

The Quality of Assessment in
Early Childhood Education

November 2007



Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa

The Child – the Heart of the Matter

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We welcome comments and suggestions on the issues raised in education evaluation reports.



Foreword

The New Zealand Government has grouped its priorities and activities under three themes:

- Economic transformation
- Families, young and old
- National identity

The Education Review Office (ERO) contributes to these themes through its role of reviewing and reporting on the quality of education in schools and early childhood education services.

ERO's whakataukī demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

*Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter*

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into schools and early childhood services, and this gives us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country. We are then able to collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's themes.

By assessing children's learning and development, early childhood education services gain good information to use in improving the programmes they offer children. ERO has analysed the quality of assessment used in early childhood services in New Zealand, and this report sets out our findings in this important area.

The successful delivery of education relies on many people and organisations across the community working together. We hope the information in this booklet will help them in their task.

Dr Graham Stoop
Chief Review Officer

February 2008

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Executive summary

This report presents the Education Review Office's findings on the quality of assessment in early childhood education.

ERO evaluated the quality of assessment in 389 early childhood services that ERO reviewed in Terms 3 and 4, 2006. Of the early childhood services reviewed 239 were education and care services, 101 were kindergartens, and 49 were playcentres.

The Ministry of Education is currently supporting the implementation of the early childhood assessment exemplars, *Kei Tua o te Pae*. ERO's evaluation took place at the end of the second year of a five-year professional development programme for the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae*. Services were at varying stages in their understanding and implementation of assessment practices, as not all had yet participated in professional development.

The framework for developing these exemplars was based on the four principles of *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum. A key element of this approach to early childhood assessment is that the perspectives of children, their parents and whānau, as well as the educators at their service all contribute to children's learning and development. Assessment informs the service's programme, educators' teaching practices, and supports positive learning outcomes for children.

ERO found that the quality of assessment varied within each service and between services. In about two thirds of early childhood services, policies and structures for assessment were working well, and assessment practices reflected the four principles of *Te Whāriki*. Factors that contributed to good quality assessment in an early childhood service related to the processes and support structures in the service, the shared understanding and practice of educators, and active and meaningful participation in assessment by children, parents, whānau and other educators.

The reflection of children's learning and development in assessment, the use of assessment to inform learning, and the contribution of assessment information to ongoing self review needed improvement in half the services. In these services educators did not give children opportunities to contribute to assessment, or to revisit and reflect on their learning. Similarly, parents and whānau were not meaningfully involved in assessment practice.

This evaluation has highlighted the need for high quality professional development and sufficient time to allow educators to fully understand the purpose of assessment processes and practices, and to use assessment information effectively in the planning and evaluation of programmes.

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ERO notes that for the forthcoming 2008/09 year, the Ministry of Education has identified four groups of services for professional development providers to focus on:

- those with high numbers of Māori and Pacific children;
- services that have not accessed significant professional development in the past three years;
- those in rural and remote areas; and
- those that are facing issues and challenges.¹

The findings of this national evaluation report endorse the Ministry's strategic approach to professional development for assessment in early childhood education

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

ERO recommends that early childhood educators:

- encourage and increase the genuine involvement of children, parents, whānau, and other educators in assessment of children's learning and development;
- give children opportunities to revisit and reflect on their learning;
- identify what learning in their service is valued or privileged, and consider this in relation to the service philosophy and *Te Whāriki*;
- strengthen links between assessment and planning, focusing on interactions and teaching practice within the service; and
- acknowledge and respond to children, and their parents' and whānau's cultural background.

ERO recommends that early childhood services management:

- provide guidance and expectations, both documented and articulated, about assessment to ensure shared understanding and continuity of practice amongst educators;
- strengthen assessment policies and processes to give educators a sound framework and rationale for assessment practice linked to service philosophy;
- provide targeted and ongoing high quality professional development, and appropriate non-contact and meeting time, to enable educators to participate in professional discussions about assessment and children's learning; and
- undertake robust and rigorous self review of teaching and assessment practice to improve outcomes for children.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education:

- further support rural and parent-led services (playcentres) by providing targeted high quality professional development in assessment; and
- provide targeted support for services to improve the quality of assessment through the development of learning communities and shared professional dialogue.

¹ These groups of services are not mutually exclusive.

Introduction

Early childhood education has evolved to meet the needs of the diversity of New Zealand's children, parents, whānau, and communities. In line with this, the many different types of early childhood services display:

- structural differences, such as sessional or all-day programmes;
- different ownership and organisational arrangements – services may be run by private individuals, government organisations, cooperatives, or trusts;
- different learning environments such as home based or centre-based services;
- a range of different philosophies and cultural identities such as kindergarten, playcentre, Montessori or Rudolf Steiner programmes;
- learning environments that embrace particular cultural identities such as kōhanga reo or Pacific language nests;
- a range of ways in which the local community participates; and
- rural and urban settings.

The range of learning programmes that services offer, and their subsequent assessment practice, reflect the diversity (particularly in philosophy and values) in this sector.²

ASSESSMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS

Te Whāriki, New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, states that assessment of children's learning and development provides early childhood educators³ with information to evaluate and improve the quality of programmes offered to children.⁴

The *Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices in New Zealand Early Childhood Services* (DOPs) outlines expectations of the standard of education and care provided by early childhood services. DOPs 3 and 4 set out requirements for planning programmes, assessing children's learning and development, evaluating programmes, and improving the quality of curriculum. Educators in early childhood services are expected to implement assessment practices that:

- 2 See ERO's *Early Childhood Education: A Guide for Parents* June 2007 for further information.
- 3 In this report, the term 'educator' is used to refer to trained early childhood teachers, staff who work in early childhood services, and parents who are responsible for the education and care of children in an early childhood service setting (e.g. Playcentre).
- 4 Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa* (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 1996), p29.



- reflect the holistic way that children learn;⁵
- reflect the reciprocal relationships between the child, people and the learning environment;
- involve parents/guardians and, where appropriate, whānau; and
- enhance children’s sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners.⁶

The Ministry of Education is currently supporting the implementation of the early childhood assessment exemplars, *Kei Tua o te Pae*. The framework for developing these exemplars was based on the four principles of *Te Whāriki*. ERO’s evaluation took place at the end of the second year of a five-year professional development programme for the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae*. Services were at varying stages in their understanding and implementation of new “socio-cultural” assessment practice, as not all had yet participated in professional development.

Kei Tua o te Pae emphasises socio-cultural assessment practices that embody the four principles of *Te Whāriki*:

- **family and community:** assessment should involve families, whānau and the community;
- **empowerment:** assessment of children’s learning should enhance their sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners;
- **relationships:** assessment is influenced by the relationships between educators and children, and these relationships should be taken into account during assessment; and
- **holistic development:** assessment of children should take place in the same context as activities and relationships, and should encompass all dimensions of children’s learning and development and see the child as a whole.

Educators and parents use assessment information in early childhood settings to “notice, recognise and respond” to children’s learning, strengths and interests.⁷ Good assessment practice in early childhood education recognises the child as a competent and confident learner, takes into account the whole child, and involves parents, whānau and educators. This socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning recognises the influence of the society in which the child lives and of its cultural values on children’s learning and development.⁸

Good quality early childhood assessment reflects and values children’s work. Narrative assessment strategies such as ‘learning stories’ positively describe children’s learning processes and indicate possibilities for ongoing and diverse learning pathways. Children contribute to assessment of their own and others’ learning, and are given feedback about their learning.

Kei Tua o te Pae provides examples of assessment so that children, parents, whānau, and educators can each help to foster children’s learning and development in their own ways.⁹

5 For a definition of holistic see the glossary in Appendix One.

6 Ministry of Education, “Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices for Chartered Early Childhood Services in New Zealand” in *The New Zealand Gazette*, (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 3 October 1996).

7 For a definition of notice, recognise, and respond see the glossary in Appendix One.

8 Ministry of Education, *Sociocultural Assessment Book 2* (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2004), p2.

9 Ministry of Education, *An Introduction to Kei Tua o te Pae Book 1* (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2004), pp2–3.

Evaluation framework

The four principles of *Te Whāriki* underpin ERO's evaluation framework. This evaluation examines the quality of assessment practices in early childhood services. ERO gathered and analysed information from services in response to the following evaluation questions:¹⁰

- How well do educators develop and implement assessment policies and practices for the service?
- To what extent do assessment practices reflect the four principles of *Te Whāriki*?
- How well are children's learning and development reflected in assessment?
- How well does assessment information inform learning in the service?
- To what extent do assessment practices contribute to ongoing self review?

Review officers made evaluative judgements based on the evidence found for indicators of good quality assessment for each of these key evaluation questions.¹¹

ERO also reviewed how services supported educators to undertake assessment of children's learning, for example through professional development and resourcing.

10 See Appendix Two: Self-review questions and indicators for your service or the indicators of high quality practice used by review officers.

11 In some instances, these indicators of good quality assessment applied to more than one key evaluation question, and this may be reflected in the findings.



Findings

This section presents the findings from the key evaluative questions and from services' self-reporting. The findings take into account the ways in which early childhood services support educators to undertake assessment of children's learning. Examples of evaluative comments from review officers (in boxes) are included to provide further information on effective practice for early childhood services.

SELF REPORTING: SERVICES' SUPPORT FOR ASSESSMENT

ERO initially gathered self-reported information from services about the support provided to educators to undertake assessment, their registration and qualifications, and the volunteers involved with the service. This information provides a background to the key findings of the overall evaluation.

Professional development

Almost two thirds of services (64 percent) reported that educators had undertaken professional development in relation to assessment practices in the previous three years. The most common of these were professional development in *Kei Tua o te Pae* (32 percent), learning stories (18 percent), and in-house professional development specific to the service philosophy or type (12 percent).

Almost half the kindergartens had participated in professional development for *Kei Tua o te Pae*, compared to less than a third of education and care services, and only 10 percent of playcentres. Over a third of playcentres and education and care services had had no professional development in assessment. Two thirds (66 percent) of rural services had not received professional development in *Kei Tua o te Pae*. Of rural services, playcentres were less likely to have had this professional development.

ERO found that services that had participated in professional development to support the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae* were more likely to be effective across all of the five evaluative questions than services that had not participated in this particular professional development. These findings were statistically significant.¹²

Registration and qualifications

Table 1 shows that:

- Nearly three quarters of kindergartens had educators that were either all fully registered and with an early childhood education (ECE) qualification, or a mix of fully and provisionally registered ECE qualified early childhood educators.
- Almost all education and care services had a mix of ECE qualified, registered or not registered educators, and educators with a non-ECE teaching qualification.

12 Differences in participation in *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development between the types of services were checked for statistical significance using a Kruskal-Wallis H test as were differences in ratings between qualification groupings. The level of statistical significance for all statistical tests in this report was $p < 0.05$.



- Almost all (91 percent) rural services had educators with a mix of ECE qualified, registered or not registered educators, and educators with a non-ECE teaching qualification, or with playcentre-based qualifications.
- Only nine percent of rural services had all fully registered, or a mix of full and provisionally registered and ECE qualified educators.
- All playcentres had some educators with playcentre-based qualifications.

