> Evaluation of the Implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae* Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars: Impact evaluation of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* 2006 professional development

Report prepared for:

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> contents

> List of Figures

> Acknowledgements

> Chapter 1: Executive summary

This report presents findings from an impact evaluation of the 2006 Ministry of Education funded *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme. In 2006, this programme provided assessment professional development to licensed and chartered early childhood education (ECE) services and ECE sector organisations (tertiary level organisations). The programme supported the resource *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars.* This resource provides a framework for developing assessment practices within a sociocultural assessment framework that is consistent with the principles of *Te Whāriki,* the Ministry of Educations early childhood curriculum statement. Particular attention was paid to documenting narrative assessment practices.

The evaluation was a mixed methods study involving a survey (19 services participated), case studies and interviews at 18 services, and interviews at seven tertiary level organisation interviews. The evaluation found that the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development had a positive impact on assessment practices in the case study services. Services reported substantial and sustained shifts in the quality of assessment practices over the time period of the professional development and beyond. Shifts were also reported in the amount of assessment being done and the types of assessment practices. The reported influence of the professional development on these shifts was generally high and the professional development was positively regarded by a majority of services. Professional development characteristics valued highly by services were the quality of facilitation, the quality of the resource itself, and the benefits of service clustering for this professional development. In a number of services there was a readiness for change in assessment practices and this appears to have been a significant enabling factor for the professional development having an effect on assessment practice.

There is evidence from the evaluation that the 2006 professional development had strengthened sociocultural assessment practices in these services. Services had taken significant steps in building an assessment community of practice inclusive of educators, children and parents. Educators had established processes for linking assessment to curriculum planning, and there was extensive collaboration between educators in the noticing, recognising and responding aspects of formative assessment practice. Assessment was being made visible to this learning community through open access to assessment documentation and public displays of individual and group assessments. Analysis of learning and making learning visible through assessment was only moderately evidenced through assessment documentation. Learning dispositions, which describe the learner in action, were only moderately supported and used as a framework for recognising learning, and there was some uncertainty about their assessment utility.

Children's active engagement in the assessment process was strongly evidenced in interviews, including child voice in assessment documentation, child reflection on and analysis of assessment narratives, and the co-construction of next steps with educators. Assessment documentation rarely recorded this child engagement and its outcomes. Assessment documentation did clearly evidence a credit-based approach to assessment in that items reflected the passions, skills and working theories of individual children, and presented them as confident and competent individuals.

Many services were strongly committed to the engagement of parents in assessment and the use of parent voice. Some services had developed practices to raise the quantity and quality of parent engagement but it was acknowledged that results were mixed to date. Parent voice and its use by educators were not strongly evidenced in assessment documentation.

Bicultural and Pasifika assessment practices were rare in assessment documentation, and these were acknowledged as low focus areas of assessment practice development in these services. Many services reflected New Zealand's bicultural and multicultural society in their day to day curriculum and teaching practices but this was not often reflected in individual assessments.

A general finding across a number of dimensions of practice was that assessment documentation did not evidence the levels of quality assessment practice described at interview. Children's portfolios often did not contain evidence of continuity and development of learning, or the engagement of children and parents in the formative assessment process. While documented assessments were being used formatively, these practices rarely became part of the written narrative.

> ## Chapter 2: Introduction

This report presents the findings from the Ministry of Education funded evaluation project: *Evaluation of the Implementation of Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (2006). This evaluation took place in 2007 and early 2008 and was undertaken by Cognition Consulting Limited with support from UNITEC Institute of Technology.

A component of the evaluation was an assessment survey of early childhood education services. This survey was targeted at services that had not yet received *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. The findings from this survey are contained in a separate report: *Evaluation of the Implementation of Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars. Assessment Survey of Early Childhood Education Services*. Some references to the survey findings are made in this report where they add meaning to the main findings.

This report is structured as follows. Chapter 3 is an overview of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme and the sociocultural assessment principles that underpin this resource and the professional development programme. Chapter 4 outlines the evaluation methodology for this mixed methods impact evaluation. Chapter 5 presents evaluation findings about: overall shifts in the quality, quantity and type of assessment practices for services since 2006; the attribution of these shifts in assessment practice to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development received in 2006, and specific reported effects on practice linked to the professional development; educator feedback about the model of professional development; and, barriers to and enablers of shifts in assessment practice. Chapter 6 looks in detail at the nature of current assessment practices at services involved as case studies in this evaluation, with reference to the Ministry of Education's desired professional development outcomes in 2006. Chapter 7 presents and discusses the main findings using the Ministry's ultimate impact areas of: quality of curriculum; teaching and learning practice; children's learning experiences and outcomes; and, teacher/educator relationships with parents and whānau and the nature of those relationships. It also presents some key issues for consideration.

> Chapter 3: Background to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme and sociocultural assessment

This chapter outlines the genesis of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme and introduces some key principles of sociocultural assessment practice which inform the professional development programme and resource.

Background to *Kei Tua o te Pae*

The government's strategic plan for early childhood education (ECE), *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki,* sets out three major goals for the sector:

- increasing participation in quality ECE services;

- improving the quality of ECE services; and

- promoting collaborative relationships.

(Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2)

This strategic plan upholds *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa / Early Childhood Curriculum*, the New Zealand national early childhood curriculum that has been in place since 1996. *Te Whāriki* introduced a discussion about the connection between curriculum and assessment stressing that the *Te Whāriki* principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships were also the guiding principles of assessment practice for the sector (Ministry of Education, 1996b, pp. 132-133).

Commentators have acknowledged that although *Te Whāriki* situated assessment within a sociocultural and formative frame, until relatively recently there has been a lack of clarity about how such assessment practice should occur in services (Carr, 2003; Carr, Hatherly, Lee, & Ramsey, 2003; Hatherly & Richardson, 2007). Hatherley and Richardson (2007) also note that assessment was an underdeveloped aspect of early childhood pedagogy until the 1990s, with assessments dominated by summative practices measuring children's acquired knowledge and skills to evaluate readiness for school (Carr, 2003). Further, assessment was deeply informed by a developmental frame dating from the early 20th century. Carr (2001) provides a personal reflection of this summative and developmental basis to children's assessment describing her own folk model of assessment as a practitioner. Her folk model prescribed that: the purpose of assessment was to check readiness for school; outcomes of interest were skills rather than habits of mind or learning dispositions; assessment should isolate deficits in children's skills and knowledge for remedy; detached observations were the appropriate assessment method for objectivity;

children's progress should be measured in the development of more complex skills; and, that ultimately assessment was *about* children not *for* others – including external agencies (pp. 1–4).

Accountability expectations for services involving children's assessment rose subsequent to *Te Whāriki's* release in 1996, providing further impetus to assessment reform. The Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) for licensed services and centres from 1996 stated that curriculum *and* assessment practices should:

a.   reflect the holistic way children learn

b.   reflect the reciprocal relationships between the child, people and the learning environment

c.   involve parents/ guardians and, where appropriate, whānau and

d.   enhance children's sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners.

(Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 1)

Although there were no guidelines for assessment or service planning in the mid 1990s, the Education Review Office began assessing services' practices in these areas. It was mandatory for services to have evidence of documented assessments that contributed to learning (Carr, 2003; Carr, May, & Podmore, 1998). The authors also suggest that general public interest in the outcomes of early childhood education, including in relation to overarching social and economic national goals, intensified at this time.

Clearly, both curriculum philosophy and accountability expectations were placing particular pressures on existing early childhood assessment methods in New Zealand at this time. On the one hand, there was a sense that assessment needed to align more with curriculum principles and, on the other, assessments were being expected to evidence individual and system success (Hatherly & Richardson, 2007). The Ministry of Education sponsored two projects in the mid 1990s to move forward on the development of assessment approaches that would support the principles of *Te Whāriki* by providing meaningful formative assessments within a sociocultural frame. The first project, *Assessing Children's Experiences in Early Childhood Settings*, developed the learning stories framework (Carr, 1998). Learning stories are a narrative method of documenting children's learning, which is 'credit' rather than 'deficit' based. These narratives concentrate on learning dispositions, and providing feedback and feed-forward to children, educators and families (see Carr, 2001). This work was expanded to include evaluations of programmes via 'teaching stories' (Carr et al., 1998). The second project, *Early Childhood Learning and Assessment (Exemplar) Project,* commencing in 2001, began collecting exemplars of documented assessment practices that reflected the sociocultural principles of *Te Whāriki*. This project ultimately led to the

development of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* assessment resource and the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme.

The *Kei Tua o te Pae* assessment resource was developed to achieve the following objectives:

■ develop a resource to support and guide assessment practice that is embedded within the dynamics of teaching and learning and the context of *Te Whāriki*;

■ illustrate what progress in learning means within the context of *Te Whāriki* where knowledge, skills and attitudes combine as learning dispositions and working theories;

■ develop a learning and assessment resource that speaks to Māori children and whānau participating in English-medium early childhood settings;

■ involve parents, whānau, teachers and children in collaborative discussions and assessment of children's learning and assessment, with the objective of collaboratively responding to and strengthening ongoing, diverse learning pathways; and

■ increase the quality of all children's learning experience in ECE by strengthening their sense of themselves as capable, competent learners, secure in their identity and sense of belonging.

(Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 3)

The first eight books of the assessment resource *Kei Tua o te Pae / Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* were distributed to all licensed and chartered ECE services in February 2005. These books were:

■ Book 1: An introduction to Kei Tua o te Pae (Ministry of Education, 2004g)

■ Book 2: Sociocultural Assessment (Ministry of Education, 2004h)

■ Book 3: Bicultural Assessment (Ministry of Education, 2004e)

■ Book 4: Children Contributing to Their Own Assessment (Ministry of Education, 2004f)

■ Book 5: Assessment and Learning: Community (Ministry of Education, 2004a)

■ Book 6: Assessment and Learning: Competence (Ministry of Education, 2004b)

■ Book 7: Assessment and Learning: Continuity (Ministry of Education, 2004c)

■ Book 8: Assessment for Infants and Toddlers (Ministry of Education, 2004d)

In 2006, a ninth book was released to services addressing sociocultural assessment for children with special learning needs:

- Book 9: Inclusive assessment (Ministry of Education, 2005)

In November 2007 six further titles structured around the strands of Te Whāriki were distributed to services:

- Book 10: An Introduction to Books 11-15 (Ministry of Education, 2007a)

- Book 11: The Strands of Te Whāriki: Belonging (Ministry of Education, 2007b)

- Book 12: The Strands of Te Whāriki: Well-being (Ministry of Education, 2007f)

- Book 13: The Strands of Te Whāriki: Exploration (Ministry of Education, 2007e)

- Book 14: The Strands of Te Whāriki: Communication (Ministry of Education, 2007c)

- Book 15: The Strands of Te Whāriki: Contribution (Ministry of Education, 2007d)

These A4 booklets are assembled across two ring binder-type folders, with the first folder containing Books 1 to 9 and the second Books 10 to 15. The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource is commonly referred to as the 'folder', 'kit' or 'booklets'.

Book 1 describes the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource as:

> *... a professional development resource to enable learning communities to discuss assessment issues in general, both in terms of Te Whāriki and in terms of their own specific settings. They introduce principles that will help learning communities develop their own assessments of children's learning.* (Ministry of Education, 2004g, p. 2)

Each book commences by introducing the assessment principle or principles in question including links to learning and assessment theory and to *Te Whāriki*. The remainder of each book provides a series of narrative assessment exemplars in a variety of formats that demonstrate the particular assessment principle in some way. Many contain photos of the learner or learners in action and children's products. Sometimes the exemplars are a series of learning episodes for an individual or group over a period of time, demonstrating continuity and development.

Book 1 defines what *exemplars* means in this resource:

> *Exemplars are **examples of assessments** that **make visible learning** that is valued so that the **learning community** (children, families, whānau, teachers, and others) can foster **ongoing and diverse learning pathways**.* (Ministry of Education, 2004g, p. 3, emphasis in original)

Book 1 makes the point that the exemplars were not selected because they were perfect or 'exemplary' but because they illustrate important aspects of sociocultural assessment. This book also cautions that the exemplars are snapshots of learning in the sense that they cannot illustrate all the learning and

opportunities to learn that the child would be experiencing at his or her service, and that the child's portfolio would be more likely to reveal this.

Each exemplar is followed by an annotation comprising a standard set of reflective questions and a response from the authors including links to various assessment ideas. These questions vary between the two folders (i.e. books 1 to 9 and books 10 – 15). In the first folder these questions are:

- What's happening here?

- What aspects of _____ (assessment principle) does this assessment exemplify?

- How might this documented assessment contribute to _____ (assessment principle)?

- What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising and responding in this place?

In the second folder of books, the second question has been modified and the fourth is replaced with a new question which acknowledges the strands that these books address:

- What's happening here?

- What does this assessment tell us about the learning (using a _____ (relevant strand) lens)?

- How might this assessment contribute to _____ (relevant strand)?

- What other strands of *Te Whāriki* are exemplified here?

As noted above, the resource is not considered to be a standalone reference or text about sociocultural assessment, but rather a resource for services to engage with in a service professional development context. The 2004/05 budget allocated approximately $2.5 million each year for five years to support the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae* including Ministry of Education-funded professional development.

Professional development providers, under contract to the Ministry of Education, began delivering *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to services and tertiary level organisations in 2005. This professional development is scheduled to continue until December 2009. In 2006, three providers were contracted to deliver *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development:

- combined Colleges of Education and Universities[1], delivering professional development to predominantly tertiary level organisations, kindergartens, home-based services and playcentres nationally;

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[1] Comprising: University of Auckland, University of Waikato, Massey University, Victoria University of Wellington, Christchurch College of Education, Dunedin College of Education

- Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa New Zealand Childcare Association, delivering professional development to education and care services nationally; and

- Education Leadership Project (ELP), delivering professional development to education and care services and kindergartens in northern parts of the North Island.

The professional development itself has two target audiences. The first is teachers/educators in licensed and chartered ECE services encompassing kindergartens, home-based networks, education and care services and playcentres. This service-level professional development delivery model has varied slightly by professional development provider and by cluster circumstances. However, the core components, which occur over a year, are:

- the drawing together of up to eight services into a professional development cluster, grouped by geographical proximity, service type, or some other affiliation. Services unable to cluster for a variety of reasons have received individual service professional development;

- the selection of lead participants from each service to attend offsite cluster seminars and workshops, and communicate learning to their services;

- cluster seminars (2) where lead participants are introduced to the big ideas in the *Kei Tua o Te Pae* resource;

- inservice facilitator support to assist services to undertake a needs analysis, develop service assessment goals and a professional development action plan, and to provide service and/or individual level support around assessment practices and procedures;

- cluster workshops (3) for lead participants to explore key ideas in *Kei Tua o te Pae* of particular interest to the cluster;

- an evaluation of the service action plan, sometimes involving a presentation by services of their professional development experiences and outcomes to the wider cluster.

The second target audience for the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme in 2006 was tertiary level organisations. In this project, 'tertiary level' encompasses professionals in tertiary institutions delivering the Diploma of Teaching ECE or above, professional staff in umbrella organisations with responsibility for licensed and chartered ECE services [for instance regional kindergarten associations] and ECE professionals within education agencies and service providers to the sector (e.g., the Ministry of Education and Education Review Office, other ECE professional development providers) (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 4). In 2005 and 2006, a total of 156 organisations participated in this aspect of the professional development. The delivery model of professional development to these organisations has

varied in both scope and timeframe depending on the identified needs and circumstances of these organisations.

This use of 'three strategic pathways or levels of support for change' in the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae* – resource, service level professional development, and tertiary level professional development, was intended to increase the programme's capacity for change. It was believed that improved teacher/educator practices and greater sector wide understanding and support for these new practices, underpinned by comprehensive guiding documentation, would be mutually reinforcing in supporting better learning experiences and outcomes for children (Ministry of Education, 2006).

In 2006, an overarching outcome and set of focus areas for change were set to guide the professional development providers in facilitating action plans with services participating in *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. The overarching outcome at the service level was to implement effective *assessment for learning* practices based on socio-cultural theory that strengthens engagement (teachers, children and families) in children's learning.

Focus areas of change for 2006 were:

- participants become familiar with, understand and articulate *Kei Tua o te Pae* and how it strengthens the development of sociocultural assessment approaches and practices;

- assessment practices are based on the principles of *Te Whāriki*;

- assessment practices and documentation evidence children's engagement in their own assessment;

- documentation practices make learning visible and thus enable children, families, whānau, teachers/educators and beyond to foster diverse learning pathways;

- assessment practices value and integrate Māori knowledge and ways of being and learning;

- assessment practices value and respond to Pasifika cultures, knowledge and ways of learning;

- assessment practices involve parents and whānau as partners in their children's learning; and

- curriculum leadership is developed through the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae.*

Sociocultural assessment practice

The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource and professional development outcomes uphold a sociocultural foundation to assessment practice. In doing so, this resource and programme aim to engage educators in the enterprise of linking assessment to learning through *Te Whāriki's* principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships. Lee and Carr (2002) provide a set of assessment

premises that interpret these curriculum principles. If assessment is to be empowering for children, by constructing their sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners, it firstly needs to be focused on strengthening those learning dispositions, or habits of mind, associated with the five strands of the curriculum: Well-being; Belonging; Contribution; Exploration; and Communication.

Learning dispositions are combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes that children bring to a learning context. Carr (2001) describes them as the state of being 'ready, willing and able' to learn. Being ready means possessing the inclination or motivation to participate. Being willing is exhibiting the judgement to know whether it is an appropriate situation to undertake this behaviour. Being able embodies having the skills and understandings to participate at a specific moment. Dispositions are context-dependent, and services are expected to support children to use dispositions more effectively in an ever-widening range of contexts (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 8). The connection between the *Te Whāriki* strands, learning dispositions, and the learning dispositions in action is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The relationship between *Te Whariki strands*, learning dispositions and learning dispositions in action

Strand	Learning disposition	Learning disposition in action
Belonging	Courage and curiosity to find an interest here	Taking an interest
Well-being	Trust that this is a safe place to be involved and the playfulness that often follows from deep involvement	Being involved
Exploration	Perseverance to tackle and persist with difficulty and uncertainty	Persisting with difficulty, challenge, and uncertainty
Communication	Confidence to express ideas or a point of view	Expressing a point of view or feeling
Contribution	Responsibility for justice and fairness and the disposition to take another point of view	Taking responsibility

(Podmore, May, & Carr, 2001)

A second way that assessment, in a sociocultural context, should associate with children's competence is through a credit based approach to assessment. This principle holds that progress in learning flows from paying attention to children's strengths and interests, and noticing the presence, not absence, of dispositions (Carr et al., 1998; Hatherly & Sands, 2002). The aim of this approach is to build on the assets of existing behaviours through wider and deeper contexts.

Thirdly, it is held that assessment should include children's voices. Children's voice is defined broadly as the child being visible or active in documented assessment processes (Lee & Carr, 2002). This can take place in a number of ways including the documenting of conversations between children and teachers, using photographs in documentation, engaging children in reflection on their stories and the recording of children's reflective comments to add further interpretation to the recognising process, and allowing children to make decisions on what is assessed, assessment goals and next steps. Sociocultural assessment addresses objectivity or validity through the integration of multiple voices in the assessment process including parents, teachers and children. In the discourse that arises through the merging of these perspectives [including those of children] in documented and undocumented assessment practices, a more robust analysis of the learner's action results (Hatherly & Sands, 2002).

Fourthly, sociocultural assessment should describe the assessment in ways that families and children can appreciate. Assessment practices should involve parents/guardians and, where appropriate, wider whānau. Here, Lee and Carr (2002) stress that assessment documentation must be accessible to families (in terms of its physical accessibility and its narrative structure and tone), and assessment practices must provide extensive facility for families to contribute their own voice and stories from home. This supports assessment in two ways. Firstly, it makes the learning visible to parents and children through narrative. It, therefore, models a view of children and their learning that parents and children can engage with to facilitate their own understandings. Secondly, it creates a space for parents and, as mentioned above, children to contribute to the assessment process by, for example, adding to stories or communicating interests and knowledge.

Lee and Carr (2002) argue that sociocultural assessment practices reflect the holistic way that people learn by featuring children's enterprises over a number of episodes and by documenting service-wide projects and relationships. By developing stories over time and space, these narratives show development and evolution of dispositions in new situations and give opportunity for better understandings of the learner in action. Service-wide projects allow for exploration of social relationships and the positions different children assume in the development and evolution of group interests.

To reflect the reciprocal relationships between children, people and the learning environment, Lee and Carr (2002) firstly assert that assessment should advocate for early childhood learning. In this sense, assessment should model practices and relationships that value children as competent and capable. This includes making portfolios accessible to children for reflection and establishing artefacts of positive relationships and valued learning. Assessment should also reflect children's relationships with the environment, building connections between children and their local communities and physical

environments. Similarly, assessments should profile developing relationships between teachers and children.

Cowie and Carr (2004) suggest that there are three significant ways that documented assessment practices can meaningfully support *Te Whāriki's* principles and strands in New Zealand. The first is that documented assessment can act as a 'conscription device' or recruitment into a community of learners. In particular, accessible and documented formative assessment provides opportunities for parents to engage with the material and participate with educators in productive ways that are not open to them through other assessment forms. With this co-scribing, the assessment becomes a site for interaction and feedback between different members of the learning community, thereby extending the formative capacity of what has been included (Hatherly & Richardson, 2007). Secondly, assessment has the capacity to construct competence and to develop competent learners. This happens through the creation of affirming stories that identify children in strong and diverse roles, directing assessment to recognise and strengthen learning dispositions, and through children being active in assessment processes in the role of self-assessor. Thirdly, assessments reveal and support continuity in learning. Assessments provide the materials to take learning in new, and potentially uncertain, directions. In this way, learning is positioned as ongoing and open to many possible developments.

The 'three Cs' above – conscription, competence and continuity all point to a learning community of assessment. Sociocultural assessment is a social practice that necessarily requires the engagement of educators, children, parents/whanau, and others in the noticing, recognising and responding aspects of formative assessment. A learning community that relies on co-analysis and co-construction of goals and learning directions necessitates significantly different power relations between educators, children and parents to those that are imbedded in a traditional summative paradigm.

These elements of sociocultural assessment practice are discussed and represented further in the next sections as the methodology for the evaluation is described and the evaluation findings presented and discussed.

This chapter outlines the evaluation methodology including evaluation objectives and data collection and analysis methods.

Evaluation objectives

The Ministry of Education in its Request for Proposals (RFP) stated the evaluation's purpose as evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae / Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars.* The overarching goal of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006 was to "implement effective *assessment for learning* practices based on socio-cultural theory that strengthens engagement (teachers, children and families) in children's learning". The Ministry desired that the evaluation assess the 'shifts and changes' to educator practices as a consequence of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in relation to the following 2006 focus areas of change as described in the previous chapter.

The evaluation was to assess how these shifts and changes ultimately impacted on four areas:

- the quality of the curriculum;

- teaching and assessment practice;

- children's learning experiences and outcomes; and

- teacher/educator relationships with parents and whānau and the nature of those relationships.

Of central importance to the evaluation methodology was assessment of the impact of the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development within its theoretical context of sociocultural assessment practice. While the evaluation focus was on shifts in practice at the service level, the evaluation also considered the interaction of service practice and the other *Kei Tua o te Pae* programme components: the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource, and tertiary level professional development.

Evaluation scope

After discussions with the Ministry of Education and ECE services it became clear that it was appropriate to focus this retrospective impact evaluation on 2006 professional development participants only. The significant time difference between the delivery of professional development for 2005 service participants and the 2007 evaluation fieldwork schedule would magnify issues of participant recall, and the influence of non-programme factors such as staff turnover or subsequent assessment professional development.

Both these issues would complicate the determination of practice shifts and the role of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in these shifts.

The evaluation scope included four areas of data collection. The first was data through service case studies about shifts in educator practices associated with the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme. The second area was a baseline survey[2] of early childhood education services that had *not* yet received *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. This would provide information on assessment practices and engagement with the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource in situations where official *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development was absent. Thirdly, the evaluation included interviews with each of the 2006 professional development providers. Lastly, the evaluation collected interview data from a small selection of tertiary level organisations about their experiences of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development and its impacts.

