of initial teacher

education for early childhood teachers is presented from the 2005 report Initial Teacher Education Policy and Practice (Kane, et al., 2005) to establish the context within which New Zealand EC teachers are prepared.

Chapter 3 considers the teaching profession and matters related to the concepts of teacher status, recruitment and retention. The original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006) was proposed as a study of teacher status and one of the key aims was to shed light on how perceptions of status impact on recruitment and retention within the teaching profession. Drawing on relevant research literature we draw attention to how status is understood and presented within the literature in relation to recruitment and retention with particular attention to issues related to early childhood education.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology including research instruments and demographic data related to the early childhood participants. The chapter concludes with an overview of how the findings of this study are to be presented in subsequent chapters. Chapters 5 through to chapter 8 present the findings from the analysis of the early childhood data. Chapter 9 presents a discussion of the findings organised around key areas of the nature of early childhood teaching, the status of early childhood teaching, recruitment and retention, and concludes with suggestions from the data of how to enhance the status, recruitment and retention of early childhood teachers.

## **1.1 Limitations**

This report is presented with some caveats due to its location within a larger study which necessarily affected its size and scope and impacted on the specific focus of questions and findings. Being a re-analysis of a sub-set of data from a much larger study which involved participants from the compulsory school sector as well as early childhood education has some implications both for the methodology and the findings. There are a number of aspects of the study that need to be drawn to a reader's attention.

Data collection instruments were generic and not specifically targeted at early childhood participants. While all instruments were reviewed by early childhood academics to monitor inclusive language, there remained a few instances where terminology was not always a good "fit" with early childhood respondents and this was identified by early childhood respondents on more than one occasion. Related to this, questions within the questionnaire did not direct the respondent to answer with respect to their education sector. This is not problematic with questions seeking personal perceptions as these can be tied to the area of education but in some cases questions could have been interpreted as calling for responses about teachers in general. For example, when completing scales related to the teaching profession, we cannot be certain that early childhood responses to these questions are related solely to the early childhood sector and not teachers across all sectors. Questions in the interview were more targeted and interviewers did take care to focus questions on the sector to which the interviewee belonged.

The size of the larger study and of the ECE data-set had implications for the analysis of the quantitative data in particular. The larger study generated 790 questionnaires from teachers and head teachers/principals which provided a large enough data set to conduct factor and other analyses with confidence. The smaller ECE sets of 146 teacher/head teacher questionnaires and 66 management committee questionnaires required analyses that were validated through factor analysis of the larger population.

In terms of the interview data there is also the need to acknowledge that interviews were conducted with 5 head teachers, 15 teachers and 4 management committee members. It is not a claim of this study that such interviews are representative of head teachers, teachers and management across New Zealand early childhood centres. Early childhood centres within New Zealand are extremely diverse and one could not hope to encompass the breadth of perceptions through such a limited sample. The interview participants contributing to this study do herald from different ECE contexts including education and care centres and free kindergartens in different geographical

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locations (Christchurch, New Plymouth and South Auckland), however they are by no means reflective, or representative of the wide diversity of ECE settings and personnel. While questionnaire responses were received from home-based childcare and Te Kōhanga Reo, teachers from these settings did not contribute to the interviews. Although some questionnaire respondents did identify as Māori or Pasifika they are under-represented in the questionnaire data and absent in terms of interview data. Thus the most notable omissions in this data are the perspectives of Māori and Pacific peoples.

The limitations imposed by the above require that the findings in this report are indicative rather than conclusive or representative. The findings are strengthened through the mixed method approach adopted and that the qualitative data do reinforce and lend a measure of authenticity to the broader-based quantitative analyses. Thus, this re-analysis is presented as a window into the perceptions of early childhood teachers, head teachers, management members and student teachers at a particular time in New Zealand. When data were generated in 2005, those involved in ECE had been working with the Te Whāriki (or its draft) for a nearly a decade and were two years into the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan. As such the early childhood sector was continuing to live with and through a period of focused political attention involving administrative and curriculum reforms.

This re-analysis does not claim to represent or give voice to the very diverse participants within ECE. Rather, it provides evidence of early childhood teachers, head teachers, management members and student teachers' perceptions of the nature and status of early childhood teaching in the early stages of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In so doing it brings together data from a sample of early childhood educators in an effort to identify factors that may enhance recruitment, retention and the status of early childhood teachers within Aotearoa New Zealand.



## Chapter 2: Early Childhood Teaching

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted a longitudinal study on attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers that involved twenty-three countries. The report, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers* (OECD, 2005) is relevant to this study as it provides an international perspective alongside which we can consider national data. In 2006 a further OECD report focused particularly on early childhood education, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*, provided statistical references and profiles of twenty OECD countries and their current status regarding ECE. A matter of growing concern among OECD member countries is developing accessible and quality early childhood education (ECE) programs so that all children are given an equal opportunity to be successful. Research has determined that properly funded and comprehensive ECE programs support children's human development, and if integrated with other social services, contribute to "enhanced maternal employment, less family poverty, better parenting skills and greater family and community cohesion" (Lynch, 2004 as cited in OECD, 2006). Conversely, "a child care policy that is purely designed to facilitate parents to engage in paid work may not necessarily enhance cognitive development among children or improve their school performance later on in childhood" (Adema, 2006, p. 49). Thus, the development of comprehensive ECE policies supportive of human and economic capital must address a myriad of concerns (issues of child poverty, women's paid employment in the workforce, ethnically diverse communities, health and social services, barriers to participation and appropriate funding) in an attempt to enhance students' success, complemented with families and communities advancements in society.

The provision of early childhood services in New Zealand ECE meets many of the requirements called for in international contexts while still reflecting particular attributes specific to New Zealand's particular cultural and social context. ECE in New Zealand provides a bi-cultural, holistic approach to the education and care of children from birth to five years old, welcoming all children's participation in an environment supportive of family and community interactions/relationships and of the individual. The government's primary objective is to provide all students with an equal opportunity to learn fundamental skills in English, Māori or Pasifika language-based programs in an attempt to support the balance between work and family responsibilities and in acknowledgement of the critical stage of children's development.

*The early years of a child's learning make a significant difference to the way they develop and go on to learn throughout their lives. Getting it right at this vital stage will build the lifelong foundations of success, not only for our children, but also for New Zealand. (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.3)*

The Te Whāriki national early childhood curriculum provides a comprehensive approach to learning in care centres, home-based services, kindergarten classes, Kōhanga Reo, Licence exempt playgroups, parent support development programmes, playcentres, the Correspondence School (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 5). Specific methods or practices are not enforced, in order to foster a collaborative vision among teachers and the needs of the community. Curriculum guidelines of Belonging – Mana Whenua, Well-being – Mana Atua, Exploration – Mana Aoturoa, Communication – Mana Reo and Contribution – Mana Tangata provide a counter-hegemonic ideal to the "educationalisation"<sup>2</sup> of the Westernized school system in an attempt to support the cultural diversity of the

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<sup>2</sup> An hierarchical approach to teaching and learning that reinforces research-driven teaching propagating greater efficiencies within the school system by enhancing teacher qualifications, student assessments and curriculum guidelines in an effort to foster a competitive based system supportive of capitalist agendas (Kagan & Kauerz, 2007).

community, develop the abilities of the whole child, and foster a more meaningful educational experience among all members of the community.

In 2002 the then Minister of Education, the Honorable Trevor Mallard, launched Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki, a 10-year strategic plan intended to increase the quality of ECE services, improve enrolment and enhance collaborations among all partners with a special emphasis on addressing the needs among Māori, Pasifika and rural communities. The strategic plan was developed by a working group which included ECE sector representatives and its development involved lengthy and widespread consultation throughout New Zealand. The Strategic Plan is centred on three core goals: increased participation in quality ECE services; improved quality of ECE services; and, promotion of collaborative relationships. Importantly in relation to this study, it is mandated that by 2012, all educators in teacher-led, centre-based ECE services must be qualified, registered teachers (Ministry of Education, 2002). Services may count teachers currently engaged in study towards a recognised ECE qualification as up to 30% of the 100% required.

Both the number of ECE services and child participation in ECE have increased in New Zealand over recent years. Results from the July 2006 annual census of children and staff at licensed and/or chartered early childhood services and licence-exempt ECE groups demonstrate that the number of early childhood services increased by 6.3% between 2002 and 2006. This comprises a 5.1% increase in the number of licensed services and a 12.3% increase in licence-exempt ECE groups (Ministry of Education, 2006). In terms of child participation, since 2002 there has been an overall increase of 5.4% in the number of children participating in early childhood education services (*ibid*, p.2) This increase has been predominantly reflected in increased participation in licensed services. Enrolment rates for children of two years of age or younger and children of five years old in ECE reflect increases of between 10 and 15% since 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2006). Enrolments of three- and four-year-old children combined demonstrate lower increase rates of 1.5% since 2002 (*ibid*). This may be explained by the relatively larger proportion of three- and four-year-old children already attending ECE services. This group in 2006 make up approximately 60% of all child enrolments (*ibid*).

## **2.1 The Shape of Early Childhood Initial Teacher Education 2005**

The preparation of early childhood teachers within New Zealand continues to be dominated by the three-year undergraduate diploma or degree qualification. Undergraduate diploma qualifications for early childhood are offered predominantly by the Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and polytechnics who in 2005 together accounted for 76% of diploma students.

There is a general perception that there has been atypical increase in the number of providers of ITE within New Zealand in recent years. This is particularly so in the early childhood sector where there are a total of twenty different providers offering 35 qualifications through 53 different pathways or programmes of study. Where one named qualification is offered through more than one mode of delivery (face-to-face, distance, web-based) or on more than one campus, these multiple pathways are referred to as programmes. Nine (six polytechnics and three PTEs) of the twenty early childhood providers could be considered “specialist” ECE providers as they offer only one ITE qualification (Diploma of ECE). Together, these nine qualifications account for 30% of early childhood student teacher enrolments, although only two of the institutions (Wairiki Institute of Technology and The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand) have student intakes exceeding 5% of the total ECE enrolments.

In terms of student intake, Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/New Zealand Childcare Association is the largest single provider of ECE ITE (16.4%) with The University of Auckland being responsible for 10.6% of student intake and The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand accounting for 9.5%. These higher student intakes reflect the practice of offering qualifications through multiple sites and/or offer centre-based programmes that are a particular feature of

early childhood sector. PTEs and polytechnics account for over 53.4% of student intake into early childhood in comparison with the universities and colleges of education (at the time of this report all colleges of education had merged with universities) which together account for 45.6%, with the remaining 1% of students enrolled in the wānanga.

The complexity and diversity in early childhood in New Zealand is no more apparent than in the number and diverse nature of teacher education qualifications currently available from a large number of providers. Qualifications offered range from three-year diplomas of teaching to three or four year degrees, through to post graduate diplomas for graduates of other teaching or academic qualifications. The age groups with which students are learning to work are usually from birth to age five, the general age for commencing formal schooling in New Zealand. However, a few institutions offer qualifications for working with the birth to age eight age range, so that graduates develop expertise to teach across the important transition times between ECE and school. Flexibility is available to students in many forms: the mode of delivery may be full or part time, on campus, field-based or extramural via the computer; qualifications may be full immersion in Māori or Pasifika languages or bilingual; there may be several exit points with differing levels that staircase to higher qualifications; and qualification elements might allow choice of study in philosophies such as Steiner or Montessori.

A typical commitment to flexibility is stated by in the New Zealand Tertiary College's Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood):

*COLLEGE BASED: Study requirements: - Attend lectures several days a week; Gain teaching experience through Centre placements. Attend blocks of practicum and teaching experiences throughout the course.*

*FLEXIBLE DELIVERY: Work (in a voluntary or paid capacity) in a licensed early childhood centre for a minimum of 16 hrs a week; Complete study modules within specified timeframes. Undertake significant self directed and supervised study; Attend a number of block courses which are run regionally; Attend blocks of practicum and teaching experiences throughout the course.*

*FIELD BASED: Work (in a voluntary or paid capacity) in a licensed early childhood centre for a minimum of 16 hours a week; Attend two evening lectures a week; Undertake self directed and supervised study; Attend blocks of practicum and teaching experiences throughout the course.*

A more recently available mode of qualification delivery is the distance qualifications via the computer. These are variously described by providers as External Delivery Option (EDO), Distance and Web-based. In the early childhood ITE sector such ECE and/or Early Years, degrees and diplomas may be offered full or part-time and offer students the advantage of being able to study from their homes. Another feature of early childhood is its flexibility in terms of the programme of study that can be undertaken. This offers a "variety of exit points to enable students to exit and re-enter depending on personal commitments and responsibilities" (Waikato Institute of Technology, DipTchg (ECE)), in an effort to meet the particular needs of students with other commitments.

Table 1 presents the type of qualification offered by each institution as of 2005. Early childhood is distinctive in that the majority of qualifications offered are undergraduate diploma programmes (20 of the 35). This is not unexpected as the Ministry has recently set undergraduate diploma at level-seven as the benchmark for early childhood initial teacher education.

Table 1: Type of ECE qualification offered at each institution, 2005

Institution	Early Childhood		
	Diploma	Degree	Graduate Diploma
Auckland University of Technology	1	1	
Bethlehem Institute		1	
Christchurch College of Education#	1	1	1
Dunedin College of Education*	2	2	1
Eastern Institute of Technology	1		
Manukau Institute of Technology	1		
Massey University		1	1
New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education	1		
New Zealand Tertiary College	1		
Rangi Ruru Early Childhood College	1		
Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/New Zealand Childcare Association	2		
Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiarangi		1	
The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand	1		
The University of Auckland	2	1	1
United Institute of Technology	1		
University of Waikato		1	
Victoria University of Wellington	2	2	
Waiariki Institute of Technology	1		
Waikato Institute of Technology	1		
Whitireia Community Polytechnic	1		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>

# Christchurch College of Education has since merged with the University of Canterbury

\* Dunedin College of Education has since merged with Otago University



## Chapter 3: Recruitment, Retention and the Status of Teachers

The recruitment, retention and the status of teachers is the focus of increasing interest in New Zealand and internationally as agencies responsible for education struggle to address the apparent declining interest in teaching as a lifelong career. The implications for the teaching profession of its declining popularity is the focus of research in countries such as the United Kingdom (Hargreaves, Cunningham, Hansen, McIntyre, Oliver & Pell; 2007), the United States of America (Johnson, Berg and Donaldson, 2005) and in New Zealand, as evidenced in the Kane and Mallon (2006) study. In addition, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has completed a longitudinal study on attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers that involves twenty-three countries. *Teachers Matter: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*, (OECD, 2005) includes findings relevant to this report.

An examination of the literature and findings from relevant studies point to a number of key factors that influence the recruitment, retention and status of teachers. These are presented below as issues identified as important for further exploration.

### 3.1 The Status of Teaching

Attention to the perceived status of teachers was an original directive in both the Kane and Mallon (2006) New Zealand study and the Hargreaves et al. (2007) England-based study. At best, the status of teachers and particularly the status of early childhood teachers is an elusive and somewhat ill-defined construct. While the status of teachers may well be of interest to the Ministry of Education (as evidenced by commissioning the Kane and Mallon (2006) study) whether status does in fact matter to teachers themselves remains unclear. The work of Hargreaves et al. (2007) highlights the ill-defined nature of status which is understood in a range of ways. Hargreaves et al. (2007) found that while status was seldom evident as a factor in becoming or remaining a teacher, improving the status of teaching was identified as a means to enhance the profession.

A number of characteristics have been used to confer professional status on a particular group or role in society. High status professions typically are well resourced, have a high degree of autonomy, attract significant trust and respect from those outside the profession, experience high competition to gain entry, and have responsibility for an important role in society. In terms of resources, teaching, and in particular early childhood teaching, does not meet the requirements of a high status profession. The funding teaching receives is often perceived as inadequate by those in the profession (Hargreaves et al., 2007; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Scott, Stone & Dinham, 2001). In terms of autonomy, teachers have always been at a disadvantage as they are funded through public funds and therefore answerable to the government. Other professions, such as the law, have previously enjoyed full autonomy within the parameters of their professional code of ethics and associations requirements. With a move to a more market-driven model in society, all professionals find themselves increasingly accountable to other stakeholder groups, such as client groups and government. Two of the major changes facing the teaching profession, amongst other groups, over the past two decades, have taken the form of increased accountability and decreased autonomy. Hargreaves et al. (2007) in a recent study of teacher status in England concluded that, “the teaching profession sees itself as lacking in reward and respect but highly characterised by external control and regulation compared with a high status profession” (2007, 9).

Teachers do indeed attract a degree of trust and respect of those outside the teaching profession. Hoyle (2001) refers to this aspect of status as professional esteem and defines it as the regard in which an occupation is held by

the public due to the attributes that members of that group are perceived to bring to the job. The esteem in which people hold a profession is derived from their own personal experiences (of schooling and teachers they know) and influenced by the experiences of others, for example through media representation. Occupational esteem remains the most malleable of status areas for teaching, and the one over which teachers themselves can have the most control through their interactions with members of the wider community.

There is no doubt, from all quarters, that teachers fulfil an important role in our society. Hinds (2002) argues that teachers perform a less dramatic, but arguably more important service than doctors, nurses, lawyers and most other professionals in terms of benefit to society. Work carried out at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in the United Kingdom has shown that indeed people think far more highly of teachers than teachers perceive them to (Waddell & Hallgarten, 2001). This finding is supported in the United Kingdom by the recent study by Hargreaves et al. (2007) and in New Zealand by Kane and Mallon (2006). Generally, the status and respect afforded teachers is perceived to be related to the age of the children they teach (early childhood attracting the lowest status) and to teachers' gender (males are afforded higher status). The OECD reports that even though teachers from a range of participating countries report that their status has declined, evidence suggests that "the social standing of teachers seems quite high" (OECD, 2005, p. 81), and this is further demonstrated in other research which concludes that the degree to which the public value teachers is much higher than teachers themselves perceive (e.g. Dinham & Scott, 1998; Rice, 2005). This anomaly has resulted in suggestions that it is the self-image of teachers that needs to be enhanced (OECD, 2005; Rice, 2005) and that teachers themselves have potential to contribute to the erosion, or alternatively the enhancement, of the esteem and respect afforded them by others.

For early childhood teachers, perceptions of status have additional dimensions. Early childhood teachers have historically been perceived as relatively lower status within the teaching profession due to them being viewed by many as carers rather than educators although recent moves towards central guidance on the curriculum is reported to have been catalyst to positive effects on their status (Hargreaves et al. 2007). There was evidence in the Hargreaves et al. (2007) study that early childhood educators valued the esteem in which they are held by parents and other adults with whom they work more highly than do teachers within other sectors and they recognised that increasing attention to the educative nature of early childhood through scholarly research had enhanced their status. Of interest in the findings of the Hargreaves et al. study is that "...their [ECE] status might be improved if teachers in other phases [primary and secondary schools] were better informed and more appreciative of the work that they do" (2007, p. 95). While early childhood teachers are confident in the levels of respect and esteem afforded them by the parents and others with whom they interacted, they perceive a lack of respect from other teachers.