Table 1: Educators' registration and qualifications

	% of kindergartens	% of playcentres	% of education and care services
All fully registered and ECE qualified	46	0	1
All fully or provisionally registered and ECE qualified	26	0	10
Mix of ECE qualified and registered, ECE qualified but not registered, other teaching qualification	28	35	89
Playcentre qualifications	0	65 ¹³	0
Total	100	100	100

Table 2 shows that two thirds of education and care services had educators on their staff that were currently undertaking an ECE qualification, compared to 18 percent of playcentres and nine percent of kindergartens.

Table 2: Services with educators undertaking ECE qualifications

	% of kindergartens	% of playcentres	% of education and care services
Educators undertaking ECE qualifications	9	18	66

ERO found that services with fully or provisionally registered ECE qualified teachers were more likely to have good quality assessment practices across all five of the evaluative questions than services where educators had a mix of registrations and qualifications or playcentre qualifications. However, services with a mix of registrations and qualifications were more likely to have good quality assessment practices across all five of the evaluative areas than services where educators had playcentre qualifications. These findings were statistically significant.¹⁴

13 Playcentres met the minimum supervision requirements for licensing for group supervision in playcentres, as outlined in Department of Internal Affairs, *New Zealand Gazette No 82*, (Wellington, Department of Internal Affairs), 19 July 2007, p2121.

14 Differences in ratings between qualification groupings were checked for statistical significance using a Kruskal-Wallis H test.

Time available for assessment, planning, and evaluation

Almost all services (89 percent) provided time and/or support for educators to assess children's learning, plan the programme, and evaluate its effectiveness. The extent of this time and support varied greatly among services. Educators at many services had regular meetings and while some of these were weekly occurrences, others were fortnightly, or monthly meetings. Similarly, in many services educators had regular non-contact time, but this too varied from less than two hours per week to two afternoons per week. A small number of services (three percent) had informal non-contact time if the ratio allowed for it, and four percent had no non-contact time. Educators in over half of playcentres reported that they used their own time at home to assess, plan, and evaluate. A fifth of services provided further time for planning and 16 percent provided professional support (mentoring and guidance) to help educators plan and assess.

ERO found that kindergartens and education and care services were the most likely to provide time for meetings and regular non-contact time. Kindergartens were the most likely to provide professional support for their educators.

Resources dedicated to assessment

Almost all services (96 percent) had resources dedicated to supporting assessment practices. These included:

- computers, laptops, and printers;
- digital cameras;
- other Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) equipment, for example data projector, dictaphone;
- early childhood exemplars (*Kei Tua o te Pae*) and other Ministry of Education documents; and
- portfolios, profiles, and templates.

Playcentres were less likely to have computers, laptops, digital cameras, or other ICT. Kindergartens were more likely to have an administrative person available to help with assessment, for example, monitoring the occurrence of assessment undertaken for individual children.

Volunteers

About three quarters of services (73 percent) had volunteers or other non-teaching staff regularly involved in the day-to-day activities of the service. Education and care services were the least likely to have any volunteers or other staff involved (36 percent) or parent help (19 percent). Kindergartens were the most likely to have a teacher aide (37 percent) and administrative support staff (24 percent). Sixty-one percent of kindergartens also had parent help in their service.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The key evaluation questions were investigated during on-site reviews in early childhood services.

ASSESSMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICE

How well do educators develop and implement assessment policies and practice for the service?

Each early childhood service is required to have a philosophy statement that expresses the beliefs, values and ideals that guide the practice of the service.¹⁵ Although there will be common elements, services may have different approaches to children's learning and assessment that reflect their philosophy.

Sound policies and practice guide early childhood educators in undertaking assessment of children's learning and development that reflects the service's philosophy. Assessment is used to support the provision of good quality learning experiences.

Open communication between early childhood services and parents and whānau ensures that information is shared which can enhance assessment and learning. Discussions between educators and parents can make children's learning more apparent to parents, and can also explain the purpose of assessment activities.

ERO evaluated how well educators developed and implemented assessment policies and practice for their service in relation to the evidence that:

- the service's philosophy was reflected in the assessment practice;
- there was a shared understanding of the purposes and intent of assessment;
- assessment practice was based on sound research;
- assessment practice incorporated input from appropriate people; and
- effective strategies in the service supported assessment practices.

Philosophy and assessment practice

Assessment practice in early childhood services should be aligned with the individual service's philosophy.

ERO investigated how well each service's philosophy was reflected in its assessment practice, and the extent to which educators' beliefs about learning reflected the service's philosophy.

In about two thirds of services, the focus of the philosophy was strongly reflected in assessment practices. In these services both philosophy and assessment practice emphasised educators' beliefs about learning, including:

¹⁵ Ministry of Education, "Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices for Chartered Early Childhood Services in New Zealand" in *The New Zealand Gazette*, (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 3 October 1996).

- learning through play;
- interactions;
- parent participation;
- valuing children's interests and knowledge;
- a child-centred approach; and
- increasing the child's voice.

In many of these services, the philosophy made direct reference to the importance of educators noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning and development. Services' philosophies recognised that children were actively involved in their own learning and development. Educators responded to children's interests, strengths, experiences, and conversations, and sought to increase parent participation in assessment. Where this was a particular strength, parents were involved, alongside educators, in reviews of philosophy and assessment practice.

The philosophy stated that children would learn through play, that their interests would be extended and that children would be treated as competent and confident learners. The assessment practices reflected the philosophy, with observations and anecdotal notes of children at play documented and shared by all members of the teaching team each day, in order to challenge and provide ongoing opportunities and experiences for learning. The philosophy of a partnership approach to learning with parents was also evident. Portfolios were sent home as a learning story was completed. Information about children's interests, strengths, likes and dislikes at the service were shared by the educators and in return parents shared anecdotal information from home, which together created a holistic view of the child's knowledge, skills and understanding.¹⁶

For the remaining third of services, assessment practice did not reflect or support their philosophy.

Although most of these services had a stated philosophy that focused on children's holistic development, learning through play, and partnerships with parents, this philosophy was not always evident in assessment practice. Educators' observation and assessment of children's learning was informal, lacked rigour, and did not meaningfully show children's interests, abilities, and skills. Assessment lacked knowledgeable analysis, and educators' perception of how and what children learnt did not clearly link to the service's stated philosophy.

¹⁶ For a definition of portfolios and profiles please see the glossary in Appendix One.

Where ERO found very poor practice, the service's philosophy did not guide assessment practice in any way. In some services, even the programme, when in action, did not reflect the philosophy. This was the case, particularly, in services where external facilitators, an umbrella organisation, or senior management had developed the philosophy without consultation, and this philosophy was not embedded in the educators' understanding or practice.

Shared understanding of assessment

When educators have a shared understanding of the purposes and intent of assessment, practice is more likely to be well understood, consistent, and result in positive outcomes for children. ERO investigated the extent to which educators within each service had a shared understanding of, and discussed and reflected on, assessment of children's learning.

Educators in over half of the services had a shared understanding of the purpose and intent of assessment. In these services there were clear expectations for assessment, including a documented assessment process that was recognised and implemented. Where this was a particular strength, services had an ongoing process for reviewing their planning, assessment, and evaluation practices.

These services provided educators with support such as professional development in assessment, as well as time to discuss and reflect on children's learning. These meeting times were both formal (regular meetings) and informal (for example, during children's sleep time). Educators discussed what information they had gathered about children's learning, and why. They also reflected upon how to achieve positive learning outcomes for children as a response to assessment.

The service had indepth professional development with an external facilitator, which had resulted in changes to its assessment and planning. Assessment practices were meaningful, manageable, and child focused. Analysis of learning was recorded alongside extension ideas. As a result of professional development, educators were developing a collective understanding of assessment and had systems in place to continue to develop this understanding.

In just under half the services, educators lacked a shared understanding of the purposes and intent of assessment and there was little collaboration on assessment and children's learning.

Many of these services experienced high staff turnover and had many new or unqualified educators on the team. This meant there was little consistency in assessment. In some services only one or two educators had any knowledge of the purpose of assessment and this was often not shared with the rest of their team.

In other services, educators could articulate some understanding of the purpose and intent of assessment, but this was not demonstrated in assessment records, reflective journals or minutes of meetings. In some services, while an understanding was apparent amongst educators, this was not supported by service-based expectations, assessment policies, and clear guidelines for assessment. A lack of professional development meant that educators were not given help to increase their knowledge and the quality of their own and others' assessment practice.

Research informed assessment

A knowledgeable educator in an early childhood education setting is able to assess children's learning in an informed and reflective way. ERO investigated the extent to which assessment was based on current early childhood theory, using key guiding documents, such as *Te Whāriki*, the DOPs, and exemplars from *Kei Tua o te Pae*.

Almost two thirds of services had based their assessment practice on the key guiding documents. The intent of these guiding documents was reflected in assessment practice, through making children's learning visible, acknowledging children's dispositions, and reflecting the holistic nature of children's learning and development.¹⁷

The DOPs and *Te Whāriki* underpinned the programme, and local and international research was linked to each aspect of the philosophy. Narrative assessment described children's learning and their developing dispositions. Teachers' own reflective research was guiding the development of sound assessment practice.

In about three quarters of these services, educators had undertaken professional development in assessment that had raised their levels of understanding of the theories and practice inherent in these guiding documents. Where ERO found very good practice, educators had regular and whole-centre professional development. This helped them to stay informed of current theories about assessment, and adjust their practice accordingly.

Just over a third of services had not based, or were only beginning to base, their assessment practice on current theories about assessment.

In most of these services, educators were beginning to use *Te Whāriki*, the DOPs, and, to a lesser extent, *Kei Tua o te Pae* exemplars to inform assessment. Although narrative

¹⁷ For a definition of dispositions please see the glossary in Appendix One.

assessment had been implemented this did not consistently illustrate children's learning. Such narrative often described what teachers did, rather than reflecting on children's learning. Educators' perspectives of learning did not adequately recognise children's learning dispositions, experiences, and interests. Some educators in these services had undertaken professional development in assessment, but this new learning had not yet resulted in effective assessment practice.

In a small number of these services, there was no meaningful link between key guiding documents and assessment practice. There was little theoretical understanding and any references to *Te Whāriki* were shallow and superficial. Educators made no use of the DOPs and *Kei Tua o te Pae* exemplars, and made no reference to children's dispositions. Although some of these services were attempting narrative assessment, often directed by their association or management, there was no professional development to support this, and hence there was little or no understanding of current theories. Assessments were poorly written, mostly describing participation and activities. There was little analysis of children's learning; instead this was mostly anecdotal comment that did not provide a basis for future learning.

Input from a diversity of people

The socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning recognises and takes into consideration the wider world in which children learn and develop. Educators consider the child as part of a family and community, and acknowledge the influence of society and its cultural values on children's learning and development. Including the perspectives of children, peers, educators, families and whānau in assessment enhances children's learning, and establishes links between the service and the home. ERO investigated how well services incorporated input from a diversity of people into assessment practice.

Input from children, parents and whānau, and all educators was well incorporated into assessment practice in just over half the services. Where ERO found particularly good practice, assessment also included the perspectives of other people involved in the children's lives. There was celebration of children's cultural background and recognition of whānau aspirations and values.

The voices of children were included in assessment. Educators recorded children's own narratives, conversations, and explanations about their learning experiences, and those of their peers, supported by photographs and art work. Educators asked children about their learning and recorded this information, and allowed children to select what went into their portfolio or profile. Children developed awareness of their own learning.