The evaluation also reviewed relevant documents such as assessment literature, professional development provider milestone reports, policy documents and centre/service assessment material.

The data collection methods that responded to each of these areas are covered below.

Early childhood education services case studies

A case study method, at the service level, was chosen as the leading method to collect data about shifts in practices resulting from the professional development. *Kei Tua o Te Pae's* purposes influenced this choice in several ways.

- Firstly, the resource and professional development focus on documented narrative assessment practices meant that services' documented assessments in children's portfolios and elsewhere were going to be data of interest.

- Secondly, *Kei Tua o te Pae's* supported goal of creating a professional community of learning around assessment pointed to data collection methods that afforded opportunities for participants to interact with the researchers in ways that reflected their development in this area.

- Thirdly, because the service level component of the professional development provided significant scope for services to develop objectives and focus activities that responded to their development needs, preferences and circumstances, the flexibility of a case study method enabled the collection of appropriate data that were reflective of this diverse implementation. Related to this was the inherent

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[2] A separate report on the results of this survey has been completed as a supplement to this report.

diversity at the service level of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development participants. As shown below, the case studies covered kindergartens, private and community education and care services, playcentres and home-based services. These service types differ in terms of physical environment, staffing, philosophy, session times, and operating routines. Sometimes these differences between services in the same service category are significant. Addressing these differences through appropriate modifications to interview questions and methods required the support of key contacts in these services backed by the flexibility of a case study method.

■ Fourthly, the case study method allowed data to be collected from observations of public displays of assessments and discussions of these by educators at the services.

The evaluation timeframe, relative to programme implementation, also made a case study method attractive because clarity about events and reported shifts in practice could be pieced together through a range of voices and different forms of evidence. This data triangulation strengthened the weight of evidence to be presented about effects and attribution.

The next section discusses the evaluation team's approach to the service case study component of the evaluation including sampling and recruitment, data collection and analysis.

ECE service case study sampling and recruitment

Only services that had received *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006 were considered for the target sample of 26 case studies. For logistical reasons, only services in the greater Wellington and Auckland regions were sampled. Ministry of Education data from the project showed that in 2006, a total of 194 services received the professional development in either Wellington (73) or Auckland (121). This limitation does need to be acknowledged in terms of generalising these findings across New Zealand.

Sampling sought to approximate the professional development participant profile by relevant ECE service type without significantly compromising the sample's relationship to the national profile of these services. It was not intended to develop a sample by service type to generalise and compare by service-type. Rather, the diversity of service types provided the opportunity to see whether patterns of effects on practice and their reported attribution to *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development persisted across a heterogeneous sample; if they did it would add reliability to the findings (Quinn Patton, 2002, p 235).

Sampling considered whether prospective case study services approximated the norm professional development experience, and had completed the professional development. This sampling approach was justified on the basis that rich data would not be forthcoming from services with a limited experience, and that the Ministry of Education already holds data through milestone reports for those services where the professional development has been incomplete or glaringly unsuccessful. To this end, sampling

considered existing Ministry of Education professional development provider milestone data about services' general experiences and progress against their objectives. Further, each provider was asked to provide the evaluation team with the name of any services that had experienced significant staff turnover since the professional development or where, in the provider's view, the experience had been incomplete or unsuccessful.

Services which satisfied the above criteria were stratified by region [Auckland/Wellington] and then service type [kindergarten, education and care service, playcentre, and home-based care]. The initial sample was then randomly selected from that listing. After discussion about this original sample with the Ministry of Education it was decided to increase the number of Pasifika-focused services from one to two.

To support the recruitment process, the umbrella organisations for playcentres and kindergartens were contacted about the participation of the services within their regional or national jurisdiction and asked to facilitate the initial invitation to participate. Services that affirmed to their umbrella association that they were willing to participate were then sent full information and a consent form. This process proved generally effective in securing playcentres and, to a slightly lesser extent, kindergartens. The initial strategy was to replace those services that declined to participate with a same-type service from the same region, with attention paid to the professional development experience criteria described above.

Table 2 compares the final sample with each of: the target sample; the 2006 professional development participation by region (Auckland and Wellington); and the national population of each of these services. The final sample of 25 services was close to the target sample of 26 in terms of service type. Two differences are worth noting. Firstly, the evaluation team found it relatively difficult to recruit kindergartens and the final sample contained five kindergartens rather than the seven targeted. One of these was replaced by an education and care service. A sixth kindergarten did eventually agree to participate but confirmation of this came too late to include this service in the fieldwork timeframe.

Table 2: Comparison of case study final sample by service type

Service type	National population*		Auckland 2006 PD participants		Wellington 2006 PD participants		Target sample		Final sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Playcentre	492	17	11	9	8	11	4	15	4	16
Kindergarten	606	21	42	35	22	30	7	27	5	20
Education and Care	1612	55	67	55	27	37	13**	50	14**	56
Home-based service	194	7	1	1	16	22	2	8	2	8
Total	2904		121		73		26		25	

* The national comparison figures exclude ECE service types that were not participants in *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development such as Kohanga Reo.

** In the target sample, seven of the education and care services were privately owned and six were community-based services. In the final sample, five of the services were privately owned and nine were community based. This variation is discussed below.

ECE service case study data collection methods

The case study methodology utilised four forms of data collection: surveys (a service/centre survey, and a participant survey); individual and group interviews; document analysis of children's assessment portfolios[3]; and general observation. Each of these methods is outlined below (see Appendix 1 for a copy of these instruments).

Surveys

A short **centre/service survey** (Appendix 1.1) was developed to gather data on participant characteristics, service characteristics, professional development experiences, and preliminary information on the nature of current assessment practices. Collecting data in this way meant that the interview time could be more fully devoted to discussion about practice rather than spending time collecting background data and basic information that was readily accessible through a survey questionnaire.

The centre/ service survey was sent to the participating service prior to the field visit and collected on the day of the visit. It was addressed to a *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development lead participant, or a

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[3] 'Portfolios' refers to a collation of a single child's documented narrative assessments [such as learning stories] and other items associated with that child's learning and experiences at the service. These documents are known by different names including 'folders', 'profiles', 'books' and 'journals'. For convenience, portfolio is the term generally used in this report.

professional leader at the service if a lead participant was not available. The survey solicited the following data from these individuals:

- participant characteristics;

- service characteristics;

- *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development activities;

- assessment focus areas related to the Ministry of Education's 2006 focus areas of change for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development;

- the assessment roles for this person before and after the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development; and

- the perceived impact of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development on current assessment activities, and comment on this.

Completed centre/ service surveys were received from 18 services (76% of the sample).

A slightly shorter **individual participant survey** (Appendix 1.2) was developed for completion by current staff members at the service that had participated in the professional development in 2006. This survey too was distributed prior to the visit with the intention of collecting responses during the field visit. This participant survey solicited the following data:

- participant characteristics;

- *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development activities;

- the assessment roles for this person before and after the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development; and

- the perceived impact of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development on current assessment activities, and comment on this.

Participant surveys were completed by 62 participants in 20 services (80% of services) with between one and six respondents at each of these services completing a survey.

Interviews

A case study service interview instrument was developed with slight variations for an individual interview (Appendix 1.3) or a group situation (Appendix 1.4). The evaluation team sought to interview lead participants in the professional development as well as educators that had participated in the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. Given the limited non-contact time available to some ECE

educators, the evaluation team's aim was to provide flexibility in how and when educator interviews were undertaken. In some services, there was a series of individual interviews over a day or different days, whereas other services found it more logistically feasible and/or appropriate[4] to be interviewed in one or more groups.

The interview sought information about current assessment practice in relation to a number of elements of sociocultural assessment practice which were established as lead questions. These elements were:

- children being active in the assessment process;

- making learning visible;

- building on children's prior knowledge;

- using learning dispositions in assessment;

- engaging family and whānau;

- bicultural assessment practice;

- Pasifika assessment practice; and

- collective assessment practices.

Response categories for coding the comments made during the interview were developed for each of these questions reflecting key dimensions of this assessment element. Interviewers recorded whether these dimensions were articulated at interview and took appropriate notes. Responses outside of these categories, and general comments and select quotes were recorded by interviewers and later entered and coded in MS Excel and NVivo 7.

The second part of the interview asked participants to make some specific assessments of the quality and quantity of assessment practices at three points in time: before the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, immediately after the professional development had formally finished, and at the time of the interview. Individuals were asked to make these assessments for themselves and the service generally, whereas groups provided an assessment for the service as a whole only. To capture this information about quality and quantity efficiently and to provide participants with a tool to assist them to reflect on their responses, participants were asked to plot three points on a grid with two intersecting

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[4] Some services opted for a group interview because they felt this reflected the collaborative dimension to their professional development experience, i.e. that they had experienced the professional development as a team and would prefer to talk about it as a collective. Where this was the case comments were coded as one interview.

axes – quantity of PD on the horizontal axis and quality of PD on the vertical axis (Appendix 1.5). These plots represented the intersection of the quality and quantity of assessment practices at these three points in time. The plots captured a pattern of change which was used to prompt participants about the enablers of, and barriers to, changes in the quality and quantity of assessment practices, and to rate the extent to which *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development had contributed to this pattern of change.

A total of 33 individual interviews took place in 18 services, and 14 group interviews involving 44 interviewees took place in 12 services. Additionally, one group interview [five participants] and two individual interviews of home-based educators took place with a revised interview question schedule. These interview responses were coded but their results were not included with the other interview data given the different nature of the questions. These responses were, however, considered at the analysis stage and references to them are made in the findings. Across all case study services (n=25), a total of 84 educators were interviewed.

Portfolio assessment item analysis

Although the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource notes that most assessment in ECE will not be documented (Ministry of Education, 2004g, p. 11), the focus of the resource is the use of documented narrative assessments to promote continuity of learning, support a wider community of practice around assessment and learning, and build children's competence and confidence as learners. To provide an additional lens on assessment practices in services, an assessment item content analysis instrument was developed to collect data from 10 portfolios in each case study service (Appendix 1.6).

Services were provided with an information notice about this aspect of the data collection to distribute to parents. This notice informed parents that they could withdraw their child's portfolio from consideration for this aspect of the evaluation. No parents took this action. The case study services were asked to make portfolios available to the evaluation team that were for current children and contained a number of 2007 assessment items. From this initial batch, ten portfolios were selected randomly [where there were more than 10 to select from] with consideration to obtaining a range of child ages [in split-age services] and a number of assessment items to choose from. From each portfolio, five individual narrative assessment items were selected for coding. Some services were unable to make 10 portfolios available during the evaluator's visit, and some that were selected did not contain five examples of documented narrative assessments. These were still used and the total number of portfolios and examples reflects this shortfall in some instances. A total of 207 individual portfolios were examined, and 967 items selected from across the 25 centres/services.

Within each single portfolio the evaluator selected recent narrative assessment items for content analysis. Most portfolios contained examples of children's artwork or other artefacts/products and these were not analysed unless there was narrative/story associated with the item. Many portfolios also contained a generic record of a significant event at the service such as a trip to the zoo, and these were sometimes assessed, particularly if they featured the individual child in question and evidenced a recognising process.

For each assessment item, the following general data were collected:

- the date of the item;

- whether it was a group or individual item; and

- whether it had a future of past assessment item associated with it.

Each assessment item was examined for slight or extensive evidence of certain features of sociocultural assessment practice of interest to this evaluation. If an assessment feature was not apparent this was recorded as such. The assessment features for which data were collected were:

- children's interests, skills, knowledge, culturally valued literacies, working theories are visible;

- next steps focus on strengthening/developing dispositions;

- teachers responding to child voice;

- child's voice included;

- child setting their own learning goals;

- key behaviours or dispositions are described;

- child's family context is valued and visible;

- integration of Māori knowledge and ways of learning/being;

- use of te reo in documented assessment;

- integration of Pasifika knowledge and ways of learning; and

- use of relevant Pasifika languages in documented assessment.

Notes were also made about individual assessment items and portfolio generally and these were collated and coded in MS Excel.

<u>General observations</u>

One of the strengths of a case study fieldwork method is the opportunities it creates to collect data of interest outside of prepared questions and areas of enquiry (Cohen & Manion, 1980, p. 146). In each case study service, general notes were recorded by the evaluator in the areas of assessment practice, enablers and barriers, professional development experiences, and other areas of interest (Appendix 1.7). These notes were transcribed and coded in MS Excel and NVivo 7. The evaluators were provided with a number of items from services that reflected their experiences with the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme or current assessment practices. These included narratives about the service's 'learning journey' narrative assessment templates and planning documents. These items were reviewed but not coded and analysed.

Professional development provider interviews

As noted in the previous chapter, in 2006 there were three organisations contracted to deliver the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme: combined Colleges of Education and Universities, Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa New Zealand Childcare Association, and Education Leadership Project (ELP). A key individual or individuals[5] from each of these providers was interviewed during the evaluation. Data were gathered in the following areas:

- the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development model;

- the overall outcomes of the professional development at the service level;

- enablers and barriers for services in achieving their desired *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development outcomes; and

- recommendations for the future delivery of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development.

The interviews were conducted face to face with the providers and recorded using audio tape. Interviews were fully transcribed and coded using NVivo 7. These data supported evaluator understanding about the programme delivery model.

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[5] For ELP and the combined colleges, a single person was interviewed, and for Te Tari Puna Ora both the current and former *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development coordinator were interviewed together.

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Tertiary level organisation interviews

Since its commencement in 2005 the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme has delivered professional development to 'tertiary level' organisations. As mentioned in the previous chapter this tertiary level has encompassed teacher education providers, ECE umbrella organisations with responsibility for licensed and chartered services and education agencies and service providers. To assist with this evaluation's focus on shifts in assessment practice at the service level, the evaluation included phone interviews with seven organisations that had received professional development in 2006. The organisational participants in these interviews were

- a teacher education provider

- a regional association for an ECE service type

- a regional association for a home based service

- a regional office of a national ECE evaluation organisation

- a national professional development team for a service type

- a national association for an ECE service type

- a national professional services team for a commercial provider of ECE services.

Each of these interviews gathered data on:

- professional development delivery characteristics;

- the professional development participants;

- the extent of the linkages between the tertiary level *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development delivered and the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development received by services of interest to the tertiary level organisation;

- the perceived impacts at the tertiary organisation level;

- the perceived impacts at the service level (for those services and educators associated with the tertiary organisation); and

- recommendations for the future delivery of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development.

These interviews were conducted by phone and notes were taken during the interview. These notes were also coded using NVivo 7.

Assessment survey of early childhood education services

In November 2007, a survey was administered to services that Ministry of Education records showed had not received any Ministry of Education professional development in 2005 and 2006, including the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. However, a high proportion of the services [49%] self-reported receiving *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development during this period. There are a number of potential reasons for this including that the services received assessment professional development from other sources and have confused the two.

A full report of the findings from this survey is provided in the companion report: *Evaluation of the Implementation of Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Assessment survey of early childhood education services.* Some data from this survey is referenced in this report to support understanding about the impact of the professional development and the role of the resource itself.

Table 3 shows the profile of assessment survey respondents by service type, and a comparison with the national population of these service types.

Table 3: Response profile by service type and national comparison

	Respondents (n)	Percentage of respondents (%)	NationalComparison (KTotP target services)* (%)
Education and Care	62	39	55
Free Kindergarten	46	29	21
Home-based network	20	12	7
Playcentre	32	20	17
Total	**160**	**100**	**100**

* The national comparison figures exclude service types that were not participants in *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development such as Kohanga Reo.

The assessment survey collected data on:

■ individual and service characteristics;

■ the service's recent professional development experience;

■ the service's use of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource;

■ current assessment practices at the service; and

■ future professional development priorities, and in particular the relative priority of assessment professional development.

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Data Collection summary

Table 4 presents the number of participating organisations and individuals for each method of data collection in this evaluation.

Table 4: Summary of data collection methods, participants and areas

Data collection method	Individual participants	Participant organisations
Case studies: participant surveys	81	23
Case studies: interviews	84 (47 interviews)	25
Case studies: portfolio content analysis	207 children / 967 items	25
Case studies: general observation	N/A	25
Tertiary level organisation interviews	7	7
Professional development provider interviews	4	3
Assessment survey	160	160

Data Analysis

The evaluation collected data from some 471 human participants (including 207 children for the portfolio assessment item analysis, and 160 educators in the assessment survey) across 195 institutions. To enable the evaluation to explore the impacts of the professional development on assessment practice in services, four categories of data were analysed: assessment activities; *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme attribution; enablers and barriers for services in developing their assessment practices; and professional development programme delivery characteristics. The data analysis approach for each of these categories is discussed below.

Assessment activities

The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource and associated professional development is particularly concerned with shifting assessment practices within a sociocultural frame to enhance children's learning. Gathering and analysing data about current assessment practices was, therefore, of key importance in this evaluation. The evaluation team developed a set of sociocultural assessment elements linked very closely to the 2006 focus areas of change and principles from the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource [Books 1-9] and relevant New Zealand literature. These elements were:

- children being active in the assessment process;

- making learning visible;

- building on children's prior knowledge;

- learning dispositions in assessment;

- engaging family and whanau;

- bicultural assessment practice;

- Pasifika assessment practice; and

- collective assessment practices.

As noted above, each of these elements of sociocultural practice was developed into an interview question that asked participants to describe how their service's current assessment practices reflected this feature. Dimensions of this element ware pre-coded and interview responses outside of these dimensions were coded during analysis. A subset of these dimensions was used in the portfolio assessment item data collection.

Three further layers of data were used to deepen the findings about current practice. Firstly, participant data about assessment activities were gathered from the service/centre surveys and participant surveys, including coded comments. Secondly, coded general observations at the service level were analysed. Lastly, the assessment survey, provider interviews and tertiary level interviews all provided further supporting data in consideration of current assessment activities. Table 5 shows the high level content contribution of each of these layers of data to the analysis process in the overall process of triangulating assessment activity data.

Table 5: Assessment activities: Data analysis content contribution and analysis weighting

Data source	Weighting in analysis	Assessment activities
Interview responses (pre-coded practice elements	Critical	All areas
Portfolio assessment item data	Critical	All areas
Other coded interview responses.	High	All areas
Centre/service and participant surveys	Medium	Focus areas of professional development Specific assessment activities Major shifts in practice
General observations incl portfolio assessment items analysis general notes	Medium	All areas
KTOTP PD provider interviews	Low	General practice shifts
Assessment survey	Low	Assessment practices (comparison) Use of *Kei Tua o te Pae* (comparison)
Tertiary level organisation interviews	Low	Practice shifts at organisation level Practice shifts at service level

Findings about current assessment practice are substantially presented in Chapter 6 and are structured around the sociocultural assessment elements listed above.

Kei Tua o te Pae professional development programme attribution

A challenge in this impact evaluation was how to attribute shifts in assessment practice at the service level to *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development while giving due consideration to other factors that might have influenced the outcomes in positive or negative ways. Key circumstances contributing to attribution challenge in this evaluation were:

■ The lack of a baseline of service assessment practices for participants in this evaluation from which to compare current practices.

■ The length of time between the commencement of the Kei Tua o te Pae professional development (early 2006) and the evaluation fieldwork (late 2007). This introduced issues of participant memory loss around professional development characteristics and earlier assessment practices, and in some cases staff turnover since the professional development.

■ The fact that some services had continued with some form of assessment professional development in 2007.

■ That all licensed/chartered early childhood services in New Zealand have been sent the Kei Tua o te Pae resource and have engaged with it to some degree in the absence of Ministry of Education-funded Kei Tua o te Pae professional development. Determining the impact of the resources plus professional development over the impact of the resources themselves, and the synergy between these two components were necessary tasks of this evaluation.

There are several ways the evaluation analysis addressed attribution to draw conclusions about professional development programme impact in these services. A key approach was to ask participants to self-report changes in practice and the level of attribution of these changes to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development (see Davidson, 2005, pp. 71-74). Participants did this at two explicit points. The first was in the service/centre and participant surveys. After indicating whether a number of assessment activities were currently being undertaken, and whether they had been undertaken *before* the professional development, participants were then asked to indicate how much (using a four point scale) they thought the professional development had contributed to the types of assessment activities currently undertaken. The second instance of self-reported attribution was immediately following the completion of the quality and quantity grid by interview participants (see above). Respondents were also asked to rate the contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* to the service's evident pattern of quality and quantity change.

Secondly, attention was given to the ways that participants specifically described the benefits of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development for their assessment practices. Responses throughout the interviews were coded as various reported effects of *Kei Tua o te Pae* and assessed against the expectations of this professional development. Significant response patterns across diverse participants that were consistent with desired professional development outcomes were considered to be evidence that *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development had influenced practice.

Thirdly, data about current assessment practices in the assessment survey from participants that had not received the professional development were compared with the case study data to determine if there were any important differences in these sets of data that might indicate that the professional development was having an effect over and above the provision of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource itself to services nationally.

Service enablers and barriers in shifting their assessment practices
Data about enablers and barriers experienced by services in shifting their assessment practices contributed to findings about both assessment shifts and the impact of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. The evaluation team was particularly interested in whether there were certain enablers and/or barriers that had implications for the professional development model in 2006 and the extent of its

impact. Data about enablers and barriers came from several sources. The first of these was following the quality/quantity of assessment grid exercise. When participants were asked to talk about their evident pattern of practice change, enablers of and barriers to shifts in assessment practice were recorded and later coded for services and individuals (in the case of individual interviews). Enablers and barriers mentioned during other parts of the interview were also recorded and coded. General observations from the case studies yielded another set of enablers and barriers data that were likewise recorded and coded. The results from these related sources were considered alongside each other to determine key themes in this area.

The three *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development providers were asked to articulate what they saw as key enablers and barriers for services participating in the professional development. These were also coded and compared to the service level data as were some coded data from tertiary level organisation interviews.

Professional development programme delivery characteristics

Although, it was not the intention of this evaluation to look closely at programme delivery and make formative recommendations, these data naturally emerged in interviews with educators, providers, tertiary level organisations and the Ministry of Education. These data were coded and characteristics that were considered positively and negatively are described in the next chapter.

> Chapter 5: Shifts in ECE educator practice and the impact of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development

Introduction

This chapter presents findings about reported general shifts in the assessment practices of case study services in this evaluation and the relationships between these shifts and the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development provided in 2006. Enablers of and barriers to shifts in practice are also considered, as well as what participants valued about the professional development they received. The chapter will address the question of whether the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development appears to have made a significant contribution to recent changes in assessment practices and the broad nature and direction of these shifts.

The first section of this chapter presents data about reported shifts in the quality, quantity and type of assessment activities in case study services from 2006 to mid/late 2007. This is followed by data about the reported contribution of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to these shifts, the enablers of and barriers to shifts in assessment practice, and impacts for tertiary level organisations.

Reported shifts in the quality and quantity of assessment practice

The evaluation team collected retrospective self-report data about the quality, quantity and type of assessment practices, before, during and after the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. These data provided a general picture of the direction of shifts in assessment practice. At interview, participants were asked to plot the overall quantity and quality of assessment practices over these three points in time on the grid described above. Individual interviewees completed two separate plots – one to indicate their own shifts over time, and the second for the service as a whole. Group interviewees were asked to complete one series of plots for the service only. These groups were required to reach a consensus about these practice shifts over time[6].

Reported shifts in the quality and quantity of practice for individuals

Table 6 and Figure 1 show the results for *individual* interviewees who completed this section of the interview reporting their own practice shifts. The results show the mean reported shifts in the quality and quantity of assessment practice across three points in time:

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[6] This need for consensus resulted in some lively discussion and debate among some participants; however, a consensus response was provided in all cases.

- Time 1 was before the Kei Tua o te Pae professional development (approximately January 2006);

- Time 2 was at the end of the of the Kei Tua o te Pae professional development (approximately December 2006); and

- Time 3 was the time of the interviews (late 2007).