### **3.2 Recruitment and Retention of Teachers**

Evidence from a range of large-scale studies across different contexts e.g. United Kingdom (Hargreaves et al. 2007), Australia, New Zealand, England and the USA (Scott, Stone & Dinham, 2001), and New Zealand (Kane & Mallon, 2006), suggests that it is the nature of the job itself that is the most important factor in teacher recruitment and retention. Being able to help others is one of the most important factors attracting people to teaching (recruitment), and is also important in promoting job satisfaction among existing teachers (retention). Teachers are attracted to, and remain in teaching due to the intrinsic and altruistic satisfaction derived from working with children and supporting them in their learning and development.

While intrinsic and altruistic factors repeatedly emerge as the strongest recruitment and retention factors for teachers, research does identify extrinsic factors as affecting teachers' levels of satisfaction and commitment to

their roles and thus potentially influencing retention and recruitment. These factors include workload, salary, and the gendered nature of teaching.

In the United Kingdom, workload has been the most frequently cited reason for leaving teaching (Smithers & Robinson, 2001), and schools are increasingly having to escalate workloads given teacher shortages (Smithers & Robinson, 2003b). The cyclical nature of the relationship between these two will make retention (and potentially recruitment) particularly difficult. In a New Zealand study on recruitment and retention, of thirteen suggestions noted for addressing recruitment and retention issues in secondary schools, seven related in some way to reducing workload or allocating more resources (Ministry of Education, 2003). All of the beginning teachers interviewed mentioned that the amount of paperwork and administration they had encountered was the major downside to the job, and returning teachers and heads of departments both mentioned workload as an aspect of the job they did not like. Teachers are expressing these views in the popular media as well (Gerrard, 2004). Johnson (2001) in a United Kingdom study explains that the dissatisfaction with workload is not about the number of hours worked as such. Rather, it is the time spent on tasks imposed on teachers, recording everything that is planned and done in great detail – much of which is never read by anyone – rather than on teaching.

In the review by Spear, Gould and Lee (2000), the research shows that for those already studying towards postgraduate teaching certificates, important reasons for doing so were altruistic ones, such as those already mentioned, while salary was amongst those rated least important. When they looked at those currently in teaching, poor pay was cited as a primary reason for those intending to leave the profession, and an increase in pay was a way to improve morale. In another study involving existing teachers from Australia, New Zealand, England and USA, salary has been cited as a ‘dissatisfier’, and an increase in salary as a starting point for increasing status (Scott et al., 2001).

An interesting finding in a study of turnover in UK teachers (Smithers & Robinson, 2003a) suggested that although salary was often mentioned as a possible inducement to stay, it was rarely given as the primary reason for leaving (workload was most often cited). These sentiments were echoed in a conference regarding the status of teaching in the UK: “Teachers leave not because of the salary issues, but they leave because of conditions in the classroom” (Waddell & Hallgarten, 2001, p. 7). It is important, though perhaps discouraging, to note here that 40% of teachers surveyed indicated that nothing could have persuaded them to stay in teaching (Smithers & Robinson, 2003a).

Currently teaching is dominated by women and is thus considered a gendered profession. This was not always so – in fact, Perrott (2002) suggests that the rise in numbers of women working in teaching has coincided with a decline in pay for the profession. Gender discrepancies in the teaching workforce appear most prominent in early childhood and primary teaching. Early childhood teachers are typically female and in primary schools in New Zealand, only 18% of teachers are male compared with 42% in secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2005). This is a new low point in a gradual decline in male primary school teachers from over 40% in 1956 (Cushman, 2000). Surveying male final year high school students in New Zealand showed that status, salary and physical contact were all of concern regarding entering primary teaching (Cushman, 2000). Interestingly, status was more of a concern to those who were intending to teach than those who weren’t.

In a focus group study involving male final year Bachelor of Education students in Australia (Lewis, Butcher, & Donnan, 1999), similar issues arose. There was a feeling that others perceived the job as ‘un-masculine’ as well as the threat of being labelled a possible child abuser. Enjoyment of teaching was discussed as being more important than salary, although they felt their work deserved higher remuneration. With regard to status, they perceived this as being low, but were optimistic that it was on the rise.

In summary, much of the current research in the United Kingdom, America, Australia and New Zealand points to some concerns about how teachers are understood and how their work is perceived and valued. There is no doubt that teachers' work has become more complex and perhaps more demanding as is the case in most, if not all other professions. The goal of this report is to explore whether this might be true of early childhood teachers and to illuminate some of the particular issues surrounding perceptions of the work and status of early childhood teachers within New Zealand.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

Data for this study were generated as part of the Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching project (Kane & Mallon, 2006). This report is restricted to data from early childhood participants in four key groups chosen which represent: those currently engaged in teaching and administration of centres (teachers and head teachers); those responsible for governance of schools (centre management committee members); those currently preparing for teaching (student teachers); and, those who are making choices about their future work and careers (senior students). Data were generated through questionnaires and interviews with participants in three regions: South Auckland; Taranaki; and, Christchurch.

Two early childhood centres were selected in each region to be part of the *Interview Cluster* (together with primary and secondary schools in the original study) within which centres were individually invited to take part in the project through networks established by the Office of Teacher Education at the Massey University College of Education. The cluster included one secondary school, one intermediate school, two primary schools, one kindergarten and one early childhood centre from each region, twelve schools and six centres in total.

Each centre was visited by two research assistants, where questionnaires were distributed to all teachers including the head teacher/supervisor, all management committee members. Interviews were conducted with the head teacher, two or three teachers, and one committee member. In addition, two tertiary institutions were invited to be involved in this research cluster. Questionnaires were distributed to all first-year student teachers, and five focus groups of volunteer student teachers were conducted by the research assistants.

The *Non-Interview Cluster* comprised additional early childhood centres in each of the three regions, South Auckland, Taranaki and Christchurch. The goal of the non-interview cluster was to widen the research sample and scope of the project thus increasing the data-set. A list of early childhood centres was generated from the Yellow Pages of the Telephone Directory and a systematic random sample was taken, omitting every fifth centre. All centres from the sample thus created were approached through a letter and invited to respond with expressions of interest on a faxback form. Every centre that chose to take part in the survey was sent Teacher/Head Teacher questionnaires, Management Committee Member questionnaires and Information Sheets, as indicated on their faxback form.

The original study was conducted through Massey University and received ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC). Approval of ethics application 04/61 was granted on 3 May 2005. The Focus on Early Childhood study involves re-analysis of an established data set and as such did not require further ethical approval as no human subjects were involved in generating new data.

### 4.1 Research Tools

The original project employed a mixed quantitative and qualitative design, using both questionnaires and interviews to gather responses from participants regarding their perceptions of teachers and teaching.

#### 4.1.1 Questionnaires

The Focus on Early Childhood study draws quantitative data from three questionnaires completed by teachers and head teachers of centres, centre management committee members, and student teachers studying towards ECE qualifications.

Teachers and head teachers of centres were asked:

- Their reasons for becoming and remaining a teacher.
- Whether they had considered leaving teaching.
- Their perceptions of the teaching profession.
- Their feelings of job satisfaction.

The first scales were adapted and extended versions of the scales found in Phase One questionnaires (Kane & Mallon, 2006), but the last, on job satisfaction, was adapted from a scale used in the Teacher 2000 Project (Harker, Gibbs, Ryan, Weir & Adams, 1998). For this scale, initially 75 items long, the first five items loading onto each of the eight factors examined in the study were included in our abridged scale. Other minor changes in phrasing were also made, to fit with the current teaching context in New Zealand.

The remaining three questionnaires used scales from the teacher/head teacher questionnaire, as appropriate for the target group. Centre management committee members were asked about their perceptions of the teaching profession. Student teachers were asked their reasons for becoming a teacher, their career aspirations, and their perceptions of the teaching profession. In addition senior secondary school students completed questionnaires that sought to determine whether they had made any decisions about their future careers, and their reasons for or against considering teaching as a career.

#### 4.1.2 Interviews

Interview schedules were developed to shape conversations with members of each of the key groups: head teachers, teachers, management committee members, and student teachers. Interviews were conducted with head teachers, teachers and management committee members on an individual basis, and with student teachers in focus groups. Interviewees were asked to make explicit their perceptions of teachers and teaching, and, in particular, for their views on:

- Recruitment of teachers.
- Retention of teachers.
- Their own and other people's perceptions of teachers.
- Status of teachers.
- Teacher satisfaction.
- Their future aspirations.

## 4.2 Early Childhood Participants

The interview cluster comprised one kindergarten and one early childhood centre from each of the three regions, six centres in total. Only five of the six Head Teachers, fifteen teachers and four management committee members from these centres participated in individual interviews. All participants also completed questionnaires.

Additional early childhood centres in each of the three regions, South Auckland, Taranaki and Christchurch, were approached to complete the Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching questionnaire only. One hundred and sixty early childhood centres were sent letters of invitation to participate in the survey. Overall, 36 early childhood centres (22.5%) agreed to participate. By region, positive responses were received from seven centres (11.7%) in South Auckland, twenty centres (32.3%) in Christchurch, and nine centres (23.7%) in Taranaki. Questionnaires were returned by 35 of the original 160 centres sent the invitation (22%).

Table 2: Types of early childhood centres by region

	SOUTH AUCKLAND		CHRISTCHURCH		TARANAKI		TOTAL
	Non-Cluster	Interview Cluster	Non-Cluster	Interview Cluster	Non-Cluster	Interview Cluster	
Education & Care Centre	3	1	20	1	2	1	28
Free Kindergarten	4	1		1	5	1	12
Te Kōhanga Reo					1		1
Home-based Childcare					1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>41</b>

Participation in the study in terms of types of ECE service is not reflective of the number of different types of ECE services within New Zealand. Education and Care Centres were over-represented as participants of this study comprising 68% of the centres.

### 4.3 Data Analysis

The Focus on Early Childhood project separated all early childhood related data and subjected them to re-analysis as a separate data set. Early childhood questionnaire responses were entered into SPSS, then analysed using frequency data and factor analysis of the larger scales. All analyses were repeated with data from both primary and secondary participants and comparisons drawn across each finding to highlight specific characteristics of recruitment and retention related to the early childhood context.

Interview data were re-coded into NVivo and then analysed to identify and categorise emerging themes comprising statements and/or segments of statements. Interview transcripts of early childhood participants were read and re-read by the project leader and two research assistants to determine emerging themes. Four interview transcripts were read by the three persons and then identified themes discussed to reach a consensus on the coding template. Subsequently the three coders read and re-read all transcripts and coded according to the agreed template. If other categories emerged from the data, these were discussed with the project leader and other coders by email and a decision made regarding their inclusion. The addition of new codes required that the transcripts were re-read to identify incidence of these additional codes.

### 4.4 Demographic Data

Demographic data from questionnaire responses by each of the three key research groups are displayed below. Where appropriate, comparable combined primary/secondary data from the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006) have been included to enable comparisons.

#### 4.4.1 Teacher/Head teacher ECE questionnaire responses

The teachers/head teachers who responded to the questionnaire represented a range of age groups, years of experience as teachers and levels of qualifications. Questionnaires were completed by teachers and head teachers predominantly from centres identified as being located in an urban city (75.3%) or in provincial city (19.9%).

Questionnaires were completed by 27 head teachers (27%) and 118 teachers (80.8%). (One questionnaire respondent did not indicate position). Only one male teacher responded to the questionnaire resulting in a sample which is overwhelmingly female in contrast to the comparable combined primary and secondary data from the original study which reflects 25.2% male respondents.

Table 3: Age profile of teacher/head teacher respondents

	Frequency Early Childhood	Percent Early Childhood	Percent Primary & Secondary (N=644)
< 25 years	22	15.1	4.8
25-34 years	46	31.5	23.3
35-44 years	31	21.2	19.4
45-54 years	35	24.0	32.9
55+ years	11	7.5	18.8
Missing	1	0.7	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

ECE respondents were generally younger than the primary and secondary respondents in the original study (Table 3). Over two-thirds (67.8%) ECE participants report ages younger than 45 years in comparison to less than half (47.5%) primary and secondary respondents combined.

Table 4: Ethnicity of teacher/head teacher respondents

	Frequency Early Childhood	Percent Early Childhood	Percent from July 2006 Annual Census <sup>3</sup>	Percent Primary & Secondary (N=644)
Pakeha	128	87.7	74.9	79.5
Māori	9	6.2	8.2	8.2
Pacific Islander	1	0.7	8.6	3.7
Asian	3	2.1	6.5	2.0
Other	5	3.4	1.8	5.9
Missing	-	-		0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The ECE respondents also reflected less diversity in terms of ethnicity than the larger population of primary and secondary respondents (Table 4). In total, 87.7% of the ECE respondents identified as Pakeha, 6.2% as Māori, 3% as Asian and only 1% as Pacific Islander. This contrasts with the combined primary secondary sample which reflected relatively larger proportions of Māori and Pacific Islander teachers/principals. This also contrasts with the statistics reporting actual ethnicity of early childhood teachers as generated in the July 2006 Annual Census of Children and Staff at Licensed and/or Chartered Early childhood Services and Licence-exempt groups (Ministry of Education 2006) which reflects greater diversity among teachers in early childhood with 74.9% European/

<sup>3</sup> July 2006 Annual Census of children and staff at licensed and/or chartered early childhood services and licence-exempt ECE groups. Retrieved from: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/ece/ece\\_staff\\_return/licensed\\_services\\_and\\_licence-exempt\\_groups/licensed\\_and\\_or\\_chartered\\_early\\_childhood\\_services\\_2006](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/ece/ece_staff_return/licensed_services_and_licence-exempt_groups/licensed_and_or_chartered_early_childhood_services_2006)



Pakeha; 8.6% Pasifika, 8.2% Māori and 6.5% Asian. The current study reflects an over-representation of European/Pakeha and a consequent under representation of other groups, most particularly Pasifika and Asian.

As might be expected due to the relatively recent introduction of graduate level qualifications for ECE, a significant proportion of respondents' highest qualification is a sub-degree (57.6%) in contrast to only 24.7% of the combined primary and secondary participants in the original study. At the time of the data collection (2005) only 36% of the ECE respondents reported holding a graduate qualification. This does not reflect the number of respondents currently studying towards degree-level qualifications which was not a question included in the original study.

The Annual Census of Children and Staff at Licensed and/or Chartered Early childhood Services and Licence-exempt groups (Ministry of Education, 2006) reports that as of July 2005, 57% of the usual teaching staff in teacher-led services were qualified which includes 96% of kindergarten teachers and 50% of the usual teaching staff at education and care services. "Qualified" means that the teacher "holds a qualification that leads to registration with the New Zealand Teachers council" (Ministry of Education, 2006). In addition, the census reveals that 24.2 percent (3,474) of teaching staff at teacher-led services were in study for an ECE qualification and, of the staff responding to the census that do not currently hold a NZ Teachers Council-approved qualification (2,904), 97 percent were in study for a qualification that leads to NZ Teachers Council registration (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Over a third (36.3%) of the ECE teachers/head teachers had been teaching 5 or fewer years and three-quarters (76.7%) had been teaching fewer than 20 years. This reflects less depth of experience than that reflected in the combined primary and secondary data where 41% of the respondents had been teaching for more than 20 years.

#### 4.4.2 Centre management committee member questionnaire responses

The respondents who completed questionnaires for members of centre management committees generate some quite different demographic data to those who identified as school sector board of trustee respondents in the original study. These data reveal some contextual differences which may well be explained by relative levels of responsibility, respect and authority afforded to early childhood management committees and school boards of trustees. The ECE respondents were 90.9% female in comparison to 51.7% of the combined primary and secondary BOT respondents. The early childhood respondents were also younger and reported fewer years of experience as a committee member.

One demographic that remains quite stable across the two populations is that of ethnicity. Management board respondents were predominantly Pakeha; 83.3% of ECE respondents and 81.9% of combined primary and secondary respondents. Fewer than 10% ECE respondents identified as Māori (7.6%) and only 1.5% as Pacific Islander. The combined primary and secondary data reveals slightly higher participation of both Māori (10.3%) and Pacific islanders (2.6%).

The early childhood centre management committee member respondents occupied a range of positions on their respective committees including: 53% identifying as members, 12.1% as chairperson or deputy chair person, 9.1% as secretary and 7.6% as treasurer. While the combined primary and secondary Board of Trustee data also reflect the majority of respondents (44%) identify as board members, a greater percentage of chairpersons (18.1%) were represented.

Early childhood management board committee respondents reflected a significantly younger age profile than board of trustee respondents from primary and secondary school data. 45% of ECE respondents were less than 35 years of age in comparison to only 9.5% of combined primary and secondary respondents. Only 9.1% of ECE respondents were over 55 years of age compared to 45.7%. Such age profiles may not be unexpected in light of

the probable age levels of children of parents in these age ranges and so perhaps their willingness to serve in these capacities.

Table 5: Age profiles of management committee respondents.

	Frequency Early Childhood	Percent Early Childhood	Percent Primary & Secondary (N=116)
>25 years	-	-	0.9
25-34 years	30	45.5	8.6
35-44 years	30	45.5	44.0
45-54 years	5	7.6	36.2
55+ years	1	1.5	9.5
Missing			0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>

Early childhood management committee members reflected a relatively lower profile of highest qualifications than did board of trustee respondents from the combined primary and secondary data. Of the ECE respondents, 39.4% reported holding a high school qualification as their highest qualification in contrast to 18.1% of combined primary and secondary respondents. Less than a third (30.3%) of EC centre management committee respondents report holding degree or postgraduate qualifications in contrast to just short of half (47.4%) of combined primary and secondary respondents.

#### 4.4.3 Student teacher questionnaire responses

As with the previous two key groups, the early childhood student teachers were overwhelmingly female (98.7%) with the one remaining respondent not identifying his/her gender. They were also predominantly Pakeha (85.3%) with 5.3% Māori, 4.0% Asian and 2.7% Pacific Islander.

These gender and ethnicity profiles differ somewhat from the combined primary and secondary student teacher data from the original study which reflect 70.9% female, respondents. The ethnicity profile of combined primary and secondary data reveals relatively higher participation of Māori (7.0%) and Asian (5.2%) but lower participation of Pakeha (73.4%) and Pacific Islander relative to the ECE data.

The early childhood student teachers reveal similar overall age profiles to the combined data from the primary and secondary student teacher respondents although a larger percentage of ECE students are under 20 years of age reflecting the undergraduate nature of the preservice programme compared with the graduate diploma programme that is most common for secondary students. Close to one third (32.0%) of the early childhood student teachers are less than 20 years of age compared with 21.4% of the combined primary and secondary student teachers, and there are slightly fewer ECE respondents over forty years of age (6.7%) compared with 8.5% of primary and secondary student teachers.

Student teachers were asked whether they entered their teacher education program directly following secondary school in an effort to identify what are typically referred to as “change of career”. Early childhood respondents reflected a different response pattern to this question than combined primary and secondary respondents. In the case of student teachers studying towards an early childhood teaching qualification, only 26.7% reported that they had entered their teacher preparation course directly from secondary school in contrast to over half (51.1%) of primary and secondary student teachers. Bearing in mind that student teachers are currently in process of studying towards a qualification it should come as no surprise that over half of the early childhood respondents (53.3%) report a secondary school qualification as their highest level of qualification, although 20% of the early childhood

student teachers report holding a sub-degree qualification from polytechnical institution. Only 2.6% of the early childhood student teachers reported holding a degree qualification or higher. This contrasts with over half (52%) of primary and secondary student teachers reporting holding a degree level qualification or higher. This could be expected due to the graduate entry requirement of many primary and secondary teaching programs.