Educators had also implemented strategies to include parents' voices in assessment. These included guiding parents through questions, encouraging them to reflect on their child's learning, and participating in discussions. Parents were also encouraged to share useful information about language and activities from home. In such ways parents became actively involved and were able to extend and support their child's learning.

Children, teachers and parents had input into the learning stories. The service had an area for comments where appropriate people could contribute as learning developed. There were also areas for parents' learning stories. Many parents contributed to these. When children travelled away from the service, parents and children were encouraged to record their learning with other family members, in other geographical areas, or with other cultures.

In most of these services, many educators contributed to assessment. Some children's portfolios were the responsibility of one educator, but others also contributed their observations to many portfolios and profiles. In a few services, the voices of other people were visible in assessment. This included other children, educators in training, local iwi, teachers from the local school, visitors from the wider community such as dental nurses, fire fighters, police, and the children's whānau such as grandparents and siblings. These contributions enriched and extended the recording and understanding of children's learning experiences.

In just under half the services assessment practice did not include contributions from a range of people. The voice of the educators dominated assessment information. Some parent and child voices were captured, but this was limited and not useful enough to contribute to children's learning or teaching practice. In most services, parents were asked to complete an introduction page about the child's background and personal information. In some services educators had tried to include parents' contributions, but often educators had not been able to convey an understanding of assessment so that the parents could understand the importance of their contribution, or provide useful input to learning. Any comments from children were often very descriptive and focused on the enjoyment of activities rather than recording their emerging learning.

Where ERO found very poor practice, the educator 'voice' was visible in assessment records, but very rarely did more than one educator comment on a child's learning. Educators in these services either did not take up the opportunity to contribute to all assessments, or strategies such as non-contact time or meetings, to enable a range of

contributions, were limited. Parents and children's contributions were either limited or not apparent. Assessments were sometimes shared with parents, but there was no expectation that parents or children would contribute.

Strategies for assessment practices

Strategies for regular and inclusive assessment help educators implement and undertake assessment practice. ERO investigated the extent to which services had strategies and systems to support worthwhile assessment practice.

Almost two thirds of services had implemented strategies and systems that supported effective assessment practice. These services had expectations for assessment that were reflected in written guidelines for assessment practice. Educators in almost all the services had regular non-contact time, meetings about assessment, and ICT resources to support assessment practice. Services had guidelines to ensure that children's learning was assessed regularly and that the content reflected the holistic nature of children's learning and development. Strong professional leadership in these services gave educators robust feedback on their assessment practices.

Meetings allowed educators to reflect and discuss children's learning. The coordinator encouraged educators to develop their own styles within certain criteria. This had resulted in more personalised learning stories and in-depth observations of children's learning. The reading, sharing, and discussion of learning stories were recorded in the planning journal. A set of guidelines and questions focused these discussions.

Systems to share assessment information amongst educators and with parents were highly evident and implemented effectively. Regular meetings and daily discussions gave educators opportunities to share observations and reflect on assessment. Where ERO found very good practice, services had folders that included examples of good assessment as guides. Profiles and portfolios were accessible to parents and they were able to take these home. Many services had daily communication notebooks in which educators and parents regularly entered information and feedback. Some services held presentations and information evenings to inform parents about children's learning.

Conversely, over a third of services lacked strategies and systems to support assessment practice.

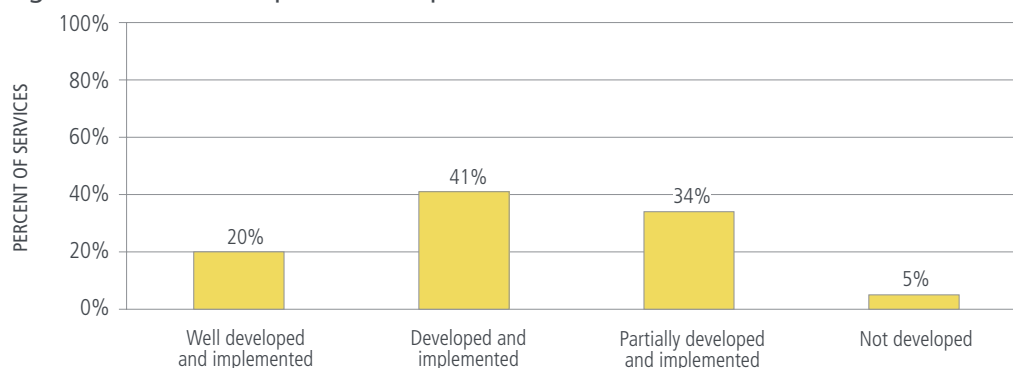
In most of these services, systems to guide educators were informal or, if written, lacked clarity. Although a few services did some recording of children's learning, their assessment guidelines were not based on current good practice. Children were assessed as a group rather than as individuals, and assessment was not undertaken regularly. A few of these services had informal systems to share assessment information amongst educators and with parents, but these systems were often ineffective or not followed.

ERO found poor leadership in many of these services and a lack of higher level professional discussion. A few of these services did not have non-contact time or meetings for educators to discuss assessment, and thus relied on educators to record assessments of children's learning in their own time. The services did not have effective strategies to ensure the regularity, content, format, or sharing of assessment information.

Overall quality of assessment policies and practice

Figure 1 shows that overall, assessment policies and practice in a fifth of services (20 percent) were well developed and implemented. Assessment policies and practice were developed and implemented in 41 percent. In 34 percent of services assessment policies and practice were partially developed and implemented, and in five percent of services these were not developed.

Figure 1: Assessment policies and practice

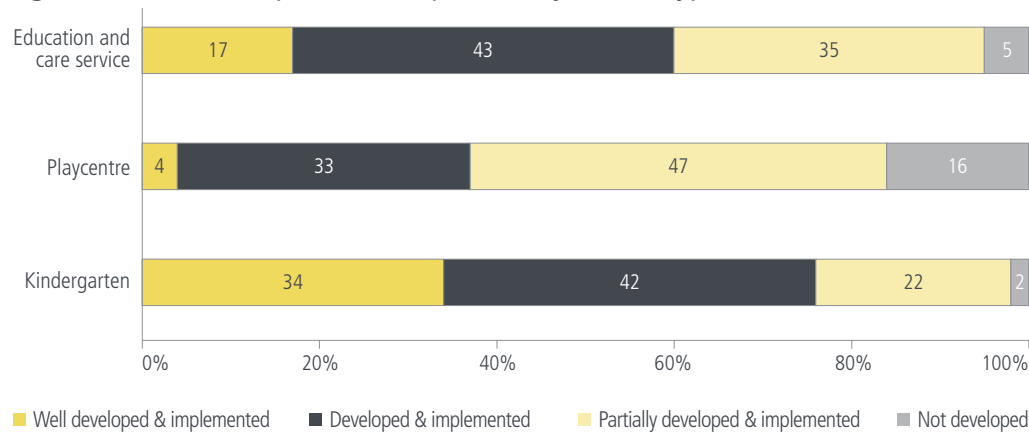


ERO found that regular and ongoing professional development and low staff turnover were key factors in educators' development and implementation of assessment policies and practices. Where educators had participated in whole-staff professional development about assessment they were more likely to have an understanding of assessment of children's learning. In services where educators had not undertaken

professional development, or only one or two educators had, there was often a lack of shared understanding of assessment. This led to poor practice and limited strategies for assessing children's learning and development. Low staff turnover contributed positively to consistency and understanding of assessment practice.

Figure 2 shows that 60 percent of education and care services, 37 percent of playcentres, and 76 percent of kindergartens had developed and implemented sound assessment policies and practices.

Figure 2: Assessment policies and practice by service type



REFLECTING THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF *TE WHĀRIKI*

To what extent does assessment practice reflect the four principles of Te Whāriki?

The valued outcomes of early childhood education vary from family to family depending on their cultural, educational, and religious beliefs, as well as their views on early learning. In New Zealand the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, is underpinned by the concept of nurturing and promoting each individual child's growing competence to communicate, participate, and learn about the world.

Socio-cultural assessment is recognised in New Zealand as a collaborative enterprise, including children, parents, whānau, and educators.¹⁸ Educators are expected to contribute to the development of children's competencies by working in partnership with each child's family. Feedback tells children what outcomes are valued and how they are doing. It also acknowledges the goals children set for themselves.

18 Gipps, C. "Sociocultural perspectives on assessment" in *Learning for Life in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by G Wells and G Claxton (Oxford, Blackwell, 2002), pp 73-83.

ERO evaluated the extent to which assessment practice reflected the four principles of *Te Whāriki* in relation to the evidence that:

- children’s holistic development was reflected in assessment practice;
- children and their families were involved in assessment practice;
- children were given feedback on their learning; and
- children’s learning was captured in context to their relationships with people, places and things.

Holistic development – kotahitanga

A holistic approach to learning and assessment takes account of all the dimensions of children’s learning and development and recognises that these are interrelated and interconnected. Early childhood educators therefore regard each child in the cultural context of their whānau and community. Underpinning this holistic view of the child is educators’ knowledge of learning theory and their understanding of child development, including cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

Combinations of children’s emerging knowledge, skills, and attitudes to learning are described as dispositions for learning. Positive dispositions for learning include courage and curiosity, trust and playfulness, perseverance, confidence and responsibility.

Dispositions for learning also include the way children approach learning, for example, taking an interest, being involved, persisting with difficulty, challenge and uncertainty, and expressing a point of view. Children’s dispositions are noticed, recognised and responded to by competent educators in early childhood settings.

ERO investigated how well services reflected children’s holistic development in their assessment practice.

Nearly two thirds of services clearly reflected children’s holistic development in their assessment practice. In these services assessment included information about children’s knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes. There was good analysis of assessment information that incorporated all aspects of children’s learning and development. This information was used to plan in advance to support children’s interests or dispositions, and to extend their learning and development in a range of contexts, activities, and experiences. In services with very good practice, assessment also reflected children’s cultural dimensions such as their own and their whānau’s aspirations, language, practices, and traditions.

Assessment included information about the whole child. The educators took into consideration the child's knowledge, skills being developed, their dispositions being followed, their attitudes and aspirations when gathering information about their learning and development. This holistic development of the child was central to the service's philosophy.

Just over a third of services did not reflect multiple aspects of children's learning and development in assessment information.

ERO found variable practice in many of these services. For example, some assessments in a service reflected the holistic nature of children's learning and development, others did not. Children's knowledge, skills, and to a certain extent, dispositions, may have been included in assessments, but there was little focus on attitudes and cultural dimensions.

Although some educators were beginning to understand the concept of holistic development, this was not reflected in their assessment of children's learning and development. Some assessments were still highly descriptive of children's activities at a certain time and place, and lacked higher-level analysis of children's learning over time and in a range of situations, reflecting educators' limited understanding of *Te Whāriki*.

In a small number of these services, ERO found little or no evidence that assessment was holistic. There was little understanding of *Te Whāriki* and learning programmes were educator-directed rather than being driven by children's interests. Assessment was mostly a description of children's involvement in activities.

Parents and families – whānau tangata

The involvement of parents and whānau in assessment acknowledges and values the interconnection between home and the early childhood service. Parents and whānau have a wealth of information and understanding about their children, particularly about their participation in the world outside the early childhood service. ERO investigated how well services involved parents and whānau in assessment practice.