The first shift measured was from Time 1 to Time 2, the second Time 2 to Time 3 while the third was the mean overall shift from the commencement of the professional development to the time of the interviews (Time 1 to Time 3)

Table 6: Reported mean shifts in the quantity and quality of assessment practice for individual interviewees using a ten point scale

	Quantity of assessment practice			Quality of assessment practice		
	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3
Mean	2.30	0.68	2.70	3.48	0.77	4.30
Std Dev	3.02	1.94	3.75	1.83	1.23	2.03
N	23	22	23	23	22	23

Figure 1: Reported mean shifts in the quantity and quality of assessment practice for individual interviewees using a ten point scale
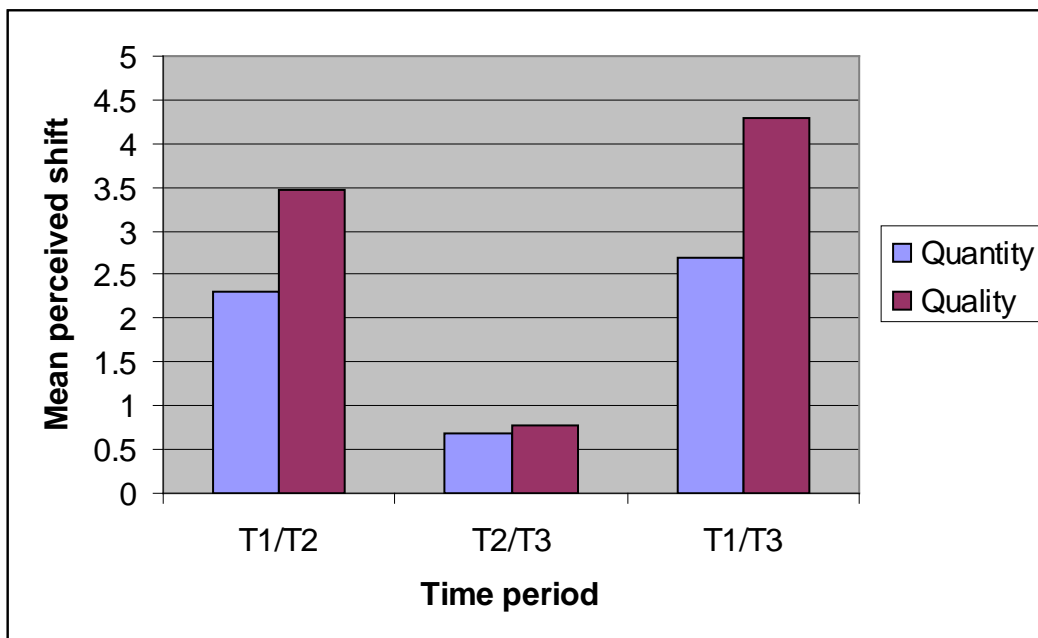
The results show a major shift in the self-reported quality of practice for these respondents, with an overall mean shift of more than four points on a 10-point scale. Most of this shift in quality occurred during the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development period in 2006 (Time 1 to Time 2). The mean shift between the end of the professional development (Time 2) and the period of this study (Time 3) was small but positive indicating that positive shifts in the quality of practice were generally sustained after the professional development concluded.

The shifts in the quantity of individual's assessment practice were rather more modest for these individuals, with a mean overall shift from Time 1 to Time 3 of just over 2.5 points on the 10-point scale. The large standard deviations indicate that there was a wide spread of individual results. In addition, some individuals indicated that their assessments declined in quantity over this total period (see Table 8). Again, most of this mean shift occurred during the professional development, and this increase was sustained in 2007. As will be noted below, it was not a particular goal of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to raise the quantity of assessment practice, and there is no prescription in the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource about how much assessment is the right amount. This relationship between quality and quantity is considered below.

The individual data were assessed to see whether educators starting at a low base of quality or quantity differed in their practices to those individuals starting from a high base of practice. Tables 7 and 8 below show the numbers of individuals whose self-reported ratings for quality and quantity of practice went up, remained the same or declined over time, separated by those who perceived they were starting from a low base versus a high base of assessment practice. A 'low base' of practice for quality and quantity was considered to be an initial (i.e. prior to *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development) rating from one to five on the 10 point scale, and a high base was considered to be a rating from six to 10.

Table 7: Self-reported shifts by individuals in the quality of assessment practice – high base (n=10) versus low base (n=13)

	High base quality of practice			Low base quality of practice		
	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3
Gained	9	5	10	13	8	13
Remained static	0	5	0	0	2	0
Declined	0	0	0	0	2	0

Note: In some instances participants did not provide values for all three data points

These data show a clear pattern of all respondents gaining in quality of assessment practice during the professional development delivery and some, but not all, continuing to improve after it. In the period

following professional development, equal numbers of 'high base' individuals reported gains or remained static in the quality of their assessment practice. In the 'low base' group, while eight mentioned further gains after the PD, two individuals reported declines in the quality of their practice with a further two reporting no change. Thus, the quality of practice is reported to have shifted in similar ways whether participants perceived they were starting from a strong base of practice or not. The effect of the professional development is that both those with a self-reported high level of capacity and those who reported a lower level of capacity perceive their assessment capacity to have improved overall.

Table 8: Self-reported shifts for individuals in quantity of assessment practice – high base (n=11) versus low base (n=13)

	High base quantity of practice			Low base quantity of practice		
	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3
Gained	4	3	6	12	8	10
Remained static	5	6	4	1	3	1
Declined	1	1	1	0	1	1

Note: In some instances participants did not provide values for all three data points

These data show that nearly all 'low base' individuals identified increasing the quantity of their assessments during the professional development period, and most (eight of twelve) also did so after the professional development had ceased. This was not the case for the 'high base' individuals, where a more varied picture emerged over time. So although quality has been self-reported as generally shifting upwards across the board during and after the period of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, quantity has increased for almost all those who were not doing much assessment before 2006, but has not necessarily increased for those who already used a relatively high number of assessments in their practice.

Thus, we have a picture of individuals who started from a low base of practice reporting that they increased the quantity and the quality of their practice, while those who had a high base also increased the quality of their practice. However, high base individuals may have acknowledged that they were already doing enough assessment, but clearly set out to do it better.

Reported shifts in the quality and quantity of practice at the service level

Individual interviewees and interview groups were asked to self-report the quality and quantity of the assessment practices across their service as a whole over the same three points of time – before the 2006 professional development, at the conclusion of the 2006 professional development, and up to the time of this study (late 2007). A total of 38 service grids were completed. Table 9 and Figure 2 show the results

for the mean change in ratings on a 10 point scale across these three points in time for quality and quantity.

Table 9: Reported shifts in the quantity and quality of assessment practice for services on a ten point scale

	Quantity of assessment practice			Quality of assessment practice		
	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3
Mean	1.82	0.92	2.74	3.71	1.13	4.84
Std Dev	3.05	1.36	3.55	1.74	1.38	2.02
N	38	38	38	38	38	38

Figure 2: Reported shifts in the quantity and quality of assessment practice for services on a ten point scale
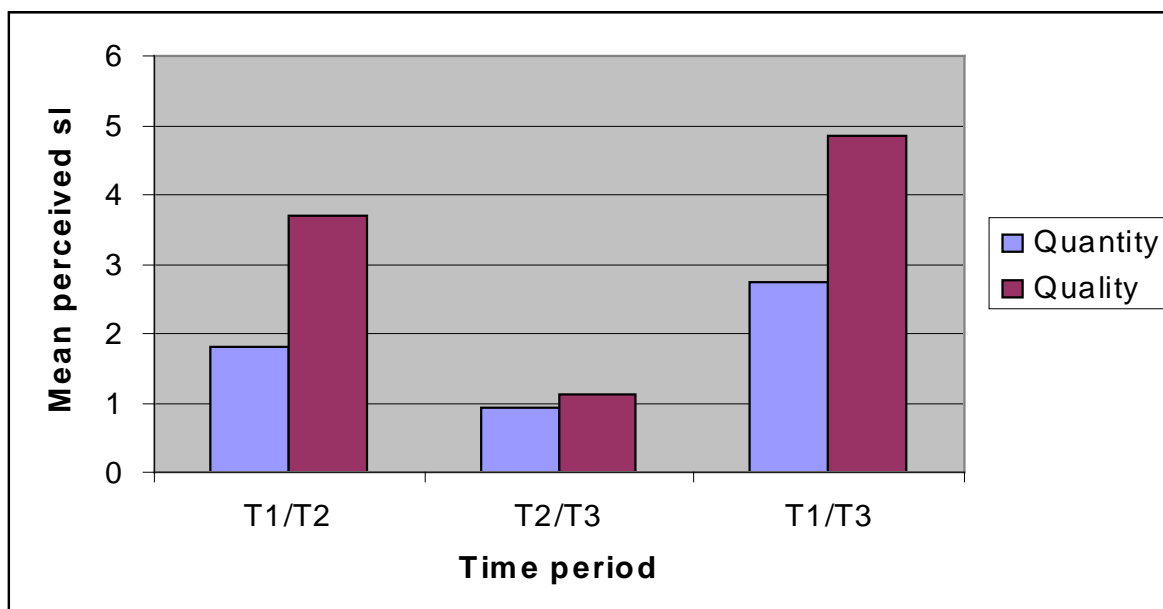
The results for the service shifts in the quality of assessment practices are consistent with the individual pattern although with a slightly larger positive mean shift. Again, most of the gain in practice occurred during the period of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development delivery; a further mean gain of approximately one point for the period following the professional development indicates that the gains reported from the first time period for a number of services were at least sustained or built on.

The mean gain in quantity for services over the whole period of time under review was almost identical to those for individuals. Again, the mean shift in quantity was modest in comparison to quality. A large standard deviation indicates a wide distribution of service shifts in quantity (including quantity declines: see Table 11).

Tables 10 and 11 show the number of self-reported ratings for quality and quantity of service practice going up, remaining the same or declining over each of the three periods of interest. Again, the data has been divided to show results for services that perceived that they were starting from a low base versus a high base.

Table 10: Self-reported shifts for services in the quality of assessment practice – high base (n=21) versus low base (n=17)

	High base of practice (quality)			Low base of practice (quality)		
	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3
Gained	21	15	21	17	13	17
Remained static	0	4	0	0	2	0
Declined	0	2	0	0	2	0

As Table 10 shows, all interview participants reported an increase in the quality of the assessment practices across their service as a whole between the start of the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development and the current time. This positive shift was evident regardless of whether services were starting from a low or high base of quality practice. All services were reported as improving during the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006, and although most continued to increase (71% of high base participants and 76% of low base participants)there was a self-reported plateau or decline for approximately one-quarter of services across both base categories.

Table 11: Self-reported changes for services in the quantity of assessment practice – high base (n=21) versus low base (n=17)

	High base of practice (quantity)			Low base of practice (quantity)		
	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3	Time 1 to Time 3
Gained	10	10	11	16	11	16
Remained static	6	8	6	1	6	1
Declined	5	3	4	0	0	0

As with individuals, the pattern for quantity of assessment practice is relatively mixed for high base services. Almost as many services reported that they had remained static or declined in the number of assessments they conducted as those who reported that they had increased the quantity of their assessment practice.. Services starting low nearly all gained in quantity. Comments at interview reflect that some services were doing a lot of assessment before the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development but that the quantity may have either increased or decreased as their model of assessment practice shifted:

- *We were doing a lot but not so many learning stories.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *We were doing daily assessment before KTOTP, but low quality – 2 assessment records per child, plus contact book plus assessments.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Centre was already doing LS [learning stories], running records and anecdotal. After PD these other methods lessons/ dropped – emphasis on learning stories.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *We always have had quantity – have done a lot.* (Interview comment, education and care service).

Report shifts in the types of assessment practices

In the case study surveys (both the centre/service and participant survey), participants were asked to indicate whether they were currently undertaking particular assessment-related activities. They were also asked whether they had been undertaking these practices prior to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, or whether these practices were subsequent to the professional development. These assessment activities were:

- undertaking assessments;

- providing assessment professional development to staff;

- developing assessment policies and procedures;

- developing a community of practice in assessment; and

- outside service work connected with assessment.

Table 12 shows the results for the number of participants who indicated that they undertook this assessment activity and whether it was new practice initiated during or subsequent to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development.

Table 12: Reported Shifts in the types of assessment practices (case study service survey)

	Doing this activity before KTOTP PD		Doing this activity now		% increase in respondents doing activity
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Doing assessment tasks	68	9	77	1	+13
Providing assessment professional development to staff	20	39	37	38	+85
Developing assessment policies and procedures at the service/centre	43	27	58	16	+35
Participating in a professional community of practice around assessment	67	6	75	4	+12
Outside-centre work	28	40	33	45	+18

The two areas of assessment practice that show the most change from before the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to the time of the study are associated with service-wide development of assessment practices. The first of these is the provision of assessment professional development to other staff. The number of case study participants undertaking professional development has close to doubled over this period. The *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development model placed some staff as lead participants who were supposed to provide formal and informal assessment support to staff as a follow-on from cluster seminars and cluster workshops. The second area of notable increase [although more moderate by comparison] is in the development of assessment policies and procedures at the service/centre. This finding connects with the general observations in the case study services that a number of services had developed service-wide systems for linking assessment to an emergent curriculum, in addition to planning for individual children.

Other changes to the types of assessment practices coinciding with the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development are relatively modest. Approximately two out of five respondent services indicated that they had been participating in a professional community of practice around assessment prior to the professional development.

The contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to reported shifts in practice

The data above show that the delivery of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in these services has coincided in quite positive self-reported shifts in the quality of assessment practices in services, variable

changes in the quantity of practices, and generally moderate shifts in some broad categories of types of assessment activities, with two key exceptions related to service-wide development of assessment practices. These findings themselves do not tell us whether *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development was associated with these shifts beyond sharing a temporal relationship with them.

This section considers the relationships between these reported shifts in practice and data about the professional development programme and its reported effects. The purpose of this analysis is to develop a stronger sense of whether and how the changes reported above have been influenced by the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development received in 2006.

The self-reported contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development on shifts in practices

Service case study participants were asked on two separate occasions to rate their perceptions of the contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to their assessment practices. Firstly, case study participants who completed a survey were asked how much they thought the professional development had influenced the *types* of assessment activities they were currently undertaking. Table 13 shows the results for all survey respondents (n=61, which represents a response rate of 75% of the 81 case study individual participants).

Table 13: Rating of influence of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development on individual's assessment activities

Response	Frequency of response (n=61)	%
A great deal	34	56
To some extent	22	36
Not very much	3	5
Not at all	1	2
Don't know/not sure	1	2

As Table 13 shows, over nine out of every ten of these case study respondents indicated that the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development had influenced current practice to at least *some extent* , with over half (56%, n=34] of respondents saying that it had influenced their practice *a great deal*).

The second opportunity case study participants had to self-report the influence of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development was at interview after reporting the quality and quantity of their practice over time. Individual interviewees were asked to rate the contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development for themselves and the service generally. Table 14 shows the distribution of responses for this question.

Table 14: Self-reported contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* to shifts in quality and quantity assessment practices on self and service

	Self (n=30)	%	Service (n=47)	%
A lot	21	70	36	77
To some extent	7	23	11	23
Not very much	2	7	0	0
Not at all	0	0	0	0
Don't know / not sure	0	0	0	0

The response shows a very high level of contribution accorded to the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development for reported shifts in the quality and quantity of assessment practice, with all participants rating it as influential to at least some extent at a service level, and over three quarters (77%) rating its contribution to service shifts as *a lot*. All but two individuals rated its contribution to quality and quantity practice changes *to some extent* for themselves personally.

Feedback about the quality of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development

The evaluation did not ask participants to comment on the quality of the professional development directly. However, some participants made comments on aspects of the professional development that they found positive for the development of assessment practices; and in a smaller number of cases negative comments were made. These comments are summarised below.

The majority of positive comments concerned the quality of facilitation provided in the professional development. Two specific characteristics of professional development facilitation emerged strongly in this category. The first was the capacity of the facilitator to understand where services 'were at' in their assessment practices and move them on sensitively but purposefully from this point:

- *Push from the PD facilitator was excellent. There was some 'pushing back". We didn't like what we were doing but we didn't know a better way.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

- *Good facilitation - challenging but moved centre from where it was at.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Has really made me look at the essence of the child. The PD facilitator was quite inspirational. Understood where the centre was at.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

The second significant facilitation characteristic, within this category, was the personal and in-service component of the professional development which saw some facilitators working with individuals and groups during and around session times.

- *Having individual discussions with facilitator really helped.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

- *PD provider visiting centre and working with Centre - making suggestions. Practice makes it easier.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Working individually with facilitator was great - most learning from this and from sharing with other centres.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *PD provider was excellent – "We clicked; worked well". PD very flexible. PD person would work with individual teachers.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

Other positive comments about facilitation were mostly general praise for the capabilities of the facilitator, such as being 'helpful and inspiring/motivating' (interview comment, playcentre).

The second most common aspect for positive comment about the professional development related to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource itself. Comments here indicate that the resource was seen as a strong support to the professional development process, particularly through having real examples of assessments to link to the professional development messages, and fostering a readiness and demand for change at the service:

- *Good documents (KTOTP) but the PD was vital for making links. KTOTP has provided directions for shifts. Centre staff were doing their own KTOTP PD before the MOE PD - taking a booklet home every week and discussing it with staff as a group.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

- *The books themselves have contributed a lot. The PD has had a moderate impact - the PD kept things on track.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Exemplars themselves are a very good resource to use with the PD - examples have been copied and used with the caregivers.* (Interview comment, home-based service)

- *Kit itself is sustainable and this has provided the means to continue with progress (without PD). It provides a good framework.* (Interview comment, home-based service)

- *PD galvanised the concern about practice. Team already wanted to move. Kit in general has been very influential.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *At our centre we use KTotP assessment activities on a daily basis and find it a useful and positive assessment tool* (Survey comment, playcentre)

The third aspect of professional development that was positively commented on concerned the clustering aspect of the professional development. The opportunities to share practices and learn from the experiences of other teachers and lead teachers from within the service and across the cluster were valued.

There were also a small number of comments about the flexibility of the professional development delivery model, the content of the professional development and general positive comments.

Negative comments about the professional development included the quality of facilitation (four comments, three of which were from one service), general negative comments (n=2), the timing of professional development meetings (n=1), the professional development model (n=1) and the professional development content (n=1).

Self-reported effects of the professional development on assessment practices

At interview, some participants articulated aspects of assessment practices that they felt that the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development had been particularly effective in enhancing, either for themselves personally or [mostly] the service as a whole. Likewise, some participants made general comments of this nature in the case study survey. The frequencies for coded responses from these two sources are presented in Table 16 below.

Table 15: Reported areas of assessment practice enhanced by *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development

Area of assessment	Survey responses	Interview personal effects	Interview service effects
Parent involvement in assessment	20		10
Quality assessment practices	13		10
Major shift in approach	10		12
Planning	10		
Child-led practices	9		2
Recognising/analysis of learning	8	1	9
Understanding of assessment	8	9	
Child active in assessment	7		3
Effective practice boost	5		6
Collaborative assessment practices	5		5
Teacher-child relationships	5		4
Assessment next steps	5		1
Clarified way forward	4		8
Children accessing their profiles	3		6
Professionally confident	3	3	3
Child voice	3		2
Assessment more enjoyable	3		2
Continuity	3		
More assessment	2		2
Te Whāriki link	2		
Learning dispositions	2		
Less template practice			5
More physical visibility			4
Totals	**130**	**13**	**96**

The most commonly reported practice effect associated with the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development was around parent involvement in assessment. Nearly thirty percent (28.6%) of the comments in the survey articulated this effect and it was the most frequently cited benefit for services. Participants noted that engaging parents had been a focus of their professional development and there had been successes in terms of increasing the quality and quantity of parent voice, and parent engagements in assessment generally. These effects were associated with making assessments more physically accessible and meaningful and understandable for parents:

- *We have made it easier for all parents to participate, so the amount of observations being done increased a lot.* (Centre/ service survey comment, playcentre)

- *We have an emergent curriculum focus and find the learning story focus format ideal to share children's ideas discoveries and exploration. Families have commented that this more informal medium is enjoyed by the children themselves and it is easy to understand and see the progress. We have developed closer relationships and enjoyed greater information sharing since the change to this style of assessment.* (Centre/ service survey comment, education and care service)

- *A lot more dialogue with parents - parents now have better contributions. "There is a different relationship with parents". This has spilled over into working bees and social events (note - rather than the other way around). Parent voice now more central - e.g., their aspirations for their child's learning.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *We did not use parent voice prior to KTOTP - there were parent interviews. "The books used to be ours; now they are their's (parents)". Parents love the portfolios. Our relationships with parents have improved markedly. Parents more open - much better relationships.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Helped us to develop practises which encouraged more input from our families. This has been very successful and we continue to implement these practises* (Participant survey comment, kindergarten)

- *Portfolios are in transparent files. Available to parents, site teachers and children. More parents voice.* (Participant survey comment, kindergarten)

- *Having the profile books out has meant the parents can give much more feedback* (Participant survey, education and care service)

- *Made us rethink how we do profile books planning and created better discussions with staff, children and parents* (Participant survey, education and care service)

- *KToTP reinforced our own beliefs about assessment records, inspired us to make our stories more interesting and worth revisiting, motivated us to encourage the children to take ownership of them as well get the whole whanau involved and contributing.* (Participant survey, education and care service)

As will be shown in Chapter 6, many participants saw the engagement of parents as a work in progress, with current levels of engagement not consistent. There was a much smaller series of comments about parent voice becoming more utilised by educators in their assessment practice:

- *My assessment practice has become more professional. I have incorporated parent and child voice more regularly.* (Participant survey, education and care service)

- *It has helped me extend and enhance the way/type of learning stories I write. It has had an influence in my practise by including "child and parent voice" which was a change in focus for me in*

The next most popular reported practice effects associated with *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development were around a shift in the overall quality of practice (Quality assessment practices) or the magnitude of the shift in assessment practices (Major shift in approach). These comments were often less specific but are suggestive of wholesale changes in the quality and approach to assessment as these comments below show.

Quality assessment practices:

- *After KTOTP doing less assessments but it was better quality.* (Interview comment, education and care service)
- *KToTP has informed my practice and therefore changed the types of assessment I do and the way I view assessment.* (Participant survey comment, education and care Service)
- *My assessment practice has become more professional.* (Participant survey comment, education and care service)

Major shift in approach:

- *We have completely changed the way we assess children's learning in the last 3 years.* (Centre/service survey comment, home-based service)
- *We changed our entire assessment/planning cycle to make it inclusive to all children, easier to follow for adults, ...* (Centre/service survey comment, home-based service)
- *Centre was using traditional assessment practices and there was no consistency or shared way of doing things. Portfolios did not demonstrate respect and professionalism for children or themselves. PD completely changed it and improved portfolios.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

The next most common set of responses about the reported effects of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development was change around the recognising/analysis of learning, which is a key element of the 'NNR' – noticing, recognising, and responding formative assessment framework underpinning the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource. This response is discussed in Chapter 6 in the section on making learning visible.

A number of participants described how their understanding of assessment had improved. The ideas transmitted through the professional development were obviously particularly educative and clarifying for some participants as these comments show:

- *A clearer understanding of the stages and process of assessment* (Participant survey comment, education and care service)
- *Extended my knowledge on learning stories. Developed and extended my programme planning skills. Given me the format to follow. It makes it easier to understand* (Participant survey comment, education and care service)

- *Participant completing first year of teaching qualification. Did not know anything about assessment or even E.C. KTOTP has clarified early childhood practice and assessment for her.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

A number of participants commented that the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development had provided some clarity about how to move forward with new assessment practices.