## 4.5 Presentation of Findings

This study involved the generation of both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. In preparing this final report a decision has been made to present the findings under major sections which draw from both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Findings are supported by descriptive statistics, cross tabulation analyses and verbatim quotations from participant interviews and responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaires. In most cases, to assist with coherence and flow, tables are not included in text but are referenced in the appendix.

The findings are presented in the following four chapters each of which is preceded by an introduction which identifies the key foci of the chapter, the main data sources and analyses and highlights the important themes which frame the reporting of data within the chapter. Where appropriate comparisons have been drawn with the data from primary and secondary teachers in the original study to draw attention to ways in which the data from the early childhood participants were similar to, or different from those from the primary and secondary participants in the larger original study. It is through this comparison that some of the more unique characteristics particular to early childhood are revealed.

The chapters are organised as follow:

*Chapter Five: Perceptions of ECE teachers and teaching* includes evidence of the salient features identified by participants of effective teachers within ECE. Key themes within this section include: relationships with children, parents and colleagues; professional development and lifelong learning; satisfaction with role of teacher; government initiatives; and, tensions and challenges.

*Chapter Six: Status of ECE teachers* includes findings supporting five key themes: the critical role of ECE; the ways in which ECE is perceived as being misunderstood in wider society; hierarchy of status and respect; teaching as a profession; and, ways in which the status of ECE teachers could be enhanced.

*Chapter Seven: Recruitment of ECE teachers* includes findings which exemplify why teachers enter ECE and include the following key themes: helping children and society; professional and personal development; and, actively recruiting colleagues.

*Chapter Eight: Retention of ECE teachers* includes themes related to: why teachers consider leaving the profession; why they remain even when faced with challenges; and overall career intentions of the participants.

Figure 1 on the following page provides a pictorial representation of how the findings are presented in the subsequent chapters.

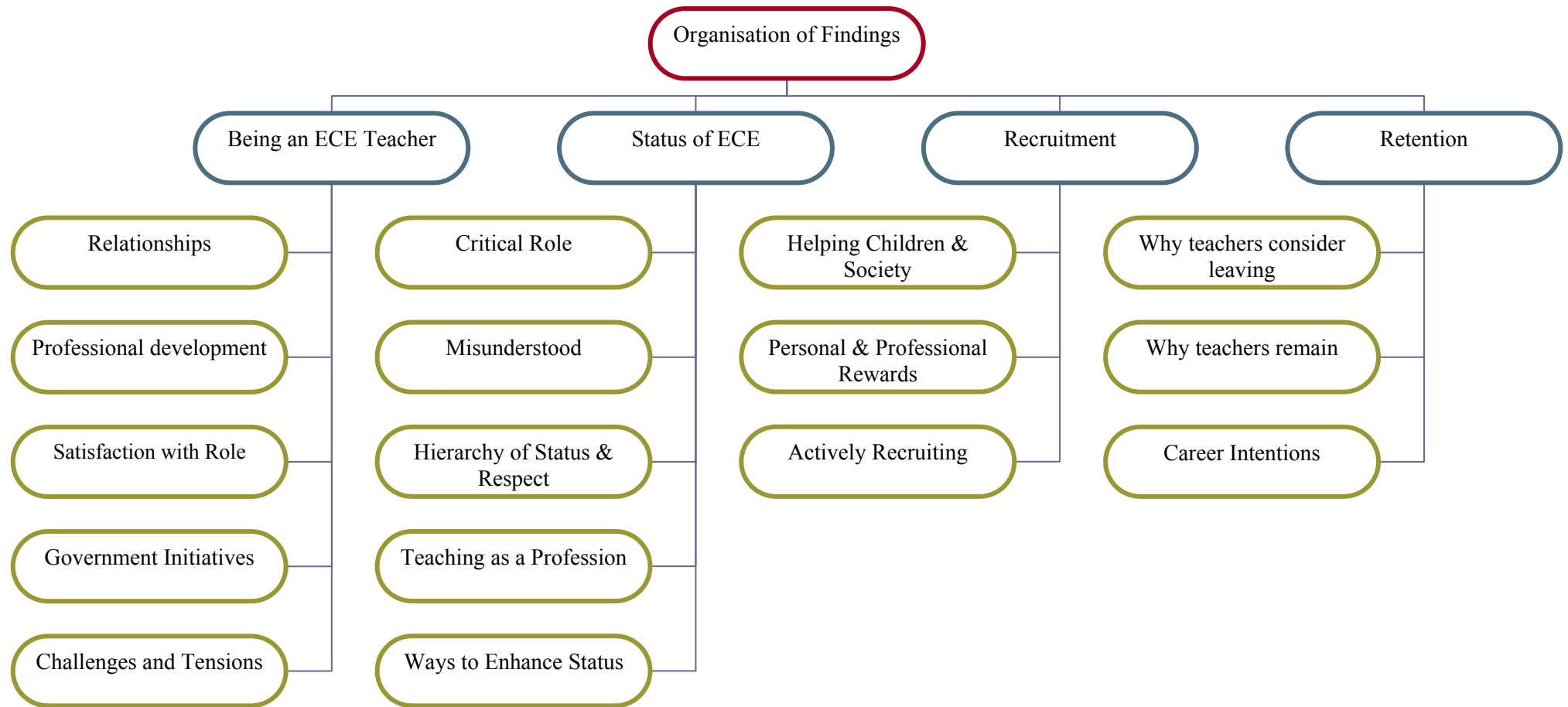


Figure 1: Organisation of Findings

## Chapter 5: Perceptions of ECE Teachers & Teaching

What does it mean to be an early childhood teacher in New Zealand? How do ECE teachers, head teachers, management board members and student teachers view the nature and role of ECE teachers? How do they construe effective ECE teachers? To what extent are they satisfied with different components of their role? What do they perceive as the key challenges facing them as members of ECE? Data pertaining to all these questions and more were generated from multiple scales within the questionnaire and from interviews and focus groups with teachers, head teachers, management board members and student teachers.

In the question *Hallmarks of an effective teacher*, respondents were requested to rank what they believed to be the five most important attributes of an effective teacher and the five least important attributes from a list derived from other research studies on effective teaching. In analysing the results each rank (1 to 5) was allocated a weighting equal to its place and cumulative scores for each attribute were calculated. In this way the attributes that overall were considered by most to be the most important, and those considered least important, could be identified and compared across the key groups (head teachers, management committee members and student teachers). Teachers and head teachers identified six key attributes that attracted scores significantly higher than others. The cumulative ranking of the hallmarks of an effective teacher by teachers and head teachers reveal the importance of intrinsic and relational factors (See Appendix A for complete tables).

The *job satisfaction* questionnaire scale provides evidence of those areas of early childhood teachers/head teachers' work that they find very satisfying and those which are determined to be less than satisfying. For the purposes of this report the responses have been aggregated as either dissatisfying (highly dissatisfying, dissatisfying, moderately dissatisfying), neutral or satisfying (highly satisfying, satisfying, moderately satisfying). Overwhelmingly early childhood teachers and head teachers are very satisfied with their work with few aspects giving cause for dissatisfaction.

As part of the interview process management board members and head teachers, were asked what attributes they looked for when appointing teachers. It is considered that those responsible for appointing teachers would be able to articulate the qualities of good and effective teachers that they would be seeking. Participants were also asked what they construed as an effective teacher. Interview transcripts were scrutinised to reveal the ways in which good and effective teachers were described.

Questionnaires provided a space where respondents could make "any other comments that you may have on perceptions of teachers and teaching and/or ways in which we can enhance the recruitment and retention of quality teachers". These were transcribed verbatim and subject to content analysis. Of the 146 early childhood participants in the teacher and head teacher questionnaire, 33 (23%) took the opportunity to write further comments.

Analyses from all these data sources collectively reveal that the early childhood teachers, head teachers, management committee members and student teachers who participated in this study perceive that early childhood teachers are:

1. able to establish caring and respectful relationships with children, parents and colleagues;
2. committed to professional development and ongoing learning;
3. generally satisfied with their role;
4. generally optimistic about government initiatives; and,
5. able to identify some tensions and challenges facing ECE.

These key themes frame this chapter of the report.

## 5.1 Relationships with Children, Parents and Colleagues

Over one third (37.0%) of the teachers/head teachers identified the *Ability to establish caring relationships with students* as either the most or second most important hallmark of an effective teacher. Management committee members ranked four attributes significantly more important than the others. Their first four factors in order of importance included: *Trusted and respected by pupils and parents*; *Ability to establish caring relationships with students*; *Demonstrably loves their work*; and *High personal integrity*. 43.9% of early childhood committee respondents ranked *Trusted and respected by pupils and parents* as either the most important or the second most important attribute of effective teachers. Early childhood student teachers identified similar hallmarks of effective teachers. They ranked the following three attributes in order of importance: *Trusted and respected by pupils and parents*; *Demonstrably loves their work*; and *Ability to establish caring relationships with students*.

When seeking to isolate those areas that teachers find highly satisfying in their roles they are, somewhat predictably, areas of their work that related to interactions with and influences on the children with whom they work. The strongest finding was that 52.7% of participants are highly satisfied (90.3% satisfied) with *Your students achieving success in some way*, while 51.4% are highly satisfied (96.6% satisfied) with *Changing student behaviour in a positive way* and 47.3% highly satisfied (97.3% satisfied) with *Changing student attitudes in a positive way*. 90.3% of early childhood teachers are satisfied with their *Capacity to influence student achievement*, of which 41.1% reported high satisfaction.

Early childhood teachers report high levels of satisfaction with their interactions with children (90.4%), colleagues (86.6%), parents (85.6%), and with senior staff in the centre (84.3%). While satisfaction with *Your dealings with community groups* attracted a lower rating (56.9%), less than 7% of early childhood teachers/head teachers reported any dissatisfaction with relationships with any of the above groups. These levels of satisfaction were consistently higher than levels reported by primary and secondary teachers in the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

Respondents view good and effective ECE teaching and teachers in terms of the relationships they are able to establish and maintain with children. Central to these relationships were an ethic of care for children's welfare and the ability to nurture and support children's learning in whatever context it emerges. There was evidence in the interviews that head teachers and management committee members construed effective early childhood teachers as people who could engage with all children in a caring, respectful and fun way while not losing sight of the need to support learning through activities and interactions.

*[T]hey are to effectively communicate with children and appropriately communicate with children and are able to look at what children are doing and think, wow that's amazing and ... how can we extend this learning (ECHT01)*

Central to building effective relationships with children was the importance of clear and effective communication. Respondents took care to report that effective early childhood teachers are not merely people who like children, or able to have fun with children. There was an emphasis on teachers displaying a genuine interest in and excitement around how children learn.

There is an acknowledgement in the data that for early childhood teachers "we are not only here for the child, we are also here for the parents" (ECHT05). All respondents emphasised the importance of working with parents and being able to "relate to the families as well as the children" (ECHT02).

*I like working with the families, you know that's really good to have that connection with the families and seeing the different children coming through. Watching the children grow and helping them [to] develop self esteem and blossom, ... it's wonderful. (ECT05)*

When seeking to identify good and effective early childhood teachers the respondents emphasised the particular nature of early childhood centres that required teachers to work very closely with each other at all times. Early childhood teachers have a willingness and ability to work in harmony with others, and to be flexible. “You need to be able to work closely together with the other staff. And you know we are in each other’s pockets all day. And there is no easy day” (ECHT02). There was a sense from the interview data that collegiality was considered a more important attribute within the early childhood than in the data of the primary and secondary teachers.

In some cases, when selecting staff, the respondents acknowledged that they looked for someone with specific skills that would complement the small team already working within the centre. This was seen as a particular priority for small early childhood centres where teachers may bring specific musical, technology or dance skills that would enhance the program able to be offered within the centre.

## 5.2 Professional Development And Ongoing Learning

Most of the respondents viewed good and effective early childhood teachers as people who are qualified, have current knowledge of Te Whāriki, and who demonstrate a commitment to ongoing learning. There was an acknowledgement that the recent requirements for qualified early childhood teachers had resulted in teachers who were familiar with the curriculum and interested in ongoing professional development.

*They have to be an enquiring mind which I guess is the same sorts of things that want out of children, you want out of an adult. You want them to be committed to their own learning (ECHT01).*

Multiple data sources reflected a consistent message – respondents valued professional development and ongoing opportunities for learning as teachers. Teachers/head teachers of early childhood centres included the attribute *Regular professional development and personal improvement* as the fifth most important hallmark of effective teachers (*Demonstrates expertise in the process of facilitating learning* was ranked sixth). Looking at the qualitative data a positive picture emerges for early childhood teachers with respect to professional development and lifelong learning. The majority of the early childhood respondents spoke enthusiastically about their commitment to ongoing learning through participation in professional development workshops, additional qualification courses and further study towards degree and post-degree qualifications. Data reflected an enthusiasm for ongoing learning that was not so evident in the data from primary and secondary teachers (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

In many cases the commitment to professional development was driven and supported by the centre leadership who were identified as people who sought out latest research and opportunities for their colleagues. “We get access to the latest research, and professional development and we do a variety of professional development and <Centre Head Teacher> always brings in lots of different readings for us to read (ECT05)”. The impact of participation in professional development was reported as improved confidence, enhanced knowledge and understanding about children’s learning and improved teaching practices.

*So that's really improved, my confidence, it's helped my confidence in all areas really, and even helped my teaching because the different courses you do, you put them into practice and you get feedback from the team and the children. Its ongoing growth isn't it? Professional growth. (ECT05)*

Those respondents who were working in the kindergarten sector, or in child care centres attached to institutions (such as polytechnical institutions), appeared to have greater access to professional development. In some cases the Kindergarten Association was identified as providing a range of professional development opportunities.

*The kindergarten association runs a feast of inspiration as part of their professional development, so we get to go and look at other kindergartens, a couple of times a year on a Saturday all day and I think that's a really positive influence because you get to see how other people are working and some of the projects that they've been involved in. (ECHT01)*

Regardless of context, the teachers and head teachers in particular conveyed the importance of professional development and their commitment to taking advantage of such opportunities.

*I've done professional development every year, I've done a paper at College since 1996 and we have annual appraisals and I'm quite reflective about things so I do try and keep improving all the time. And we have in-centre professional development for whole team too. (ECT11)*

The senior teacher within the centre is named repeatedly as having a particular role in supporting and fostering ongoing professional development which is also acknowledged to have increased with the move to professional standards and teacher registration.

*Our senior teacher is always there to help us if we have problems on a professional sort of level, for example we're all now doing appraisals and all that type of stuff and professional standards have just come in for kindergarten which primary and secondary have had years but because we've now got parity with primary teachers, part of the deal was that we would take on these professional standards so that's all just been worked out and so we have professional development to help us align ourselves with what's expected. So a lot of professional development. (ECT09)*

Responses regarding the importance of feedback were low on the *Hallmarks of an effective teacher* scale, but the qualitative data shows that many teachers do value it (especially new teachers). Teachers reported positively about the feedback they received through the recent introduction of teacher appraisals in line with professional standards adopted by kindergarten association. Within the early childhood sector there is also repeated opportunity for collegial feedback since teachers are working so closely with each other and with the head teacher and this was repeatedly identified as a positive feature of their working environment.

A management committee member raises the idea that teachers should be appraised by parents and students. For example, an early childhood committee member suggests "Teachers need frequent (yearly?) appraisals on the job done – and to have parental input on these, so that the wider spectrum of their teaching is assessed" (ECM03). Yet, it was acknowledged that:

*As in any profession – when teachers have done well **THEY NEED TO BE TOLD** (original emphasis). A simple "job well done"/"thanks" doesn't cost anything and it increases morale! (ECQ73).*

In general, appraisal systems in centres as reported in the data were very variable with limited evidence of systematic processes. In some appraisal was conducted thoroughly, but the majority of evidence suggests that across early childhood, appraisal reflected an ad hoc nature and was often limited to beginning



teachers. There was very limited evidence of appraisal that was explicit and systematically applied across all teaching staff.

Clearly head teachers are key to both encouraging and rewarding professional development, and to sending the message of its value to teaching practices, commitment and energy:

*And I guess the teachers that are growing in themselves all the time are the good teachers and they don't become stale because something might be around the corner that excites or interests us (ECHT5).*

During the interviews, teachers and head teachers were asked what advice they would give to beginning teachers. The data reveals that experienced early childhood teachers particularly value the notion of teacher as lifelong learner as this was overwhelmingly the focus of the advice given. There was also a caution to new teachers to seek work-life balance and to protect their own health in recognition of the physical demands associated with early childhood teaching.

While some teachers acknowledge that the need for professional development can feel like one additional duty amidst a busy schedule, nevertheless they were overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic about advocating continuing development to beginning teachers as a great way to survive and thrive.

*Keep up with professional development because you need to keep feeding yourself and being up there with the latest information and research, so you can grow, otherwise you can get burnt out (ECT13).*

When compared to the rankings from the wider primary and secondary population of the original study, early childhood participants gave rise to the most notable interruption in an otherwise consistent pattern. Teachers/head teachers of early childhood centres included *Regular professional development and personal improvement* as the fifth most important attribute of effective teachers (*Demonstrates expertise in the process of facilitating learning* was ranked sixth). *Regular professional development and personal improvement* was ranked as ninth most important hallmark of an effective teacher by both primary and secondary teachers/principals.

Consideration of the frequencies of the individual questionnaire items that are related to matters of professional development reveals that, when compared to data from the original study early childhood participants rate regular professional development and personal improvement as more important than participants in other sectors. They also rate membership of a professional learning community, opportunities for lifelong learning and receiving regular feedback as more influential than do other teachers on both their reasons for joining the profession and for staying in the profession. Across all items related to professional development and feedback, secondary teachers and principals record the lowest agreement frequencies, which typically run at 10% less than early childhood respondents, who consistently provide the highest frequencies. This could signal that the early childhood teachers and head teachers have a stronger commitment to ongoing learning as teachers or that they have access to more support and opportunity for ongoing professional learning.

Finally, looking at the *Job satisfaction* scale, early childhood teachers rate the range of professional in-service courses as most satisfying compared to respondents from the other sectors but are less satisfied with the three items on mastery, development of skills and professional goals and promotion on merit.

### 5.3 Degree Of Satisfaction With Role

The early childhood responses to the *Job Satisfaction* scale was subject to factor analysis to identify the key constructs around which scale items cluster. Data from the teachers/head teachers' factor analyses comparisons of factor means with comparable factors from the primary and secondary teacher/principal respondents are reported to demonstrate shifting emphasis and prioritising of each factor.