About half of the services involved parents and whānau in assessment activities. These services were proactive in seeking parents' input about their child's interests, strengths, and aspirations, as well as the family's cultural background, values and beliefs. Services used enrolment sheets, asked reflective questions, and recorded parent conversations and learning stories accompanied by photographs of their children to plan possible learning

experiences. Some parents also contributed stories about their family, culture, language, and events such as holidays. In most of these services, parents were easily able to access assessment records such as portfolios or profiles.

Learning stories were well displayed to make children's learning visible. Educators had developed a template for parents to contribute information about their child and their aspirations for their learning when they began at the service. Educators provided parents with a small notice to indicate when a new learning story had been placed in their child's portfolio. Families could take portfolios home and a useful format for encouraging families to make a written contribution had been developed. Many families used this, or their own format, to record stories from home.

Where ERO found especially good practice, services had established effective systems to encourage parent involvement in assessment of their child's learning. For example, services shared assessment information not only through portfolios and profiles, but also through email diaries and learning stories, daily notebooks, information and whānau evenings, wall and slideshow displays, and parent interviews. Parents were well informed and actively involved in their child's learning and development.

Just under half of the services had difficulty involving parents and whānau in assessment and the contributions of parents and whānau were limited.

Many of these services asked parents for information about their family and child's interests at enrolment, and less often at regular intervals throughout the child's attendance. However, this was frequently the only consideration of the child's family, cultural background, values and beliefs. ERO found little evidence that educators used this information in planning or to reflect on children's learning.

Although parents in most of these services had access to assessment records such as profiles and portfolios, the usefulness of this to parents was limited. Services often reported that many parents declined to participate in assessment activities.

Feedback to children – whakamana

Feedback to children about their learning and development enhances their sense of themselves as confident and capable learners. ERO investigated how well services gave children feedback on their learning.

Just over half of the services were enhancing children's sense of themselves through feedback about their learning. Children in these services revisited past and current learning experiences and could talk about their learning. They were able to revisit their learning through portfolios, wall displays, DVDs, and computer presentations of digital photographs. Educators used language and questions that encouraged children to discuss and think further. Where ERO found very good practice, educators valued children's resourcefulness, curiosity, creativity and problem solving.

Children were constantly looking at their portfolios and any comments they made were added. This gave children's perspectives on what they were thinking at the time, indicated change over time, helped children to revisit past experiences and learning and reflect on these. Educators were skilled at making links with past learning while talking with children and being explicit about children's progress.

Documentation of emerging interests, including children's work, was collated into planning folders and children and parents were able to revisit these rich learning experiences. Displays of learning stories and photographs were carefully placed throughout the service at a suitable height so children could return to these, discuss them, and recall past learning and progress.

Almost half the services were not giving children feedback about their learning. Children in these services had limited access to records of learning experiences such as portfolios, wall displays, and photographs. When educators did make opportunities to revisit experiences, children were not encouraged to reflect on, or build on, their learning. Most feedback given to children affirmed or directed behaviour rather than encouraged reflective strategies such as problem solving or curiosity.

Children's learning in context – ngā hononga

Children's learning and development are influenced by their relationships with people, places, and things. Assessment of this learning and development should be captured within the context of these relationships. ERO investigated how well services were assessing children's learning in context.

Two thirds of services assessed children's learning in context. Assessment of children's learning reflected the social contexts in which the children learnt, and included meaningful descriptions of the environment and the people in it that influenced their learning. ERO found that where parents were very involved in their child's learning, the parents made links with home experiences and the cultural context of the family, for example, aspirations, language, practices, and traditions.

In services with very good practice, educators included other people such as friends, educators and parents, and used descriptions, photographs and captions to capture the context of learning in a meaningful way as well as to show children's progress and learning over time. Educators used their observations and analysis of learning to plan programmes and activities that would allow children to follow their current and emerging interests in a child-initiated context. In many of these services, the cultural context of children was an important feature of assessments.

Assessment was individualised, and drew on knowledge gained from the service or home context. Educators and parents, who came from a wide range of ethnicities, incorporated cultural contexts into assessment. Educators noticed and responded to children's initiatives and recognised their individual strengths and abilities.

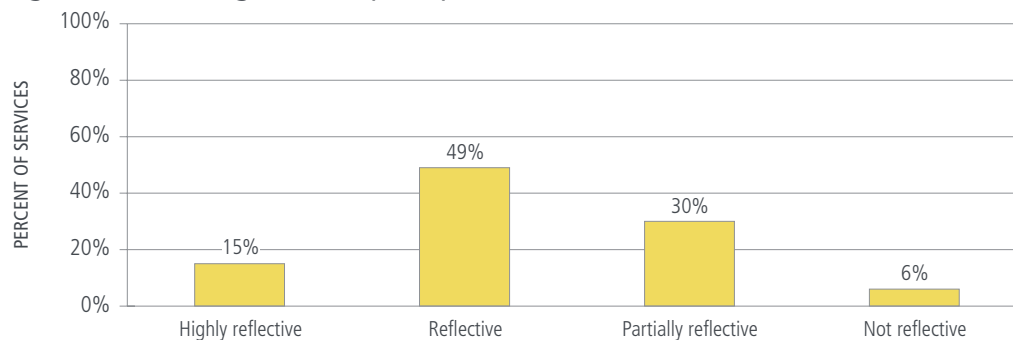
A third of services did not assess children's learning in context. Few educators acknowledged social interaction and children's strengths and abilities, and few incorporated cultural contexts. Most observation was descriptive and did not make any links to an analysis of what learning was occurring or what might happen next.

In a small number of these services, the assessment of children's learning did not occur in a meaningful context. Rather, educators assessed children undertaking set tasks, as opposed to assessing learning occurring during child-initiated play.

Overall reflection of *Te Whāriki* in assessment practices

Figure 3 shows that in 64 percent of services ERO found that assessment practices were highly reflective or reflective of the four principles of *Te Whāriki*. Assessment practices at over a third of services (36 percent) were only partially reflective or not reflective of the four principles of *Te Whāriki*.

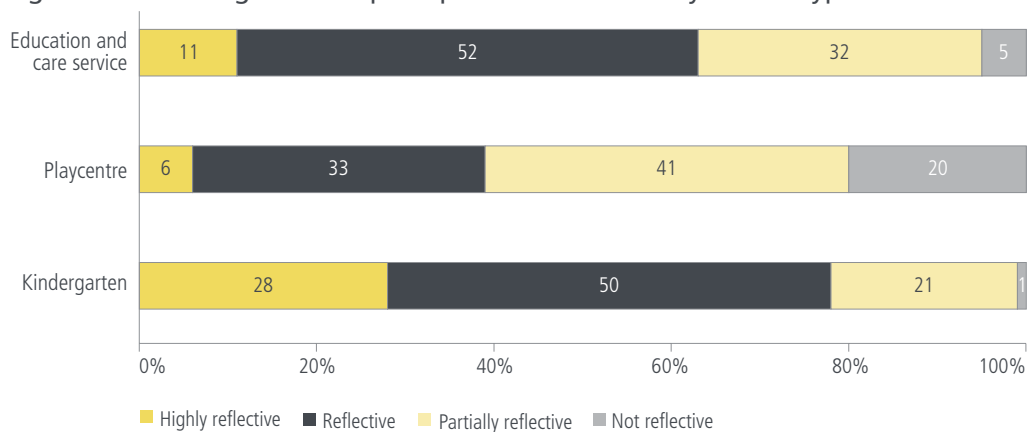
Figure 3: Reflecting the four principles of *Te Whāriki*



ERO found that educators' understanding of *Te Whāriki* and socio-cultural assessment were key factors in how well assessment practice reflected the four principles. In services where practice was partially or not reflective, parents, children, and the educators themselves were not able to use assessment information to support children's learning and development.

Figure 4 shows that in 63 percent of education and care services, 39 percent of playcentres, and 78 percent of kindergartens assessment practices were highly reflective or reflective of the four principles of *Te Whāriki*.

Figure 4: Reflecting the four principles of *Te Whāriki* by service type



REFLECTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

How well is children's learning and development reflected in assessment?

Children are better able to learn when educators observe children, use this information to challenge their own thinking, and provide learning opportunities that extend children's abilities. Assessment information reflects the complexity of learning and development, and the context of interactions with people, places, and things.¹⁹

ERO evaluated how well children's learning and development was reflected in assessment in relation to the evidence that:

- assessment information demonstrated the breadth of children's learning and development;
- assessment information showed an increasing complexity in children's learning and development; and
- assessment information included appropriate analysis to reveal learning.

¹⁹ For a definition of complexity of learning please see the glossary in Appendix One.

Breadth of children's learning and development

Assessment that captures the breadth of children's learning and development, including skills, dispositions, parents' aspirations, and children's interests provides a picture of the whole child. ERO investigated how well assessment information demonstrated the breadth of children's learning and development.

In just over half the services assessment information demonstrated this breadth. Educators in these services gathered a range of assessment information that included many aspects of children's learning and development. Children's dispositions were referred to in assessment, as were parents' aspirations, through the use of photographs and written comments. Combined, these aspects helped show children's learning and development, and informed planning and next steps for learning. Educators invited children to comment on their own learning and accurately reflected this in assessment records to build a picture of the whole child.

Educators effectively included all aspects of the child's development in assessment information. The children's profiles clearly showed the extent of learning by the comments made about interests and needs. The inclusion of children's voice in the portfolios was a strength. Families were well informed of the breadth of children's learning and the development that had occurred. Parents' goals for their child were recognised and responded to on a regular basis. Children were listened to and their ideas and opinions were valued.

Just under half the services were not demonstrating the breadth of children's learning and development in their assessment information. While assessment records covered a wide range of experiences and activities, many of these services lacked strategies to ensure that children's progress and breadth of learning and development could be demonstrated. Educators in some of these services analysis showed connections between the narratives and children's learning, but others discussed only children's participation in activities.

Increasing complexity

Assessment that acknowledges the complexity of children's learning and development shows the progress of each child as they develop competence and confidence over time. ERO investigated how well assessment information showed the increasing complexity in children's learning and development.

In just under half the services educators were writing narratives and including photographs and children's art work in portfolios that showed the progress of individual children over time. These educators were also able to show children's skills and learning dispositions in ways that demonstrated the complexity of their learning and development. Educators supported children and encouraged them to revisit previous learning experiences, building on children's interests. They did this through effective noticing, recognising, and responding, and were able to build on prior learning.

Comprehensive records showed what educators were noticing and recognising about children's learning and how they responded to this knowledge to increase the complexity of the child's experiences and understanding. Immediate responses to develop children's interests and knowledge through the daily reflective diary made learning meaningful and increased the complexity of experiences. All entries in portfolios were specific for that child and their learning. Building in prior knowledge and revisiting past learning was an established practice.

In just over half the services educators did not demonstrate understanding of the complexity of children's learning and development in assessment information.

Educators in many of these services were only just beginning to make links between stories about children's learning and recognising significant learning moments for children. ERO found evidence that, although some children's learning was increasing in complexity, not all educators were able to recognise this and thereby add challenge to children's learning or help them to revisit past learning.

Where ERO found very poor practice, educators failed to see opportunities to increase the complexity of children's learning through their play and current interests. There were very few connections between learning stories to show children's progress, and where this did occur educators often misinterpreted the nature of the complexity and the child's interest.