- *We didn't like what we were doing but we didn't know a better way. (Interview comment, playcentre)*

- *PD galvanised the concern about practice. Team already wanted to move. (Interview comment, education and care service)*

- *Had a good grounding but the PD provided the framework "the bones" to hang it on. It (PD) made the journey manageable. PD gave us the confidence to sell this approach to parents – "It validated that we were going in the right direction". (Interview comment, education and care service)*

- *It has pulled us out of a rut. (Group interview notes, education and care service)*

- *I first learned about learning stories at University. I was keen to put them into practice in another centre but found without centre-wide professional development and support it was very hard to achieve. KToTP helped to fill in my gaps of knowledge and gave me the confidence to conduct my first self review and guide our teaching team towards a very successful learning journey which we are still on. KToTP provided the tools (the books), the guidance (facilitator) and the support network (facilitator and other service staff member doing PD). (Participant survey comment, education and care service)*

- *I feel we are already doing a good job writing learning stories for assessment purposes but felt we could do them differently (we were getting tired of using templates + were moving away from these. KTotP had excellent examples of innovative writing with a socio-cultural perspective, which we are now using. (Centre/service survey comment, education and care service)*

These comments suggest that some participants were looking to enhance assessment practices but needed the opportunity of a programme such as *Kei Tua o te Pae* to provide the necessary impetus. These comments are reflective of the tension noted in the literature by the late 1990s, between *Te Whāriki's* principles for assessment, and ongoing prevalent patterns of assessment practices rooted in early 20th Century assumptions about child psychology and development.

Findings from the assessment survey of early childhood education services indicate that the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource itself has become a touchstone reference for assessment practice and assessment policy development in services since it was released in February 2005. Of the 81 services in this survey that reported that they had not received Ministry of Education funded *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development: 80% had the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource readily available to educators; in 69% of services teachers had used the resource to develop their practice; in 63% of services educators had discussed the ideas as a group; 55% of services had used the ideas in *Kei Tua o te Pae* to modify their curriculum planning, and in 52% of services teachers had referred to the resource on a regular basis.

It was apparent in some case study services that the professional development had provided a next step for moving on with the ideas in the resource and their developments in assessment practice to date were being influenced by the resource. In six case study interviews and five case study survey comments, participants noted that the professional development had enabled improvements from a positive base, again confirming that for some services there was momentum and commitment for further change.

The remaining reported effects associated with *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development were a mixture of general capability development for individuals or services (professionally confident, assessment more enjoyable) and various assessment practices relating to the focus areas of change of the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. These assessment practices are the focus of Chapter 6.

Impacts of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development at the tertiary organisation level

This evaluation's focus was on shifts and changes in assessment practices in services. The 'three-pronged' model of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006 - resource, service level professional development, and tertiary level professional development - was designed to be mutually reinforcing for shifts in practice in services. Professional development at the tertiary level was intended to increase both understanding and support for sociocultural assessment practices with this audience (including congruency of understanding with services) which was seen as facilitative of support for service educators to improve their assessment practices (Ministry of Education, 2006, Appendix 1). The seven participants in these tertiary level interviews were asked to describe the impact of the professional development on their organisation and their perception of impacts at the service level. The most prominent reported effect for themselves [mentioned at five interviews] was the benefit of staying abreast of assessment developments that were impacting on services. This was viewed as a positive benefit in their professional engagement with services concerning assessments:

- *(Regional kindergarten association) very keen to participate because kindys have become very involved in KTOTP and its PD and the association and senior teachers need to stay abreast of developments in practice at the service level. … KTOTP ideas were not new but it was important for the professional services manager to get the same/consistent messages to those being received by the services. The facilitator that delivered the [regional kindergarten association] PD was also working with the local kindys so it was good to have this link.* (Interview Comment, regional umbrella organisation)

- *Wanted to present consistent messages to the services while accepting there are service level philosophical differences. "We are all speaking the same speak".* (Interview comment, national association)

Four interviewees mentioned the impact of sharing their learning about assessment through their professional channels:

- *We wanted to know how to support our services professionally in this area. Interest in the links between KTOTP and planning. The PS team are now able to more effectively support services in this area.* (Interview comment, national association)

- *The PD has meant that [Regional kindergarten association] has encouraged more kindys into the PD. Readings [from the PD session] have been passed on to kindys. Senior visiting teacher reports were enhanced because they made recommendations associated with KTOTP and KTOTP PD.* (Interview Comment, regional umbrella organisation)

- *The organisation has continued to use the ideas and assessment processes of KTOTP and new caregivers are expected to write narrative assessments.* (Interview comment, home-based network service)

- *The professional development provided support for using the document. It established ideas for getting the kit used. It added to this facilitator's capability in delivering professional development and providing professional support to services around the Kit. The facilitator has been able to take the kit and work with it in ways that are useful and relevant to the individual playcentre.* (Interview comment, national organisation)

Three interviewees mentioned that their organisations now had assessment professional development to support the understanding and use of *Kei Tua o te Pae* with the services they were connected with. Three interviewees also mentioned that the professional development gave their staff opportunities to share and discuss assessment ideas with each other.

Effects for services reported by these interviewees were wide ranging with no prominent themes. Three interviewees mentioned that the quality of assessment practice remained variable between educators and services, however this was independent of whether the service had received *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. The representative of one national organisation believed that the engagement with, and impact of, the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development and resource were low across the organisation's services because of an apparent philosophical difference between the assessment approach of these services and the sociocultural assessment basis to *Kei Tua o te Pae.*

Interestingly, only three case study services in this evaluation cited umbrella organisation support as an enabler of shifts in assessment practice, and two of these services were home-based where the network personnel (in particular the visiting teachers) are more directly involved with the [home] educators. None cited them as a barrier. This perceived low level of support may be a result of umbrella organisations providing more intensive assessment support for services that are not engaged in the formal *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development.

The tertiary level organisation interviews indicate that the professional development did increase the understanding of and support for the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource at the tertiary organisation level in all but

one organisation, and that some congruency was generated among the understandings and practices of services and those of the umbrella and other professional organisations[7] in the sector.

Enablers of and barriers to shifts in assessment practice

The evaluation team collected self-report data about the non-programme factors that had a positive or negative influence on the effects of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. In individual interviews, participants were invited to comment on enablers and barriers for themselves and the service generally. In group interviews, only comments at the service level were requested. After preliminary open coding of these comments, the codes were further collated into four categories of enablers and barriers: capability, capacity, readiness and support. Capability covered responses that articulated various staff competencies to shift current practices. Capacity covered responses that articulated sufficient or insufficient levels of staff having sufficient/insufficient available time to shift practices and/or sustain shifts. Readiness related to a number of service and individual factors outside of capacity and capability that were harmonious or disharmonious to change, and in particular change in the direction of *Kei Tua o te Pae's* professional development goals. The final category of support collated a number of reported factors beyond the direct control of educators, but influential in shifting practice or inhibiting these shifts. Tables 17 & 18 show the open coded responses for each category or barrier or enabler. Table 17 shows the enablers at the service and individual level, while Table 18 shows these results for the barriers.

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[7] One interviewee was from a regional office of a national ECE evaluation organisation, and another was from an ECE teacher education provider.

Table 16: Non-programme enablers of shifts in assessment practice for individuals and services

	Capability		Capacity		Readiness		Support	
	Coding	**N**	**Coding**	**N**	**Coding**	**N**	**Coding**	**N**
Services	ICT PD	4	Good staff ratio	2	Open to change	11	ICTs	9
			Non contact time	2	Unhappy with current practice	8	Service leadership	3
			Stable staff	2	Staff support	7	Umbrella organisation support	3
					Match current practices	4	Management support	2
					Match current understandings	4	Admin support	1
					Support for assessment approach	4		
					More enjoyable assessment	3		
					General momentum	3		
					Whole service involvement	2		
	Total	**4**	**Total**	**6**	**Total**	**46**	**Total**	**18**
Individuals	ICT PD	1	Non contact time	2	Match current understandings	10	Professional support	3
					Staff support	5	Ongoing PD	1
					Professionally confident	3		
					More enjoyable assessment	2		
					Whole service involvement	2		
					Match with current practices	2		
					Match personal pedagogy	1		
	Total	**1**	**Total**	**2**	**Total**	**25**	**Total**	**4**

Table 17 shows that at the individual and service level, the most articulated enablers related to a readiness to shift practice. At the service level, the most commonly reported readiness attribute was a staff disposition towards change, followed by dissatisfaction with status quo assessment practices and general staff support for change:

■ *Staff not afraid of change. … Our team like challenges.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *KTOTP took pressure away; old system of observation was jargonistic, prescriptive, rigid rules of observation, developmental approach. Now assessment is fun and interesting. Team uncomfortable with the old approach.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

At the service level some participants noted that *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development goals were consistent with their current practices and/or understandings and therefore the shifts were not difficult. Symmetry between *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development goals and educator understandings was the most commonly articulated readiness enabler for individuals. Some participants remarked that they had been exposed to sociocultural assessment theory in recent ECE training or through working at a previous service:

■ *Studying at same time so already knew about KTOTP. Was able to develop a better understanding through PD and helped to hear other centres' experiences.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

This idea of readiness to move forward with assessment practices is reflected in the overall demand by services for assessment-related professional development over this period. In the baseline assessment survey for this study of early childhood education services, which was targeted at services that had not received *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, nearly half (79 of 160) of the services reported that they had received this professional development. It would appear that these services were confused about what professional development they had received – that specifically for Kei Tua o to Pae or some other assessment related professional development.

In spite of this apparent confusion it is clear that no other content area of Ministry of Education-funded professional development over the period from 2005 to 2007 gets close to this level of participation: 'Other' (14%); leadership (12%); specific curriculum area 11%; approaches to learning and teaching (7%; management and governance (7%); working with family and whānau (7%); and implementation of DOPs 5%. In the assessment survey 78% of respondents had received some form of assessment-related professional development since 2005. Assessment was regarded as the top priority for future professional development by 34% of services and as an important priority by a further 52% of services. These responses affirm readiness and demand to move forward on assessment. The findings from the Evaluation of Ministry of Education Funded Early Childhood Professional Development Programmes (Cherrington &

Wansbrough, 2007) also indicate a strong demand from services for professional support in assessment. The professional development content area of 'Assessment for learning (including *Kei Tua o te Pae*)' was the top ranked content area of relevance to service needs (p. 96). The timing of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development appears to match this readiness and demand.

For services, the next highest category of coded responses for enablers was support factors. By far the leading support enabler was ICTs. Lee and Carr (2002) note that ICTs have become a powerful tool for linking assessment to learning because they allow narratives to be developed rapidly, enable sharing of photos with families and public displays of learning, and allow educators and others to look closely at the child in action through for example photos and video. Comments about ICT as an enabler stressed the role of laptops and PCs in recording and publishing learning stories, and the use of digital cameras for learning stories. The support of management, umbrella organisations, administrative systems and service leadership in general were all mentioned at interview between one and three times as enablers for services. Individuals made little comment about support enablers for themselves with the professional support of colleagues being noted three times and leadership once. Interestingly, comments relating to capacity and capability as enabling factors were uncommon. The enablers data do suggest that a readiness to shift practice and appropriate support conditions were the key non-programme factors in making the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development successful.

Table 18 shows the self-reported barriers to shifts in practice reported by case study participants during interviews.

Table 17: Non-programme barriers to shifts in assessment practice for individuals and services

	Capability		Capacity		Readiness		Support	
	Coding	N	Coding	N	Coding	N	Coding	N
Services	General staff capability	7	Assessment admin	2	Critique of sociocultural assessment	1	Financial	2
	ICT capability	3	Lack of staff	4	Current assessment philosophy	5	ICT	5
	Child language	1	Lack of non contact time	6	Other priorities	5	Infrequent child attendance	4
			Staff turnover	14	Lack of Staff support	2	Leadership	1
			Time	9			Maintaining momentum after PD	3
							PD not compulsory	3
							Physical/ space	3
							Parent resistance	1
	Total	**11**	**Total**	**35**	**Total**	**13**	**Total**	**22**
Individuals	Personal capability	3	Intermittent PD participation	3	Other priorities	6	Leadership	1
	Staff capability	1	Lack of staff	1	Shifting assessment philosophy	1	Parent resistance	1
			Non contact time	1				
			Time	2				
	Total	**4**	**Total**	**7**	**Total**	**7**	**Total**	**2**

For services, factors that were reported as barriers to shifts in assessment practice were most commonly related to capacity. Staff turnover was the most commonly cited capacity barrier, although it shold be noted that these responses came from a small number of services that were experiencing extreme staff turnover (and in one case, management turnover), and included comments by two playcentres that turnover of parents (who are the educators at these services) was a challenge to maintaining understandings about assessment and embedding in new assessment practices. For services citing staff turnover, the issue was a lack of continuity and sustainability of change when original participants left. Staff turnover could also create a general state of disruption that broadly affected the service. For

services, time and a lack of non-contact time were commented on as barriers nine and six times respectively. A lack of time related to planning time, time to make change generally, limited time with children to do assessments, and limited time to document narrative assessments. Lack of non-contact time related to time away from children to write up narrative assessments:

- *Lack of release time to do it. Teachers do assessments in their own time. Time - putting everything together. Staff use their computers at home and transfer files to the centre system.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

- *Only get one hour non-contact time per week so could do more with more time. Straight after PD we were doing 4 LS [learning stories] per week. Now we do as many as we can.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

For services, support was the second most common category of barriers to shifts in assessment practice. There were a wide variety of factors reported within this category with the two leading factors being a lack of ICTs (n=5), and infrequent child attendance (n=4). Capability and readiness did not feature as self-reported barriers to the same extent as these, although general staff capability came through relatively strongly as a capability barrier:

- *Unqualified staff. Staff with English as a second language. Lack of beginning understanding about socio cultural assessment.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Lack of understanding about purpose and possibilities of learning stories in beginning meant initial stories not so meaningful.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

Reported barriers at the individual level across the categories were few. The leading single factor was that there were other priorities for this person. On examination, this barrier related to these participants having other non-teaching roles at the service, including administration and management, which were limiting their assessment role and general contact with children.

Summary

This chapter has presented various data in support of the question of whether the 2006 *Kei Tua te Pae* professional development has made a significant positive contribution to shifts in assessment practices in these case study services. In other words, has the professional development had an impact? As mentioned earlier, this evaluation lacked a baseline of practice for these services and so various methods of data collection and analysis have been employed to understand impact in the absence of this pre and post comparison.

This chapter considered reported shifts in the quality, quantity and types of assessment practices for individuals and services. The area of greatest reported shift since the professional development commenced was in the quality of assessment practices. Across 38 interviews, a mean shift in the quality

of practice of nearly five points (M = 4.84, SD = 2.02) on a 10 point scale was reported. Most of this gain was during the period of professional development but improvements for most services continued to occur after the professional development officially finished at the end of 2006. All services reported gains in the quality of assessment practice since the commencement of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, whether they started from a high or low base. The same pattern of change in quality was evident for individuals reporting their personal shifts.

Shifts in service and individual quantity of assessment followed a similar pattern over time as quality of assessment, but were on average more moderate and varied (M = 2.70, SD = 3.75). This can be explained by the reflections in some services that they 'had always done a lot of assessment' and that quality was now their primary interest. Sometimes *less was more* for these services and small number of services *positively* reported a drop in the quantity of assessment as they discarded traditional practices that were time intensive but added little value.

In three broad areas of assessment activity – doing assessment tasks, participating in a professional community of practice around assessment, and outside-service work - the number of individuals in the case studies who reported involvement in these activities increased only slightly from the commencement of the professional development in 2006. Two assessment activities which linked closely to the delivery model and goals of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development – providing assessment professional development to staff, and developing assessment policies and procedures at the service/centre - increased substantially. There was an 85% increase in the number of participants reporting providing professional development to staff which is consistent with the expectation that lead teachers would share messages from the professional development seminars and workshops with other staff. There was a 35% increase in participants developing service assessment policies and procedures. Each service in the professional development was required to develop a plan for the development of their assessment practices during the professional development, and services reported developments in their assessment planning including linking assessment to curriculum development more purposefully.

These shifts in the quality, quantity and type of assessment practices share a time relationship with the delivery and post-delivery period of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. Case study survey participants were asked to rate the contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to current practices. In terms of the shifts in the type of assessment activities, over half (56%) reported that the professional development had contributed a great deal and a large majority (92%) rated it as having contributed to at least some extent. At interview, the self reported contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to shifts in the quality and quantity of service assessment practice was even more positive with 100% of respondents rating it as contributing to these shifts to at least some extent

and 77% reporting that it had contributed a lot. The result was similar for individuals, with 93% rating it as contributing to at least some extent. When respondents offered comments about the professional development programme these were rarely negative: 9 negative comments versus 56 positive comments. Participants were especially positive about the quality of facilitation provided by the professional development providers and the quality of the resource itself. Case study participants also talked about shifts in assessment practice that they believed related directly to the professional development experience. These effects were led by outcomes associated with involving parents more in children's assessment. Participants also articulated broad substantial effects in the quality and nature of assessment practices.

Interviews with tertiary level organisations indicate that the professional development has been successful in establishing congruency of understanding around *Kei Tua o te Pae* between ECE services and those organisations that can support them professionally. Interviewees valued staying abreast of assessment developments in the sector and some were taking their professional understandings about assessment through into their professional work with services. However, services themselves were unlikely to cite the support of their umbrella organisation as an enabler of assessment shifts. Perhaps explicit tertiary level assessment support is being targeted at services that are not participating in the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development.

Participants talked about a number of enabling factors that had supported their shifts in practice through the professional development. These were most commonly factors categorised as 'readiness' such as staff being open to change, dissatisfaction with current practice, and staff support for changes in assessment practices. This is consistent with the ECE professional development evaluation findings of Cherrington and Wansbrough (2007) that assessment was both the most critical area of perceived professional development need, and the most valued professional development provided for New Zealand's early childhood services. Clearly, the timing of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development was complementary to a perceived need and a number of case study service participants noted that the professional development had clarified the way forward for their service and energised current assessment practices.

Capacity issues – having the right amount of time and human resource to be effective in assessment and to participate in change - were the main reported form of barrier. However all services reported that they had enhanced the quality of their practice, so these barriers appear to have been managed, indicating a high level of commitment to professional development and assessment change.

The data in this section collectively suggest that the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006 contributed significantly and positively to shifts in assessment practices in these services. Further, these

shifts appear to be consistent with the focus areas of change and overarching outcome of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme in 2006. The next chapter considers in depth the nature of current assessment practices in these services and assesses these practices against key principles of sociocultural assessment practice.

> Chapter 6: Current assessment practices in early childhood education services that received *Kei Tua o te Pae professional development in 2006*

Introduction

This chapter presents evaluation findings about the current assessment practices of services that participated in *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006. It addresses how these assessment practices conform with, and differ from important elements of sociocultural assessment practice articulated in the 2006 professional development focus areas of change and the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource itself.

The findings for this section draw largely from the service case study interviews and the assessment item content analysis undertaken in each case study service. For the interviews, findings for each element of sociocultural assessment practice are collated from interview responses using pre-coded dimensions of practice and other coded comments made at interview. In places, data from general observations in the case study services and case study survey responses are also presented. The analysis is also informed by the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development provider interviews and tertiary level organisation interviews.

The chapter is structured around a set of important elements of sociocultural assessment practice that were developed by the evaluation team with reference to the focus areas of change, the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource and the recent literature about sociocultural assessment practice in early childhood education. As described in Chapter 4, these elements of practice became key interview questions and interviewees were asked to describe how their current assessment practices reflected each of the following key areas:

- making learning visible

- children being active in the assessment process

- building on children's prior knowledge

- using learning dispositions in assessment

- engaging family and whānau

- bicultural assessment practice

- Pasifika assessment practice

■ collective assessment practices.

Case study centre/service survey participants were also asked to rate whether each of these areas [with the exception of collective assessment practices] was one of the following: a major focus of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, a minor focus, not a focus or N/A. Table 19 displays the results for each element, which are then discussed below.

Table 18: Areas of focus for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development: case studies (N=18)

Area of assessment	Major focus	Minor focus	Not a focus	N/A
Making learning visible	16	2	0	0
Building on children's strengths through assessment	16	1	0	1
Children active in assessment	15	3	0	0
Family/Whanau involvement in assessment	14	3	0	1
Using learning dispositions in assessment	10	6	2	0
Bicultural assessment practice	5	8	4	1
Pasifika assessment practice	1	5	6	5

Making learning visible

A focus area of change for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006 was:

> *Documentation practices make learning visible and thus enable children, families, whānau, teachers/educators and beyond to foster diverse learning pathways.*

This focus emphasises continuity of learning and development through assessment practices which recognise and record the learning that has taken place, and is then used to facilitate next steps in strengthening children's dispositions and working theories. The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource defines 'recognising' as the application of professional expertise and judgements to what is noticed (Ministry of Education, 2004g, p. 6). This recognising can be documented or undocumented practice; however, documentation builds opportunities to share, clarify and build understandings about learning with colleagues, children and families.

Recognising learning, in this context, also emphasises a professional community of assessment through making the learning visible to children, parents/whānau, and other educators. The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource describes four main aspects to the development of a learning community, two of which are especially relevant here: developing relationships, and making some of the work public (Ministry of Education, 2004a, p. 2). 'Making learning visible' then is about both deep professional judgements of

what is noticed, and the accessibility of the products of this noticing to a potential or actual learning community in assessment through a variety of media.

Sixteen of the 18 case study centre/survey participants noted that making learning visible was a major focus of their *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, the equal highest response for any focus area. No participants noted that this was not an area of professional development focus. Participants in three interviews acknowledged that this was an area of ongoing development:

> *Learning is not explicit yet; we are getting there. Parents are "noticing" and developing "recognising" skills.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

Making learning visible: findings from interviews

Case study interviewees were asked to describe how their assessment practices reflected the idea of making learning visible. Table 20 shows the frequency of comments obtained from 47 interviews about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 19: Making learning visible: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews[8]
Child's participation documented	31	66
Teacher thinking/reflection/responding visible	20	43
Child's ideas, working theories documented	19	40
Learning behaviours and dispositions referred to/commented on	13	28

Two-thirds of respondents articulated practices of recording children's participation through narrative assessments indicating a commitment to documenting what was noticed. Fewer respondents articulated practices that emphasised ideas and working theories (40%) and the documenting of children's learning behaviours and dispositions (28%) – practices which are explicitly about making visible both the *learner* in action, and where these actions are taking children's competencies and working theories about people, places and things. The professional acts of reflection and responding as assessment processes were also moderately articulated with respondents in 43% of interviews drawing on this aspect.

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[8] Percentages for interview responses do not add to 100% as responses could be coded for more than one dimension.

Participant responses outside of these pre-coded categories significantly emphasised the *physical* visibility of assessment documentation rather than the foregrounding of learning in assessment narratives. As mentioned above, making the learning public is a component of making learning visible as it supports continuity and encourages a learning community. The physical visibility of assessment items was commented on during this question at fourteen interviews, and it tended to be referred to at other times during the interview. These responses were almost all related to the display of learning stories and related narrative assessment items in a public area of the service environment. This practice was most commonly linked to capturing the attention and interest of parents, and also, to a lesser extent, children and staff. Some services were posting all learning stories on the wall before placing them in portfolios while others were displaying exemplar learning stories to communicate what was happening at the centre. This also had the effect of demonstrating the act of narrative assessment.

One service noted that the balance of displaying children's 'products' versus children's learning 'processes' had moved towards displaying process as a commitment to making learning visible. Group stories were frequently posted publicly. Photos and slide shows without associated narratives were also provided as public displays because they could facilitate face-to-face communication between parents, children and staff. One service made a point of discussing each completed learning story with the child's parents when they were present. Some services mentioned making their curriculum planning public and showing the links between centre curriculum planning and individual and group learning stories and interests. This included wall displays and publicly accessible planning folders.

The following comment from a playcentre interview describes the way these public displays were intended to inform parents about the learning that was taking place but also heighten their understanding about narrative assessment principles:

> *Sometimes examples from portfolios are enlarged to A3 size (colour copy) and displayed on wall - "especially if they are a good example of a narrative". These serve 2 purposes - to let the playcentre community know what has been happening during sessions, and to provide example of narrative assessments to parents.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

All case study services had portfolios accessible to children and by extension parents. This is discussed in the section on children being active in assessment.