The factors from the original study were utilized as the numbers of respondents in the early childhood data set would not have generated a reliable factor analysis. A factor analysis of the total data set reproduced the original factors derived from the Kane and Mallon (2006) study which confirms the authenticity of the original analysis. Factor analysis of the *Job satisfaction* scale gave rise to eight factors which are discussed below (See Appendix B). The factor analysis revealed similar factors to that conducted on the full 75 item scale from which this scale was derived (Harker, Gibbs, Ryan, Weir & Adams, 1998).

Teachers/head teachers in early childhood centres gain satisfaction from these 8 factors in the following order, beginning with the most satisfying: "Contribution to children and centre", "Professional development", "Leadership structure and values", "Interactions with the centre community", "Change and advancement", "Professional associations", "Resources", and "Time and effect on life" (Table 6). All factors except "Time and effect on life" were rated as significantly "satisfying" (i.e., mean rating greater than "4" on a 7 point scale),  $t(145)=36.33$ ,  $t(142)=23.21$ ,  $t(144)=20.44$ ,  $t(144)=16.93$ ,  $t(142)=8.42$ ,  $t(143)=6.84$ ,  $t(141)=3.97$ , respectively, all  $p$ 's < .001.

Years of teaching experience significantly interacted with job satisfaction,  $F(14,854)=2.35, p<.01$ , such that those who have taught for over 20 years rated "Leadership structure and values", "Contribution to students and school", "Professional development", and "Interactions with the school community" as more satisfying factors than did those who have taught 20 years or less, while those who have taught for less than 6 years rated "Time and effect on life" and "Resources" as more satisfying factors than those who have taught 6 years or more.

Job satisfaction also significantly interacted with the variable "Seriously considered leaving teaching?",  $F(7,966)=2.19, p<.05$ , such that those who have considered leaving teaching in the past 3 years rated "Leadership structure and values", "Time and effect on life", "Professional associations", and "Resources" as less satisfying than those who have not seriously considered leaving teaching in the past 3 years, although there were no differences in level of satisfaction for the other factors.

Table 6: Comparison of factor means across early childhood, primary and secondary data sets of the Job Satisfaction Scale<sup>4</sup>

Job Satisfaction Scale Factors (Scale items in brackets)	Early Childhood Teacher/ head teacher Mean	Primary Teacher/ principal Mean	Secondary Teacher/ principal Mean
Contribution to children and centre (4, 5, 2, 1, 6, 3, 12)	5.98	6.01	5.87
Professional development (22, 21, 23)	5.65	5.70	5.74
Leadership structures and values (24, 13, 25, 26, 27)	5.58	5.47	5.07
Interactions with the centre community (15, 16, 9, 10, 14)	5.41	5.11	4.70
Change and advancement (32, 33, 31, 30, 34)	4.68	4.07	3.88
Professional associations (18, 17, 19, 20)	4.65	4.48	4.19
Resources (36, 35, 37)	4.48	4.22	3.89
Time and effect on life (29, 28, 8, 11, 7, 38)	4.12	3.52	3.52

Teachers/head teachers in early childhood centres found “Leadership structure and values”, “Time and effect on life”, “Professional associations”, “Resources”, “Interactions with the school community”, and “Change and advancement” as more highly satisfying than did those in Primary and Secondary schools,  $F(2,775)=12.44$ ,  $F(2,775)=16.66$ ,  $F(2,773)=7.68$ ,  $F(2,769)=8.54$ ,  $F(2,774)=35.55$ ,  $F(2,771)=30.57$ , respectively, all  $p$ 's<.001. They also more strongly agreed with perceptions about the teaching profession regarding “Professional culture” and “Professional recognition”,  $F(2,776)=41.30$ ,  $F(2,775)=39.01$ , respectively, both  $p$ 's<.001.

## 5.4 Government Initiatives and Changes Within Sector

There is general acknowledgement by the respondents that the Government has given focused attention to the early childhood sector in recent years and that this is a positive thing for early childhood teachers, for children and for parents. Government is repeatedly credited with directing attention onto early childhood and although there are concerns raised with the increased workload that has been generated as a consequence, there is overwhelming support for what is seen as a shift towards acknowledging and respecting the work of early childhood. “I’m very excited about the fact that the Government is actually recognising the importance of early childhood and that we’re going to be recognised”(ECT06). Inevitably mention of Ministry initiatives that reinforce the importance of early childhood are closely seen to be associated with workload and salary as suggested in the following.

*The government is putting more and more funding into early childhood but actually on the floor you still don’t see that. Working on the floor you still don’t see it, you know, the funding’s coming in but it seems to*

<sup>4</sup> All Factor Analysis tables present the factors in order of strength of loading according to Factor Mean values. In tables where factors from ECE are compared to other sectors, the factors are ordered according to the ECE mean values.

*not filter down to me. Maybe it will change because the new funding is targeting the teachers as well, you know, you've got to have a registered teacher on the floor at all times and depending on how many teachers are required, they get the targeted funding and so do the children. (ECHT04)*

The interview transcripts reveal repeated references to the enhanced teaching and learning in evidence in early childhood since the introduction of Te Whāriki and the assessment and reporting requirements surrounding its implementation. In all cases the teachers and head teachers reported that in essence these were positive and contributed to enhanced learning for children and practices for teachers. While celebrated however, it was also acknowledged that there was a time commitment to producing children's learning stories which had to be managed and time also taken to communicate and report to parents effectively.

*I really have enjoyed the introduction of learning stories. I think the documentation has put a very positive light on working with children. You are always looking for the things that are just so amazing and, and it happens everyday, and I think yeah it's a very positive influence. (ECHT01)*

*I think within the Early childhood community it has changed radically because of the requirements for actually working with individual children, for documenting learning and, and keeping some kind of record of what actually happens as far as the education of children. I think that's been quite different. (ECHT01)*

While interviews and the qualitative responses to the questionnaire signal frustration with the increased workload as a consequence of the focus on early childhood (see below), for the overwhelming majority of respondents these changes to curriculum, assessment and reporting were still viewed as enhancing the role of early childhood educators and being of benefit to the children in their care. Unlike the primary and secondary data from the original study where changes are interpreted as being detrimental to teachers and failing to benefit students, early childhood teachers recognise that government initiated changes within early childhood education have, for the most part, had positive intentions and, when well supported, will enhance the children's experiences and learning.

Early childhood teachers/head teachers show levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction noticeably different from those of primary and secondary teachers with respect to the rate of educational and curricula change in recent years. Less than 12% of early childhood teachers are dissatisfied with *the recent changes to curricula* and only 20% with *the amount of educational change in recent years*. This compares with 34.9% and 42.5% dissatisfaction from primary teachers and 48.4% and 64.2% dissatisfaction from secondary teachers (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

## 5.5 Challenges and Tensions

While early childhood respondents clearly appear more satisfied in their work than primary and secondary teachers (See Above), there is some evidence of dissatisfaction including: communities perceptions of working hours/holidays; workload and the degree to which it affects personal and family life; and, financial resources and support structures for children and teachers. In all these cases, the relative level of dissatisfaction of early childhood teachers is less than that expressed by primary and secondary teachers (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

### 5.5.1 Increasing and shifting workload

It is acknowledged that the increased focus by Ministry and the curriculum reform have subsequently impacted on workload within centres for teachers: "We've just been overloaded with paperwork" (ECT08). There appears to be an increasing realisation that more time needs to be devoted to planning, assessment and reporting and this needs to be managed effectively to ensure there is still adequate time for the core business – teaching. The workload is also reported to impact on teachers' personal or family time as most report having to take work home to complete and or spend time planning for learning at home outside of centre hours.

*Not enough hours. Yeah the workload is quite a bit. You know to be an effective teacher, you need to really do a lot of assessments and planning and there isn't really enough time to cover it all. That can be a bit frustrating because we have 43 in the morning and the same in the afternoon and really you need that time to cover each child. (ECT05)*

One head teacher describes some of the multiple tasks and interactions that an early childhood teacher has to manage in limited time. There is a sense that these multiple demands raise concerns within early childhood as to the appropriateness of the funding to support the roles given increased and/or changed requirements.

*I have begun to have great concerns about the increasing amount of workload that has been put on teachers/head teachers. Juggling Time: workload increased considerably, limited time with tamariki, parent/whanau –informal chats (support /advice, options for their children, child development/progress), formal chats (assessment/development, EIP, with other professionals- CYfs involvement, GSE/CCS, Specialists, Schools, HN, others) Although pay parity has come in for kindergarten teachers, we still have a lot more admin work than schools, and all assessment, planning, budgets, etc plus the above and very limited time. (ECQ25)*

Related to the changing workload are data falling under the general description of working conditions. During the interviews, teachers, head teachers, and management committee members were asked to identify triggers that would cause teachers to leave the profession. Ratios were identified repeatedly as being constantly in tension with achieving what was optimal with respect to children's learning and care.

*The ratios is probably the big one for kindergarten, when we have about 36 it's very calm, it's very positive but sometimes when everybody is here it's very hectic and can more managing numbers than actually spending times with children. (ECHAT01)*

The changing requirements of early childhood are accompanied by increased administrative tasks in terms of reporting and record keeping. These are recognised as necessary, however, additional funds to enable appointment of an administrative person are called for. Some centres have managed to fund a part-time position through other means, however most respondents argue that these are positions that should be funded by government as such things as "Keeping up the number of new children that we require while we have a really huge turnover" can impact on funding if records are not accurate.

*A definite thing that this kindergarten has done has been removing a lot of the administration tasks to a person, a set person and it's not funded by the Government, it's unfunded, it would be good to see that funded. That has made a huge difference to how much time our teachers spend doing our admin[istration], it means that they can focus on their books they do for the students. (ECM03)*

Additional support was also called for in the peripheral areas of teachers' duties within early childhood centres. As a head teacher remarked of a perfect world in early childhood education, "I would employ someone to do cleaning stuff that we have to do so my teachers don't have to...I would have a cook in the centre so we don't always have to think about that side of things" (ECHAT05).

Early childhood teachers and head teachers called for more focused attention on how children with special needs are supported and their needs accommodated within early childhood contexts. There are concerns expressed regarding the working conditions and resources in some centres where there is a perception of limited support for

children with special needs. The teachers/head teachers report that without additional support, children's needs may not be adequately met and therefore their learning and development will suffer.

*One of the major concerns I have for teachers is the provision of support for special needs children in classrooms and at EC centres. Insufficient support adds stress to all children/parents/teaching staff, which can be emotionally draining. I am fortunate to work in an excellent EC centre but I feel the conditions under which some teachers work, especially in profit-driven centres, are appalling, with poor teacher/child ratios, inadequate resourcing and conditions of employment (individual contracts). (ECQ10)*

Concerns as to how general classroom teachers can effectively meet the needs of the range of children with special needs is a recurring feature of calls for additional resources, both human and material, across all sectors.

Reference to special needs was also made in relation to centres situated in low decile areas where poverty levels are high. Teachers are concerned that these centres require additional funding to support specialist personnel or at least lower group ratios so that children can be given the attention they require.

*So we try to deal with children who need lots of really good input, some really positive input and so when it comes to that ratio equation and what teachers actually can achieve for those children, it's like the better the ratios are the more they're going to achieve for those children and it can be really hard and frustrating to achieve what you want to achieve with those children because physically within the ratio you can't do it. (ECT14)*

There were general calls for increased funding to support teachers in meeting the administrative requirements, providing adequate resources for children's learning and development and for accommodating children with specific learning needs. Such concerns were echoed in calls for increased salaries for early childhood teachers and head teachers themselves.

### 5.5.2 Working conditions

Early childhood teachers express some level of dissatisfaction with respect to the ways in which their "official" working hours are perceived by the community (37% dissatisfied). These levels are significantly less than recorded by primary (75.2%) and secondary teachers (77.2%) in the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006). Close to one third (32%) of early childhood teachers also express dissatisfaction with their "official" working hours and holidays and 30.1% are dissatisfied with the workload and the effects on their personal or family life (28%). Comparable measures for primary and secondary teachers are consistently above 50% (Kane & Mallon, 2006). (For a summary of participants' levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction see Appendix B2)

Around one quarter of the early childhood teachers/head teachers are dissatisfied with the financial (28%) and material resources (24.7%) of their centre and 31.6% are dissatisfied with the *Support structures for teacher physical and mental wellbeing in education generally*. Comparable levels for primary and secondary teachers exceed 50%.

The early childhood respondents' dissatisfaction with both "official" working hours and "holidays" must be interpreted with caution as the working hours and holidays vary significantly across different types of early childhood service. This was evident from the interview transcripts which emphasised that teachers in child care centres did not necessarily have access to holidays to the same degree as those in kindergarten, and this was an

issue that caused some concern. The following quote is typical in that it addresses the salary and holiday entitlements which are reported as significantly different when considered over many years service.

*I mean conditions in early childhood today being in an early learning centre have been pretty crap when you look at the rest of the sector, even in kindergartens, you can make it 12 weeks holiday and heaps more pay and when I think about that too much I think gosh, we're all fools doing this job why are we working here. It's like we get 4 or 5 weeks if we're lucky after five years of working here, we get you know 5 weeks holiday compared to 12, it doesn't really add up and we probably earn \$5-10,000 less than an equivalent teacher of our experience in kindergarten. If you think about it too hard you really think what are we doing? (ECT14)*

### 5.5.3 Salary

Like many of the findings reported from the early childhood interviews, salary is one that is reported simultaneously as an attraction (the recent moves towards pay parity) and a detraction (the historical consequence of low salaries). There were frequent references to salary and its relative inadequacy in comparison to other areas within early childhood and within education generally. While in general respondents applaud the moves towards pay parity with primary teachers, some of the more experienced, but less qualified teachers (sub-degree) raise concerns about the lack of recognition for their expertise. Some teachers of long experience argue that they are of an age where embarking on a degree qualification seems unrealistic and costly.

Most early childhood respondents think salary has improved but has further to go to reflect both the importance of the job and the workload. Some think it is not a problem for them personally but see it as a problem for the profession in terms of both recruitment and retention. Many have stories of colleagues who have left and are now earning much better money in another job.

*Definitely the pay contract side of things. I mean the people I know who I trained with who have left early childhood it has been like I can do and do this and I've got a job doing this and I get \$10,000 more. And it's just like it's so sad that you've left early childhood, you know you're the type of person that we want to stay in early childhood, you know, you've got that drive and commitment. (ECT14)*

Some teachers believe they are taken advantage of as they tend to be committed, it is known that they love their jobs and because “we're nice people...we can't push too hard and fight too hard in those sort of issues [pay] because that is insulting people” (ECQ62).

### 5.5.4 Initial Teacher Education and teacher qualifications

Teachers (and some management committee members) are not reticent in expressing their views that there are people in the profession (and in their own centres) who are not pulling their weight, which in an early childhood centre has immediate workload implications for colleagues. In arguing the importance of qualified teachers, one head teacher expresses reservations about the competence of some early childhood teachers who have achieved equivalence to the diploma status.

*I have reservations accepting that all teachers (early childhood educators) that have equivalence to a diploma of teaching are in fact able to pull their weight professionally in a busy centre. Other staff are constantly propping them and cover for their lack of knowledge and professionalism. This is my experience. I believe that there should be a clear level of attainment for such teachers as there is with the current diploma of teaching or degree. This is so that they can deliver a high standard of teaching and it would help retain quality in some cases. (ECQ34)*

The re-analysis of the early childhood data, however, did not reveal significant criticisms levelled at other teachers and their performance as was apparent from primary and secondary teachers in the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

Universities, colleges of education, private training institutions, polytechnics and wānanga all contribute to the preparation of early childhood teachers. Head teachers and teachers who participated in the interviews raised some concerns regarding the variable quality of initial teacher education and the capability of graduates. While they do acknowledge that providers of teacher education do indeed graduate some outstanding beginning teachers, there is a perception that some providers adopt a business approach to accepting students for the associated funding, rather than selecting quality students.

Concerns about initial teacher education that were raised by early childhood respondents were focused primarily in three areas: the need for providers to be more selective in accepting students; the need for providers to be willing to fail low performing students; and questions related to the importance of centre-based preparation. One head teacher of an early childhood centre felt that “only one in five graduates from the providers were employable” (ECHTQ36) and posed the question whether providers were accepting students for the funding.

*We're getting some extremely good students, no doubt about it, but we're also getting a number of, who have chosen teaching I'm sure because they don't know what else to do, and the sort of, I like children sort of factor. (ECHT03)*

*There's always people that stand out and we've got some really good people through our processes and interviewing but I am shocked at some of the people that come out and I'm shocked that they have actually been given the qualification. I think there needs to be a lot more accountability in Colleges. (ECT14)*

It is perceived that providers are reluctant to fail non-performing students, and that student teachers are provided with multiple opportunities to resubmit assignments with the primary goal of the providers being to ensure that students pass the required courses. This concern was voiced by both teachers and head teachers.

*But you hear stories, you know, oh well as long as they pay their money they get so many chances to you know, resubmit this, resubmit this, resubmit this. And I know people who have been given up to five times to resubmit it and I think if you're not up to par, not up to the skills at that stage of your life, sure give them one resubmit, but for goodness sake, why don't you just write it for them and it seems to me like they have you know. I think...we need to get a bit more serious about having quality teachers and quality qualifications (ECT11).*

Early childhood teachers/head teachers (Question 10) and student teachers (Question 7) were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with a number of statements about preservice teacher training. Not unexpectedly, student teachers reported more favourable views of the calibre and quality of preservice teacher education students than did teachers.

Teachers and head teachers provide cautiously negative views of the quality and calibre of student teachers with 53.4% of respondents disagreeing that the profession attracts only high quality students and 55.5% raising questions about the selection of student teachers through disagreeing with the statement ‘colleges of education only accept high quality candidates’. Although it must be noted that many early childhood respondents were non-committal and chose the middle option, therefore signalling neutrality. Between 29% and 47% of early childhood



respondents chose neutral responses for each item of the scale suggesting that they were not able to make a generalised statement about student teachers.

More early childhood teachers agreed that student teachers show a high level of commitment to teaching (34.2%) and a high level of competence (33.6%) than disagreed with these statements (21.2%). Agreement and disagreement by early childhood head teachers and teachers as to whether student teachers were adequately prepared for teaching, or were well suited to teaching were equivalent.

Responses by early childhood student teachers to the same question were significantly more positive as could be expected as they were reporting about their own population. Between 33% and 44% disagreed with the statement about quality of student teachers attracted and accepted into preservice teacher education. Yet the level of agreement with statements related to the preparedness of student teachers (65.4%), their suitability for teaching (68%), their commitment (74.7%) and competence (77.3%) generated positive agreement from the majority of student teachers.

The early childhood respondents reflected more positive views about student teachers than comparable respondents from the primary and secondary sectors. Over two-thirds of primary and secondary respondents disagreed with statements regarding the high quality of student teachers and negative (disagreement) responses consistently exceeded agreement across all items.

The importance of having trained and competent teachers who are able to meet the needs of all children in early childhood is evident in the interviews and qualitative responses to questionnaire but these data reveal some tensions as changing qualification requirements roll through the sector. There is, throughout the data, a general acceptance that early childhood teachers need to be competent, well prepared and qualified to be entrusted with this important job.