Analysis to reveal learning

Analysis of educators' observations of children makes children's learning visible. This analysis transforms what educators notice into the recognition of learning. ERO investigated how well assessment information included appropriate analysis to make learning visible.

In just under half the services educators were analysing assessment information appropriately in order to understand children's learning better. Educators' recognition of learning, and short term reviews made children's learning in assessment information visible. Educators in a service worked together in meetings to analyse observations, record children's learning, and to identify next steps, possibilities and opportunities. In services where ERO found very good practice, both parents and children were involved in analysis through learning conversations.

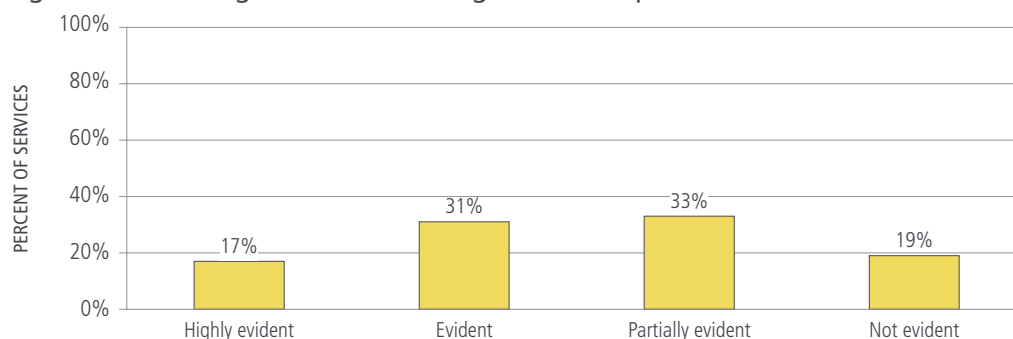
Each afternoon the educators had a reflection meeting to discuss daily stories about children. They downloaded the day's photographs and talked about the photographs while someone recorded the information. Resources and environment were discussed to ensure that these were set up for the following day to continue to stimulate interests in learning.

In just over half of services, educators did not identify children's learning through their analysis. Although educators in a few of these services did not undertake any analysis, most educators were beginning to do so, but were at a very early stage of understanding and development. Educators' analysis of children's learning was variable – focusing on activities and groups of children rather than recognising learning occurring for individual children. The identification of next steps and possible directions was missing in most narratives or short-term reviews. Although some of these educators were analysing children's learning informally, this was not shared with other educators or parents.

Overall quality of reflective practice

Figure 5 shows that in less than half of services (48 percent) the reflection of children's learning and development through assessment was highly evident or evident. The reflection of children's learning and development in assessment was only partially evident in a third of services, and not evident in 19 percent of services.

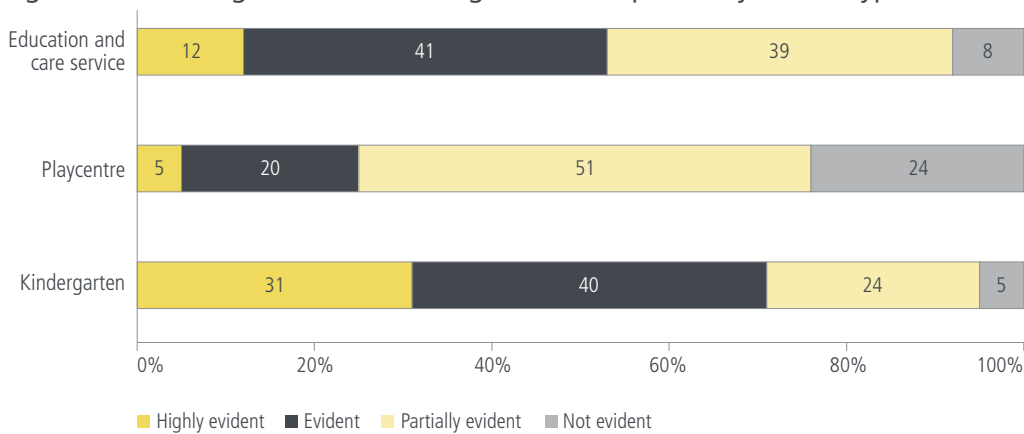
Figure 5: Reflecting children's learning and development



ERO found that in services where children’s learning and development was partially evident or not evident through assessment, educators did not understand or practise socio-cultural assessment. In some of these services, educators had only recently undertaken professional development in assessment, and they lacked confidence and experience to analyse and reflect upon children’s learning and development through assessment.

Figure 6 shows that in 53 percent of education and care services, 25 percent of playcentres, and 71 percent of kindergartens, reflection of children’s learning and development through assessment was evident or highly evident.

Figure 6: Reflecting children’s learning and development by service type



ASSESSMENT INFORMING LEARNING

How well does assessment information inform learning in the service?

Good quality assessment practice contributes to positive outcomes for children. Assessment helps educators to provide learning opportunities that enrich children’s experiences, learning, and abilities. The complexity of children’s learning increases when they participate in learning experiences that are connected and relevant to their own family and community.

Assessment involves the observation of children by experienced and knowledgeable educators who use that information to improve their programmes and outcomes for children. Educators who assess well, embrace the concept of “ako” – that the child and the educator are in a learning journey together – and that teachers are also learners.

ERO evaluated how well assessment information informed learning in the service in relation to the evidence that:

- links between assessment and planning demonstrated the educators' response to children's learning;
- children participated in meaningful experiences as a result of assessment practice; and
- children contributed to the assessment process.

Links between assessment and planning

The use of assessment information to plan for future programmes helps to create meaningful and increasingly complex learning experiences for children. ERO investigated how links between assessment and planning demonstrated that educators responded to children's learning.

In just over half the services educators were using assessment to plan for, and respond to, children's learning. Educators participated in team planning sessions to develop programmes and next learning steps for children. These sessions focused on what educators had noticed and recognised during observations, how they had responded to children's current and emerging interests, and how they planned to do so in the future. Educators' analysis of children's learning and opportunities for further learning were also documented in reflective journals, learning stories, and portfolios.

In services where ERO found very good practice, educators had developed useful strategies to provide links between planning and assessment. For example, in one centre an ongoing team reflective journal was used at formal meetings to promote thinking and analysis amongst the team.

Educators met to discuss learning stories and next steps for children. The 'where to next' was documented in a shared planning book. The service had theme books – folders of learning stories that had grown into a unit developed from several children's interests. Educators wrote reflective narratives for these books. The 'where to next' in learning stories was written in a broad context, as educators wanted the child to drive their own learning.

In just under half the services, educators were not making useful links between assessment and planning. Educators did not regularly participate in reflective discussions and there was little sharing of observations and analysis of children's learning. Some educators were beginning to notice and recognise children's emerging interests and needs. However, subsequent experiences provided by educators lacked depth and continuity, and consisted mainly of changes to activities and resources, rather than responding to what children knew and were interested in, and exploring how their learning could be developed and enhanced.

Participation in meaningful experiences

Children participate in meaningful experiences when they are engaged in, and challenged by the learning occurring, and where that learning is enhanced by good quality assessment. ERO investigated whether children were participating in meaningful experiences informed by assessment.

In about half the services children did participate in meaningful experiences informed by assessment. Educators planned activities that were based on identified interests, strengths, and needs, and that were meaningful to children's home life. Children arrived at the service with a sense of anticipation and excitement about the challenges and experiences ahead. They were engaged in activities they had chosen themselves that were stimulating and appropriate to their age. They could easily access resources to support their play, and educators interacted with the children rather than directing play. The children had a sense of themselves as capable learners, and could share their learning with each other and with educators.

Assessment practice enabled educators to recognise activities and experiences likely to engage particular children, and to respond both immediately and long term to their interest. Children were able to choose freely, the environment was organised to take account of their emerging interests and educators responded from their in-depth knowledge of children.

In services where ERO found particularly good practice, educators were quick to respond to children's learning by introducing new resources and extending children's thinking through open ended questions and sustained conversations. Educators often made adjustments to the programme immediately, as well as planning for extension and development of children's interests and ideas over time.

In the remaining services assessment had little or no influence on the provision of meaningful learning experiences for children. In some of these services children actively participated in and enjoyed experiences that reflected the service's philosophy. However, these experiences were not informed by assessment of children's interests and learning. Many of the activities were educator-directed and they often lacked challenge and opportunities for decision making, particularly for older children.

Children's contribution to assessment

When children contribute to the assessment of their own learning, they are able to discuss and choose the direction of their learning experiences. By having opportunities to make decisions about what is important and should be included in their assessment records, they are able to identify themselves as competent and as experts. ERO investigated the extent to which children were contributing to assessment practice.

A third of services provided children with opportunities to participate in assessment of their own learning. These educators included children's voices in assessment in a variety of ways, such as speech bubbles of children's comments about the learning experience, and participation in decisions about which photographs and art work to include. Children were able to revisit their learning through portfolios and through planned discussions such as mat time. Educators recognised children's aspirations and goals and this informed both spontaneous and formal planning. Educators also encouraged children to evaluate their own learning through conversations that required children to think about how they might develop an idea or skills. Recording these conversations showed how children's thinking and learning developed over time.

In services where ERO found very good practice, educators acknowledged children's voices and perspectives. Many of these services were using ICT effectively to help children revisit their learning and participate in their own assessment.

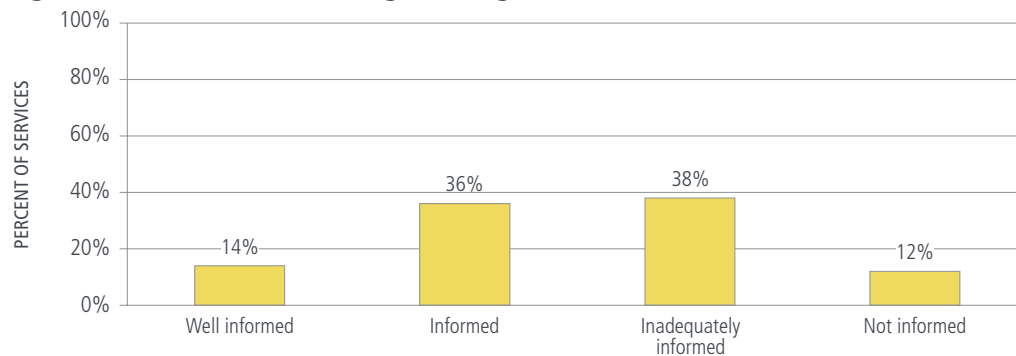
ICT was used as a tool for documenting the programme in action, assessment and children's publications. Children were learning how to use ICT tools to support their learning and to make it visible. They revisited and reflected on past learning through portfolios and planning stories. Children discussed their own play and learning information with their peers and educators. They developed their own criteria for assessing achievement mostly using ICT and there were opportunities for children to become the educators. Children made decisions about what they would do next and about entries into their portfolios.

Children in two thirds of services had limited opportunities to contribute to assessment of their learning. While educators in some of these services were beginning to record children's voices and to encourage them to revisit their learning, many educators did not actively seek out children's self evaluation or give them opportunities to further plan or extend their own experiences. The educators did not have an adequate knowledge and understanding of current assessment theory and practices to respond meaningfully to children's perspectives, plans, and interests.