Making learning visible: Findings from the assessment item analysis

For each narrative assessment item reviewed, the evaluation team recorded whether there was 'extensive' or 'slight' evidence of learning dispositions or key behaviours being described in the item, or whether this feature was not apparent. Table 21 below shows the frequency of results for each category.

Table 20: Key behaviours or dispositions are described: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	388	40
Slight evidence	332	34
Extensive evidence	247	26
Total	**967**	**100**

In just over one-quarter of narrative assessment items (n=247) there was extensive evidence of the assessment item describing key behaviours or dispositions. A further one-third contained slight evidence of key behaviours or dispositions. Many of these assessment items alluded to dispositions by describing children's skills, knowledge, interests, or particular talents. However, these narratives did not tend to connect these to valued learning dispositions and competencies. Forty percent of items lacked any reference to key behaviours or dispositions and were limited to descriptions of children's participation in various activities with people, places and things.

A number of assessment items described an event and then literally referenced this story to particular goals for learning and development within *Te Whāriki's* strands: well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration (see Ministry of Education, 1996b, pp. 46-72). Sometimes these links were footnotes to the narrative while at other times they were mentioned in the narrative itself using a conscious reference style. This practice was quite well embedded with some educators, while others advised that they had moved on from it because it was a less creative 'template practice' or alienating in tone for parents and children.

This assessment item analysis results, and the interview responses above, suggest that articulating learning in narrative assessment practice and recognising learning as assessment practice generally, is still in development across services. A substantial quantity of the assessment items reviewed were weighted wholly or significantly towards accounts of noticing: describing children's participation (without documented professional interpretation of the learning behaviours) and demonstrating dispositions through this participation. Educators were however strongly committed to making assessment public, and making learning visible in this way was thriving in many of these services.

Children active in assessment

A focus area of change for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006 was:

> *Assessment practices and documentation evidence children's engagement in their own assessment.*

Within a sociocultural assessment frame, children benefit from assessment through being actively involved in the assessment process. Through engagement with assessment, children build their identity as a learner and develop deeper understandings about their capabilities and dispositions. Children learn about learning and develop skills in self-evaluating their learning – not just their learning products (Ministry of Education, 2004f). Teachers benefit from the reflection and feedback from children in making sense of the learning and making quality decisions about the next steps (Ministry of Education, 2004g, p. 15).

Kei Tua o te Pae book 4 *Children Contributing to Their Own Assessment* (2004f) provides examples of ways children can self-assess by:

- making their own judgements about their achievements;

- self-regulating their learning activities;

- deciding what should be recorded in their portfolios;

- using materials to provide reference points against which to assess their achievements;

- referring to earlier assessments in portfolios to judge current success/progress; and

- revisiting and correcting their assessment portfolios. (p. 5)

Book 4 also contains a range of ways child voice can be meaningfully incorporated in assessments:

- narratives incorporating children's language;

- parents and teachers assuming a child's voice to represent a child's perspective or assist with interpretation of the child's perspective with the child;

- teachers puzzling over the meaning of an observation to invite child or family input;

- children assessing each other's learning; and

- families contributing to the assessment record with or for the child. (p. 6)

Children as active participants in the assessment process was reported as a major focus area of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development by 15 of 18 centre/service respondents, with a further three citing this as a minor focus. Participants in five case study interviews acknowledged that this was an area of ongoing

development for the service. Seven case study survey participants made comment about current assessment practices associated with children being active in assessment:

- *The importance of learning stories being a foundation to planning and also having the shared learning as a tool to support the involvement of the child/teacher/parents/community.* (Case study survey comment, education and care service)

- *The KToTP development has enabled us to fine tune our whole assessment process of our children. It has empowered our children by making them a part of the process and given the adults a fantastic tool to ensure the continued learning of our children.* (Case study survey comment, playcentre)

- *... the children write simple stories, we re- visit their learning through photos, displays and profile books.* (Case study survey comment, education and care service)

Children active in the assessment process: findings from interviews

Case study interviewees were asked to describe how their assessment practices reflected the idea of children being active in assessment. Table 22 shows the frequency of interview comments about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 21: Children active in assessment: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews
Children aware of documentation process and connection to learning	25	53
Child's voice used	23	49
Child's participation documented	23	49
Children set their own learning goals – next steps	23	49
Child's voice in assessments	20	43
Family context documented	18	38
Children's relationships/interactions documented	15	32
Child's ideas, working theories documented	9	19

As Table 22 shows, four of the dimensions of children being actively engaged in assessment were articulated by about half of interviewees in describing their practices. These were: making the purposes and processes of assessment documentation understood by children; recording and responding to child's voice through assessment; documenting the participation of the children in their own assessment; and involving children as decision makers in the development of learning pathways for them. Participants were less likely during this question to suggest that children's ideas and working theories, family context or relationships were documented.

From other coded comments during this interview question, it was very clear that a number of services were engaging children closely in assessment processes. In 22 interviews (47%), participants described practices associated with children reflecting on their learning stories, often with purposefulness around continuity of learning:

■ *Children love to look through portfolios and revisit/remember experiences.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

■ *Children interested in revisiting and remember old stories. [Want to retry/repeat experiences.]* (Interview comment, playcentre)

■ *Children revisit and reflect on past portfolio experiences and this sometimes leads to retrying or further planning around that event.* (Interviews comment, education and care service)

■ *Documentation (past and current) always available to children. Helps them to be able to revisit and repeat/extend experiences.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *Children enjoy looking at their portfolios and displays on walls, and will set their own learning from these. (Want to repeat or retry an experience). They like to read their own and each others portfolio.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

Other ways that children were active in the assessment process were also articulated at 10 interviews. These interviewees reflected ways that children were initiating assessments, setting goals and self-assessing, and reflectively adding their perspective to the learning that was occurring:

■ *Children set learning goals as a group.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

■ *Children request assessments and photos, and judge whether their own work is worthy of their profile. Children starting to set the curriculum agenda e.g., selecting preferences for field trips. Sometimes the what next decided by students. Profiles now at children's height.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *Centre puts stories in the folder with the children so they are aware.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

■ *Children write their own narratives. Gave examples of children who had initiated and dictated their own story and showed an awareness of the features of a narrative (e.g., gave it a title). Children love to look through portfolios and revisit/remember experiences. Children show some ownership of assessment process by requesting stories and photos be developed and added to portfolios.* (Interview comment, Playcentre)

■ *Children request incidents of learning to be included in portfolios.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *Children contribute items to portfolio. Portfolios accessible to children and families at all times. Children often request artwork be included in portfolios.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *Children involved in producing learning stories (reflecting and commenting on photos).* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

■ *Listening to the children – they assess themselves. Revisiting portfolios. "I can do that now – I think I need a new story" and "I haven't had any new stories".* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

At seven interviews, respondents mentioned that engaging younger children, including babies, in the assessment process was challenging or impractical:

■ *[Interviewee Works with under 2 years olds]. Finds it difficult to get child's voice or to find ways of encouraging these children to be active in assessment process. Does this by documenting children's participation and non-verbal responses and plans learning based on these. Children enjoy looking at their own portfolios.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *Children enjoy looking at their portfolios and displays on walls, and will set their own learning from these. (Want to repeat or retry an experience). They like to read their own and each others portfolio. Easier to include older children because they can talk.* (Interview comment, education and care service).

Children having access to their portfolios was mentioned at 15 interviews (32%), reflecting that these educators saw this as a crucial aspect of child engagement. General observation notes from the services confirm that child access was nearly ubiquitous in these services regardless of child age or service type. As the following comment shows, this physical access was vitally important to children's contribution to their assessment:

> *Availability of portfolios and other big documentation books important for enabling children's participation. Children request incidents of learning to be included in portfolios. Children revisit and reflect on past portfolio experiences and this sometimes lead to retrying or further planning around that event. Children's voice forms used. Children's words/theories used in stories* (Interview comment, education and care service)

Children active in assessment: findings from assessment item analysis

To explore the idea of children being active in the assessment process through the assessment item analysis, each narrative assessment item was assessed for the following dimensions: child's voice included; teachers responding to child's voice; and child setting their own learning goals. Results for each of these assessed dimensions are presented and discussed below.

<u>Child's voice included</u>

For each item it was noted whether there was extensive or slight evidence of child voice in the narrative. Child voice was considered to be the literal transcribed voice of the child during the episode or episodes, or the educator's retelling of a conversation or passage of speech. Items where the child's voice was brief or appeared to be token or inconsequential to the narrative were regarded having 'slight' evidence of child voice.

Table 22: Child's voice included: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	516	53
Slight evidence	163	17
Extensive evidence	288	30
Total	**967**	**100**

About half (47%) of all assessments had some level of child voice in evidence. This voice took a number of forms, including conversation narratives between groups of children, a discussion between two friends or a teacher and child, children's talk related to various activities they were undertaking (such as physical or artistic tasks), questions and answers between children and adults demonstrating the development of working theories and immediate next steps decisions, narratives that were wholly a conversation, and a completed child's voice section (not common) in the assessment item, which could be a reflective comment on the story itself.

<u>Teachers responding to child's voice</u>

The assessment item analysis also looked at whether there was evidence of child voice being purposefully used in some way by educators. Sociocultural assessment stresses the importance of engaging with and responding to child voice in a sustained way to build understanding about children's evolving behaviours and ideas (Perkins, 2006, p. 27). Notwithstanding that reflective conversations between children and teachers were taking place in the review of assessment documentation by children (see above), documented assessments could also evidence more immediate, listening, reflection and responses to child voice by teachers, or evidence of later reflection, clarification and planned next steps after the event. Table 24 presents the frequency of results for this aspect of the assessment item analysis.

Table 23: Teachers responding to child voice: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	528	55
Slight evidence	230	24
Extensive evidence	209	22
Total	**967**	**101**

If this result is compared with the data above for the appearance of child voice where 440 items had some evidence of child voice (Table 23), then all but one instance of child voice (that is, 439 items) was engaged with by the teachers.. This response could be through the recording of a teacher-child

conversation including the immediate co-construction of next steps during the activity, or teacher's reflecting, interpreting and contemplating next steps by engaging with the child voice transcript. Engagement with child voice through subsequent reflection with children on narratives containing child voice was rarely evident in narratives. As highlighted above, the interview data suggest that in a number of services children were being encouraged to reflect on previous stories with teachers, and widespread portfolio accessibility was supporting this. The narratives themselves, however, did not evidence this reflection – the reflection had not become part of the story.

<u>Children setting their own learning goals</u>

As noted above, children setting their own learning goals and contributing to the 'next steps' was articulated in half (49%) of the case study interviews. The assessment item analysis considered whether there was slight or extensive evidence of children setting their own learning goals. Table 25 presents these results.

Table 24: Children setting their own learning goals: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	567	59
Slight evidence	198	20
Extensive evidence	202	21
Total	967	100

There was evidence of children setting their own learning goals in 41% of assessment items with about half of these having strong evidence and the remaining half having slight evidence. It was relatively common to see the narrated story of a child that had set him/herself a goal as part of the activity (for instance to climb a rope ladder) and to persevere, develop competence in, and achieve this goal. Through child voice it was clear that children were thinking about their learning and making immediate decisions about what to do next. In contrast to this, it was rare to see evidence of children having decided what to include in their portfolios, setting a learning goal and requesting an assessment as part of this, or reflecting on progress towards a goal or earlier achievements using existing assessment items.

The evidence above suggests that children are indeed very active in the assessment process in these services. The accessibility of portfolios to children, which was sometimes a new development, was providing children with opportunities to reflect on their learning with educators and this was reported as increasing children's competence and understandings about learning, as well as helping educators to understand their needs and strengths. The assessment item analysis found that child voice was evident in about half of all narratives and that in almost every one of these items there was evidence of engagement

by educators in this voice, either during the activity or as recognising comment as part of the write up. The assessment items themselves did not evidence child engagement in assessment processes that had been described at interview such as setting a learning goal or reflecting on progress..

Learning dispositions in assessment

The development of learning dispositions by children through early childhood education is one of the key learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki*. Learning dispositions are about being ready, willing and able to participate in learning, and they enable children to develop robust working theories about people, places and things in their lives. Learning dispositions turn ability into action and are important to children's development of a strong identity as a competent and capable learner (Ministry of Education, 2007a, pp. 4-5).

Learning dispositions have become strongly associated with narrative assessment practices in New Zealand and were a prominent feature of learning story templates in the late 1990s (see Carr, 2001, pp. 146-156) reminding educators of their centrality as an outcome of assessment of and assessment for learning, and encouraging educators to recognise them and support their development through considerations of 'what next?'. Learning story templates linked five learning dispositions to the strands of *Te Whāriki*: taking an interest (belonging strand), being involved (well-being strand), persisting with difficulty or uncertainty (exploration strand), communicating with others (communication strand), and taking responsibility (contribution strand).

Learning dispositions were identified as a key principle of sociocultural assessment practice for assessment in this evaluation. The new series of *Kei Tua o te Pae* books released in November 2007 are themed around the strands of *Te Whāriki*, and these books are intended to give prominence to learning dispositions (personal conversation, *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development project manager: Ministry of Education, 2007).

In the centre/service survey, 10 of 18 participants indicated that learning dispositions were a major focus of their *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, with a further six indicating this was a minor focus and the remaining two indicating it was not a focus at all. This was one of the lower responses to the question concerning the focus of their professional development and consequent action. Two case study survey participants mentioned learning dispositions as a positive outcome of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, again a relatively low response.

Learning dispositions in assessment: Findings from interviews

Interviewees were asked to describe how practice at their service reflected the idea of learning dispositions in assessment. Table 26 shows the frequency of interview comments about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 25: Learning dispositions in assessment: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews (n=47)
Dispositions used in assessment	29	62
Dispositions used in practice by teachers	20	43
Focus on strengthening, developing dispositions	18	38
Dispositions relevant to the centre context used	8	17

While dispositions being used in assessment was articulated at 62% of interviews, the results for teachers using them in their practice, and an assessment focus on strengthening and developing children's dispositions were considerably less evident through interview responses. Other comments at interview reveal that dispositions had an uneasy position in the assessment practices in these services. A small number of educators were completely or partially unfamiliar with the term. In nine interviews (19%), respondents said that they and/or their service did not fully understand dispositions as these sample comments and notes show:

■ Dispositions discussed but not incorporated. *We try to talk about dispositions but to be honest I don't think we really understand them. Not widely used. More likely to discuss strengths and interests.* (Interview comment, Playcentre)

■ Centre commented that they are moving away from dispositions. *Never understood them anyway. Focus more on group interactions/learning and individual learning that is tied to the principles of Te Whāriki.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ Participant noted that there was varied understanding of dispositions amongst staff. *Rarely talked about or used.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

In 34% of all interviews (n=16), participants explicitly mentioned that they did not use dispositions in their assessment practices. These responses were from eleven unique services (44% of case study services). Various reasons were given for this non-use of dispositions in assessment – not understanding them, perceiving that they were in some conflict with *Te Whāriki* based assessment, or making a collective or personal professional judgement that they did not work or were only partially useful. The comments and notes from interviews below illustrate this mixed reaction to dispositions and again suggest an uncertainty about what they are:

- Learning dispositions not a focus. *Focus on developing competent and independent learners with strong self-esteem.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

- LDs [learning dispositions] not a strong focus at this centre. *The language of dispositions is quite foreign – We use the language of Te Whāriki. But we probably use them implicitly.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- Principles of Te Whāriki. *This centre intentionally moved away from dispositions towards the principles of Te Whāriki. (As a direct result of KTOTP PD). Talked about difficulty in 'seeing' and 'using' dispositions. Particularly did not find dispositions helpful for talking about social/relational learning.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- Needed an explanation of dispositions. *Focus on learning not dispositions.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *The theory (of LD) is a bit hard to get your head around but learning is described.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

- Dispositions not used ... *but, in the back of my mind. I don't specifically look for them. They (dispositions) don't work individually – often there is a mixture of dispositions being expressed. You need understandings about dispositions as a background.* (Interview comment, education and care service).

Learning dispositions in assessment: findings from assessment item analysis

The assessment item analysis considered two aspects of learning dispositions in assessment: key behaviours or dispositions are described, and next steps focus on building, strengthening dispositions. In terms of the description of key behaviours or dispositions, as shown earlier in the section on making learning visible, in just over one-quarter of narrative assessment items there was extensive evidence of key behaviours or dispositions being described, a further one-third contained slight evidence, and the remaining 40% of items lacked any evidence of key behaviours or dispositions being described.

Next steps focus on building, strengthening dispositions

Each assessment item was assessed for evidence of next steps narratives that were focused on the development and strengthening of dispositions – a fundamental goal of formative sociocultural assessment practice. The results are shown in Table 27.

Table 26: Next steps focus on building, strengthening dispositions: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	636	66
Slight evidence	219	23
Extensive evidence	112	12
Total	**967**	**101**

As Table 27 shows, just 12% of assessment items contained a narrative of next steps that referenced the building of dispositions, and approximately one quarter had slight evidence of this feature. A significant portion of the 66% of assessments that lacked a focus on strengthening and developing dispositions lacked *any* reference to next steps; therefore making a judgement about the quality of the next steps was impossible in these cases. When next steps comments were present, they were often quite brief and/or vague. Next steps comments frequently referred to doing more and similar activities or generally providing learning resources and opportunities to nurture the demonstrated skills and/or interests evident in the narrative. It was very rare to see the use of dispositional language in these comments. Sometimes the brevity and lack of depth of these comments was in contrast to the rest of the narrative which could be rich in discussion about the learning taking place. This is perhaps a legacy of practice from learning story templates which sometimes featured a relatively small and footnote-type space for next steps narratives. The sociocultural assessment literature encourages teachers to hypothesise about the learning that is occurring and to make explicit their uncertainty about what the next steps might be, partly as a way of inviting more perspectives and inquiry but also to acknowledge that children's dispositions and working theories evolve in unpredictable ways. Rigid responses may therefore be considered inappropriate (Cowie & Carr, 2004; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; Perkins, 2006). Within this framework, narrative assessment practice needs to keep next steps as open and flexible as possible. Even given this approach, and the fact that educators reminded us that next steps were frequently just done rather than proposed in documentation, it is surprising that such a low percentage of assessment items contained next steps statements that strongly foreground the development of learning dispositions.

The overall frequency of use of dispositions in narrative assessments was quite low. However, in contrast to other aspects of sociocultural assessment practice that were more strongly in evidence through interview comments than through assessment items, the use of learning dispositions was relatively more strongly evidenced in assessment items over interview responses. The interviews presented a confused picture of use, non-use, partial incorporation and mixed understandings about what dispositions are and how they relate to New Zealand's early childhood education curriculum and assessment goals. The evaluation also picked up some opposition to learning dispositions as an appropriate framework for recognising learning. Some services that were clear that they 'didn't use dispositions' were using dispositional language in their assessments, suggesting that the theory of dispositions is more consistent with some teachers' personal pedagogies than interview comments would suggest:

> *In interviews teachers were very hesitant about dispositions and acknowledged that they did not understand or use them. There was evidence of dispositional language in stories occasionally though.* (Case study, general observation, education and care service)

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The reference to dispositions and dispositional language in next steps comments was very low, and the emphasis on extending skills and interests confirms self-reported comments that understandings about and the application of dispositions in assessment is a work in progress in a number of services. Interestingly, especially given the primacy of learning dispositions as an outcome of New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, some individuals and services appear to have a limited interest or an aversion to their use in assessment.

Building on children's knowledge, interests, skills

Sociocultural assessment practice is a credit-based paradigm. A key premise is that learning flows from paying attention and responding to children's strengths and interests – focusing on what children can do rather than their deficits (Hatherly & Sands, 2002). This approach draws in child's family and cultural context as both a key influence on children's learning and as a source of opportunity for educators to enhance learning through capitalising on these literacies, understandings and interests from outside the service (Ministry of Education, 2004h, p. 4). This aspect of sociocultural assessment was not a discrete focus area of change in 2006; however it is represented through the focus area of assessment practices being based on the principles of *Te Whāriki.*

In the centre/service survey 16 of 18 respondents reported that this aspect of assessment was a major focus of their 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, with one further service indicating that this was a minor focus. This was the equal highest result for an element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Building on children's knowledge, interests, skills: Findings from interviews

During interviews, participants were asked to describe how their assessment practices reflected the idea of building on children's knowledge. Table 28 shows the frequency of interview comments about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 27: Building on children's knowledge, interests, skills: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews (n=47)
Finding out child's interests, knowledge, culturally valued literacies	38	81
Children's interests and preferences visible	37	79
Connections are made between child's experiences	28	60
Commitment to assessment enabling ongoing learning	21	45
Focus on what children can do	20	43
Teachers responding to child's voice	18	38

The results show very strong support for assessment practices which notice (81%) and use (79%) children's interests, skills and knowledge. Participants in 14 interviews (30%) discussed how children's individual and group interests, as recognised through the production and analysis of individual and group learning stories, were significantly influencing or 'driving' the service's planning for individuals and groups:

■ *Nothing is done unless it comes from the children. But teachers also important – relationships. ... Child-centred paradigm but now more co-construction. More child decision-making expected.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *Observe children; identify capabilities, decide how resources are to be provided. Staff meetings, informal meetings with staff all the time + conversations with parents to determine child's interests/passions. Try to find out what is going on at home.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *The Main benefit of learning stories is that they follow key themes and interests - enables teachers to follow interests. Learning stories help the educator to support learning. They help children to develop their interests - following the positive sides.* (Interview comment, home based educator)

■ *Centre planning based on interests displayed on board. All learning stories are displayed on wall and then in portfolio. Planning is up on wall for parents to see and to remind teachers of the activities they needed to setup.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

■ *We try to identify what they know about. We follow children rather than direct the process.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

Interviewees were less likely to articulate a credit or strengths based assessment approach explicitly (43%). A relatively low 45% articulated a commitment to assessment enabling learning in this question area – which relates to the most important element of this assessment feature – the 'building' or formative aspect of noticing and responding to children's interests, skills and knowledge through assessment.

Building on children's knowledge, interests, skills: Findings from assessment item analysis

Each assessment item was assessed for evidence that children's interests, skills, knowledge, culturally valued literacies, and/or working theories were visible in the narrative. Table 29 present the results for this feature.

Table 28: Children's interests, skills, knowledge, culturally valued literacies, working theories visible: Assessment item analysis.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	90	9
Slight evidence	376	39
Extensive evidence	501	52
Total	**967**	**100**

Ninety-one percent of items provided slight or extensive evidence that children's interests, skills, knowledge, culturally valued literacies, and/or working theories were visible, which supports the interview data evidencing generally strong child-led curriculum approaches in services. Individual learning stories were generally personal describing individual or group delights and passions for various people, interests or activities, or showing evident competence and confidence in particular activities or domains of learning. Narratives celebrated children's persistence including positively evolving behaviours and working theories.

There are some particular points to note in this overall finding. Firstly, while teachers had often selected a child's interest, skill or understandings for assessment, it was very rarely evident that this interest had come from outside of the service. This is looked at further in the engaging family and whānau section below. Secondly, these child-led assessments were more likely to be linked with skills or interests, rather than working theories or [as discussed above] dispositions. Thirdly, these identified interests, skills and knowledge were quite unlikely to be carried over into subsequent narrative assessments that the evaluation team could ascertain from the available portfolio documentation. From 967 assessments, 752 (78%) did not have an associated item that was discovered by the evaluation team[9], while 214 (22%) did. That is not to say that this interest, skill or knowledge was not developed, just that this continuity and development was not evidenced to the evaluator through subsequent documented assessment items.

Some individual assessments items were the result of following an interest or disposition over more than one time period and sometimes in a variety of contexts. For instance, one teacher explained that she stored the learning story electronically and added to it as subsequent observations took place until she

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[9] It is possible that some items may have been missing from the portfolios, in development and therefore not filed, or filed in a newer or older portfolio that was not seen by the evaluation team.

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was satisfied that the story was ready to be printed and filed in a portfolio. Some narrative assessment items followed a child over a short space of time [for instance a single session] but recorded their participation in a variety of activities. The clear majority of learning stories were based around a learning episode taking place within a single session.