*Early childhood's a difficult sector but I think well yes, I guess I think as teachers the necessity to have trained teachers will make a difference so children learn, that's really going to lift things because now anyone can just come in and work in the sector and I don't think that's a good thing at all. (ECT11)*

*And then last week I got a letter to say that I'm now a full registered teacher, which is a personal boost for me, that that's how I'm being perceived and it's been recognised so you know, and I am proud of that because it means that what I do is of quality. I would leave the job, I would leave my career as such if I could not deliver it. (ECT06)*

The sector is also expressing concerns that the “lack of qualified relievers available to centres has a very negative impact at the moment” (ECHO1) as those teachers who have achieved degree qualifications and demonstrated competence are typically fully employed and there are limited numbers within the relief teacher pool.

Like so much of the data generated by early childhood teachers, there are cases both for and against the need for degree qualified teachers as one experienced teacher reports below that her experience will not be recognised financially in spite of the likelihood that she will support qualified beginning teachers in their transition into the centre.

*From what I see I'm going to be penalised and I have a wealth of experience, someone comes in and does a degree, they jump in very close to my salary, they've got very little teaching practice practical knowledge, they rely heavily on my expertise to get them through all the little scenarios and the fine tuning*

*that makes a good communicator between the parent and the child and smoothing the way as the first year through the education system, paving the way, I'm doing all that but I'm not getting compensated economically for that and I'm going to be penalised for that because I don't have a degree. I haven't got the money for it because they're not paying well enough and also for me personally I have family commitments that preclude me from being able to study in the way that I would want to. (ECT13)*

## Chapter 6: Status of ECE Teachers

What is the perceived status of early childhood teachers? How do early childhood teachers, head teachers, management board members and student teachers perceive the status of their role in wider society? What do they perceive about how others view them? What attributes of a profession do they most closely identify with? What are the ways we can enhance the status of early childhood teachers? The participants' perceptions regarding the status of teachers and of teaching are revealed through analyses of data generated through two specific questionnaire scales and through the interview data.

Questionnaires completed by participants each had two questions that contribute data to this chapter: *The teaching profession*<sup>5</sup> and *Perceptions of respect*<sup>6</sup>.

The early childhood responses to the *Teaching Profession* scale were subject to factor analyses to identify the key constructs around which scale items cluster (Frequency and cross tabulation analyses for this scale can be found in Appendix C & D). The factors from the original study were utilized as the numbers of respondents in the early childhood data set would not have generated a reliable factor analysis. A factor analysis of the total data set reproduced the original factors derived from the Kane and Mallon (2006) study which confirms the authenticity of the original analysis. Data from the teachers/head teachers' factor analysis and comparisons of factor means with comparable factors from the primary and secondary teacher/principal respondents are reported to demonstrate shifting emphasis and prioritising of each factor among key groups and across sectors.

The question *Perceptions of respect* asked participants to identify how much respect they felt teachers received from different groups of people. Of interest is the amount of respect that teachers and head teachers perceive they receive from different groups and the degree to which this is supported or contradicted by the data from the management committee members and/or the student teachers.

The *Perceptions of respect* question was subject to statistical analysis for each of the key groups and findings compared (Frequency analyses for this scale can be found in Appendix E). Qualitative data from other comments invited on questionnaires and the interview and focus group (student teacher) transcripts were subject to analysis to identify verbatim comments related to the status of teachers and teaching.

In terms of perceptions of status from both inside and outside ECE there are three key themes that emerge from the findings. Participants are confident that the role of early childhood teachers is a critical one in our society; however, they perceive that their role is more often than not misunderstood and that there is a hierarchy of status and respect afforded teachers with early childhood educators being positioned at the lowest level. In addition, reported in this chapter are findings related to status that reflect differences in the responses of early childhood participants in comparison to primary and secondary data from the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

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<sup>5</sup> Question 7, Teacher and Principal Questionnaire, and Question 4, Board of Trustees/Management Committee Member Questionnaire; and Question 4, Student Teacher Questionnaire.

<sup>6</sup> Question 9, Teacher and Principal Questionnaire; Question 3, Board of Trustees/Management Committee Member Questionnaire; and Question 6, Student Teacher Questionnaire.

## 6.1 ECE Fulfils a Critical Role in Society

There is no doubt that the participants in this study are confident that early childhood teachers serve a critical role in society and are pivotal to young children's learning and development. The statement that overwhelmingly gains the support of teachers and head teachers, management committee members and student teachers as a statement true of the teaching profession, is that teachers *Have responsibility for an important service*, which is identified by 84.3% of the teachers/head teachers, 97% of the management committee members and 89.3% of the student teachers.

Management committee member responses were more positive than those of the early childhood teachers and head teachers and the student teachers, suggesting that management committee members perceive the teaching profession in a more positive way. Student teachers tend to perceive the teaching profession more positively than teachers and head teachers. Overall, early childhood respondents perceived teaching more positively than did their counterparts from primary and secondary sectors in the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

The early childhood teachers, head teachers, managers and student teachers emphasised repeatedly through responses in interview transcripts the importance of the role of early childhood centres in the lives of young children, of families and for our society. As demonstrated also in the quantitative data (chapter 5), early childhood teachers identify that working with young children and contributing to their attitudes, behaviour and achievement are key factors in their own level of satisfaction and these notions are reinforced by the qualitative responses such as:

*I feel quite honoured to be teaching all the littlies. I mean it's really important that they develop particularly things like social skills and respect and whatever else and I feel really important, particularly to be at the beginning of their, their formal type education I mean with us. (ECT08)*

## 6.2 Early Childhood Teaching Is Often Misunderstood

The degree of respect and status that participants' perceive is afforded them by others in the community decreases the further you move away from the early childhood centre. In general, early childhood teachers/head teachers perceive that they receive the most respect from those closest to them personally and professionally: from the children they teach, from the colleagues within their own centre, from their own families, from parents and from senior management (listed in order). Over half the teachers/head teachers perceive that they are only given a little respect from the local community, from people in other professions and from the general public. While 65.8% of teachers/head teachers perceive that the media gives teachers a little respect, 28.8% perceive that the media give teachers no respect and 17.1% perceive that teachers are given no respect by the general public. What is also of interest, especially in light of data emerging on the status of early childhood teachers (See Section 6.3) is that 54.8% of teachers and head teachers and 52% of student teachers perceive that they receive only a little respect from teachers in other sectors of education (primary and secondary).

Responses from the board/committee members reflect more polarisation towards perceived positive respect from others for teachers. Board/committee members are more positive regarding the respect that they perceive is given to teachers from colleagues (95.5%), and management (84.8%). They perceive similar levels of respect to those reported by teachers from management committee members and children. However, only 56.1% of management committee members perceive parents have a lot of respect for teachers while 71.2% of teachers perceive a lot of respect from parents. This may signal a lack of awareness on behalf of the management committee members to the degree to which parents and teachers work in partnership within the early childhood centres. Management committee members reflect similar perceptions to the teachers and head teachers with respect to the degree to which the media, the local community, people in other professions and the general public respect teachers.

Responses from the student teachers reveal a more tentative perception of the levels of respect afforded to teachers by others. Teachers and management within their schools are perceived to afford teachers the greatest respect closely followed by the children they teach and their own families, however, these responses are significantly lower than those of teachers/head teachers. For the remaining groups however, the majority of student teachers perceive that teachers receive either little, or no respect. Student teachers appeared to perceive a general lack of respect for teachers from those outside the immediate teaching environment.

Throughout the qualitative data there is a continual message from early childhood educators that their role and work is fundamentally misunderstood by those beyond the immediate influence of the early childhood setting. There is repeated evidence of frustration and concern that “society as a whole is still kind of lagging behind a little bit with their perception on early childhood”. (ECT06) In spite of their confidence that they play a critical role in society, teachers, head teachers, management committee members and student teachers are all convinced that many in the wider society still construe them as baby sitters and care-givers.

*I think there are loads of people who think we just wipe bottoms and that's about it and they don't consider us teachers, just caregivers and yeah I have to sit people down quite often, they get sick of me actually, giving them little lectures about what we actually do and how we teach. So I think it's really important that we spread the word, but yeah the perception is still not good. (ECT08)*

Most respondents, like the above teacher, take the role of advocate for early childhood education on as part of their role and ensure that people who do misconstrue early childhood teaching are better informed. However the following respondent explains that such misconception may not rest only with those unrelated to education but also impacts on recruitment of teachers through the ways in which early childhood is represented to senior students and parents.

*There appears to be a perception that Early Childhood Education is the easier option as a career path and all you need is to like children. We have secondary students contacting us to come and work in our centre for “work experience” which is fine, but often it's students with lower academic skills. They do not realise that it is a tertiary level qualification. There is still an element of society that views ECE as “baby sitting”, and you start to “learn” when you go to school. There also is real pressure for parents to send their children to school when they are 5 yrs old. Many would benefit from a further 6-12 months at ECE level. (ECQ96)*

Others reveal deeper frustrations and vent against even the parents whose children they care for as not understanding the complexity of the role. This level of frustration regarding misunderstanding was common in the responses, but seldom focused so pointedly at parents.

*The public perception of kindergarten teachers is that we are glorified babysitters. Parents (who we work closely with in their role as parents and committees) do not understand any facets of the job. They need us to be there for their children, chats, concerns, needs and 100% involved in their children's education process. (If we are lucky enough for them to see pre-school (kindergarten) as Education at all. The job is brilliant (the more you put in and all that). However it is undervalued – (so multi faceted you wonder if you make any ground some days being, or trying to be, everything to everyone). I am highly committed and motivated to provide the best learning/developmental opportunities for 3 and 4 year olds. I feel like I'm on my own. Parents want quick fixes. No time, no effort. Just throw their children in the door and get out as fast as possible (ECQ47)*

Many early childhood respondents and interview participants, however, did believe that some members of the local communities, mainly the parents whose children they taught, did have increasing appreciation and understanding of the roles of early childhood teachers. The reasons for this were predominantly identified as the increased exposure to early childhood as parents and also there was repeated acknowledgement that the increasing focus of the government on early childhood had helped to raise awareness.

*When I first started a lot of people just considered that you're there as babysitters, and/or carers for their children. But I think over the last few years that, especially as more people are putting their children into childcare that certainly they think, from my experience particularly here, that your work as a teacher and what you do, the things that they see, that you are doing with their children educationally is valid as well. So we're not just carers now, some people are starting to see us as educators. (ECT11)*

The adoption of Te Whāriki, the requirements for qualifications equivalent to primary teachers and the recent attention focused on early childhood has, to some degree encouraged parents especially to become more informed about early childhood education and its complexities. There is, as was evident in the data from the original study, also a grudging respect from community members for the work early childhood teachers do. While there may well be misunderstanding, there are many who will openly acknowledge they would not willingly work with groups of other people's young children and spend their days meeting their varied demands.

*Well people are always saying I couldn't do your job as an early childhood teacher so you know, I think they see it. The parents who come here have a different perception from the outside world I think because they can see what we're doing so I think we are valued by the parents who come here. But I think the outside perception of a lot of people in the general community is that we are babysitters and it's not that difficult a job. I don't think they understand what's actually involved to become a teacher and what you need to know to be a good teacher. Or even a competent teacher. But I hope that's changing. (ECT11)*

There is acknowledgement that many parents are becoming more aware of the reality of the early childhood role and this is further reported in the recruitment section where the practice of encouraging active parents to become early childhood teachers was positively reported. Parents are demonstrating a critical interest in the work and quality of early childhood centres to whom they entrust their children's care, learning and development.

*..but there are parents who are a lot more aware now. They do actually look up ERO reports, they come in and they ask, I mean I'm always showing around people, and they ask a lot more questions, they've obviously done a little bit of research, you know when they ask those questions about ratios, qualifications, which is great, people are going out and they're actually thinking about us a lot more. (ECT14)*

There is a sense in many of the interviews (as demonstrated below) that while there are encouraging interactions with individual community members who honestly express surprise about the complexity of the work of early childhood teachers, there is still a long way to go to have a cultural shift in how early childhood is perceived.

*When they hear me talk about what I do in my job they all go, wow, I had no idea that that's what your job involves, wow, rather you than me, you know, and they're not talking about just the nappy changing stuff like that, they're talking about the bigger issues with children and families, you know, child behaviours and those sorts of stuff. Yeah I think that younger generations are starting to appreciate the early years of children's life a bit more but I think probably the majority of New Zealand society don't see early childhood as important and an area that you know, we shouldn't be getting pay parity with primary because don't be ridiculous, you're overqualified babysitters, come on, anybody can do it. (ECT14)*

### 6.3 An Hierarchy Of Status And Respect

*I believe being a stay at home mother is probably about the only thing that holds less status in society than being an early childhood teacher. Teachers have historically been undervalued, under-paid and under-resourced (but I'm sure you already know this), and this is even more true in the early childhood sector. People still see you as a glorified baby sitter. I feel I can say this, having had 12 years in the industry. (ECQM30)*

While some level of misunderstanding regarding the role of early childhood teachers on the part of the general public may well be expected, especially in light of the historical nature of child care and the recent reforms, the lack of respect perceived by those involved in education, other teachers, highlights a further concern around teacher status. There is repeated evidence from teachers, head teachers and student teachers that early childhood teachers are considered by other teachers as lowest on the educational ladder of status and respect.

*I came to gain a firsthand insight into the way Early Childhood Teachers are viewed, even by our colleagues, primary teachers. It is not just main stream society that sees ECE as "babysitters" it is high school/primary school teachers and other people in education. I couldn't count the number of times people have gasped, absolutely shocked when I said I have a degree in Early Childhood education. Often people even come out and question "you can do a degree in that!" (ECQ 13)*

*I also have concerns about the lack of respect some school teachers have for their fellow professionals especially kindergarten teachers – they have very little understanding of our kindergartens work, the programmes and importance of ECE. This is a huge disappointment for 2005 really, that school teachers still feel they are above everyone else. (ECQ25)*

While some may expect such misunderstanding from those not associated with early childhood, one teacher reported that a close family member, himself a secondary teacher, was not to be convinced that early childhood was in fact, teaching as he exclaimed: "For god's sake you play with paint, and finger-paint and change nappies, get real, ... do you want to be paid for that, for goodness sakes, anybody can do it" (ECT14). A further comment below articulates the reflections of an early childhood teacher who was seeking to respond to a challenge made that teaching very young children (talking to four year olds), cannot be considered as equal in status or as deserving of respect as teaching senior secondary or university students.

*But yeah I think it's definitely not seen as an intellectually stimulating because you're interacting with 4 year olds; you're not interacting with 18 year olds. I think that the intellectual challenge doesn't come from talking to a 4 year old. The intellectual challenge comes from talking to a 4 year old and thinking, oh I wonder what's going on there. I wonder what I can do about it. I wonder what they're thinking. You know that and what does, and what does theory and research say about this that I can use positively, you know. (ECHT01)*

There was also a recurring theme in the data that demonstrated tensions between groups within early childhood: kindergarten and child care centres. There were repeated references to the ways in which kindergarten teachers have made progress in gaining some level of acceptance and respect as teachers where as those in child care are still 'tainted' by historical practices that did not require child care personnel to be qualified.

*I'll say child carers are not looked highly upon by some kindergarten teachers because child cares were places where unqualified people were and kindergarten teachers I think hold themselves up on a little box*

*of their own and like they're qualified, we do educational stuff and you just do care. There is a generation of kindergarten teachers like that. I think that the younger group are probably not thinking like that.* (ECT14)

Perhaps some of the hierarchy of status and respect is due to the lack of compulsory nature of early childhood education. The following proposes advice for improving quality in early childhood education rests with a clear understanding of how learning occurs and systemic changes to support effective teaching and learning. There is a caveat, however, that questions the possibility of achieving such advances in a non-compulsory sector.

*In order to improve Quality Education in Early Childhood, it is fundamental that 1. Teachers have a clear vision of how learning occurs; 2. Administration/Management understand and support the same vision; 3. Government agencies/councils put in system where teaching and learning can be realistically achieved. Unfortunately ECE is not a compulsory sector and this affects how the wider community perceive us.* (ECQ81)

Such statements, reflecting concern with respect to tensions and ongoing misunderstandings were evident also within the larger body of teachers in the original study but are more evident in the early childhood data.

## 6.4 Viewing Teaching As A Profession

Factor analysis was initially conducted on the *Teaching profession* scale using aggregated data from the three key groups (teachers/head teachers, management committee members and student teachers), however, analysis indicated that there were not strong and viable relationships among the constructs. Consequently, factor analyses were conducted separately for each of the groups. Teacher/head teachers and the management committee members generated three factors each and the student teachers generated four factor analysis. The results of this analysis are presented here as a category to highlight the ways in which responses among the key groups reflect shifting levels of allegiance with typical attributes of professions. (Factor analyses for each group are presented in Appendix D)

The teachers/head teachers' data formed three factors which are presented in Table 7. Generally data demonstrates that teachers and head teachers in ECE most strongly agreed with perceptions about the teaching profession concerning "Responsibility and requirements", followed by "Professional culture", and then "Professional recognition". "Responsibility and requirements" and "Professional culture" were both significantly agreed with (i.e., greater than a mean rating of "3" on the 5 point scale),  $t(142)=17.07$ ,  $t(143)=13.58$ , respectively, both  $p's < .001$ , whereas ECE respondents were neutral with respect to perceptions concerning "Professional recognition".

Years of teaching experience marginally interacted with perceptions about the teaching profession,  $F(4,250)=2.17$ ,  $p < .10$ , such that those who have taught for over 20 years agreed more with perceptions concerning "Responsibility and requirements" than did those who have taught 20 years or less, while those who have taught for less than 6 years agreed more with perceptions concerning "Professional recognition" than did those who have taught for 6 years or more. Perceptions about the teaching profession did not interact with any other variables (e.g., "Seriously considered leaving teaching?").

Teachers/head teachers in early childhood centres agreed more strongly than primary and secondary teachers/principals with perceptions about the teaching profession regarding "Professional culture" and "Professional recognition",  $F(2,776)=41.30$ ,  $F(2,775)=39.01$ , respectively, both  $p's < .001$ .



**Table 7: Comparison of factor means across early childhood, primary and secondary teachers/head teachers data sets of the Teacher Profession Scale**

Teacher Profession Scale Factors (Scale items in brackets)	Early Childhood Teacher/head teacher Mean	Primary Teacher/ principal Mean	Secondary Teacher/ principal Mean
Responsibility and requirements (6, 8, 12)	4.02	3.96	3.98
Professional culture (18, 19, 20, 21, 17, 14, 1, 15, 11)	3.75	3.59	3.23
Professional recognition (4, 2, 7, 3, 9, 13, 5, 16, 10)	3.05	2.84	2.48

Factor analysis of the management committee members responses gave rise to three factors with similarity to those derived from the teacher/head teacher questionnaire, although some variation in reliability. Similar names have been allocated as the constructs described by the clustering of items were judged to be similar (See table 8).

Management board members from early childhood centres most strongly agreed with perceptions about the teaching profession concerning “Responsibility and requirements”, followed by “Professional culture”, and then “Professional recognition”. “Responsibility and requirements” and “Professional culture” were both significantly agreed with (i.e., greater than a mean rating of “3” on the 5 point scale),  $t(65)=18.09$ ,  $t(65)=12.16$ , respectively, both  $p's < .001$ , whereas ECE respondents were neutral with respect to perceptions concerning “Professional recognition”.