Overall quality of assessment informing learning

Figure 7 shows that learning was well informed or informed by assessment information in half of the services. Learning in 38 percent of services was inadequately informed and 12 percent were not informed by assessment information.

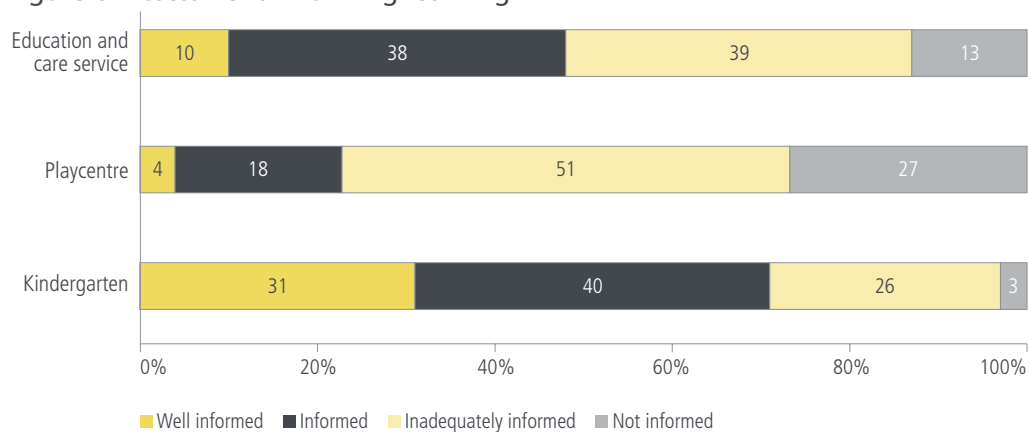
Figure 7: Assessment informing learning



ERO found that in services where learning was inadequately informed or not informed by assessment information, a variety of factors, including staff turnover and inadequate planning, analysis, and non-contact time contributed to this situation. A lack of professional development and strategic direction meant that educators did not have a shared understanding of assessment, or services did not have the policies and procedures to drive good quality assessment practices.

Figure 8 shows that learning in the service was either well informed or informed by assessment information in 48 percent of education and care services, 22 percent of playcentres, and 71 percent of kindergartens.

Figure 8: Assessment informing learning



CONTRIBUTING TO SELF REVIEW

To what extent does assessment practice contribute to ongoing self review?

Effective self review allows educators to review their programmes, physical environment, and interactions in light of assessment information about children's learning and development.

ERO evaluated the extent to which assessment practice contributed to ongoing self review in relation to the evidence that:

- educators use assessment information about children's learning and development to inform the service's programme development;
- educators use assessment information to improve the service's physical environment; and
- educators use assessment information to improve interactions between educators and children, and amongst children.

Programme development

When services gather and analyse assessment information about children's learning they are able to use that information to identify new directions for the learning programme and the professional development requirements of educators. ERO investigated how well services used assessment information to inform programme development.

About half the services were using assessment information about children's learning to inform programme development. Educators in these services undertook both spontaneous and planned reviews and made changes to the programme in response to their assessment of children's learning and development. Reflective discussions, guided by key questions about learning and development, and the documenting of changes to activities and planning, ensured that planned experiences to further challenge children and extend their learning were ongoing and purposeful. Educators were also using self-review processes to identify professional development opportunities.

Where ERO found very good practice, services had a comprehensive framework to guide self review. The strategic direction and philosophy of these services matched their policies and procedures for planning, assessment, evaluation, and consultation. These frameworks ensured regular self review and the effective implementation of changes to the programme.

Planned and spontaneous reviews added significantly to the development of the learning environment and to educators' practice. Planned reviews focused on the evaluation of the projects undertaken with children and provided educators with useful information. Educators followed a predetermined plan in which they developed and answered key questions, such as how they encouraged complexity of learning, included literacy, and involved the community. The format included a section for identifying 'possibilities and opportunities' or next teaching and learning steps.

Half the services were not using assessment information about children's learning and development to inform their programme.

Some of these services were developing self-review processes, but their educators had varying levels of understanding about the purpose of self review. While some educators could articulate changes made to the programme in response to assessment information, few had written records that documented these changes and provided a record for future staff reflection.

ERO found that in some of these services educators were unable to change long-term programme planning in response to assessment information, as strategic and annual plans were inflexible or not sufficiently focused on teaching and learning. Strategic planning was largely about property development and assets, rather than also focusing on programme and professional development. Nationally-based management guided many of these services, and strategic plans were not localised and did not adequately reflect the context of each service, the children attending, and their parents and whānau.

Physical environment

Appropriate changes to the physical environment of an early childhood service reflect the current interests and strengths of, and next learning steps for, the children in the service. ERO investigated how well services used assessment information as part of their self review to improve the physical environment.

Educators in less than half the services used assessment information to guide development of the service's physical environment. These educators changed the environment regularly so children had access to learning resources and spaces that supported their current interests and strengths, and promoted inquiry and exploration. Educators also used next steps identified in learning stories to contribute to short-term planning and long-term strategy on budgets and changes to the environment.

Where ERO found very good practice, educators adapted the environment so children developed a wide range of skills and dispositions. They consulted children about the physical environment to make sure that it matched their interests and gave them challenge.

Educators changed the activities in the environment according to children's interests. The exterior space was small and educators were limited by what they might change in this area, but discussed how to best accommodate changing needs within the confines of the space available. The service used a community centre and had to put all its equipment away at the end of each session, so there were daily opportunities for altering the layout of the equipment and areas of interest.

Over half the services did not use assessment information as part of their self review to improve the physical environment. While changes to the environment were made, these were unlikely to be the result of analysis of 'what next steps' identified in assessment, or of children's use of resources and outdoor and indoor spaces. In many services, changes to the environment were driven by management decisions based on budgets, new resources available for purchase, and health and safety matters, rather than by educators' analysis of children's current interests and strengths.

Interactions between and amongst educators and children

When assessment information contributes to interactions in the service, educators are able to show that they are reflecting upon their interactions with children, and considering how to extend and improve the quality of these interactions. ‘What next’ steps in assessment focus on ensuring that all children participate positively in the social and educational environment of the service. ERO investigated how well services used assessment information to extend and improve interactions between educators and children, and amongst children.

In the services (less than half) that used assessment information to inform interactions, assessment records provided evidence of educators reflecting on interactions, and recorded subsequent changes or improvements made to enhance interactions. Assessment information contributed to the knowledge educators had about children, and to engage children in interactions that supported their sense of belonging and their learning and development.

Where ERO found very good practice, educators used assessment information in their promotion of children’s problem solving, negotiation, leadership, cooperation, and sharing of ideas and views. These services also used the assessment process to build and improve on their interactions and relationships with parents and whānau.

Respectful and responsive relationships were formed between children, their peers and educators. Educators were responsive to children and engaged in professional dialogue with parents and other educators. Children interacted alongside and with others as part of their engagement in learning and during social times at the centre. They developed confidence in communicating and working cooperatively. Educators used effective questioning skills and sustained dialogue with children to promote problem solving, and encouraged them to share their views and theories of the wider world. Children also supported the learning of their peers. They developed dispositions that would support them throughout their education. A range of strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning supported children’s growing confidence to engage with and understand the world around them.

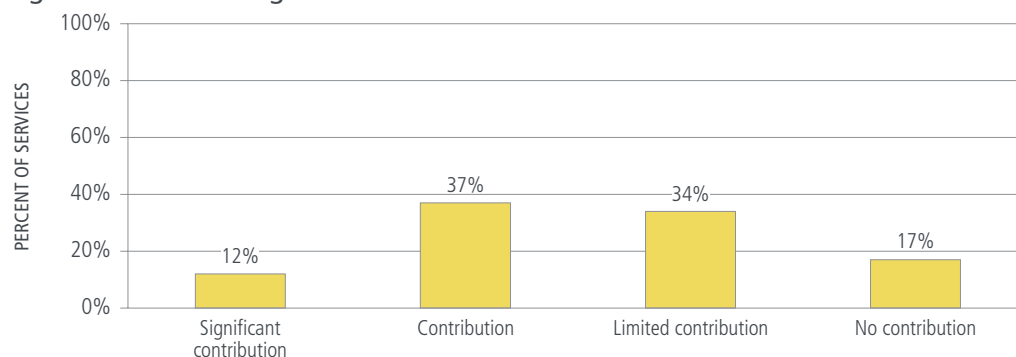
More than half the services did not use assessment information to inform the interactions at the service. While in many of these services interactions were positive, they were not very constructive. Interactions between educators and children were instructional and educator directed, and educators lacked the ability to listen carefully

to children's responses and respond appropriately. Educators had poor questioning and prompting skills, and did not give children time to think and respond. In many services, the effect of assessment on interactions was not documented or analysed in learning stories and next steps for learning. Where ERO found very poor practice, there was very little evidence that interactions between educators and children extended and supported the development of children's language, understanding, and thinking and other interpersonal skills.

Overall quality of assessment contributing to self review

Figure 9 shows that in just under half the services (49 percent) assessment information made a 'significant contribution' or 'contribution' to ongoing self review. In a third of services (34 percent) assessment information made a 'limited contribution' to ongoing self review, and made no contribution in 17 percent of services.

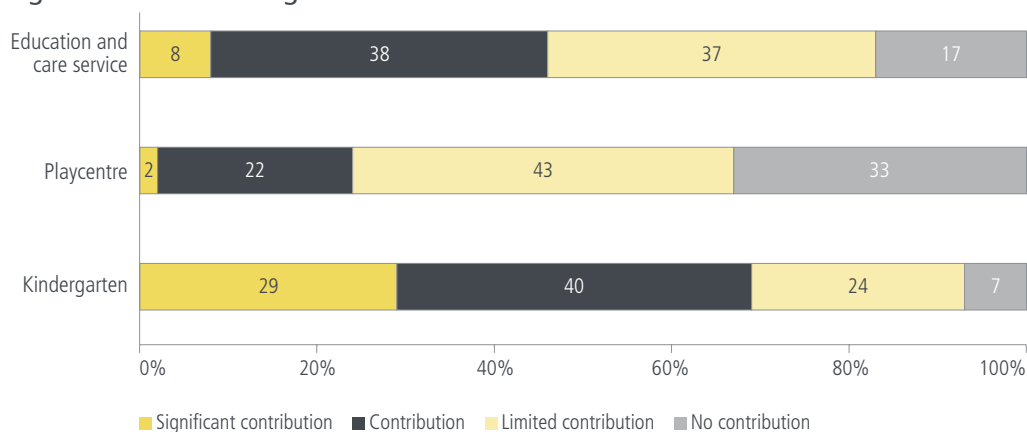
Figure 9: Contributing to self review



ERO found that in services where there was limited or no contribution of assessment information to ongoing self review, a lack of professional development opportunities hindered educators' abilities to participate in discussions and to use assessment information to reflect on their practice.

Figure 10 shows that, in 46 percent of education and care services, 24 percent of playcentres, and 69 percent of kindergartens, assessment information made a 'significant contribution' or a 'contribution' to ongoing self review.

Figure 10: Contributing to self review



THE OVERALL QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT

The quality of assessment in early childhood services was reviewed against five key evaluation areas.

ERO found that 38 percent of services were implementing good quality assessment practices across all five key evaluative areas.

Thirty percent of services were implementing good quality assessment practices in some areas of assessment, but not in others.