The findings around assessment building children's knowledge, interests and skills are mixed. It was clear from interview and assessment item data that educators in these services were very strongly committed to a child-led curriculum (with some degree of teacher-led planning) and a number of services had developed systems linking individual and group assessments to curriculum planning as these general observations from one service reveal:

> *Weekly reflections (a montage of photos and comments/narrative) are documented on A1/A3 paper on the wall near the entrance – These build up over the term, and are eventually placed in a large folio for teachers and children to revisit. … In the same area there is also wall space given to 'Planning Stories' – this is where teachers add documentation relating to the term's planning and over time the documentation develops, showing the relationship with events and children's involvement etc.* (General observation notes, kindergarten)

Individual and group narrative assessment items were very likely to reflect children's own interests, knowledge, friendships and preferred activities at the service, although interestingly few of these were acknowledged as arising from outside of the service. The narrative often demonstrated some level of development over a short period, such as building an understanding, or succeeding with a puzzle after several attempts. Assessment items were not likely to contain evidence of the development of competencies and understandings over time or continuity in general or the expression of dispositions and working theories in new contexts. Likewise interview responses strongly supported assessment practices endorsing children's strengths and highlighting curriculum directions, but were less likely to articulate how the assessment process could be a tool to build on these strengths.

Engaging family and whānau

The engagement of family and whānau is critical to sociocultural assessment in several ways. Firstly, because family has a major informing role in children's working theories about the places, people and things around them, and emergent preferences, skills, literacies and interests; credit-based assessment sees family context and family members as a resource within the learning community:

> *Families enrich the record of learning, reduce some of the uncertainty and ambiguity, and provide a bridge for connecting experiences.*(Ministry of Education, 2004a, p. 5)

Parent voice in assessment is seen as a key avenue for this exchange of understandings between a child's home and ECE service. Parent voice is any communication that contributes to the assessment process.

This can be oral, but written parent voice is also encouraged through assessment documentation. Learning story templates often contain a space for 'parent voice' comment. Parent voice can also be its own narrative about a child's experiences and capabilities away from the service. There were some examples of this in portfolios, particularly associated with major events such as an overseas holiday or the birth of a sibling.

Sociocultural assessment also makes a philosophical commitment to including parents in an expanded community of learners with staff and children (Carr, 2003). Narrative assessment practices are seen to make the curriculum 'permeable' and accessible to parents, inviting participation and, therefore, serving as a 'conscription device' to expand the narrative and the learning community (Carr et al., 2001). Narrative assessment practices support parent engagement by articulating the learning that is valued, demonstrating an affirming and credit-based approach, and crystallising and describing learning in ways that parents can understand and therefore respond to. Through engagement with narrative assessments, commentators also point out that parents can gain understandings about their children's competencies and dispositions – stories that may have remained hidden or undervalued in alternative forms of assessment.

For the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, a focus area of change was:

> *Assessment practices involve parents and whānau as partners in their children's learning.*

In the centre/service survey, 14 of 18 respondents said that engaging family and whānau was a major focus of their *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, and three said it was a minor focus. As noted in Chapter 5, more services cited parent engagement in assessment as an effect of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development than any other category of effect (see Table 16). The comment was made at eight interviews that this was an area of ongoing development for the service. In fifteen interviews (32%) participants mentioned that parent voice remained low, which supported the feedback from participants that engagement was variable with parents. This is discussed below.

Engaging family and whānau: Findings from interviews

At interview, participants were asked to describe how their assessment practices reflected the ideas of engaging family and whānau. Table 30 shows the frequency of interview comments about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 29: Engaging family and whānau: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews (n=47)
Parent contribution to assessment	40	85
Responsive, reciprocal, respectful relationships	35	74
Parent contribution used by teachers	32	68
Children's family context is valuable/visible in assessment	30	64
Parent development in assessment	18	38
Wider community involvement	5	11
Other	5	11

As Table 30 shows, most respondents (85%) articulated practices that involved parent contribution to assessment. This included various forms of undocumented and documented parent voice. There was a very strong commitment to the principle of greater involvement of parents in assessment. It was evident that services had worked on building up the quality and quantity of parent contribution to assessment and three-quarters (74%) of respondents talked about the development of closer relationships with parents.

In about two thirds of interviews (68%) the use of parent contributions in the assessment process was discussed. At a similar number of interviews (64%), comments were made about making parent voice visible and valued in documented and undocumented assessment practices. Yet, as noted above, getting parent voice into the assessment process was an ongoing challenge for services with 32% of interviews making comment that it was still low. Further analysis of these comments revealed that services that perceived they had a close relationship with parents based around personal interaction and where parent interest and engagement was strong in assessment, were still experiencing low levels of documented parent voice:

> *Less parent input isn't a true reflection that they are disengaged. [service is] ... finding alternatives to parent voice form.* (Interview Comment, education and care service)

> *It is a challenge to get parent engagement. Engagement done mainly through talking - before and after session discussion. There needs to be a culture change - there is an expectation that teachers will lead. Conversations at pick up and drop off are not ideal.* (Interview Comment, education and care service)

> *Informal sharing of ideas is "very extensive". But formal parent voice is not. Parent voice/ interaction allows understanding abut what the child is expressing/communicating.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

> *Some of the communication we have with parents isn't documented - e.g., child's parents emailed photos of doing gardening at home. Sometimes parent voice is related by teachers in the*

assessment documentation. We don't have much parent voice but this doesn't mean they are not informed or involved. (Interview comment, education and care service)

Family and caregivers share what is happening in different contexts. Parents share stories - verbally but not in the book. (Interview comment, home-based service)

Teachers in a small number of services were addressing this situation of high discussion/low documentation by writing up the parent voice in the learning story themselves.

Explicit parent development in assessment was mentioned at 38% of interviews. A few services mentioned parent nights where the service's learning journey with *Kei Tua o te Pae* was discussed, and a playcentre mentioned 'scrap [book] nights' where parents worked on their children's portfolios as well as exploring assessment ideas. Assessment portfolios commonly contained explanations for parents of the formative purpose of the folder and curriculum matters generally. Commentators note that parent development in assessment does occur organically through engagement with learning stories – i.e. these stories can inform or 're-story' how parents see their children as competent and confident learners (Carr, 2001, pp. 132-133). The interview data suggest that most parent development was happening informally in these services through discussion with educators and engagement with their children's assessment materials:

Parent contribution is growing - parents initially thinking - "I'm not the teacher". Started with inviting parents into the centre e.g., inviting them to play an instrument, showing/sharing practices. Newsletters, parent evenings, feedback plus daily feedback and conversations. At first parents were reluctant - "It's not my job to write their report". So educating parents that we want their experiences, opinions, stories. (Interview comment, education and care service)

The contribution of the service's wider community of people, places and things as a context for assessment was only mentioned at five interviews (11%). This was perhaps not surprising given the initial focus of the question on families and whānau. Some services mentioned getting parents with particular backgrounds or community profiles to talk about themselves and their job/interests and a record of these events would often be placed in children's portfolios.

Engaging family and whanau: Findings from assessment item analysis

Each assessment item was assessed for evidence that children's family context was valued and visible in assessment. This could be expressed through parent voice as part of the assessment item, or reference to the child's family context in the narrative. Table 31 presents the results for this feature.

Table 30: Children's family context is valued and visible in assessment: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	709	73
Slight evidence	153	16
Extensive evidence	105	11
Total	**967**	**100**

Across the 967 assessment items, 105 (11%) contained extensive evidence of the visibility and value of the child's family context. The majority (73%) of assessment items did not contain any parent voice, even where this was being sought through a parent voice section or a request for parent voice by the writer of the narrative. When parent voice was evident, this was often a brief comment such as 'fantastic' or a thank you to the teachers which was rated as slight evidence. Parent voice was often retrospective comment on a story rather than being the evident initiation point for an assessment or, a comment that precipitated any evident extension to the learning episode. There was a lack of stories that evidenced a connection to home-related interests, skills and knowledge even though educators commonly told the evaluation team that they sought and utilised these home insights from parents and children. Passing references to family were coded as slight evidence. A small number of parents had written detailed learning stories, but there was a lack of evidence of continuity of these stories in further assessment documentation.

Educators frequently commented that parent voice was solicited more through oral discussion than through explicit documentation. They also expressed that 'next steps' were often not documented at all. As a result, it is difficult to be conclusive about the reported low level appearance and use of documented parent voice, or to infer that opportunities to build on children's strengths, interests and skills from home were being lost. As some educators acknowledged, increasing parent engagement, including getting them to directly contribute to the written narrative was a work in progress and some were looking at creative ways to engage parent voice through the strategies discussed above. Despite the priority placed on this aspect of sociocultural assessment by educators across a range of services, and their enthusiasm about improving engagement, documented assessment practices did not produce evidence that parents were meaningfully engaged. However, interview data, which included accounts of rich oral exchanges, between educators and family evidenced more positive developments in this area.

Bicultural assessment practice

Bicultural assessment practice is covered in detail in Book 3 of the first series of *Kei Tua o te Pae* (Ministry of Education, 2004e). Book 2 which introduces sociocultural assessment within the principles of *Te Whāriki* asserts that assessment must consider Māori pedagogical frameworks and bicultural approaches to assessment, as well as acknowledging the crucial role that children's social and cultural worlds play in children's learning (Ministry of Education, 2004h, pp. 2-5). Within sociocultural assessment, bicultural practices promote learning experiences for children that support and extend their competence in a bicultural world. This includes children's competence in understanding and speaking te reo Māori, protocol and customs, and local history, symbols, and waiata. As process, bicultural assessment practices are seen to reflect biculturalism through contributions and productive use of these contributions from home and community, and the involvement of Māori whānau and community in the assessment process.

In 2006, a focus area of change for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development was:

> *Assessment practices value and integrate Māori knowledge and ways of being and learning.*

In the centre/service survey, five respondents said this was a focus area for their 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development activities, with a further eight saying this was a minor focus. Four said this was not a focus and one responded N/A. This result put bicultural assessment at the lesser end of service priorities as an assessment focus area. Participants in 11 (23%) interviews confirmed that bicultural assessment was a low focus area for them. Participants in six interviews (13%) commented that this was an area of ongoing development and a review of these comments shows that educators reported some progress but that further development was required:

- *No Maori students but have talked about 'starting small' in bicultural assessment.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

- *Integration of te reo into documented assessment has been a PD focus over the last few years. Caregivers introduce this into their curriculum. Network has planned Marae visits and made links to the Kohanga. The caregivers have a yearly treaty of Waitangi workshop.* (Interview comment, home based service)

- *Not much - but just had some PD on Te Reo. Still growing in confidence. Try to engage parents who have knowledge of Maori language and Tikanga.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

Bicultural assessment practice: Findings from interviews

Interviewees were asked to describe how their current assessment practice reflected bicultural assessment. Table 32 shows the frequency of interview comments about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 31: Bicultural assessment practice: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews (n=47)
Child's cultural context valued	26	55
Integration of Māori knowledge and ways of learning/being	17	36
Whānaunatanga/whānau seen to be central	13	28
Use of te reo Māori in documented assessment	12	26
Learning and knowing about local iwi in area	1	2

It is clear from these data that across the case study interviews there was generally low articulation of practices covering these aspects of bicultural assessment practice. There was some uncertainty about how to respond to this question, and some admitted that they had not considered this aspect of *Kei Tua o te Pae* and sociocultural assessment. The most common response (55%) was that practices valued children's cultural contexts and attempted to validate and strengthen these. Although a number of interviewees were quite hesitant around bicultural assessment practices, some described a range of ways that the teaching and learning at the service reflected Māori tikanga, language and various cultural practices.

About one-third (36%) of interviews reported that assessment practices integrated Māori knowledge and ways of being, and a lesser number (26%) mentioned the use of te reo Māori in assessment documentation. Practices acknowledging the centrality of whānau and whānaunatanga were described at 28% of interviews.

Bicultural assessment practice: Findings from document analysis

Each assessment item was assessed for evidence of two elements of bicultural assessment practice: Integration of Māori knowledge and ways of learning/being, and use of te reo Māori in documented assessment. Tables 33 and 34 present the numbers and percentages of assessment items that contained extensive or slight evidence of each of these features.

Table 32: Integration of Māori knowledge and ways of learning/being: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	928	96
Slight evidence	23	2
Extensive evidence	16	2
Totals	**967**	**100**

Table 33: Use of te reo Māori in documented assessment: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	936	97
Slight evidence	20	2
Extensive evidence	11	1
Totals	**967**	**100**

The results show very little presence of Māori knowledge and ways of learning/being, or use of te reo Māori in documented assessments. This was even less than the interview responses would suggest would be the case. However, some services had incorporated te reo and Maori knowledge and culture into the their curriculum. In some instances, te reo and tikanga practices were prominent in displays at services even where this prominence was not apparent in assessment narratives:

- *There was little integration of Māori concepts (and no Te Reo Māori) in children's portfolios viewed. There is one display board dedicated to bicultural partnership/Treaty of Waitangi information and visuals and the planning file did show specific aspects of whole centre involvement e.g., understanding the marae, use of poi and traditional Māori games.* (Case study general observation notes, kindergarten)

- *No integration of Māori concepts or Te Reo Māori in children's portfolios viewed, however the physical environment does include artefacts and greetings from range of cultures including Māori e.g., Treaty of Waitangi, Te Reo displays. The teachers expressed a focus on inclusive multicultural practices e.g., valuing Te Reo Māori week, cultural festivals, food etc.* (Case study general observation notes, kindergarten)

From general observation and educator comment it was evident that the services in the case studies generally had very small numbers or no Māori children attending them. A review of comments from interviewees about bicultural assessment being a low focus area shows that stated reasons were commonly associated with the cultural profile of children at the service. This included the service having a multicultural or Pasifika focus:

- *Hasn't increased. Some parent resistance.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Multicultural centre. Karakia used - very simple - has to appeal to the multicultural audience. Teachers try to learn a new phrase every month. Waiata. But not an assessment focus.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Small Maori roll (6 max). Not a strong demand from parents. Tuakana Teina relationships encouraged.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

- *This wasn't a strength of the centre. Aspects of bicultural practice important to Playcentre as an organisation and individual words or phrases may be included in a written assessment.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

These responses suggest that, perhaps, if the child profile of the service was more heavily weighted towards Māori children bicultural assessment practice may be more prominent. However, it is also

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interesting that tikanga and te reo Māori could have a strong presence in the curriculum but only be represented in assessments to a very small degree. Given that an outcome of bicultural assessment is that "Assessment protects and develops children's identities as competent and confident citizens in a bicultural society" (Ministry of Education, 2004e, p. 7), bicultural assessment practice, as acknowledged by a number of educators in these services remains an area for significant development.

Pasifika assessment practice

A *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development focus area of change in 2006 was:

Assessment practices value and respond to Pasifika cultures, knowledge and ways of learning.

Across the services, the evaluation team looked how services were reflecting Pasifika world views, culture and language in assessment practices. In addition, two case study services were purposefully selected for the evaluation because they had a Pasifika focus. It was the case in a number of services that they had no Pasifika children.

In the centre/service survey, one respondent reported that Pasifika assessment was a major focus of their *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development; five reported it as a minor focus and six and five respectively said it was not a focus or N/A. Participants in 13 interviews (28%) confirmed that this was a low focus area. Interviewees from one service reported that Pasifika assessment practice was an area of ongoing development. As with bicultural assessment practice, some services noted that they incorporated Pasifika language and cultural concepts into the curriculum generally.

Pasifika assessment practice: Findings from interviews

Interviewees were asked to describe how their current assessment practices reflected Pasifika assessment. Table 35 shows the frequency of interview comments about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 34: Pasifika assessment practice: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews (n=47)
Child's cultural context valued	29	62
Learning and knowing about local Pasifika cultures	12	25
Use of relevant Pasifika languages in documented assessment	4	8
Integration of Pasifika knowledge and ways of learning	3	6

As with the responses for bicultural assessment practice, participants were quite likely (62%) to articulate a response that all children's cultural contexts were valued in assessment practices As with the findings for bicultural assessment practice educator responses to this question were associated by participants to the demographics of the service in question, and that a 'multicultural' perspective in response to the diverse cultural backgrounds of the children was the service's approach:

> *More likely to include multicultural practices according to families at the centre at the time - then focus on Pasifika specifically. Encourage families to develop stories for their own and other children in other languages and scripts.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

Pasifika assessment practice: Findings from assessment item analysis

Each assessment item was assessed for evidence of two elements of Pasifika assessment practice: integration of Pasifika knowledge and ways of learning, and use of relevant Pasifika languages in documented assessment. Tables 36 and 37 present the numbers and percentages of assessment items that contained extensive or slight evidence of each of these features.

Table 35: Integration of Pasifika knowledge and ways of learning: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	951	98
Slight evidence	11	1
Extensive evidence	5	0
Total	**967**	**99**

Table 36: Use of relevant Pasifika languages: Assessment item analysis

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not apparent	957	99
Slight evidence	7	1
Extensive evidence	3	0
Total	**967**	**100**

The assessment item analysis found virtually no assessment practice that integrated Pasifika knowledge/ways of learning or Pasifika language. Again, this can probably be attributed to the demographic profile of these services. It is, perhaps, also a result of a thoroughly child-led ethos apparent in these services and their assessment practices which saw child interests directing the curriculum, with significantly less evidence of children's backgrounds influencing this 'child-led-ness', let alone the exploration of cultures that were outside of the service's family profile. This general point is discussed in the final chapter.

Collective assessment practices

The 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development goals and delivery model along with the *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource each placed emphasis on the development of a community of practice in assessment. Two 2006 focus areas of change require the development of a learning community:

- *Participants become familiar with, understand and articulate Kei Tua o te Pae and how it strengthens the development of sociocultural assessment approaches and practices.*
- *Curriculum leadership is developed through the implementation of Kei Tua o te Pae.*

The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource expects a learning community to critically engage with its content:

> *The Books are designed as a professional development resource to enable learning communities to discuss assessment issues in general, both in terms of Te Whāriki and in terms of their specific settings. They introduce principles that will help learning communities develop their own assessments of children's learning.*(Ministry of Education, 2004g, p. 2)

The learning community is considered to consist of educators, children, and families and whānau. The engagement of children and families and whānau in assessment has been considered above. The focus of this section is on the ways that participant practices reflected collective approaches to assessment. As discussed earlier, there are several arguments for collaborative staff practices within a sociocultural paradigm of assessment – including the pursuit of validation and objectivity through multiple perspectives emerging through collective reflection, making learning visible through the de-privatising of one child – one educator assessment practices, improving teacher-child relationships and developing comprehensive pathways for children that are supported by all staff.

The service case studies collected data about collaborative assessment practices through the case study surveys, interviews and general observations. These are considered below.

Collective assessment practices: Findings from case study surveys

In Chapter 5 it was reported that case study survey data indicated there had been strong positive shifts in two areas related to collective assessment practices: the provision of assessment professional development to other staff, and; the development of assessment policies and procedures at the service/centre. Interestingly, there was only a very modest increase (+12%) in the number of participants who articulated that they had begun to participate in a professional community of practice around assessment only since the commencement of the 2006 professional development. This small shift results from a high number of participants (67 of 73; 92%) reporting that they were already participating in a professional community of practice before the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development.

Five survey respondents (7%) made comments about collaborative assessment practices which were seen as an outcome of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. These stress team work and shared practices in the development of assessment approaches and assessment activities:

> *Given confidence to explore a range of assessment activities on session and continuation in the discussion of developing assessment activities with other members. Confidence in discussing KToTP with other members and on training courses outside of playcentre* (Case study survey comment, playcentre)

Collective assessment practices: Findings from interviews

Interviewees were asked to describe how the educators at their service worked collectively in their assessment practices with children. Table 38 shows the frequency of interview comments about practice that articulated various pre-coded dimensions of this element of sociocultural assessment practice.

Table 37: Collective assessment practices: Frequency of interview responses for each pre-coded dimension

	Frequency	Percentage of interviews (n=47)
Time given to dialogue about assessment for individual children	25	53
Shared understanding about assessment practices	23	49
Shared staff contribution to child's assessment	22	47

A number of interviewees were very enthusiastic about their team practices associated with assessments. Time given to dialogue about assessment was mentioned in just over half of the interviews (53%). Comments at interview revealed that service staff were discussing children's assessment in formal and informal situations more than this result would suggest. Participants in 27 interviews (57%) talked specifically about opportunities for formal staff discourse around assessment of learning.

- *Lots more discussion about children's learning. Have changed the format of staff meetings to discuss learning. Discussions about next steps and what learning is going on. Team is working hard on being reflective as a team. Team had to get over taking reflective discussion personally – this can be hard for older teachers. We are a community of learners. No teacher stands alone; however, what each teacher does has a huge impact on the children. Everything goes back to the children's learning.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Parents meet at the end of each session to discuss events and learning, and ideas for narratives.* (Interview comment, playcentre)

- *Two non-contact afternoons a week - usually focus on documentation and assessment. Includes sharing stories, noticing. Discussing and debating children's learning and where to next.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Monthly programme meetings. Share narrative - talk about what next and plan. Chat about children's progress. What next goes onto wall planning. Teacher responsible for 5 children each*

month, but encouraged to observe across all children. Examples of learning stories are shared and discussed and future planning comes out of stories and transferred to planning on wall. (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *Staff meetings have an "observations" agenda item where specific children and group learning stories are discussed.* (Interview comment, kindergarten)

- *Children are not allocated to particular teachers. Weekly meeting where learning stories are analysed using a framework of five features: Content, dispositions, child voice, learning environment, teaching strategies. Once per term for each child there is this discussion at the staff meeting. Teachers analyse the emerging curriculum each term.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

As the comments reflect, at these meetings, new or emergent learning stories would be presented as part of the recognising process.

Interviewees in 16 interview groups (34%) made comments about informal contexts (both in and out of session) for collective discussion about assessment:

- *Informal 'on the spot' dialogue and planning and assessment during the day.* (Interview comment, education and care service)

- *It is very valuable to hear about what other home-based educators in the network are doing - how they write their stories but also what they are recognising.* (Interview comment, home-based service)

In approximately half of interviews (49%), participants talked about the development of shared understandings about assessment across staff and these comments were often associated with the increased opportunities for and service expectations of informal and formal dialogue around children's assessment:

> *Centre has a two weekly meeting - children's learning discussed. Teachers are rotated around different children. Team is on the "same wavelength".* (Interview comment, education and care service)

Comments were made in forty seven percent of interviews that there were shared contributions by staff to assessments. A number of aspects of the narrative and oral assessment process beyond discussion were reported as shared including joint observations, sharing of ideas for learning stories, reference to other staff members in children's assessment narratives, joint accountability around children receiving an adequate number of assessments, shared time and space for writing up assessment narratives, reviewing learning stories before finalisation, and regular rotation of staff assessment responsibilities for individual children and groups of children.

Most services making these comments also noted that a particular staff member retained the primary responsibility (whether loose or tight) for the assessment of a particular child. Assessment items did not evidence collective reflection or other aspects of collective practice in the assessment process. As was the case with a number of sociocultural assessment elements described in this chapter, the impact and activities of collective practice were not integrated into the narratives.

The interview data supported by general observations and the case study service survey data all confirm that collective assessment practices were taking place across a variety of services in this evaluation – particularly formal and informal opportunities for staff discourse about children's learning and assessment. Assessment was becoming increasingly de-privatised from one teacher to many children, towards practices that reflected or aspired to a community of many teachers, many students, and many family and whānau members. One feature of this model was that educators were participating in each other's assessment processes in the noticing and especially recognising and responding phases of assessment. However, as was the case for a number of sociocultural assessment elements under study in these services, assessment items did not themselves evidence these collective practices. The survey showed that the majority of survey participants already felt that they were participating in a professional community of practice around assessment prior to *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006.

Summary of Findings about current assessment practices

This chapter has presented findings about assessment practice related to eight elements of sociocultural assessment practice of importance to this evaluation:

- making learning visible;

- children being active in the assessment process;

- building on children's knowledge, interests and skills;

- using learning dispositions in assessment'

- engaging family and whānau'

- bicultural assessment practice;

- Pasifika assessment practice; and

- collective assessment practices.