There were no significant differences in perceptions of board members in ECE, Primary, and Secondary schools/centres for any of the 3 factors.

**Table 8: Comparison of factor means across early childhood, primary & secondary management committee board members' data sets of the Teacher Profession Scale**

Teacher Profession Scale Factors (Scale items in brackets)	Early Childhood Committee member	Primary BOT member	Secondary BOT member
Responsibility and requirements (6, 5, 12, 1)	4.07	4.16	3.97
Professional culture (19, 20, 21, 18, 17, 14, 11, 8, 10)	3.82	3.79	3.60
Professional recognition (16, 2, 7, 13, 4, 15, 9, 3)	2.91	2.96	2.80

Factor analysis of the student teachers' data resulted in four factors which demonstrate that early childhood student teachers most strongly agreed with perceptions about the teaching profession concerning “Responsibility and associated requirements”, followed by “Professional culture” and “Respect”, which they agreed with equally, and finally “Professional recognition”. “Responsibility and requirements”, “Professional culture”, and “Respect” were all significantly agreed with (i.e., greater than a mean rating of “3” on the 5 point scale),  $t(403)=26.48$ ,  $t(402)=23.70$ , and  $t(404)=19.11$ , respectively, all  $p's < .001$ , whereas ECE respondents were neutral with respect to perceptions concerning “Professional recognition”.

There were no significant differences in perceptions of student teachers in ECE, Primary, and Secondary schools/centres for any of the 4 factors.

Table 9: Early childhood student teachers' factor means for the Teacher Profession Scale

Teacher Profession Scale Factors (Scale items in brackets)	Early Childhood Student Teachers
Responsibility and Associated Requirements (12, 6, 10, 7, 8)	3.80
Professional Culture (20, 21, 18, 19, 17, 15, 14)	3.72
Respect (11, 13, 16, 1)	3.70
Professional Recognition (4, 5, 2, 3, 9)	3.00

## 6.5 Ways To Enhance The Status Of Early Childhood Education

How do we enhance the future status of early childhood? For some, the answer is simple – reconnect to the essence and value of children within our society.

*I know they've just been so much put out there encouraging people to take up teaching, maybe they just need to recognise the value of children...need to reawaken how valuable our children are and how they are our future generations and that what we input now is so valuable for later on in life. Maybe that's the answer, to enhance the value of our children so teachers are important (41, ECE).*

The re-analysis of the early childhood data independently revealed some creative and very positive suggestions related to enhancing the status, recruitment and retention teachers for the early childhood sector. Underpinning most of the suggestions is the need for early childhood teachers and government to work towards re-educating the public (and teachers from other sectors) as to the importance, value and reality of early childhood teaching.

*Oh I think just getting information out to the general public about what we do. It's difficult to do that I suppose but even a documentary or something on Kindy teachers and I don't know just even just their qualifications. I mean there's a lot of people around that are just so ignorant, yeah. I don't know how it could be done. Just don't know, I mean it would have to be sort of a nationwide sort of thing I think in a perhaps a profile in the paper occasionally of somebody in their day or... Also too I think that particularly with Kindy teachers, I think that Primary teachers need to know exactly what we do, I think that would be very helpful. Getting communication going between us. We do try, we try so hard but it's a difficult thing, I don't know whether it's kind of a professional barrier that goes up or what, but it has to change dramatically. (ECT08)*

There is a need to increase people's awareness of the educative function of early childhood education and to dispel the commonly held notion of early childhood centres as care facilities alone. "For early childhood I think it could be enhanced by letting people realise that we are trained and I think that we are registered, that we do the same amount of training as the other teaching professions" (ECQ65). For most, as mentioned above, early childhood teachers themselves are willing and active advocates for the sector and take every opportunity to dispel myths and

misconceptions, but they cannot be held responsible to do this alone. If we value the training and preparation of early childhood teachers, there is some responsibility perhaps on others beyond the sector to actively advocate on their behalf and ensure that a more realistic account of the role of the early childhood teachers is disseminated.

*I'm hoping we're getting the story across to parents, I think we are slowly getting the story across to parents that we're not here just as babysitters. I know we talk to parents and we've had parent nights and I think that has increased more of an awareness for parents but for the wider community I am still wondering. I've done four years study to get there and sometimes that's quite hard having to explain and stick up for what we do, because a lot of people don't see us as being teachers. (ECT12)*

The general message from the early childhood data is that early childhood teachers, head teachers and management committee members feel that there is an opportunity to address most of the current concerns in early childhood education and that while recent attention by the government on this sector is a promising beginning, more needs to be done. There is a sense that early childhood education is yet to come into its own and that as demand increases, so too will calls for quality education and care and early childhood needs to be ready to rise to this challenge.

*I think the strategic plan that's coming into effect as long as the Labour Government stays there to see it through, will make a huge difference. I think if teachers are going to be better paid so that must make them feel better because especially in childcare will be equivalent with kindergarten teachers I suppose, so that puts us on a level playing field and if we get the same as primary teachers then that's going to lift the status of our sector. And I think as more people are going to work and looking for places to put their children for care and education, they're going to be much more fussy about where they send their children and look for more than just a care, they'd be looking for education as well. (ECT11)*

While recent requirements related to qualifications are viewed as a way of increasing the status of early childhood teachers, there is an associated need to ensure that these qualifications are indeed accessible to current and potential early childhood teachers.

*To attract and retain quality teachers (particularly ECE), I feel we need to 'up the ante' in terms of professionalism, so upgrading qualifications is a great start (providing there are user-friendly ways of doing this, especially given that many women are also trying to raise families and so have limited resources, i.e. time and money).(ECQM30)*

The recurring sense of perceived inequity with other teachers (primary and secondary) also needs to be addressed. Of course, since status and salary are so closely linked in most people's assumptions, there are strong calls for increased salaries for early childhood teachers ensuring pay parity for all, as one way of enhancing status and for increased resourcing of centres.

*To retain and recruit more teachers to early childhood teacher there needs to be pay parity with kindergarten teachers and more recognition of our qualifications. Parent and care centres require more financial support. Government needs to simplify funding to centres to see the benefits of employing qualified teachers. (ECQ88)*

*Pay increases and workplaces that reflect the quality of teachers. On-going incentives i.e. further training opportunities and public recognition, to fuel the fire in the teachers' bellies and gain some much deserved respect. These things would all help to retain and motivate teachers. (ECQM30)*

There were calls for enhanced working conditions for early childhood teachers and associated support to enable them to adequately prepare for children's learning thus addressing many of the concerns raised in earlier sections of this report.

*We need to improve the paid release time for teachers so we can teach to our maximum potential and do everything else required. Recruiting new people? Improve working conditions for teachers. Advertising – t.v., papers etc. Informing parents on best choices for children – not necessarily convenience for parents! Good luck. We are relying on improved outcomes for teachers and of course children. (ECQ47)*

The following acknowledges the work government has done but suggests creative use of the media to show the reality and complexity of early childhood. Using television and other media to an advantage was a common theme in people's responses to how to improve status. Some challenged the researchers with the need for a television programme that would do for teaching, what Shortland Street has done for nurses and doctors.

*I actually think there could be some better quality television programmes than what there is at the moment on television, like for instance, I actually think it would be good to have talk shows, like Good Morning or whatever but actually talks about children's development, things that go on, what happens in your childcare centre, you know, that kind of thing. I think television is a good media to actually use to educate people ....(ECT06)*

Some teachers, albeit a minority, are explicit about the benefits that teaching offers in terms of holidays and a certain degree of autonomy to shape their own level of commitment. This early childhood teacher was equally positive about projecting the reality of teaching in terms of holidays and flexibility:

*Lots of benefits because you get all the holidays, it's good for you when you have families, the money is good, the hours are pretty cool. You can put in as much or as little into it as you want. You don't get dirty. You can get dirty. I think it is a very creative job, you can create all day and I think you're happy all the time. People say it's stressful but I've cut the stress out and I think "okay I'm here for a reason and my reason is to get on with this job". I know you do have difficult people but you've got to take it from their side. They're the people that are using this service (ECT07).*

There were also a number of calls for more flexible working conditions for early childhood teachers as a way of enhancing recruitment and retention especially. Enabling those who are experienced teachers to transition into part-time work. With the aging population and the need for staff I think that more flexible hours would make working more manageable up to retirement age. This job is extremely physical and over the years the body "wears out" so being able to work full time can be a challenge. (ECQ78). Also flexible working hours are seen to be more attractive to people seeking entry into the profession while simultaneously gaining the necessary qualifications (centre-based training enables this).

In summary, the early childhood responses provided encouraging suggestions for the enhancement of the status of early childhood teachers, recruitment and retention. These generally were conveyed within a sense of "continuing the journey that has begun towards parity" (ECT04) through education and active advocacy for early childhood, for children and parents. They are also underpinned by a deeply held conviction that early childhood education is a valuable stage of a child's learning and development and as such, needs to be fostered and supported.

*The government and community need to realise and acknowledge the work, love and care that goes into young children in early childhood centres. Children learn more in the first two years of life than at any other age and yet Early childhood centres get less funding and lower wages than any other teachers. The children will not do well at school and therefore not ever attend university or Polytechnic if they do not acquire a love of learning and good social skills when they are young. The young children of today are the adults that will one day run this country, let's give them every opportunity to learn. (ECQT57)*

## Chapter 7: Recruitment of ECE Teachers

Why did the teachers and head teachers in this study choose early childhood teaching as a career? What factors attracted them to working as an ECE teacher? What factors were unimportant in their decisions to become a teacher? What role do these factors play, if any, in the recruitment of new ECE teachers?

The participants' perceptions regarding the recruitment of teachers are revealed through both the questionnaire and the interview data. Questionnaire responses to the scale *Reasons for becoming a teacher*<sup>7</sup> were subjected to frequency and factor analysis. Transcripts of the teacher/head teacher interviews and student teacher focus groups and relevant qualitative comments from questionnaires were subject to content analysis.

In considering the quantitative and qualitative analyses, the following three main themes emerged and frame this section of the report: altruistic notions of helping children and society; intrinsic motivation in terms of personal and professional rewards; and, advocacy for ECE through actively recruiting teachers. Since the factor analysis reveals the importance especially of the first two themes *helping children and society* and *professional and personal rewards* it is presented first and then the three themes are presented with support of both quantitative and qualitative data.

### 7.1 Reasons for Becoming a Teacher: Factor Analysis

The responses to the *Reasons for becoming a teacher* scale were subject to factor analysis to identify the key constructs around which scale items cluster. (Frequency and factor analyses for this scale are presented in Appendix F.) The early childhood teacher/head teacher data was analysed separately to the student teacher data and for both data sets, the original factors from the original study were utilized, as the numbers of respondents in the data sets would not have generated a reliable factor analysis. For the teachers/head teachers factor analysis comparisons of factor means with comparable factors from the primary and secondary teacher/principal respondents are reported to demonstrate shifting emphasis and prioritising of each factor. A factor analysis of the total data set reproduced the original factors derived from the Kane and Mallon (2006) study which confirms the authenticity of the original analysis.

Factor analysis of the *Reasons for becoming a teacher* scale generate five factors including: helping children and society; professional and personal development; pay and career paths; status and respect; and, family issues. Table 10 presents a summary of factor means for the teacher/head teacher and student teachers early childhood factor means in comparison with primary and secondary data and a discussion of the interpretation of this analysis.

The mean loading values demonstrate that for early childhood teachers/head teachers and student teachers the most important factor was that related to "Helping children and society" which comprised largely items that could be classified as intrinsic or altruistic. The second most important factor was "Personal and professional development", then "Pay and career path". The least important factors were those related to "Family issues" and "Status and respect". This order of importance was reflected in the factor analysis of the early childhood student teacher data although across all factors, the student teachers reported higher levels of importance.

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<sup>7</sup> Question 1, Teacher/Head Teacher Questionnaire and Question 1, Student Teacher Questionnaire.

Table 10: Comparison of factor means across early childhood, primary and secondary data sets

Factors (Scale items in brackets)	Early Childhood		Primary	Secondary
	Teacher/ head teacher Mean	Student Teacher Mean	Teacher/ principal Mean	Teacher/ principal Mean
Helping children/society (1, 10, 20, 5, 7, 27, 9, 19, 26)	4.03	4.21	3.91	3.67
Professional and personal development (13, 12, 15, 14, 21, 18, 31, 11, 8)	3.73	3.97	3.61	3.57
Pay and career paths (29, 28, 30, 23, 32, 24)	3.41	3.65	3.37	3.38
Status and respect (16, 17, 25, 22)	2.94	3.08	2.90	2.86
Family Issues (4, 3, 2, 6)	2.67	3.06	2.76	2.68

T-tests were conducted to determine if mean ratings for each of the five factors were at least moderately important in the respondents' decisions to become a teacher. There were significant differences between the importance of the factors for early childhood teachers/head teachers and also for student teachers. For teachers/head teachers "Helping children/society", "Personal and professional development", and "Pay and career path" were all rated as significantly *more* than moderately important (i.e., greater than a mean rating of "3" on the 5 point scale),  $t(144)=12.44$ ,  $t(145)=5.00$ , and  $t(145)=20.85$ , respectively, all  $p's < .001$ . "Family issues" were deemed significantly *less* than moderately important,  $t(144)=-4.70$ ,  $p < .001$ , whereas "Status and respect" was rated moderately important,  $t(145)=-.81$ ,  $p > .05$ .

For early childhood student teachers, "Helping children/society", "Personal and professional development", and "Pay and career path" were all rated as significantly *more* than moderately important (i.e., greater than a mean rating of "3" on the 5 point scale),  $t(409)=45.07$ ,  $t(409)=32.09$ , and  $t(406)=14.66$ , respectively, all  $p's < .001$ . "Family issues" and "Status and respect" were both rated moderately important,  $t(407)=1.47$ , and  $t(407)=1.85$ , respectively, both  $p's > .05$ .

Early childhood teachers/head teachers' reasons for becoming a teacher did not interact significantly with any of the teacher attributes with the exception of years of teaching experience. There were no significant differences in terms of gender, ethnicity or location due to the small numbers of respondents with some attributes e.g. only 1 male respondent and low numbers of different ethnic groups. Years of teaching experience significantly interacted with reasons for becoming a teacher,  $F(8,500)=2.76$ ,  $p < .01$ , such that those who have taught for over 20 years rated "Pay and career path" as less important than did those who have taught 20 years or less, while there were no differences in their ratings for the other 4 factors.

One interesting finding was that there was no significant interaction between the teachers/head teachers' factors related to their reasons for choosing teaching and their response to Question 3. "Have you ever seriously considered leaving teaching?" There is no evidence that people entering teaching for particular reasons are more likely to consider leaving at some stage of their teaching career.

When compared with comparable analysis of the data from primary and secondary teachers/principals data there are some interesting findings. Teachers/head teachers in early childhood centres found "Helping children/society"

more important as a reason to become a teacher than did those in Primary and Secondary schools,  $F(2,775)=15.24$ ,  $p<.001$ . They also found “Personal and professional development”, “Pay and career path” and “Status and respect” relatively more important to their decisions to become teachers than did either primary or secondary teachers. “Family issues” were slightly less important to early childhood teachers/head teachers than they were to the primary and secondary teachers/principals.

Frequency responses for individual items reveals that there are also reasons that were clearly identified as not at all important to early childhood teachers/head teachers’ decisions. 58.2% of the respondents report that *Attractive holiday entitlement* was not at all important in influencing their decision to become a teacher, and 48.6% of the respondents considered that *Having a family member or friend as a teacher* was not at all important in their decisions to become a teacher themselves.

Items related to the status and image of teaching were most noticeable as being not at all important as influences on people’s decisions to become teachers. Over half the respondents signalled that being *Attracted to the image of the job* was either not at all important (30.8%) or only slightly important (26.7%). Similarly, 29.5% of respondents felt that wanting *A high status occupation* was not at all important and 28.1% felt that it was only slightly important in their decision. Of the remaining respondents, 23.3% felt that wanting *A high status occupation* was moderately important and only 15.1% registered it as important or extremely important (See Appendix F). Much like the teachers/head teachers, the reasons identified as not at all important or only slightly important by the largest percentages of student teachers were those related to the image and status of the job.

## 7.2 Helping Children and Society

Much like respondents from the other sectors (primary and secondary), early childhood participants consistently cite “I just really enjoy working with children” (ECT03) as a reason for becoming a teacher which supports the questionnaire data. Comments such as “I do have a passion for children, I do enjoy them” (ECST05), were typical also from student teachers. There was evidence that some respondents also felt this was their destiny, that they had always known that they would be a teacher of younger children.

*For me it’s something I think I’m good at. I enjoyed my own teaching when I was a pupil. It runs in the family and since being a parent I’ve seen the potential of nurturing young children* (ECST07).

When considering the frequencies of teacher/head teacher responses to the items in Question 1, “Reasons for becoming a teacher”, a number of strong patterns are evident that relate to participants altruistic motivation (see Appendices). On a positive note, 95.8% of early childhood respondents rate *Enjoying working with children* as important or extremely important (75.3%) in their decision to become a teacher, and 88.4% claim that their *Enjoyment of teaching* was extremely important in their decision. Early childhood teachers and head teachers clearly prioritise intrinsic (*Enjoy working with children, Enjoy teaching, Want to do a job of which I feel proud, Want to do something meaningful with my life, Want to feel fulfilled in my work*) and altruistic (*Want to give children the best possible start in life*) motivations in their decision to choose teaching as a career.

All the student teachers (100%) rated *Want to give children the best possible start in life* as either extremely important (90.7%) or important (9.3%) reflecting a strongly altruistic motivation for becoming an early childhood teacher. All but one of the student teachers (98.7%) identify *Enjoy working with children* as either important or extremely important. Other very high scoring reasons could be considered intrinsic such as *Want to feel fulfilled in my work, Enjoy teaching, Want to do something meaningful with my life, and Like the degree of variety in the job*.

While early childhood respondents shared many of the reasons for entering teaching with their primary and secondary colleagues as reported in Kane and Mallon (2006) re-analysis of the early childhood interview transcripts did enable some specific early childhood patterns to emerge in the findings. For example, early childhood teachers, head teachers and student teachers report that a fascination with how young children learn and develop was a key reason for entering early childhood teaching. This category was more prominent in the early childhood data than in the data from other sectors (primary and secondary). There were repeated instances where respondents identify a keen interest in being part of young children's development and supporting their learning.

*I was actually doing some Teacher Aiding and I noticed quite a lot of the children coming in that hadn't been to any Early Childhood education setting, they were just lost and I became fascinated in child development before that. ... I was just fascinated with child development and when I saw these new entrants, children, I thought I can really make a difference, I can really make a difference here if I go Kindy teaching, you know. I was quite enthusiastic about that so that was kind of my, kind of my motivation to do that (ECT08).*

A further element which has emerged as distinctive in ECE data included the important influence played by having experiences with the early childhood context through being a parent which, in many cases, initiated a keen and ongoing interest in how young children learn and develop. For many early childhood teachers their own children "were the hook" (ECHT03) for them to become teachers.