Thirty-two percent of services were not implementing good quality assessment practices in any of the five evaluative areas.

For each of the five areas, ERO compared the quality of assessment practice by service type and locality. The following findings were statistically significant.²⁰ ERO found that:

- kindergartens were more likely to have good quality assessment practice than education and care services and playcentres; and education and care services were more likely to have good quality assessment practice than playcentres, across all five of the evaluative areas;
- urban services were more likely to have good quality assessment practice than rural services across all five of the evaluative areas. Sixty-three percent of rural services were playcentres. An urban playcentre was more likely to have good quality assessment practice than a rural playcentre; and
- within a particular service type, locality did not influence the quality of assessment practice in the five areas, unless the service was a playcentre.

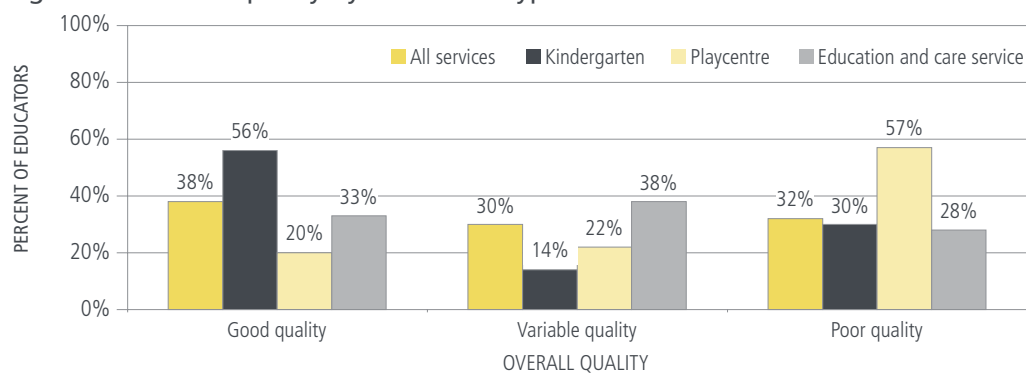
²⁰ Differences in ratings between the types of services were checked for statistical significance using a Kruskal-Wallis H test. The differences in ratings between urban and rural services (locality) were checked for statistical significance using a Mann Whitney U test.

ERO found variable quality of assessment practice across the early childhood education sector, as well as in particular service types and by locality.

Overall quality between service types

Figure 11 shows a fairly even spread across the three groupings of ‘good’, ‘variable’, and ‘poor’ quality. This evenness of spread is reflected by education and care services, with about a third of education and care services in each grouping. Figure 11 shows that although kindergartens had greater representation in the good quality group (56 percent), 30 percent were in the poor quality group. Conversely, 20 percent of playcentres were in the good quality group, with 57 percent in the poor quality group.

Figure 11: Overall quality by institution type



ERO found that in the playcentres in the good quality group (10 of 49 playcentres overall) parent educators were engaged in ongoing professional development in assessment and also had good support from a Centre Support Person who modelled high quality practice. Many parent educators were experienced and valued the importance of assessment. They supported new parents in noticing, recognising, and responding to children’s learning. There were systems and documentation to ensure continuity of assessment practice. Regular planning meetings and effective self review ensured assessment information was used to reflect children’s interests and strengths in the programme.

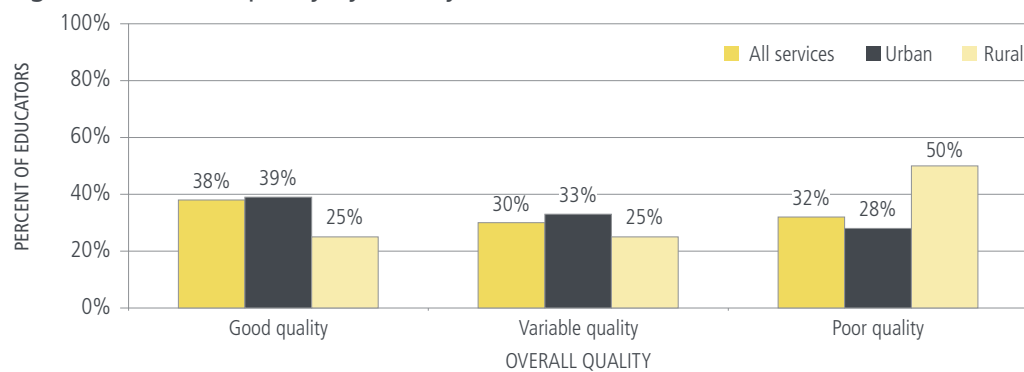
Of the playcentres that were in the poor quality group (28 of the 49 playcentres) most had had little or no professional development in assessment. If there had been any professional development usually only one or two educators at the service had taken part. Where professional development had been undertaken for *Kei Tua o te Pae* it was provided by a Centre Support Person who had attended a workshop or seminar funded by the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately this model of training appeared to result in a lack of shared understanding amongst all educators about the purpose and practice of assessment for children's learning and development.

In most of the kindergartens in the poor quality group (30 of 101 kindergartens overall) educators had not participated in any recent professional development in assessment. Although educators at most of these kindergartens had non-contact time and access to ICT to assist with assessment, they did not have good professional support and leadership. There was a lack of management systems and frameworks to provide guidance and support for good quality assessment.

Overall quality between rural and urban services

Figure 12 shows that half the rural services were not implementing good quality assessment practice in any of the five key evaluative areas. Nearly two thirds of rural services in this evaluation were playcentres, and ERO found that playcentres were less likely to have received professional development for *Kei Tua o te Pae*, to have access to ICT resources, non-contact and meeting times, or ECE registered educators. Rural playcentres were less likely to have good quality assessment practices across the five evaluative areas than urban playcentres.

Figure 12: Overall quality by locality



Conclusion

Good quality assessment in early childhood education includes and values many perspectives. A key element of the socio-cultural approach to early childhood assessment is that the perspectives of children, their parents and whānau, as well as the educators at their service, all contribute to children's learning and development. This holistic approach to assessment informs the service's programme, educators' teaching practices, and supports positive learning outcomes for children.

ERO found that in about two thirds of early childhood services assessment policies and structures for assessment practice were working well, and that this reflected the four principles of *Te Whāriki*. However, the reflection of children's learning and development in assessment, the use of assessment to inform learning, and the contribution of assessment information to ongoing self review, needed improvement in half of services.

A particular issue was the lack of meaningful participation of children, parents and whānau in assessment of children's learning and development. In almost two thirds of the services children did not contribute to assessment, and in about half the services, educators did not give children opportunities to revisit and reflect on their learning. Similarly, in about half the services, parents and whānau were not meaningfully involved in assessment practice.

The main factors that underpinned effective assessment practices were high quality professional development involving all educators in the service, supported by sufficient time to allow educators to fully understand the purpose of assessment processes and practices, and to use assessment information effectively in planning and evaluation of programmes.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO GOOD QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE?

ERO found that the quality of assessment varied within each service and between services and identified factors that contributed to good quality assessment in an early childhood service. These related to the processes and support structures in the service, the shared understanding and practice of educators, and active and meaningful participation in assessment by children, parents, whānau and other educators.

Processes and support structures

A philosophy that focused on learning, supported by processes, policies, and assessment practice developed for, and relevant to, the context of each service, provided a good



framework for high quality assessment practice. Good leadership and strategic direction in a service helped develop and promote a shared and appropriate understanding of, and ongoing expectations for, assessment.

Good quality management and resourcing of assessment practice, such as ongoing and targeted professional development, and the provision of non contact and meeting times, helped educators to participate in professional discussions about assessment. The promotion of, and time for, reflection allowed educators to consider ways in which assessment information could be used to inform learning in the service. The provision of appropriate ICT helped to reduce educators' workloads, and also allowed them to involve children, parents, and whānau and make learning visible to them.

Robust and rigorous self review of teaching and assessment practice helped educators make outcomes positive for children. It also helped educators to practise consistently across the service. Good quality self review in these services resulted in positive change in programmes, the environment, and in interactions.

Useful frameworks and strategies minimised the risk of educators leaving the service. Low staff turnover provided time for professional development and new ideas about assessment to be embedded into assessment practice. These contributed to an understanding and consistency of good quality assessment practice and the strategic direction of the service.

Educators and assessment practice

Educators using good quality assessment practice were able to articulate and document significant moments in children's learning and development. ERO found that this was a result of experience and confidence, a willingness to see and value learning in different ways, and to take risks in their professional discussions with other educators. Educators were able to link their understanding about assessment to practice, and to change their practice if necessary. These educators were part of a learning community, often promoted and developed by their umbrella organisation or management structure.

Assessment was valued and seen not only as a requirement, but also as inherent in the four principles of *Te Whāriki*. Educators' understanding of *Te Whāriki*, linked to their service's philosophy, guided what they noticed and valued about children's learning. Professional development and ensuing discussions challenged educators' beliefs about which learning to value and support. Educators articulated links between children's learning, the analysis of this learning, and the next steps for children's learning and development. They were able to convey children's learning and development meaningfully to parents, whānau, and children. This understanding was linked to educators' qualifications and professional development.

Participation in assessment

Good quality assessment practice and information incorporated the multiple perspectives of children, parents, whānau, and all educators in the service, as appropriate. Parents and children were visible in assessment: educators valued their contribution and they influenced what was noticed as learning. In services with very good practice, there was recognition of children's culture in what educators valued and noticed. Parents and children at services with good quality assessment practice had access to assessment information, and children took part in self assessment of their learning.

RURAL EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Of particular concern to ERO was the quality of assessment in rural early childhood services, of which the majority were playcentres. Rural services were less likely to have good quality assessment practice than urban services. Similarly, playcentres were less likely to have good quality assessment practice than kindergartens and education and care services. Factors that contributed to the lack of good quality of rural services, in particular, playcentres included:

- a lack of participation in professional development, including for *Kei Tua o te Pae*;
- a lack of non-contact and meeting time to plan and evaluate programmes;
- limited access to ICT to help with assessment processes and practice; and
- a lack of fully registered, ECE qualified educators.

These factors are important in helping educators develop a shared and appropriate understanding of, and reflective environment for, assessment of children's learning and development. The absence of these factors in rural services has been detrimental to the quality of assessment in these services.

DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL UNDERSTANDING

ERO found that the early childhood services in this evaluation were at varying stages of professional understanding, particularly about the Ministry of Education's implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae* professional development. Participation in this professional development had a significant influence on assessment practice in early childhood services. Active involvement in professional discussions and communities of learning help educators to reflect on their practices, to reconsider the kind of learning they value and what they choose not to notice, recognise, and respond to.

ERO notes that for the forthcoming 2008/09 year, the Ministry of Education has identified four groups of services for professional development providers to focus on:

- those with high numbers of Māori and Pacific children;
- services that have not accessed significant professional development in the past three years;
- those in rural and remote areas; and
- those that are facing issues and challenges.²¹

The findings of this national evaluation report endorse the Ministry's strategic approach to professional development for assessment in early childhood education.

This evaluation has highlighted the need for high quality professional development and sufficient time to help educators understand assessment processes and practices and to use assessment information in the planning and evaluation of their programmes.