Table 39 presents a summary of key findings for each of these.

Table 38: Summary of Findings: Current assessment practices

Element of sociocultural assessment practice	Key Findings
Making learning visible	Very strong reported focus for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development
	Significant public visibility of assessment items in services
	Profiles very accessible to children and families
	Recognising learning not consistently evident in assessment

Children being active in the assessment process	Very strong reported focus for 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development
	Strong support by educators for this element
	Children reflecting on their learning stories with educators
	Children sometimes involved in the assessment process: e.g., setting learning goals, deciding on assessments to be undertaken
	Moderate level of child voice in documented assessments
	Child voice in assessments highly likely to be engaged with by educators
	Children setting learning goals and child reflection on their assessments not widely evidenced in assessment documentation
Using learning dispositions in assessment	Moderate reported focus for 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development
	Learning dispositions and dispositional language not consistently evident in documented assessments and moderately used by educators in assessment practices generally
	Next steps in narrative assessments not usually focused on strengthening dispositions
	Some lack of understanding of what learning dispositions are
	Some ambivalence to learning dispositions as an appropriate framework for sociocultural assessment practice
Building on children's knowledge, interests and skills	Very strong reported focus for 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development
	Very strong commitment to a credit-based model of assessment by educators
	Individual and group knowledge, interests and skills strongly reflected in assessment items
	Culturally valued literacies, skills, interests and knowledge related to home not very common in documented assessment items.
	Development of skills, interests, knowledge, dispositions and working theories over time rarely evidenced in portfolios and not strongly articulated by educators
Engaging family and whānau	Very strong reported focus for 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development
	Reported that there has been significant improvement in the engagement of parents in assessment
	Ideal of parent engagement in assessment strongly supported by educators
	A moderate amount of explicit parent development in assessment initiatives apparent
	Parent voice and evidence of parent engagement and in documented assessments low
	Community links not strongly evident in individual assessment items

Bicultural assessment practice	Low reported focus for 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development
	Bicultural assessment practice recognised as an area of development by some services
	Relatively strong commitment te reo and tikanga Māori in curriculum but low rate of individual assessment items connected to this
	Individual children's culture valued and occasionally reflected in documented assessments
	Te reo and Tikanga Māori and Maori knowledge and ways of being evident in very few assessment items
	Note: Findings potentially exaggerated by low numbers of Maori children in the participant services which is a limitation of this study.
Pasifika assessment practice	Very low reported focus for 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development
	Pasifika language, knowledge and ways of being/learning evident in very few assessment items
	Individual children's culture valued and occasionally reflected in documented assessments
	Note: Findings potentially exaggerated by low numbers of Pasifika children in a majority of these participant services.
Collective assessment practices	Many educators are taking formal and informal opportunities to discuss their assessments of children with colleagues
	Educators report collaborating on various aspects of the assessment process with their colleagues
	There is a shift away from privatised one [teacher] to many [children] model of assessment responsibility to a model where the assessment is a shared responsibility
	Educator collaboration in assessment process and reflection on the learning rarely evident in assessment items themselves
	Most services consider that they have a professional community of practice associated with assessment
	Strong commitment to the ideal of a wider community of practice involving children and parents

This table shows a pattern of positive practice across each of these elements with caveats and concerns in each area. Educators demonstrated a strong commitment to making learning and assessments publicly visible and a number of examples of this were articulated and demonstrated to the evaluation team. However, the analysis of learning beyond descriptions of observed behaviour was not evident or only partially evident in a substantial percentage of assessment items.

Children are apparently being positively positioned as engaged subjects rather than passive objects of assessment. This positioning saw them engaging with their own assessments and sometimes contributing their own perspectives to the recognising process. The subject matter and narrative tone in assessment items were both affirming of the child as a competent and capable learner in almost all cases. While child voice was not explicit in about half of all assessment items viewed, when it was in the narrative, it was generally meaningfully engaged in by the author. However, children's growing role in the assessment process was rarely demonstrated in the narratives themselves.

Learning dispositions, as a sociocultural assessment tool, were held in mixed regard and with mixed understanding in these services. For some, learning dispositions were seen to not work in practice, or to be an unnecessary approach when *Te Whāriki* itself was seen to be an encompassing guiding framework for assessment. Assessment items often used dispositional language to describe children's activities and this reinforced that there was a lack of clarity in some services about what learning dispositions are. Given that the development of strong learning dispositions is one of two outcomes of *Te Whāriki* for children, and given these services expressed more confidence and clarity about other aspects of sociocultural assessment, the generally low-key or ambivalent positioning of learning dispositions in the assessment methodologies of these services is concerning.

Educator and assessment item data confirmed a very strong commitment to a credit-based model of assessment that started with the child's strengths and passions. It was interesting then that assessment items tended not to explicitly trace these to interests from home and the wider world of the child. Most stories started from an interest evidently developed at the service. Continuity across learning stories that would have illustrated development of these strengths and working theories in a wider range of new and more complex contexts was not strongly evidenced in assessment items.

The productive engagement of parents and whānau in assessment practices was an aspiration of many educators and services in this study, and a number articulated that they had made positive gains in this area. A number of services also acknowledged that engagement was not consistent or of a quality that they were satisfied with. Services were making efforts to discuss assessments and learning generally with parents and making assessments accessible to them. Documented parent voice was still low as was verification through assessment items that parent voice was informing the selection of assessments, the recognising of learning, or the contemplation and development of next steps.

Bilingual and Pasifika assessment practices were not widespread in these services, which generally contained low numbers of Māori and Pasifika children. These aspects of assessment were a lower priority in a majority of services although some acknowledged that bicultural assessment was an area for ongoing

assessment practice development. Some services had moderate or significant commitments in their curriculum to include Pasifika and Māori language and cultural concepts but these were generally not the subject of learning stories (particularly individual stories). Services had not addressed, to any depth, how assessment practices might reflect Pasifika and Māori world views and pedagogies. Services acknowledged that they valued each child's culture and tried to reflect this in their relationships with children and sometimes their assessment practices.

Lastly, collective assessment practices were generally warmly embraced by these services and there were a number of developments cited in this area. Educators were talking about their practice and soliciting contributions from others to support the recognising process. Teachers were sharing responsibilities for assessments of single children and sometimes jointly contributing to a single assessment. Services and educators were making time for formal and informal discussions about assessment and learning and these were usually specific to assessment narratives in development. As with some of the other developments in assessment practice, these practices were not explicitly evident in the assessment items themselves.

Chapter 7 concludes the evaluation by considering these findings about current practice along with the findings from Chapter 5 about assessment practice shifts and their relationship to *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006. Some key issues for future consideration are also raised.

> ## Chapter 7: Discussion of findings

This chapter presents the key findings about the impacts of the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme on educator assessment practices. It first considers the general direction and characteristics of these impacts. The second part discusses the key findings using the Ministry of Education's ultimate outcomes of interest: quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment practice, children's learning experiences and outcomes, and, teacher/educator relationships with family/whānau and the nature of those relationships. Issues for further consideration that arise in the evaluation findings are also considered.

Kei Tua o te Pae, consisting of the resource, national programme of service level professional development and supporting tertiary level organisation professional development represents a financially substantial and comprehensive Ministry of Education effort to reform assessment practices in New Zealand early childhood education services. The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource is not just a tool to assist educators to do assessment. It also demonstrates a philosophy of assessment that challenges the developmental and summative assessment paradigm that was ingrained in early childhood education practice as it entered the 21st Century, This occurred despite a curriculum that pronounced a new assessment direction, and despite the emergence of narrative assessment methods in the late 1990s. The content of the resource is extensive, and the reach of the professional development programme to support its use across diverse ECE services is expansive. The professional development programme model is similarly extensive, covering cluster workshops and seminars, and in-service facilitation often involving all staff members, over a one year period.

The evaluation data indicate that the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme in 2006 had a significant positive impact on assessment practices in the participant services. Overall, case study services reported substantial shifts in the quality of assessment practices over the professional development timeframe and beyond. These shifts were regardless of whether services were starting from a self-reported strong or weak base of practice. The quantity of assessment activity undertaken in these services also increased over this timeframe although not as much as quality. This reflected the observation that some services were already doing a lot of assessment and were focused on improving quality. Encouragingly, shifts in practice tended to be sustained and continued after the professional development, reflecting a degree of ownership of ongoing assessment change by the service. The evaluation data indicates that the broad types of assessments that educators undertake have not changed much over this period. It was clear from the literature and the case study services that some of the ideas and approaches in *Kei Tua o te Pae* were already in place in some services. Two activities which did stand

out as far more common since early 2006 - providing assessment professional development to staff, and developing assessment policies and procedures at the service/centre - are traceable to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development model. When case study participants talked about key changes linked to the professional development experience, engaging parents and whanau was the most frequently reported effect, followed by general shifts in the quality and nature of assessment practice.

These shifts in quality, quantity and type of assessment practices share a temporal relationship with the delivery and post-delivery timeframe of the 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. Case study participants rated highly the contribution of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development to shifts in the quality, quantity and types of assessment practices. Some participants made comments about the delivery of professional development, and they were most positive about the facilitation, the quality of the resource and the benefits of service clustering. Negative comments about the professional development delivery were rare. Evaluation data about the enablers of shifts in assessment practice illuminate the impact of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development because the strongest enabling theme, was not capability or capacity per se, or even support, but readiness for change. For these services, the professional development was desired. The model allowed services to focus on areas of perceived need and its content tended to match service and educator aspirations. There appears to have been a synergy between the timing, model and objectives of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, and sector demand at the service level. Mitchell and Cubey's (2003) first characteristic of effective professional development linked to enhanced pedagogy is that the professional development incorporates participants' own aspirations, skills, knowledge and understandings into the learning context. In this case, assessment was an area of demand for professional development and the delivery model was flexible to incorporate service preferences and priorities.

The role of the resource itself in enhancing readiness is likely to have contributed to the effectiveness of the professional development. 2006 *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development participants had already had the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development resource for one year. Evidence from the case study survey and interviews was that there was a familiarity with and existing use of the resource. Some participants commented that the professional development provided a catalyst and framework for moving forward with the resource.

The evaluation data indicates that the professional development programme in 2006 was effective in shifting practice in these services. This professional development was supported by: a resource that is highly regarded by practitioners; a groundswell of demand from services for assessment-related professional development linked to a readiness for change; the availability of other assessment related professional development and support (including through the Ministry of Education general contract); and

as the tertiary level organisation interviews suggest, generally strong support from other parts of the sector that have an influence in the professional practices of educators in services. A variety of indicators of this positive critical mass were reported by participants: for instance, the use of a sociocultural framework by ERO in its service reviews, and the replacement of departing teachers by new teachers who had either received the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development at another service or been exposed to it through teacher education programmes. The professional development programme in 2006 was a contributor to this positive milieu of assessment reform, and its participants' professional development experiences were enhanced by it.

To evaluate current assessment practices, the evaluation team developed a set of elements of sociocultural practice related to the focus areas of change. These are considered below within the ultimate impact categories established by the Ministry of Education for this evaluation: quality of curriculum and teaching and assessment practice [considered as one category here]; children's learning experiences and outcomes; and, teacher/ educator relationships with family and whanau and the nature of those relationships.

Quality of the curriculum and teaching and assessment practice

This section considers findings relating to collective assessment practices, making learning visible, learning dispositions in assessment and bicultural and Pasifika assessment practice.

The idea of a learning community is central to both the concepts of sociocultural assessment and the professional development's theory of assessment practice change. The evaluation looked at several aspects of the development of a learning community, including collective assessment practices. The evaluation found strong evidence through interviews that educators were acting collectively in assessment by taking time to discuss children's assessment and that these formal and informal discussions were informing the recognising and responding assessment processes in these services. These interactions occurred at formal times during staff meetings where educators presented assessment narratives for discussion and feedback. They were also happening frequently 'on the floor' or informally outside of sessions. Responsibility for individual children's assessments was increasingly being shared and there was some sharing of assessment tasks within a single narrative. However, the assessment item analysis did not produce evidence of shared assessment responsibilities or shared assessment products to any great extent.

Collective practices were also evident in the systems and processes that educators had put in place to use individual and group narratives to plan the service curriculum. This planning involved extensive sharing of assessments with the collective of staff and frequently, the public visibility of assessment documentation.

The evaluation found strong evidence of services making assessment accessible and publicly visible, and being more judicious and strategic about what they displayed. Portfolios were accessible to almost all children most, or all, of the time, and likewise accessible to families. This aided the 'conscription device' (Cowie & Carr, 2004) capacity of assessment to extend the learning community and facilitate understandings about formative sociocultural assessment amongst its members – staff, children and parents/whānau.

There is mixed evidence of practice regarding *making learning visible* in assessment items. At one extreme were narratives that were just descriptions of an activity or children's participation without any reflection, and at the other extreme were narratives that were potentially alienating to parents and children by their complex descriptions of learning. Forty percent of assessment items contained no evidence of recognising learning at all and just one quarter of items were considered by the evaluation team to strongly evidence recognising of learning. An exploration of the learning happening may have occurred outside of the narrative through the avenues of physical visibility and collective practice noted above, but, as with a number of features of assessment practice in this evaluation, these actions was not subsequently reflected in the narrative. It is not clear to what extent this is affecting the capacity of the narrative to provide revisiting educators, children and parents with an assessment of formative value. A lack of visible analysis of learning is, however, definitely weakening the capacity of the narrative and any related narratives to reflect children's learning progressions.

The use of learning dispositions in assessment is one way that educators can make learning visible. The *Kei Tua o te Pae* resource describes three aspects of competence: personal goals, interests, and working theories; learning strategies and dispositions; and social roles and culturally valued literacies (Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 3). In the most recent *Kei Tua o te Pae* books the relationship between learning dispositions, assessment practices and learning outcomes is affirmed:

> *Key competencies, learning dispositions, and working theories provide the foundations for lifelong learning in any domain. If the educational environments and assessment practices are in place to support them, such competencies, learning dispositions, and working theories will be enriched and will develop in strength.* (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 5)

Yet the evaluation found that the use, understanding and favourability of learning dispositions in assessment to be variable. It was clear that in some services there was uncertainly about how learning dispositions connect with the strands of *Te Whariki* and whether they 'work' or are useful in assessment practice. Learning dispositions was not a strong self-reported focus for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in these services. Educators were more likely to use dispositional language in their narratives than this response would suggest, but given the centrality of learning dispositions to learning outcomes in *Te Whariki*, the moderate support and use of learning dispositions in assessment is surprising. The

strengthening of learning dispositions featured in very few 'next steps' narratives in assessment items. Next steps comments were fairly uncommon altogether and tended to be brief and sometimes quite non-specific.

Bicultural assessment practice, like learning dispositions was a low focus area, and the integration of Te reo and tikanga Māori and Māori knowledge and ways of being in documented assessments was very low. The observed service environment and reported curriculum practices did acknowledge these things (such as karakia and waiata at mat time, observance of tikanga, and Te reo instruction and use). During this discussion, educators often noted that their service had few, if any, Māori children enrolled and that this made a difference to their degree of emphasis on bicultural assessment practice. At this time educators would also note that they acknowledged and supported the different cultures of their children including reflecting this in assessments. There was, therefore, something of a tension articulated between bicultural assessment and child-led and credit-based assessment practice. Assessment narratives were highly likely to respond to children's interests, passions and working theories. Bicultural practices such as a Powhiri might lead to a generic story in many children's assessment portfolios. The evaluation team tended not to select these items because they were likely to be for display rather than assessment purposes. Assessing individual children for their bicultural competence was rare.

Pasifika assessment practice was an even lower priority in these services for similar reasons – the profile of the children and the impact of this on educators' considerations of child-led and credit-based assessment practice.

Children's learning experiences and outcomes

Children's learning experiences and outcomes is the second of the Ministry of Education's ultimate impact categories. This section considers the sociocultural assessment elements of children being active in assessment and building on children's knowledge, interests and skills.

Children's active engagement in the assessment process was strongly evidenced in the case study services. Child access to portfolios was very open in the case study services, which was a new step for some. The assessment survey of early childhood education services confirmed that ready and ongoing access to portfolios by children is the norm. It was apparent from general observation in the case study services that children were familiar with their portfolios and showed evident pride in them. There was some evidence that children were supporting the analysis of learning and the development of next steps through reflection on assessment narratives with educators. In assessment items themselves these processes of engagement were absent from narratives, which reflects that these acts of engagement may have happened before the assessment took place [in decision-making about what was to be assessed and

learning goals] or after the assessment was written as part of the ongoing collective recognising and co-construction of next steps.

Child voice appeared in about half of assessment items, and assessment items were often presented in the first person [educator as narrator] with the child being addressed personally in the narrative. This reinforced the child as competent and positioned the educator/child relationship as central to the activity. Child voice was often accompanied by educator responses, making a conversation which might describe problem solving, relationships and negotiation or the development of a working theory. Teachers often reflected on the child's words in the narrative. Photos were very common also enabling the child in action to be presented through the narrative.

There was a strong commitment by educators in the case study services to assessment practices beginning with children's passions, knowledge and skills. This aspect of sociocultural assessment practice was clearly in tune with educators' pedagogical approaches, and assessment items strongly evidenced a credit based model in tone [empowering] and the assessment context. Interestingly, the assessments did not often evidence that the passion, working theory, knowledge, or skill was related to home or elsewhere in the child's life.

Educators were building communities of practice to share assessment information about individual children and hypothesise and develop next steps to build on children's strengths. These conversations were taking place informally and formally and assessment items were a tool of this analysis, including with parents and children. The de-privatising of assessment practices noted above was increasing the likelihood that children's strengths would be noticed and developed. Next steps often mentioned continuing to provide opportunities for the child to develop an interest or skill, however because there was a moderate level of recognising and exploring learning dispositions in action, this commitment may not be fully exploiting the development opportunities that are implicated in these interests – for instance the application of learning dispositions in wider contexts. The portfolios, as a whole, for children did not tend to evidence continuity and development. Most assessment items in this evaluation were stand alone without explicit connections to subsequent or previous items, and did not indicate that proposed next steps had been taken and assessed.

Relationships with Family and Whānau

Engaging family and whānau in assessment practices was another dimension of sociocultural assessment practice that resonated very positively with educator and service pedagogies. Many services, in the case studies, chose this as a focus of their *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development, and some acknowledged it as an area for ongoing development. Services reported increases in parent engagement

in their children's assessment information and stronger contributions from home that supported teachers' relationships with children. Parents were reported as liking the portfolios. There were some reports of parents being positively affected by the representation of their child as competent and capable learner through narrative assessments. Educators talked about the oral exchanges that were happening around their children's assessments. Services had developed a number of strategies and practices to enhance this including public displays, accessibility of portfolios, and making a practice of discussing each new learning story with parents.

Assessment item documentation did not produce evidence of a great deal of parent engagement or voice in assessment. Services acknowledged that they were still struggling to get many parents to provide parent voice, and this voice was often brief and expressed general summative feedback rather than adding to the formative processes of recognising, and deliberation about next steps. Again, very few narratives appeared to have germinated through educator engagements with parents.

Some services had put in place formal opportunities for parent development in assessment such as evening meetings to discuss portfolios. Portfolios often contained information for parents about the purpose of assessment, and a template for parents to record key details about their child including their interests, skills and personality.

As mentioned there were few learning stories that reflected children's connections with people, places and things outside of the service. As with bicultural assessment practice, portfolios often contained generic records of community outings and engagements such as a zoo visit or a visiting performer. However, as they were generally whole-service activities, these tended to be a record of the event rather than an assessment which would have added recognising and responding to the noticing.

Issues for further consideration

The evaluation found a strong commitment to the ideal of a learning community in assessment that was inclusive of educators, parents and whanau and children. Services had extended their collective practices and were engaging children and parents in the assessment process. Children's portfolios generally did not evidence a learning community where all members were active in the assessment process – noticing, recognising, responding, and revisiting. While the evaluation team were advised often that the portfolios did not tell the whole story of child and parent engagement in particular, if assessment documentation is to reflect the learning that is valued in its fullest sense and to help construct a learning community, there needs to be consideration about how assessment documentation can more effectively represent these practices of engagement.

Secondly, although services had strong practices to make assessment documentation visible, the assessment items did not always make learning visible. Participation was described and children were validated as competent and confident, but a number of narratives did not address learning. Many services had good systems in place to discuss assessment narratives between staff and between staff, children and parents. The narratives, however, did not evidence this collective analysis or how this analysis had contributed to next steps. Recognising learning, is fundamental to teaching and the ongoing development of this competency in educators is a wider project than the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development programme itself. However, because quality analysis of learning was reported as occurring through discussion, consideration should be given to how this analysis can be enhanced and reflected at the level of documented assessment. Learning dispositions have a role here because they express the learner in action which is what is required of an effective narrative. However, the mixed reaction to and use of learning dispositions will need to be explored further and addressed if this framework is to be an enabler of stronger practice in recognising learning.

Many services in this evaluation's case studies were strongly committed to reflecting New Zealand's diverse society and commitment to biculturalism in their physical environment and curriculum practices. Yet, in the assessment items analysed, learning about and for a bicultural and multicultural society was almost totally absent, as was learning about the people, places and things from children's wider family and community lives. There is a question here about why these things, which were of evident value to the service, were not reflected in assessment practices in a way that was commensurate with this value. This may be due to the very strong commitment in these services to a child-led approach in the selection of assessment contexts for children. There needs to be consideration given to how literacies and dispositions that are of value and valued by a service are not just reflected in assessment through display (through for instance generic stories of cultural activities) but are developed through formative sociocultural assessment.

Lastly, the evaluation found consistent discrepancies in the quality of assessment practice articulated through interviews, and that evidenced through assessment item analysis, and these discrepancies have been noted. There seems to be a tension between the role of assessment documentation as a repository of artefacts of learning, and its role as a tool of learning. The portfolio, as a repository of artefacts, stresses the qualities of celebrating the child as a competent individual, being visual and reader friendly, acknowledging children's strengths, and celebrating their products. These characteristics are supportive of the 'conscription device' potential of documented assessment; they gave portfolios affective appeal and therefore engage. The portfolio, as a formative tool of learning, stresses analysis of learning, continuity and development of learning, and a community of voices at all stages of the assessment process. Some

portfolios in this evaluation were heavily weighted towards being a repository of artefacts to the point where they resembled scrapbooks of children's experiences and artistic products. Absent in these portfolios was any analysis of learning, evidence of continuity and development, and signs of an operating learning community. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to how documented assessment practices can become more formative and rigorous, and reveal the outcomes of this formativeness without removing their affective appeal as celebratory artefacts.

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> Appendix 1 – Service case study instruments

> ## 1.1 Evaluation of Kei Tua o te Pae. Centre/service Survey

<mark>To be completed by a KTotP professional development lead participant (or centre/service professional leader if lead participant is not available).</mark>

Participant details

Please write your details in the right-hand column below.

Name	
Position at the centre/service (tick)	☐ Education leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other (Describe):
Centre/service name	
Years at this centre/service	
Years in early childhood education in total	
Age range of the children taught by you	☐ Under twos ☐ Over twos ☐ Mixed
Role in the KTOTP professional development (tick)	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating Teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):

Questions

1. When did the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development start at your centre/service?

    Month: _____ Year: _____

2. When did the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development formally finish at your centre?

    Month: _____ Year: _____

3. Please indicate whether your centre/service and you personally, undertook each of the following *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development activities. Please complete both columns – the first for you personally and the second for others at the centre.

Activity (circle)	I participated (tick)	Another/others at the centre participated (tick)
Participated in cluster seminars	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in cluster workshops	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Developed an action plan for *Kei Tua o te Pae*	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in professional development with the PD provider in non-contact time	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in professional development with the PD provider during sessions with children	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Implemented our own assessment-related professional development without the provider	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Presented our KTotP Professional development story to other ECE services or audiences	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Evaluated our action plan	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Anything else? (please describe)		

4. Please indicate whether each of the following types of assessment goals were a focus of your centre/service goals for *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development in 2006. Please tick to indicate whether these goals were a major focus, minor focus, not a focus, or N/A (not applicable).