*Becoming involved with my own children at the Play Centre basically fascinated me ... so it was when my children came along that I thought this is the thing for me to do and so I went right through Play Centre and got a job here at the Polytech and continued with my training here (ECT11).*

The influence of parenting was evident in responses from both the less and the more experienced teachers and head teachers and from the student teachers. A student teacher preparing for early childhood teaching reports that experiencing her own children in early childhood contexts heightened her own awareness of the learning that occurs in the first five years and the importance to ensure quality early childhood education across all contexts.

*I'm not sure but maybe with your own children entering childcare programmes, you actually get to see what's available out there and the inconsistencies of it. That 0-5 is just such a huge sponge-like period for those children that you want to get quality (ECSTFG01).*

While the quote below reports the motivation of a teacher of 35 years experience who is now the director of the centre within which she works.

*I actually became a teacher through being with my own personal children. Starting, getting interested then and then being involved in Playcentre and wanting to go on and extend myself more. (ECHT04)*

In these and other cases, the teachers/head teachers report that at the time when they were choosing to become teachers, the staff within their own child's centre, encouraged them to embark on the training required to qualify as an early childhood teacher. In some cases, becoming a parent and the growing interest and involvement in their own child's development in early childhood precipitated a change from a previous career that led to early childhood teaching. In some of the student teachers' cases, they were currently working towards qualifications after having been in early childhood education, unqualified, for a number of years.



*I did some training but not through the college, like national certificate level, I've done some training for playcentre. So she said I don't have to do the national certificate I can go straight to Bachelor of Teacher. So I had to make my decision. (ECSTFG05).*

### 7.3 Personal and Professional Rewards

Data from the early childhood participants reflected evidence of teachers and students teachers choosing to become teachers due to intrinsic motivation related to personal and professional development. There was evidence through the interviews that in choosing early childhood teaching, some participants viewed it as a career that would give them both personal rewards and professional credibility. In addition, consideration of the frequencies for individual items on the *Reasons for Choosing Teaching* scale, reflect a stronger influence of professional factors than were evident in the primary and secondary data.

For some early childhood teachers, time spent working as a teacher aide or in another allied caring profession such as carer for elderly or for children with disabilities, had given them the confidence and the insight to embark on formal training. Participants reported that these initial experiences triggered a personal and professional interest in being part of supporting children's development.

*I was a teacher aide in primary school and I noticed a lot of children coming in who hadn't had early childhood, they seemed so lost and it fascinated me why. I became really interested in understanding child development. (ECT03)*

Personal rewards were often related to satisfaction derived from contributing to children's development and supporting their learning and through engaging with colleagues in professional activities.

*Watching children develop and the feedback you get from the children is very good too. And also through other teachers and other professional people, talking about education and even going to conferences and conventions and things like that, that was quite important. (ECT05)*

There was also evidence of early childhood teachers acknowledging that their decision to become a teacher was the culmination of a thoughtful reflective process through which they were learning more about themselves and what they wanted out of life for themselves and for children.

*I guess in the process you learn a bit more about yourself too and what your limits are and where you're going in your life and what you want for your children as well as for other people's children.(ECT01)*

One of the student teachers explained that for her deciding to become a teacher went beyond the altruistic notions of helping children and contributing to society. She also wanted to have a career of which she felt proud and which gave her personal and professional satisfaction. This was evident across the data as many of the participants (teachers/head teachers and student teachers) had chosen teaching as a change in career and so had forgone a previous, often successful career to re-train as an early childhood teacher.

*I wanted a career that I could be proud of and that I would find rewarding. So I went back to school in 1982 and redid my education as an adult student and I think it evolved from there as I grew in confidence as a person. (ECST03)*

Items within the *Reasons for Choosing Teaching* scale that are of particular interest include: *Wanting to be part of a learning community*; *Wanting opportunities for lifelong learning*; and *Wanting to further my own knowledge*. These three factors are credited with influencing participants' decisions to become early childhood teachers. Seventy per cent of participating teachers/head teachers and 77% of student teachers identify *Wanting to further my own knowledge* as important or extremely important to their career decisions in contrast to 58% of primary teachers and 51 % of secondary teachers in the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006). Having *Opportunities for lifelong learning* was rated as important or extremely important by 61% of early childhood teachers/head teachers and by 74% of student teachers. Yet the same factor was important in the career decisions of 50% of primary teachers and 34% of secondary teachers (Kane & Mallon, 2006). Similarly *Wanting to be part of a learning community*, was rated as important or extremely important by 55% of early childhood teachers/headteachers and by 59% of student teachers, but by only 45% of both primary and secondary teachers. These frequencies signal the relative importance of these factors as influences in people's decisions to become early childhood teachers. Throughout the data (both qualitative and quantitative) there was repeated evidence of early childhood teachers' enthusiasm for engaging with professional learning and willingness to embrace opportunities to extend their own understandings of teaching and learning. These data suggest that this motivation to extend themselves personally and professionally is also a significant factor for many in their decision to become an early childhood teacher and, further, that these factors are relatively more important than they are to primary and secondary teachers' initial career decisions.

While more experienced teachers seldom mentioned salary and or job security as reasons for becoming teachers these were evident as factors reported by student teachers. Student teachers identified reasons associated with career conditions as having an important or extremely important influence on their decisions. *Wanting a lifelong career* was identified as extremely important or important by 85.3% of the early childhood student teachers. For example, *Want a reliable income*, *Want strong job security*, *Want a challenging job*, and *Want future earning potential* all fall within a group of reasons supported by over 50% of student teachers as important or extremely important to their decision to become a teacher.

## 7.4 Actively Recruiting Colleagues

Early childhood teachers, head teachers and student teachers, with few exceptions, would strongly recommend early childhood teaching to others as a valuable and rewarding career. Generally, the respondents acknowledged that they would recommend teaching if they felt the person had the necessary personal qualities and commitment to supporting young children's development. Early childhood teaching was viewed by many as "the most valuable profession there is" (ECT08) and as such, people seeking entry should be competent and capable. For this reason many of the respondents identified current parents of children within their centres as potential early childhood teachers.

*The parents that have been here and then said that they were interested, I've been very positive[with them] because I think if they are here and they're interested and they spend some time in the centre, then they've already seen what's involved and would be great I think. (ECHT01).*

Respondents would generally encourage people to go early childhood teaching because of their own experience of it as a very rewarding career from which you can gain great personal growth and satisfaction. There are opportunities to be creative, to work in dynamic exciting teams of colleagues and to really make a difference in the early learning foundations of children.

*You can be creative within your job. There is a lot you can do within the boundaries. And it's an amazing experience being on a learning journey with children. See them move and grow. (ECT02).*

The very few respondents who were less enthusiastic about recommending early childhood teaching to others raised concerns in two key areas: the physical demands of the job and its related wear and tear on your body; and the lack of surety in terms of salary. Early childhood teaching is reported by teachers and head teachers as being demanding physically and experienced teachers do suggest that new teachers should be made aware of ways in which they can protect their own health and well-being. Salary was raised as a reason to dissuade prospective teachers, however, this was qualified with references to proposed pay parity and a sense that the future promised better salary conditions for teachers who are degree qualified.



## Chapter 8: Retention of ECE Teachers

What makes some teachers consider leaving the profession? Why do teachers stay when faced with increasing workload and challenges? What can we learn about ECE teachers' career intentions?

The participant data related to the retention of teachers are revealed predominantly through the teacher/head teacher questionnaire data. Teacher/head teacher responses to a number of questions inform this area: Question 2, *Reasons for remaining a teacher*; Question 3a, *Why teachers leave*; Question 3b, *Why teachers stay*; Question 4, *Intentions to leave*; Question 5, *Career aspirations*; and Question 11, *Job satisfaction*.

Teachers/head teachers were asked to indicate 'yes' or 'no' to the question: "Have you seriously considered leaving teaching during the last three years?" Responses indicate that less than half of the respondents (43.2%) had considered leaving teaching. This aligns closely to the percentage of primary teachers/principals who answered yes to the same question (43.5%) but is less than the 58.2% of secondary teachers/principals who had considered leaving the profession. In a subsequent part of this question, respondents were asked to indicate from a list, those reasons which caused them to seriously consider leaving teaching. A list of nineteen reasons was provided and respondents also were provided with the space to write other reasons.

In an open-ended question, participants were asked to indicate "Why did you end up staying?" This generated 59 early childhood responses. Consideration of the early childhood responses separate to the larger data set revealed that early childhood teachers and head teachers reported a range of particular reasons for remaining in teaching in spite of challenges of changing working conditions and the day to day demands of working in busy centres.

The early childhood responses to the *Reasons for remaining a teacher* scale were subject to factor analysis to identify the key constructs around which scale items cluster. Data from the teachers/head teachers factor analysis comparisons of factor means with comparable factors from the primary and secondary teacher/principal respondents are reported to demonstrate shifting emphasis and prioritising of each factor.

The original factors from the original study were utilized as the numbers of respondents in the early childhood data set would not have generated a reliable factor analysis. A factor analysis of the total data set reproduced the original factors derived from the Kane and Mallon (2006) study which confirms the authenticity of the original analysis through which five factors were named.

The findings in this chapter are presented under three related section headings: why do ECE teachers consider leaving teaching? Why do ECE teachers remain in teaching? And what are ECE teachers' career intentions?

### 8.1 Why Do ECE Teachers Consider Leaving Teaching?

ECE teachers and head teachers have considered leaving the profession for reasons related to: increasing workload; and, the physical demands of the job. Of the list of reasons provided, 23.3% of respondents who signalled that they had considered leaving the profession, indicated that *Work-life balance issues (workload)* and *Stress* had caused them to consider leaving teaching over past three years and over 17.8% indicated *More paperwork* and 15.1% identified *Pay issues*. Each of these reasons relate closely to perceptions of increasing workload associated with the role (See Chapter Five). A *Sense of lack of respect for the profession* is the next most important (but only 13.7% indicate it as a reason). These percentages are lower than comparable data from the primary and secondary

teacher/principal respondents where 34.4% indicate *Work-life balance issues (workload)* and for 29.5%, *More paperwork* had caused them to consider leaving teaching over past three years. These reasons were closely followed by *Stress* (28.6% secondary respondents).

Thirteen respondents proposed alternative reasons for considering leaving which reveal some interesting findings specific to early childhood. An area of recurring reasons that were given related to leadership of the centre and/or to issues surrounding staff collegiality. The importance of teachers and head teachers being able to work effectively as a team is an important requirement of early childhood contexts that is not present (to such a degree) in primary or secondary contexts. While these are attributes that are recognised as critical, when relationships are fractured, or leadership somehow flawed, there is potential for unrest.

*Head teacher was very dictatorial and been in her job for 25 years. She only wanted things done her way and constantly complained about the way I did things – undermined my love of the job and confidence in my abilities.(ECTQ53).*

*A team member had a strong influence in the team, and the centre which made me dissatisfied with the work environment. Since she left, the centre has become once again a great place to work. (ECTQ107)*

The physical demands of the job was another reason identified under “other” as a factor as teachers get older. This is not something that was identified in the data from primary and secondary teachers.

*As I get older I feel that kindergarten teaching requires high level of fitness, agility, strength, moving equipment daily etc. A niggling concern (ECTQ81).*

The physical nature of the job is a particular feature of early childhood which is reported by teachers and head teachers as a critical factor in retention. Teachers report that even though they would dearly love to remain in the profession, they acknowledge that there will come a time when they cannot physically sustain the work.

*I'm still very passionate about working with children but I do know that at some point in time I can't sometimes wonder about how long can I still do that, you know, put things in place, like not rocking the children to sleep anymore because physically that's become really really hard, you know, so we have actually learnt strategies to minimise the wear and tear on our own bodies, like our back and our shoulders and our arms and so on. I still enjoy my job. (ECT06)*

This is an aspect of the job that was repeatedly reported by teachers in interviews and in the qualitative responses from the questionnaires and an area that may not be well understood by those outside of the profession.

*... it can be very hard and if you get a few days like that, then it's very wearisome and I think probably people get to an age where they feel that it's physically too demanding sometimes because it is. I mean early childhood is very hard on the body. (ECT11)*

## 8.2 Why Do ECE Teachers Remain?

The open ended questionnaire responses reveal that a significant group of people stay in teaching fundamentally due to their commitment and passion for the role and for working with children – put simply, they love the job and the daily interactions with children and colleagues. These comments were reinforced by the statistical analysis of the scale Reasons for remaining a teacher (See below).

*Because teaching is my passion and early childhood education needs passionate teachers (ECTQ04).*

*Because my enjoyment in working in ECE outweighed the burden of paperwork and additional requirements of accountability – only just! (ECTQ52).*

*A strong sense of commitment to the children that I teach. A strong sense of commitment to most staff members that I teach with. (ECTQ25).*

The teacher/head teacher responses for question 2 *Reasons for remaining a teacher* reveal that the key reason for early childhood teachers/head teachers remaining in the profession is their *Enjoyment of working with children*, which 82.2% of respondents rate as extremely important. Over 80% of the teachers/head teachers identify *Enjoy teaching*, *Want to give children the best start in life*, *Want to do something meaningful with my life*, *Want to help children become members of society*, *Do a job of which I can feel proud*, *Want to feel fulfilled in my work*, and *Want time available to reflect on lessons and share with colleagues* as reasons that are important or extremely important in influencing their decisions to remain in their jobs.

When considering the frequencies of responses to Question 2, the only issues of lesser importance are *Wanting a high status occupation* and (to a lesser extent) *Having an attractive image of the job*, both of which are nominated by over a third of the respondents as either not at all important or only slightly important. Issues like *Attractive holidays* and *Family friendly working patterns* that were not nominated by this group as important reasons for choosing teaching, now emerge as moderately important reasons to stay. Over 20% of teachers/head teachers rate these as extremely important and over 70% of identify these items as moderately to extremely important in affecting their decisions to stay in teaching.

One interesting item in the questionnaire scale is the final one, *Feel I have no other choice*, where 26.1% of all teachers/head teachers feel that issue is of some importance (slightly important, moderately important, important or very important). This is notable due to the comparable finding of the primary and secondary data where 49.9% of teachers rate this as of some importance in their decision to remain in teaching. Unlike their colleagues in other sectors, early childhood teachers do not reflect the level of frustration associated with feeling trapped within a job in which they are unhappy.

The same picture emerges from the open-ended responses where a very small number of early childhood teachers (5 of the 59 respondents) appear to be staying in teaching for reasons that they view as out of their own control. Teachers in this category see that they have little flexibility in their current context due to “The amount of training already done to complete ECE” (ECTQ17); they “need the income to pay student debt” (ECTQ107), or personal circumstances prevent them from leaving at this time, although they would like to do so.

*Husband made redundant. Still enjoy children but at almost 33 and 13 years in EC am running out of energy (ECTQ127).*

Factorial analysis of the *Reasons for remaining a teacher* questionnaire scale generated five factors. The factors means are presented in Table 11 including comparisons with primary and secondary data and a discussion of the interpretation of this analysis.

Teachers/head teachers in early childhood centres found “Enjoyment of the job” to be the most important factor for remaining a teacher, followed by “Contribution to children/society” and “Encouragement and support” which were equally important factors, then “Personal and professional development”, and finally “Terms and conditions of the job”. All 5 factors were rated as significantly *more* than moderately important (i.e., greater than a mean rating of

“3” on a 5 point scale),  $t(144)=35.26$ ,  $t(144)=21.75$ ,  $t(144)=18.89$ ,  $t(144)=12.57$ , and  $t(144)=8.24$ , respectively, all  $p$ 's < .001.

Table 11: Comparison of factor means across early childhood, primary and secondary data sets

Factors (Scale items in brackets)	Early Childhood Teacher/ head teacher Mean	Primary Teacher/ principal Mean	Secondary Teacher/ principal Mean
Enjoyment of the job (6, 24, 1, 35, 30)	4.55	4.44	4.24
Contribution to children/society (9, 21, 20, 8, 4, 31, 10, 19, 13)	4.17	4.06	3.90
Encouragement and support (25, 16, 26, 12, 23, 2)	4.10	3.91	3.53
Personal and professional development (15, 18, 14, 22, 7, 11, 17)	3.78	3.68	3.48
Terms and conditions of the job (33, 32, 34, 27, 36, 28, 29, 3)	3.59	3.58	3.50

Years of teaching experience significantly interacted with reasons for remaining a teacher,  $F(8,504)=4.99$ ,  $p < .001$ , such that those who have taught for over 20 years rated “Terms and conditions of the job” as less important than did those who have taught 20 years or less, while there were no differences in their ratings for the other 4 factors. Reasons for remaining a teacher did not interact with any other variables (e.g., “Seriously considered leaving teaching?”).

Teachers/head teachers in early childhood centres found that “Contribution to children/society”, “Encouragement and support”, “Enjoyment of the job”, and “Personal and professional development” more important as reasons for remaining a teacher than did those in Primary and Secondary schools,  $F(2,779)=9.04$ ,  $F(2,778)=30.88$ ,  $F(2,779)=15.38$ ,  $F(2,779)=8.35$ , respectively, all  $p$ 's < .001.

The most interesting (and most common) finding from the open-ended responses was the number of early childhood teachers who had been proactive in changing the context or circumstances of their work so that they were able to address the concerns that had originally initiated their thoughts of leaving the profession. Half (29 of the 59) of the responses demonstrated that the teacher/head teacher had taken some agency in changing or addressing the aspect of their work that was causing dissatisfaction.

Some teachers reported a conscious decisions to change the ways in which they worked such as negotiating “Reduced hours of work and developed skills to deal with stress” (ECTQ85), or “Because I love the job, I put strategies in place to provide a better balance and adapted the “always tomorrow” attitude to paperwork.” (ECTQ77). Others found support within their own centres through articulating their concerns and gaining support from management within the centre:

*Because I managed to make a change in how I dealt with issues and was able to talk things through with management, gaining their support. (ECTQ32)*



Teachers also reported how taking on more responsibility and challenge reinvigorated their commitment to teaching. Often this included embarking on professional development opportunities which enabled them to gain deeper satisfaction and reward from their work through leadership. For example the following responses show a range of actions:

*Took on a high level position with more challenge to keep my brain going also, don't like giving up. (ECTQ01)*

*Found a leadership role where I had more involvement in the decision making process. Also received support from local profession development service. (ECTQ98)*

*Strong leadership from head teacher. Professional development opportunities. Involved in Research – I've become an associate teacher. (ECTQ79)*

*Enjoy ongoing professional training that encourages better interactions with children, i.e. learning their working theories and seeing them grow into independent learners. (ECTQ17)*

Within this set of responses there was also evidence of teachers changing their place of work in order to be situated in a more positive and satisfying working environment. This reinforces the importance of both leadership within early childhood centres and the collegiality between staff who are required to work so closely with each other.