²¹ These groups of services are not mutually exclusive.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that early childhood educators:

- encourage and increase the genuine involvement of children, parents, whānau, and other educators in assessment of children's learning and development;
- give children opportunities to revisit and reflect on their learning;
- identify what learning in their service is valued or privileged, and consider this in relation to the service philosophy and *Te Whāriki*;
- strengthen links between assessment and planning, focusing on interactions and teaching practice within the service; and
- acknowledge and respond to children, and their parents and whānau's cultural background.

ERO recommends that early childhood services management:

- provide guidance and expectations, both documented and articulated, about assessment to ensure shared understanding and continuity of practice amongst educators;
- strengthen assessment policies and processes to give educators a sound framework and rationale for assessment practice linked to service philosophy;
- provide targeted and ongoing high quality professional development, and appropriate non-contact and meeting time, to enable educators to participate in professional discussions about assessment and children's learning; and
- undertake robust and rigorous self review of teaching and assessment practice to improve outcomes for children.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education:

- further support rural and parent led services (playcentres) through the provision of targeted high quality professional development in assessment; and
- provide targeted support for services to improve the quality of assessment through the development of learning communities and shared professional dialogue.



Methodology

SAMPLE

ERO evaluated the quality of assessment in all services where ERO carried out an education review in Term 3 and Term 4, 2006. The types of services and the locality are shown in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: Service Types

Service type	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage ²²
Education and Care Services	239	61	64
Free Kindergartens	101	26	20
Playcentres	49	13	16
Total	389	100	100

Table 3 shows that kindergartens were slightly over-represented in the sample. Playcentres and education and care services were slightly under-represented, in comparison to national figures. However, the differences between the sample and national figures were not statistically significant.²³

Table 4: Locality of services

Locality	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage
Urban	357	92	91
Rural	32	8	9
Total	389	100	100

Table 4 shows that the numbers of urban and rural services in the sample were representative of national figures.

²² The national percentage of each service type is based on the total population of early childhood services as at 16 March 2007. For this study it excludes Casual Education and Care Services, Home based Care and Kōhanga Reo.

²³ The differences between observed and expected values were tested using a Chi square test.



DATA COLLECTION

Data collected by ERO during on-site evaluations

For each service, ERO considered information from a variety of sources including:

- self-review and programme philosophy information provided by the service;
- service strategic plans;
- service annual reports and assurance statements; and
- other documentation including information held by ERO.

During the review, ERO also had discussions with:

- the licensee;
- the management team;
- educators;
- children; and
- parents, whānau and the community, as appropriate.

For this evaluation, ERO also considered information from the following sources gathered during the on-site part of the education review:

- educators' programme planning, assessment and evaluation;
- observations;
- learning environments; and
- examples of children's learning.

Appendix One: Glossary

Complexity of learning	By acknowledging complexity of learning, an educator understands that noticing, recognising and responding is holistic, involves parents and whānau, and is part of a responsive relationship. <i>An Introduction to Kei Tua o te Pae Book 1</i> , p19.
Dispositions	Combinations of children’s emerging knowledge, skills and attitudes to learning are described as dispositions for learning. Positive dispositions for learning include courage and curiosity, trust and playfulness, perseverance, confidence and responsibility. Dispositions for learning also include the way children approach learning, for example taking an interest, being involved, persisting with difficulty, challenge and uncertainty, and expressing a point of view. Children’s dispositions are noticed, recognised and responded to by competent educators in early childhood settings.
Holistic	For the purposes of this evaluation, ERO looked for assessment that included information about children’s knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes, and cultural dimensions.
Learning community	The learning community includes children, parents, whānau, educators, and others. In a learning community, children have opportunities to try out a range of roles, including, for example, friend, tuakana, teina, jam maker, reader, and explorer. <i>An Introduction to Kei Tua o te Pae Book 1</i> , pp3 & 19.
Narrative assessment	Narrative assessment is assessment that is expressed through story, and includes an analysis of the learning that has taken place.

Notice, recognise, and respond	Assessment for learning is described as noticing, recognising, and responding. These are processes that educators use when interacting with children and underpin assessment. Educators notice things as they work with children, they recognise some of what they notice as learning, and respond to a selection of what they recognise. <i>An Introduction to Kei Tua o te Pae Book 1</i> , p6.
Profiles and portfolios	Profiles and portfolios are records of children’s learning, strengths, and interests over time. Educators, parents, whānau, and children contribute to these records. This helps connect children’s learning experiences with people, places, and things in their environment.

Appendix Two: Self-review questions and indicators for your service

Question 1: How well do educators develop and implement assessment policies and practice for the service?

1(a) Our service's philosophy is reflected in the assessment practice.

- Our service's philosophy is congruent with assessment practice (eg philosophy states parents to be involved, and there are mechanisms to encourage and involve parents).
- Our educators' beliefs about learning reflect our service's philosophy.

1(b) We have a shared understanding of the purposes and intent of assessment.

- There is consistent assessment practice amongst our educators.
- Our educators are reflective practitioners.
- There is shared dialogue amongst our educators about assessment.
- There are positive learning outcomes for children resulting from assessment.
- There is evidence of discussions about assessment in meeting minutes, journals, appraisals, and other relevant documentation.
- Our educators comment on each other's assessment practice.
- There are discussions with parents and children about assessment.

1(c) Our assessment practice is based on sound research.

- Assessment makes visible the learning that is valued.
- *Te Whāriki*, the DOPs and the Exemplars inform assessment practice.
- There is evidence of narrative styles of assessment.
- Dispositions are included in assessments.

1(d) Our assessment practice incorporate input from appropriate people.

- The child's voice is visible in assessment.
- Parent/whānau voice is visible in assessment.
- All our educators' voices are visible in assessment.
- There is recognition of cultural background in assessment.
- Other voices are visible in assessment (eg students, volunteers, education support workers).

1(e) Effective strategies within our service support assessment practice.

- Each child's learning is regularly assessed.
- There are clear guidelines and support for our educators.
- There are systems for our educators to share assessment information with each other.
- There are systems for our educators and parents/whānau to share assessment information.



Question 2: To what extent does assessment practice reflect the four principles of Te Whāriki?

2(a) Children's holistic development is reflected in our assessment practice.

- Our assessment includes information about:
 - children's knowledge (eg facts, concepts, ideas, vocabulary);
 - children's skills (physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social);
 - children's dispositions (curiosity, persistence, playfulness, resilience);
 - children's attitudes (confidence, belonging, participation, enjoyment); and
 - children's cultural dimensions (eg aspirations, language, practices, traditions).

2(b) Children and their families are involved in our assessment practice.

- Parents/whānau access our assessment information.
- Our assessment information is meaningful to parents/whānau.
- Our assessment practice enables parents/whānau to contribute.
- Parents/whānau use our assessment information to support their child's learning and development.
- Parents/whānau and children express aspirations and our educators use these to inform their planning.
- Our practice and our environment reflect children and their family/whānau's cultural backgrounds, values and beliefs.

2(c) Children are provided with feedback on their learning.

- There are opportunities for children to use our assessment information (eg read profiles, take photographs, write their own stories).
- There are opportunities for children to reflect on their learning.
- Our educators model reflective strategies eg critiquing, problem solving.
- Children revisit experiences, build on them and can articulate previous learning.

2(d) Children's learning is captured in context.

- Our educators observe children in meaningful contexts.
- Our observations of children refer to the context (people, places and things) of the learning.
- There are links between our observations, analysis, and ongoing documentation.
- Children's different strengths and abilities are recognised.
- Our assessment information includes the contribution of the environment and social interactions to learning.
- The cultural context of the child is incorporated in our assessment.

Question 3: How well are children's learning and development reflected in assessment?

3(a) Our assessment information demonstrates the breadth of children's learning and development.

- Physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language, and spiritual development are included.
- Dispositions are referred to eg curiosity, perseverance.
- Parents' aspirations are captured.
- Our assessment captures the breadth of children's learning (a combination of current theories that influence teaching and learning eg Gardener's intelligences/schema).
- Our educators listen to children to ascertain interests.
- Children's voice is authentic and builds a picture of the whole child.

3(b) Our assessment information shows an increasing complexity in children's learning and development.

- There are connections between stories about children's learning.
- Our assessment shows that a degree of difficulty is being added by children/educators.
- Our educators revisit assessment/prior knowledge about children.
- Our educators recognise when children revisit an area of interest (eg through conversation).
- The individual child is recognisable in our assessment documentation.
- Our educators can articulate 'wow' moments.

3(c) Our assessment information includes appropriate analysis to reveal learning.

- Our analysis is visible in documentation (could be labelled recognise, short term review, or written within the narrative).
- Our educators work together to analyse observations when appropriate.
- Children/parents' perspectives are sought during our analysis.
- There is a focus on learning, not just description of what happened.
- Our analysis draws upon wider theories of how children learn and develop.
- Our analysis draws on our educators' understanding of how children learn and develop.

Question 4: How well does assessment information inform learning in the service?

4(a) Links between our assessment and planning demonstrates that our educators respond to children's learning.

- There are team discussions about children (staff minutes).
- Our educators keep reflective journals showing analysis of the learning event and experiences.
- There are strong threads of learning evident in children's profiles/portfolios.
- There are links between learning episodes.
- Changes are made to our resources and environment because of assessment.
- Planning ideas develop and change over time because of assessment.
- Children and our educators seek expert or specialist input to expand their own knowledge of the world.
- Our educators make decisions based on assessment information.
- Our educators respond to children's emergent and current interests.

4(b) Children participate in meaningful experiences as a result of our assessment practice.

- Children choose to participate as long as their interest remains.
- Children arrive with anticipation and excitement about where the learning will lead.
- Children are engaged in self-choice activities.
- Children can articulate/describe their own learning experiences.
- Children can access resources, both people and material, that they need.
- Activities that children participate in are challenging and age appropriate.

4(c) Children contribute to our assessment process.

- Children discuss their own learning information with their peers and adults.
- Children develop their own criteria for assessing achievement.
- Children make decisions about what they will do next.
- Children make decisions about entries into our assessment records.
- Children identify themselves as competent and an expert.
- Children contribute to our assessment practice.
- There are opportunities for the child to become the educator.

Question 5: To what extent does our assessment practice contribute to ongoing self review?

5(a) Our educators use assessment information about children's learning and development to inform our service's programme development.

- Our strategic and annual plans allow for changes in direction of our programme.
- There are written records that our assessment has informed programme development.
- Our educators can articulate changes made to our programme because of assessment.
- Children's assessment records show ongoing development of our programme through possible next steps.
- Our assessment information is used to identify professional development opportunities for our educators.

5(b) Our educators use assessment information to improve our service's physical environment.

- There are written records that our assessment has informed change in our physical environment.
- Our educators can articulate changes made to our physical environment because of assessment.
- Children's assessment records show ongoing development of our physical environment through next steps.
- There is provision in the budget to purchase resources and books based on our assessment.
- Our educators make changes to our environment to meet current interests and strengths of the children.

5(c) Our educators use assessment information to improve interactions between adults and children, and amongst children.

- There are written records that our assessment has informed interactions.
- Our educators can articulate changes made to interactions because of assessment.
- Children's assessment records show ongoing development of interactions through 'what next' steps.
- Our assessment records show interactions between children and adults are reflected upon appropriately.
- Our assessment records show that children are socially integrated into our service environment.
- Our educators use assessment records to identify children with whom they need to improve interactions.

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