PD purposes	Focus of Kei Tua o te Pae professional development in 2006 (tick)
Generally improve assessment practice	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Generally strengthen socio-cultural assessment practice	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Making learning visible through assessment	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Using learning dispositions in assessment	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Children being active in assessment	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Building on children's strengths through assessment	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Family/whanau involvement in assessment	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Bicultural assessment practice	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Pasifika assessment practice	☐ **Major focus** ☐ **Minor focus** ☐ **Not a focus** ☐ **N/A**
Other (please describe)	

5. For each assessment activity listed below, please indicate whether you have undertaken this activity since the start of the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. For each activity you have undertaken, please indicate whether you were in a leadership role or a participant role, and whether you were doing this activity prior to the *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development.

Activity	Tick answer
Doing assessment tasks (e.g. recording, taking photos, discussing assessments with children and families).	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Providing assessment professional development to staff.	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Developing assessment policies and procedures at the service/centre (e.g. around parent relationships).	☐ **Yes – in a leadership role** ☐ **Yes – as a participant** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Developing a professional community of practice around assessment (e.g. staff meetings).	☐ **Yes – in a leadership role** ☐ **Yes – as a participant** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Outside-centre work (e.g. presentation at conferences, visits to other centres).	☐ **Yes – in a leadership role** ☐ **Yes – as a participant** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

6. Please tick one of the following options to describe how much you think KTotP has influenced the <u>types</u> of assessment activities that you currently undertake at the centre/service.

☐ A great deal

☐ To some extent

☐ Not very much

☐ Not at all

☐ Don't know/not sure

7. Please comment on the reason/s for your response to question 6 above:

> Thank you for completing this survey!
>
> We will collect this survey during our visit.

> **1.2 Evaluation of Kei Tua o te Pae. Participant Survey**

Participant details

Please write your details in the right-hand column below.

Name:	
Position at the centre/service:	☐ Education leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other (Describe):
Centre/service name:	
Years at this service/centre:	
Years in early childhood education in total:	
Age range of the children taught by you	☐ Under twos ☐ Over twos ☐ Mixed
Role in the KTOTP professional development:	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating Teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):

Questions

1. Please indicate whether you personally participated in each of the following *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development activities by ticking either Yes, No or N/A (not applicable option).

Activity (circle)	Participation (tick answer)
Participated in cluster seminars	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in cluster workshops	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in the development of a centre/service action plan for *Kei Tua o te Pae*	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in professional development with the PD provider in non-contact time	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in professional development with the PD provider during sessions with children	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Implemented our own assessment professional development without the provider	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Presented our story to other ECE services or audiences	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Participated in the evaluation of our action plan	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
Anything else? (please describe)	

2. For each assessment activity listed below, please indicate whether you have undertaken this activity since the start of the Kei Tua o te Pae professional development. For each assessment activity that you have undertaken, please also indicate whether you were doing this activity prior to the Kei Tua o te Pae professional development.

Activity	Tick answer
Doing assessment tasks (e.g. recording, taking photos, and discussing assessments with children and families).	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Providing assessment professional development to staff.	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Developing assessment policies and procedures at the service/centre (e.g. around parent relationships).	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Participating in a professional community of practice around assessment (e.g. staff meetings).	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Outside-centre work (e.g. presentations at conferences, visits to other centres).	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**
- I was doing this before the KTotP PD	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

3. Please tick one of the following options to describe how much you think KTotP professional development has influenced the types of assessment activities that you currently undertake at the centre/service.

☐ A great deal

☐ To some extent

☐ Not very much

☐ Not at all

☐ Don't know/not sure

4. Please comment on the reason/s for your response to question 3 above:

Thank you for completing this survey!

We will collect this survey during our visit.

> **1.3 Evaluation of Kei Tua o te Pae Interview Sheet: Individual Interview**

For the interview of a lead participant, education leader at the centre, or single teacher.

Participant details

Name:	
Centre/Service name:	
Position at the centre/service: *ONLY COMPLETE IF NO SURVEY*	☐ Ed leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other (describe):
Role in KTotP: *ONLY COMPLETE IF NO SURVEY*	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):

General Notes:

Questions

I am going to ask you a series of questions about assessment practices at your centre/service based on some features of sociocultural assessment. Please feel free to refer to examples from your assessment materials if this helps.

1. I want to start with the idea of children being active in the assessment process. How does your centre/service's current assessment practice reflect this feature?

Response Categories	Tick
Child's voice in assessments	
Child's voice used	
Child's participation documented	
Child's ideas, working theories documented	
Children set their own learning goals – next steps	
Family context documented.	
Children aware of documentation process and connection to learning.	
Children's relationships/interactions documented.	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

2. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of making learning visible.

Response Categories	Tick
Child's ideas, working theories documented	
Child's participation documented	
Learning behaviours and dispositions referred to/commented on	
Teacher thinking/ reflection/ responding visible	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

3. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of building on children's prior knowledge.

Response Categories	Tick
Commitment to assessment enabling ongoing learning	
Children's interests and preferences visible	
Connections are made between child's experiences	
Focus on what children *can* do	
Finding out child's interests, knowledge, culturally valued literacies	
Teachers responding to child's voice	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

4. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of using learning dispositions in assessment?

Response Categories	Tick
Dispositions used in assessment	
Dispositions relevant to the centre context used	
Focus on strengthening, developing dispositions	
Dispositions used in practice by Teachers	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

5. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of engaging family and whanau?

Response Categories	Tick
Responsive, reciprocal, respectful relationships	
Children's family context is valued/visible in assessment	
Parent contribution to assessment	
Parent contribution used by teachers	
Parent development in assessment	
Wider community involvement	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

6. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of bicultural assessment practice?

Response Categories	Tick
Integration of Maori knowledge and ways of learning/being	
Child's cultural context valued	
Use of Te Reo language in documented assessment	
Learning and knowing about local iwi in area	
Whanaunatanga/ whanau seen to be central	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

7. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of Pasifika assessment?

Response Categories	Tick
Integration of Pasifika knowledge and ways of learning	
Child's cultural context valued	
Use of relevant Pasifika languages in documented assessment	
Learning and knowing about local Pasifika cultures	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

8. I now want you to describe how the adults at your service/centre work collectively in their assessment practices with children.

| Response Categories	Tick
Time given to dialogue about assessment for individual children	
Shared staff contribution to child's assessment	
Shared understanding about assessment practices	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

9. For the assessment practices that we have been talking about, we want to know where you place yourself and the group/centre prior to, immediately following the PD, and now in 2007. We want you to use this grid to plot where you and the centre were at in terms of the *quality* and *quantity* of assessment things that you were doing at these points in time. You can write in the same box more than once.

To explain the grid, here is a general explanation for what answers in the different quadrants mean (*show picture*).

Please use the black pen for yourself and the red pen for the group/centre generally. Let's start with you personally. Using the black pen, write a 1 for where you think your assessment practice was at prior to KtotP PD. For where you think you were at immediately after the KTotP PD, write a 2. And for where you think you are at now, write a 3.

Please write your answers **inside** the small boxes.

Now let's do the same for the centre/service generally. For where you think the centre/service was at prior to the KTotP PD write a 1 on the grid. For where you think the centre/service was at immediately after the KTotP PD, write a 2. And for where you think the centre/service is at now, write a 3.

HIGH

QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT

LOW

QUANTITY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

LOW   HIGH
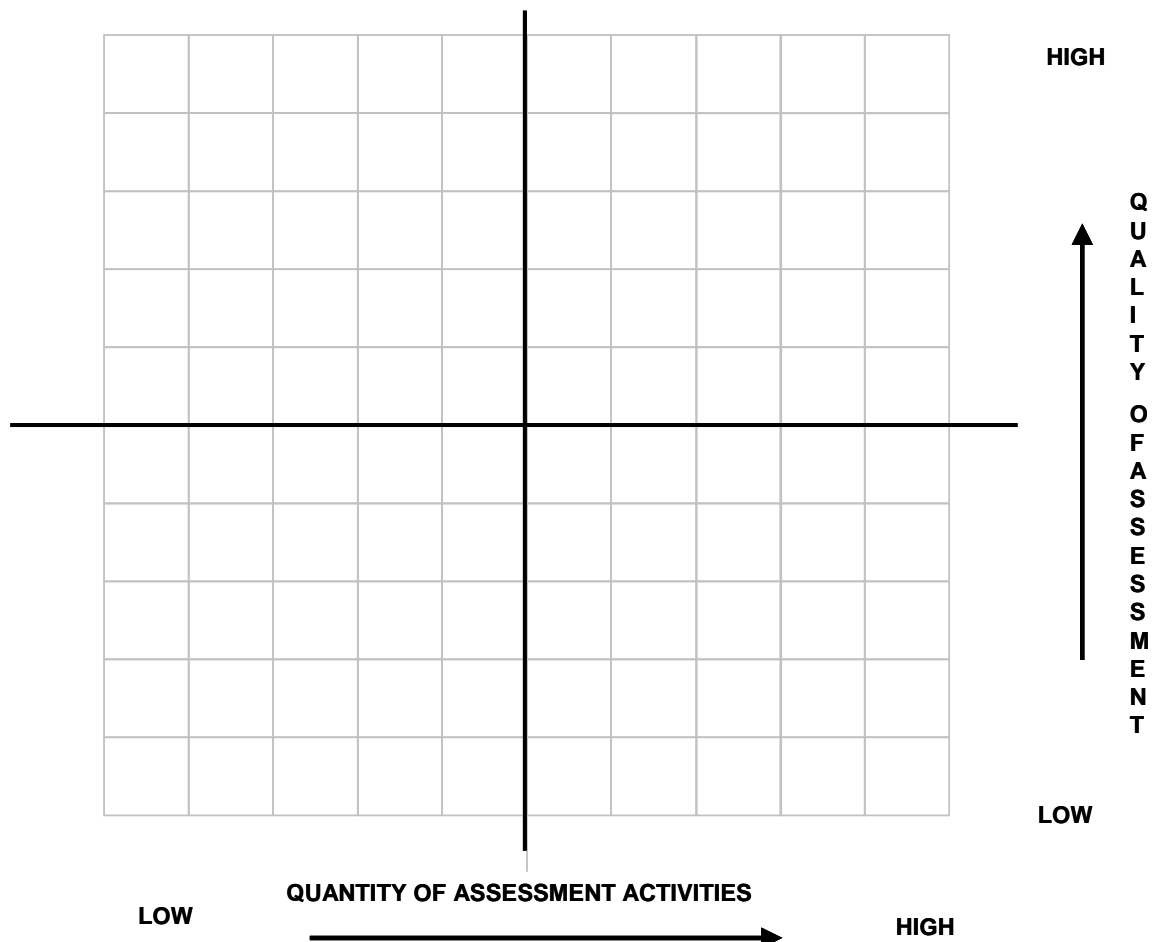
10. Could you explain these patterns for me? Let's start with the pattern for you personally:

	Enablers	Constraints/ Barriers
Me		
Centre/Service generally		

11. Lastly, for you and the centre/service, how much do you think that KTOTP has contributed to these changes in assessment practice? Please choose from either a lot, to some extent, not very much, not at all, or don't know. Let's start with you. ... Now let's do the same for the centre/service generally.

Response	Me	Centre	Notes about rating
A lot			
To some extent			
Not very much			
Not at all			
Don't know/ not sure			

> 1.4 Evaluation of Kei Tua o te Pae Interview Sheet: Mixed Interview
For a group interview situation

Participant details

■ Centre/service name: _____

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Teacher name:					
Position at the centre: *ONLY COMPLETE IF NO SURVEY*	☐ Ed leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other	☐ Ed leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other	☐ Ed leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other	☐ Ed leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other	☐ Ed leader ☐ Admin manager ☐ Educator ☐ Other
Role in KTotP: *ONLY COMPLETE IF NO SURVEY*	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating Teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating Teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating Teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating Teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):	☐ Lead participant ☐ Participating Teacher ☐ non-participating teacher ☐ Other (describe):

Notes:

Questions

I am going to ask you a series of questions about assessment practices at your centre/service based on some features of sociocultural assessment practice. Please feel free to refer to examples from your assessment materials if this helps.

1. I want to start with the idea of children being active in the assessment process. How does your centre/service's current assessment practice reflect this feature?

Response Categories	Tick
Child's voice in assessments	
Child's voice used	
Child's participation documented	
Child's ideas, working theories documented	
Children set their own learning goals – next steps	
Family context documented.	
Children aware of documentation process and connection to learning.	
Children's relationships/interactions documented.	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

2. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of making learning visible.

Response Categories	Tick
Child's ideas, working theories documented	
Child's participation documented	
Learning behaviours and dispositions referred to/commented on	
Teacher thinking/ reflection/ responding is visible.	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

3. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of building on children's prior knowledge.

Response Categories	Tick
Commitment to assessment enabling ongoing learning	
Children's interests and preferences visible	
Connections are made between child's experiences	
Focus on what children *can* do	
Finding out child's interests, knowledge, culturally valued literacies	
Teachers responding to child's voice	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

4. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of using learning dispositions in assessment?

Response Categories	Tick
Dispositions used in assessment	
Dispositions relevant to the centre context used	
Focus on strengthening, developing dispositions	
Dispositions used in practice by Teachers	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

5. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of engaging family and whanau?

Response Categories	Tick
Responsive, reciprocal, respectful relationships	
Children's family context is valued/visible in assessment	
Parent contribution to assessment	
Parent contribution used by teachers	
Parent development in assessment	
Wider community involvement	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

6. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of bicultural assessment practice?

Response Categories	Tick
Integration of Maori knowledge and ways of learning/being	
Child's cultural context valued	
Use of Te Reo language in documented assessment	
Learning and knowing about local iwi in area	
Whanaunatanga/ whanau seen to be central	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

7. I now want you to describe how your centre/service's current assessment practices reflect the idea of Pasifika assessment?

| Response Categories	Tick
Integration of Pasifika knowledge and ways of learning	
Child's cultural context valued	
Use of relevant Pasifika languages in documented assessment	
Learning and knowing about local Pasifika cultures	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

8. I now want you to describe how the adults at your service/centre work collectively in their assessment practices with children.

Response Categories	Tick
Time given to dialogue about assessment for individual children	
Shared staff contribution to child's assessment	
Shared understanding about assessment practices	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Notes	

9. For the assessment practices that we have been talking about, we want to know where you place the centre/service prior to, immediately following the PD, and now in 2007. We want you to use this grid to plot where the centre/service was at in terms of the *quality* and *quantity* of assessment things that you were doing at these different points in time.

To explain the grid, here is a general explanation for what answers in the different quadrants mean (*show picture*).

For where you think the centre/service was at prior to the KTotP PD write a 1 on the grid. For where you think the centre/service was at immediately after the KTotP PD, write a 2. And for where you think the centre/service is at now, write a 3. Please write these numbers **inside** the small boxes on the grid. You can write in the same box more than once.

HIGH

QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT

LOW

QUANTITY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

LOW   HIGH
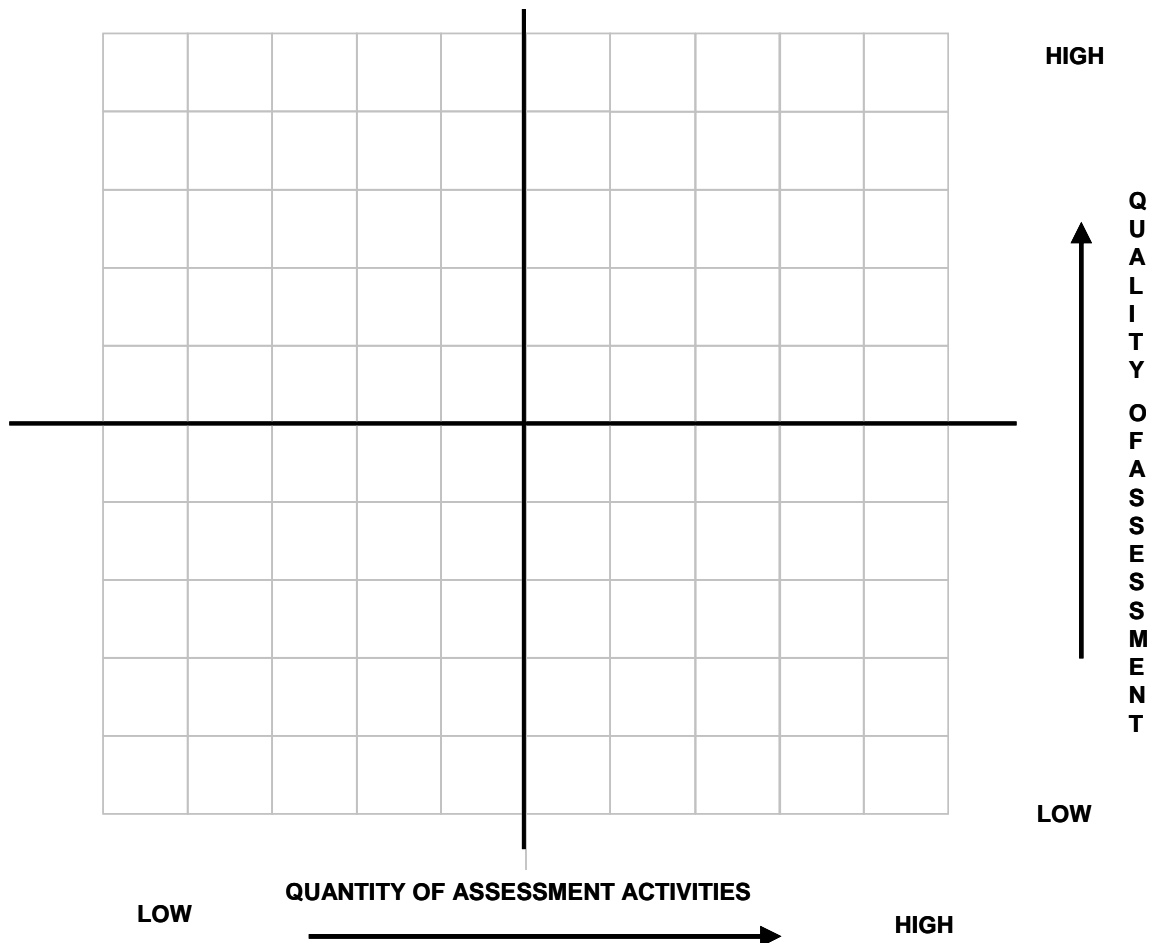
10. Could you explain this pattern for me?

Enablers	Constraints/ Barriers

11. Lastly, how much do you think that the KTOTP PD has contributed to these changes in assessment practice? Please choose from either a lot, to some extent, not very much, not at all, or don't know.

Response	Me	Centre	Notes about rating
A lot			
To some extent			
Not very much			
Not at all			
Don't know/ not sure			

> **1.5 Service case study instrument – Quality and quantity assessment practice matrix**

QUANTITY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

LOW   HIGH

QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT

HIGH

LOW
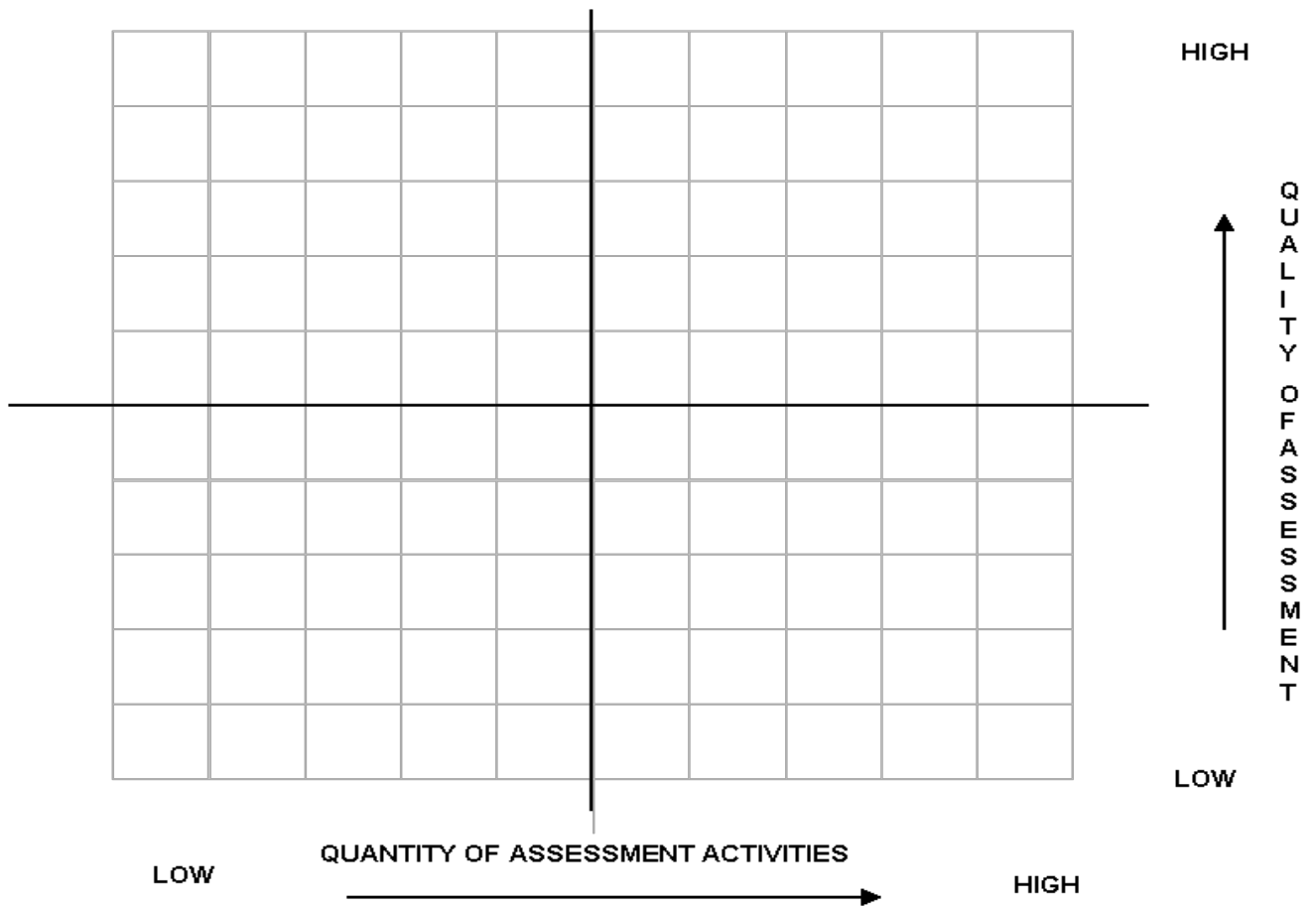
> ## 1.6 Service case study instrument – Portfolio assessment item analysis sheet

Centre service:	Assessment record analysis sheet.	Code for Evidence:			
Approximate age of child (years/ months):		N = Not apparent S = Slight evidence E = Extensive eviden			
Type of assessment record (e.g. profile):					
		Assessment item			
General Features		1	2	3	4
Date of item mm/yy					
Is it a group assessment item? (Y/N)					
Does item have a future or past assessment item associated with it? (Y/N)					
Assessment features					
Children's interests, skills, knowledge, culturally valued literacies, working theories visible					
Next steps focus on strengthening, developing dispositions					
Teachers responding to child's voice					
Child's voices included					
Child setting their own learning goals					
Key behaviours or dispositions are described					
Child's family context is valued and visible					
Integration of Maori knowledge and ways of learning/ being					
Use of Te Reo language in documented assessment					
Integration of Pasifika knowledge and ways of learning					
Use of relevant Pasifika languages in documented assessment					
Notes about assessment record overall:					

Selection notes: choose only examples of narrative assessment practice. Choose five items. Choose only recent examples (if possible 2007)

> **1.7 General Centre/ service Observation Sheet**

Observation	Notes
Making learning visible	
Building on children's prior knowledge	
Family/ Whanau involvement	
Children active in assessment	
Learning dispositions	
Centre Constraints	
Centre enablers	
Feedback about programme delivery model	