*Change in work environment meant more supportive, collaborative staff. Motivated and enthusiastic team makes a huge difference in ECE where teaching is collaborative. (ECTQ30)*

*I was granted leave and returned at the beginning of the year under new management new HT. Also the position is 7.5 which allows me to be involved in other interests. (ECTQ78)*

*Moved into a new teaching position in a very positive centre with great supportive head teacher and teaching team. (ECTQ53)*

These are very encouraging findings for early childhood compared to primary and secondary data from the Kane and Mallon (2006) study which revealed that close to half of the primary (45%) and secondary (44%) and over half of intermediate (55%) respondents who had thought of leaving teaching reported that they remained in teaching in spite of being dissatisfied and wishing to leave. In the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006) data that reported teachers making active choices and changes in their working conditions or contexts were most evident from early childhood teachers (49% of those who indicated thoughts of leaving) and were recorded the least by primary teachers (19%). Over a quarter of intermediate and secondary teachers responded in this way. This suggests that while many teachers experience challenges in their work that cause them to consider leaving teaching, early childhood teachers appear to more readily take agency in addressing issues and taking action to increase their satisfaction e.g. "New challenges and permanent work gave more job satisfaction." (ECTQ83). This could of course be also explained by the flexible and fractional nature of some early childhood positions, and perhaps the relative shortage of qualified teachers.

Given that teachers report that holidays are not an influence on recruitment (why they chose to teach) it is interesting to note that early childhood teachers do report that holidays were essential to their retention (backing up the results from the original study which suggest holidays are more salient for teachers in service than for those contemplating the profession).

Here both the importance and the defensiveness about the importance of holidays are evident in a quote from an experienced early childhood teacher:

*I think keeping our, this sounds awful, keeping our breaks. Keeping our holidays. It is really important to me (ECT05).*

Even for less experienced teachers, the holidays and hours are important. They allow teachers flexibility to combine some family life with work and it is useful to be able to leave the premises and work from home after interaction time ends. Even new teachers highlight the role of the holidays in retention:

*You get to the end of term and you're like, I don't think I want to be a teacher any longer, it's too hard. And you're like oh yeah, holidays soon and at the end of the holidays you're like, man I want to get back there (ECT13).*

### **8.3 What Are ECE Teachers' Career Intentions?**

Participants were asked to indicate their career intentions over the coming year and to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements describing behaviours related to staying or leaving teaching. Early childhood teachers/head teachers are not intending to leave their positions at their centres or to leave the profession within the next 12 months. Only 5.5% of teachers/head teachers would prefer another job to their current one and 7.5% would hope not to be teaching in 12 months time. While a number have thought seriously about leaving their centre or leaving teaching, they are not intending to do so in the immediate future.

These percentages signal an early childhood workforce that is more intent on staying put than that of their primary and secondary counterparts. The primary and secondary teachers/principals data reveals that 16.8% would prefer another job to the one they currently hold and 14% would prefer not to be teaching a year from now.

Participants were also asked to indicate their career aspirations for five years hence among a range of options. Respondents were able to indicate more than one choice. Close to half (46.6%) indicate that they will be in a teaching role in five years time and 39.7% indicate they hope to be in a role involving teaching and management, and 14.4% just management within education. Pursuing higher degrees was seen as a viable choice of 30.8% of teachers and 34.9% expected family commitments would attract their attention. Only 12.3% of the participants are planning to leave teaching for an alternative career outside education within the next five years, while 15.8% of early childhood respondents are intending to leave teaching to seek other opportunities within education.

These responses rate more positively when compared with comparable data from primary and secondary teachers/principals. Only 35.6% of primary and secondary respondents indicate that they expect to be in a teaching role in five years time and 38.5% expect to be in a teaching/management role. There were 17.7% of the primary and secondary respondents who indicate that they expect to be in a career outside of education suggesting that the early childhood workforce is more stable and potentially has more longevity than the other sectors.

What is apparent and important for questions of retention is that the vast majority of early childhood teachers are not in fact going to leave the profession. Responses indicate that the majority of people's career aspirations over the next five years will keep them in education and primarily within teaching or teaching and management.

## Chapter 9: Discussion

The findings presented in the previous chapters when considered in their entirety provide a picture of what are perceived as important aspects of the nature of early childhood teaching currently in New Zealand, how the participants construe the status of early childhood education, what attracts people to early childhood teaching, and conversely, what may induce them to leave. Participating teachers, head teachers, management committee members and student teachers provide a picture of early childhood in New Zealand in 2005 and identify ways in which this picture may be enhanced. This chapter seeks to synthesise the findings in light of what is known from the relevant literature and with attention to key policy directions.

### 9.1 What Does It Mean To Be An ECE Teacher?

The findings from this study illuminate the ways in which early childhood teachers are construed and how the work of EC teachers is understood by those already engaged in teaching (teachers and head teachers), those responsible for centre governance (management committee members), and those preparing for careers in teaching (student teachers). There is no doubt from the evidence provided that the nature of early childhood teachers' work in contemporary New Zealand has undergone significant reconceptualisation over the recent decades, is increasingly complex, physically and intellectually demanding, and may well be misunderstood by those outside of the immediate early childhood community.

Early childhood teachers, head teachers and associated others are very confident in the importance of their role not only to the children and the families with whom they work but also to the wellbeing and advancement of society in general. There is no doubt that all respondents perceive that early childhood teachers make a critical and significant contribution to children's learning and development which serves as a foundation for their contribution to wider society in the future.

There is definite homogeneity in the ways in which teachers, head teachers, student teachers and management committee members construe effective early childhood teachers. It is clear that participants construe good and effective early childhood teachers in terms of affective relational attributes concerned with interacting with children and with their parents. According to them, effective teachers establish caring relationships with children, enjoy their work, and are trusted and respected by parents. Expertise in facilitating learning is considered to be inextricably linked to providing for a child's care, wellbeing and holistic development. Early childhood teachers within this study embrace opportunities for professional development and collegial feedback. These findings reflect more positive dispositions to lifelong learning than in evidence from the primary and secondary sector, signalling perhaps more openness to lifelong learning as a teacher.

Early childhood teachers promote professional development and ongoing learning as critical aspects of being a successful early childhood teacher in New Zealand at this time. This supports the goals of the OECD (2005) report to transform teaching into a knowledge-rich profession. It is also explained by some in terms of being able to respond effectively to the recent administrative and curricular reforms to support children's learning and development. In all aspects related to professional development and engagement in learning communities, early childhood teachers presented most positive responses in comparison to evidence from the compulsory sector.

The OECD suggests that "teachers need to be 'active agents' in analysing their own practice in the light of professional standards and their own students' progress in the light of standards for student learning" (2005, p. 14).

This commitment is apparent within the findings of this study as early childhood teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to ongoing professional learning through learning from their own practice and that of their colleagues within their centre, and through formal professional development activities. As suggested by Johnson et al., (2005) professional development must be resourced and supported by leadership. There is a general sense that those in leadership positions within the early childhood centres and/or the associations actively promote and support teachers to participate in ongoing learning through professional development opportunities. The centre environment is critical as it influences the extent to which professional development is valued by management and colleagues and is facilitated for teachers. Although teachers do report increased workload as a consequence of administrative and curricular reforms, there is an over-riding sense that early childhood teachers view professional development and feedback from colleagues as essential elements of their work.

Appraisal of early childhood teachers is variable in nature due in part to the wide diversity of contexts and contracts within which early childhood teachers operate. Some teachers welcome the Kindergarten Association's adoption of teaching standards and view these as an opportunity to gauge their own professional advancement with the support and mentoring of centre leaders. Such procedures may well become more formalised with the current moves towards teacher registration for early childhood teachers. One recurring element of the performance of early childhood teachers is that most fundamental to their context; the ability to work collegially in teams. The capacity to contribute to the work of the centre in a collegial and positive way is an essential element in early childhood where teachers operate daily in concert with colleagues, parents and others.

Findings confirm that early childhood teachers' work, much like other professions, has undergone changes due to administrative and curricular reforms and remains the focus of an active national strategic plan. The government has set in motion a 10-year strategic plan which includes, as one of three key goals a commitment to enhancing the quality of early childhood education for all New Zealand children.

*Quality early childhood education lays the foundation for children's later learning, through an enriching environment that facilitates the development of cognitive skills...[It] contributes to the development of self-esteem, as children gain understanding of their emotions and establish the basis for relating to others...[It] is one of the ways by which social and cultural values are reinforced and passed on to the next generation. Therefore, the quality of early childhood education today influences the well-being of citizens and society in the future."*<sup>8</sup>

Early childhood participants within this study generally embrace the general goals of the strategic plan and view the adoption of Te Whāriki and the continued focus on strategic development as key evidence that early childhood is on an upward trajectory to being considered key contributors to children's learning and development.

## 9.2 Does Status Matter To ECE Teachers?

It is clear that early childhood teachers value the esteem in which they are held by parents and colleagues with whom they interact whilst carrying out the day to day responsibilities of their role. In terms of perceived respect from others, early childhood teachers and head teachers perceive the highest levels of respect from parents, and from the children they teach in comparison to perceptions generated from all other data sets both within early childhood (management committee members and student teachers) and secondary and primary data from the original study. In comparison with secondary teachers especially the difference is significant while primary teachers' perceived levels of respect from these two sources are slightly lower than those of early childhood. All participants perceive higher levels of respect evident from those associated most closely with teachers and lower

<sup>8</sup> Quality in Action, p 5

levels of respect from those more removed from teaching in the wider society and, in particular, the media. The perception of the low respect from media is interesting as it repeatedly occurs across key groups, yet as is shown in the media report attached to the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006) the construction of teachers and teaching by the media is mixed and by no means entirely negative.

This project confirms findings from other research that status is a messy and ill defined construct that is more often represented by those currently involved in early childhood teaching in terms of the respect and esteem in which they are held by others, and in relation to salary and working conditions. Status is a relative construct, understood in terms of the positioning of teaching relative to other high status professions. By its very nature, early childhood teaching therefore struggles to be conceived of as a high status job – its work with young children, its largely feminised workforce, the perceived low academic rigour of its training and the relatively limited salary, are all interpreted as barriers to high status.

For early childhood teachers in this study the concept of status is an interesting one. The participants overwhelmingly perceive early childhood teaching to be considered by others (including other teachers) as being of relatively low status compared to other teaching roles and other professions. The participants in this study argue that early childhood teaching is generally misunderstood by the wider public and, perhaps more importantly, by colleagues in primary and secondary schools. There is a level of frustration in being so confident of the importance of one's work, yet perceiving it to be undervalued by people through lack of understanding of its core business. This finding is consistent with a recent longitudinal study in England which found that the status of early childhood teachers might be improved if "teachers in other phases [primary and secondary teachers] were better informed and more appreciative of their work" (Hargreaves et al., 2007, p. 95).

This study reveals that parents who interact with early childhood centres develop enhanced understanding of the work of teachers and afford ECE teachers the highest levels of respect in comparison with others. There is a sense therefore that further "education" is needed to enable people outside the immediate influence of early childhood education to better understand the essential aspects of early childhood teachers' work. Such a goal may well be supported by the increasing amount of scholarly research and literature which has extended knowledge and understanding of early childhood education over recent decades. In addition, participants acknowledge that the status of early childhood teachers is currently undergoing revitalization through the focused attention of the Ministry and others as administrative and curricular reforms become more securely embedded.

### **9.3 Recruitment: Why Teachers Choose ECE**

Early childhood teachers are motivated to become teachers primarily through their passion for working with children, their desire to have a rewarding and worthwhile career and their commitment to contributing to children's development. Early childhood teaching is viewed as a job that brings with it both personal intrinsic and altruistic rewards and one that enables individuals to engage in ongoing professional learning. These findings support other studies reviewed by Johnson et al. (2005) and reported for example by Rice (2005) and Hargreaves et al., (2007) that identify intrinsic and altruistic motivations to be fundamental to teachers' career decisions. For many early childhood teachers, their own socialisation in the ECE environment through their role as parents is the initial "hook" that ignites their interest in how young children learn and develop. The notion of parenting being an initiation into the early childhood context is supported in practice through head teachers and teachers encouraging parents who show an interest in pursuing such careers.

There is also evidence that student teachers currently preparing for teaching careers are attracted to teaching by the perception of job security, regular family-friendly holidays (applicable to kindergartens), a reliable income (assuming pay parity is achieved), and the possibility of having a lifelong career. The ten-year strategic plan

(Ministry of Education, 2002) includes seeking enhanced quality of early childhood education through (among other strategies) teacher registration requirements and pay-parity. Student teachers working towards early childhood qualifications are often experienced early childhood educators who are either studying alongside their daily work (centre-based initial teacher education), or have taken the decision to upgrade their qualifications. Thus, under the strategic plan student teachers currently enrolled in degree qualifications will be looking towards enhanced income potential in comparison with some more experienced, though unqualified teachers.

There is a sense that early childhood educators are complicit in “growing” their own profession through actively encouraging and supporting parents who demonstrate an interest and commitment to seek entry to a teacher education programme. This contrasts with evidence from the compulsory sector where teachers and principals actively discouraged candidates from choosing teaching (Kane & Mallon, 2006). The importance of being a parent as a trigger for taking up teaching as a career was also not as evident in the data from the other sectors (primary and secondary) and could thus signal an area for recruitment focus for the early childhood sector specifically.

#### **9.4 Retention: Why ECE Teachers Choose To Leave Or To Stay**

Early childhood teachers love the core aspect of their job, the interaction with young children, colleagues and parents, professional development opportunities, and daily opportunities to make a difference to the lives of children and parents. Early childhood educators remain in the profession due to perceived rewards that are intrinsic, altruistic and collegial. If matters related to collegiality and leadership become problematic, the majority of early childhood teachers take decisions to address issues through changing the centre at which they work or altering their level of responsibility, rather than leave the profession.

There is a clear sense that even though early childhood teachers find the workload has increased in recent years in response to new curricular and reporting requirements, is demanding physically and is not yet adequately rewarded financially; there is little that would cause them to leave the profession that they believe makes such a critical contribution to society. In general early childhood teachers are positive about the recent focus of the Ministry through the adoption of Te Whāriki and the Strategic Plan and associated qualification requirements as they see these as enhancing their profession and the development and learning of children.

The data from the original study (Kane & Mallon, 2006) reveals that primary and secondary teachers report being inadequately rewarded, undervalued and insufficiently supported by some or all of: colleagues, leaders, parents, students, boards of trustees, the Ministry of Education, government and public. However, a closer look at the sector-specific data demonstrates that this is not generally the case for early childhood teachers/head teachers.

There are elements of the role of early childhood teacher that are causing frustrations and could present as triggers to decisions to leave or to move within the sector. These relate predominantly to workload, the teacher’s physical capacity and health, administrative support, teacher/children ratios, and failure to achieve equity across the system in terms of salary, working conditions and holidays. While each of these deserve to be carefully considered and addressed, there is not a sense from the data that early childhood teachers are on the verge of leaving. Early childhood teachers are generally very satisfied with their role, positively disposed to professional development and largely positive about the future direction of the sector.

## 9.5 Enhancing Recruitment, Retention And Status Of ECE Teachers

What can be said with absolute confidence is that early childhood teachers, head teachers, management and student teachers believe that they have responsibility for an important service within society. It is with this underpinning assumption in mind, that participants within this study themselves offered a range of suggestions for enhancement of the recruitment and status of early childhood teachers. These are presented below for consideration.

It is acknowledged that many individuals and groups have been very active in the pursuit of such goals over many years and that the current confidence of early childhood teachers in their own efficacy can be attributed to the pioneering work of those who have recognised the value of early childhood education for all children. The following are therefore not promoted as unique to this research project, nor are they intended to in any way diminish or dismiss the current work already underway by both government and non-government agencies, social groups, parent groups, educational institutions and committed individuals. They are an attempt to gather together the ideas explicitly proposed by the early childhood participants within this study or implied through the data.

1. Public education programmes that promote children's early years as a time of critical development and learning for young children and consequently, early childhood teachers as pivotal to children's development.
2. Promotion of early childhood teaching as a rewarding and challenging career through making explicit how teachers are valued in our society would have the potential to first enhance the intrinsic motivation, satisfaction and self-image of current teachers and present a more positive and informed view of teaching to potential teacher candidates.
3. Promote early childhood teaching as a job at the cutting edge of society's achievements and challenges. The idea of promoting early childhood teaching as making an important contribution to society is not solely an effort to recruit new teachers. An important outcome of such an endeavour would be to demonstrate that the government and wider community do in fact value the contribution early childhood teachers make and the importance of the work they do with children in our society.
4. Promote early childhood teaching as a complex, challenging job that requires candidates to have multiple skills and capabilities – this is not a job for just anyone, it requires intelligent, competent, confident, skilled, enthusiastic candidates who would step up to and enjoy the challenge and privilege of working with parents and colleagues in the care and education of young children.
5. Do not disguise the complexity and challenges early childhood teachers face daily. Acknowledge the challenges of working with children from all facets of society and responding (with appropriate and informed support) to the challenges they bring to the classroom, whilst also endeavouring to support their development and learning – do not construe early childhood teaching as being just about fun.
6. Continue to promote and support professional development and ongoing professional learning opportunities for early childhood teachers.
7. Use current successful and motivated early childhood teachers to advertise teaching, and make explicit the motivation behind the dedicated teachers who do thrive in these complex working environments – reveal what makes them stay teaching in the face of the daily challenges, the heavy workload and the long hours. Get early childhood teachers to talk about what the wider community, including senior students

contemplating career choices, cannot intuit – the core reasons and intrinsic satisfaction gained from working in a dynamic, collegial, demanding but rewarding career.

8. Be open about the variable working hours and holidays and acknowledge that they are more generous (for some) than what is available in other professions – have early childhood teachers talk about how there is time with children and time away from them, where you can plan, read and think. Emphasise that depending on the area within the early childhood system, there can be flexibility and regular planned breaks to engage in other interests, to spend time with family, to gather energy and plan for another term ahead.
9. Confront the ambiguity and scope of early childhood teachers' work. If early childhood teachers are primarily expected to support children's learning, development and achievement then it is important to identify other duties that can be withdrawn from the teacher's day to day responsibilities, or, alternatively, that teachers are given the support to accomplish these tasks. This could include administrative and cleaning duties so prevalent in the work of some centres.
10. Explore the range of flexible working arrangements possible so that experienced teachers who are seeking to transition out of full-time work as a lead up to retirement or due to physical demands of the job can continue to work on a fractional basis. Thus, signalling the value of their experience and enabling current teachers to view early childhood education as a lifelong career.
11. Support and adequate resources are essential for effective implementation of early childhood teachers' work and these are matters that the Ministry of Education, and centre management committees, in particular need to consider. While resources typically imply increased costs and expenditure, some areas of support both within centres and on a community-wide level can be implemented through changes in attitudes and practices.
12. While salary alone is seldom identified as an independent factor affecting recruitment and retention, it is recognised as a factor within the complex set of influences on both current early childhood teachers and those considering ECE careers. Salary consistency across the early childhood sector would counter current feelings of inequity among some early childhood teachers, especially those in child care centres.
13. There are a number of research projects recently completed or currently underway which may assist the Ministry of Education with evidence to work with providers of initial teacher education, the Teachers Council, teacher unions, head teachers and teachers to consider ways to enhance the quality of initial early childhood teacher education across the number of providers within New Zealand. Consideration could be given to examining the efficacy of the diversity of forms of initial teacher education including examination of centre-based models.



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