

Results of a Survey on Early Childhood Policy and Issues

Executive Summary

Introduction

Following 'The Future for Children's Early Care and Education' national forum held in February at the National Library of NZ a survey was conducted on early childhood policy and issues.

This survey represents quite possibly the first opportunity for delegates from early childhood groups, leaders in young children's care and education, children's advocates, parents, teacher educators and other experts to state anonymously what they think about early childhood policy and its goodness for children now and into the future.

The findings indicate some major points of discrepancy between the views of survey respondents and public policy views. This matters because the early years are critical ones in human development, and if we do not get it right for young children the effects also flow through to society and the economy. The findings of this survey suggest that public policy for early childhood education may be on a harmful rather than a helpful track for children and families in particular, and for early childhood services in general.

Synopsis of Results and Background Information

The survey comprised of 11 questions, each requiring a single "Yes" or "No" answer. A few lines of space were left after each question for respondents to add their thoughts/comments if they wished. Many did, but not necessarily for every question, and often comments were more than a few lines long. Thus a lot of qualitative data was obtained for what was designed to be an essentially quick quantitative survey (see the full results in the next section). Sixty people completed the survey, and these people represented a tremendous range of different responsibilities and interests in children's early care and education with a significant amount of expertise within the group. The 11 questions are listed below, along with the results and some background information to the questions.

Questions	Background Information
<p>1. Do you think participation in an early childhood education programme is the first stepping-stone on the path to lifelong learning?</p> <p>29% YES 71% NO</p>	<p>"Early childhood education is the first stepping-stone on the path to lifelong learning. Access to high quality early childhood education that parents can afford, is the firm footing children need to thrive at school and beyond." (You're better off with Labour, 2005 policy document Early Childhood Education, p. 1)</p> <p>"Early Childhood education (ECE) is a critical first step in building the foundation for a child's ongoing learning and development." (Pathways to the Future: A Strategic Plan for ECE, Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2)</p> <p>"I am convinced that quality early childhood education builds the life-long foundations of successful learning." (Education Minister, May 2006, Free ECE pamphlet for parents)</p>

<p>2. Do you think the best approach to addressing the needs of young children in at risk families is the provision of quality early childhood education?</p> <p>32% YES 68% NO</p>	<p>“For children from disadvantaged backgrounds participation in quality ECE is particularly important, as they may not be exposed to high quality early learning experiences in the home.” (Pathways to the Future: A Strategic Plan for ECE, Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 9)</p>
<p>3. Do you think more intensive participation, attending longer hours and from a younger age, in government-funded teacher-staffed early childhood programmes delivers stronger benefits for all children?</p> <p>4% YES 96% NO</p>	<p>“Research tells us that intensive, regular and quality early childhood education is critical to ensuring children do well later in life.” (Minister of Education and Minister for Social Development and Employment, Budget 2004 media release, 27 May).</p>
<p>4. Will the 20-Hours Free ECE policy mean better experiences and learning for children in the programmes/centres signed up to the scheme?</p> <p>15% YES 85% NO</p>	<p>“Free ECE will encourage better outcomes by sending a strong signal to parents and whanau that ECE participation has benefits for children and society. It will also free up parents to participate in work, education or training.” (Guide to the New ECE Funding System, Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 13)</p> <p>“Wise: 20 HOURS FREE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION I recently visited Flying Start Childcare and Preschool to meet some of the children who are now benefiting from the Labour-led governments 20 hours free ECE for three and four year olds.... Children who attend ECE have a much better chance of succeeding in school and later in life. The policy means that families can save up to \$4500 each year for every child and it is available to all families whether parents are in the paid workforce or not. More than 65 000 three and four year olds are benefiting from the policy... this visionary and historic policy.” (Steve Chadwick, MP, e-newsletter, Issue No. 5, July 2007)</p>
<p>5. Early childhood programmes receive an hourly amount from the Govt. for each child enrolled. Should parents also be entitled to this amount, or some financial entitlement to cover wage loss, if they are their child’s primary educator (i.e. they don’t use ECE or use an ECE programme for less than 20 hours)?</p> <p>83% YES 17% NO</p>	<p>Early childhood services receive between \$11.64 and \$3.09 per hour per child in subsidy from the Government (depending on the type of service and percentage of registered teachers employed). The money is paid directly to services and not to parents. If a child’s family member e.g. grandparent or aunty signs up to a home-based service the operators of the service (not the family) receives an hourly rate from the government. Government money also goes to early childhood services in a number of different ways: Equity Funding, Centre Discretionary and Establishment grants, and the Childcare Subsidy through the MSD. The 20-Hours Free scheme was designed to encourage parents to increase the number of hours their child spends in ECE regardless of whether parents need assistance with childcare.</p>

	<p>The Ministry of Social Development 2006 Work, Family and Parenting Study reported that 35% of families (around 1/3 of households) with both parents in paid work would prefer one parent not to be in paid work.</p> <p>“The Families Commission is to spend more than \$500,000 telling people they should value parents.” (Dominion Post, Feb, 2008) “Social Development Associate Minister Darren Hughes is singing the initiative's praises. “ We've also been busy supporting parents, that includes 14 weeks of paid parental leave," he says. However, a survey of 500 parents shows that they still feel marginalised with 90% of parents who thought their role was very important. In contrast only 18% felt the government thought their role was important. Stay-at-home mum Rita Trapp agrees with the survey. She left a high flying job to be a full-time mum to her three kids. "Those first five years is very important. You're never going to be able to get that back," says Rita. The Trapps say the government favours working parents and does not value Rita's work at home.”</p> <p>(http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/410965/1573544)</p>
<p>6. Do you think that children are more likely to receive higher quality care and education if the staff in an early childhood programme are all registered early childhood teachers?</p> <p>43% YES 57% NO</p> <p>7. Do you think the length of the early childhood training course a person undertakes is directly related to the quality of the early childhood programme for children and families?</p> <p>36% YES 64% NO</p> <p>On Questions 6 and 7 there were noteworthy differences in the responses of people associated with early childhood services and people associated with adult/teacher education. Please refer to the full results in the next section.</p>	<p>“Teacher qualifications are a key factor in delivering quality early childhood education for children. That’s why the government has set teacher registration requirements.” (You’re better off with Labour, 2005 document Questions and Answers document Early Childhood Education, p. 2)</p> <p>“Requiring ECE services to employ registered teachers increases the costs to the services... The Government will therefore fund services so that increased teacher quality does not come at the cost of decreased participation.” (Pathways to the Future: A Strategic Plan for ECE, Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 9)</p> <p>“This investment has seen the number of registered early childhood teachers in education and care services grow from just over 39% in 2002, to 54% in 2007. This feeds directly into the Teacher Registration Targets to improve quality ECE, which is one of the sector’s long term quality goals under the Strategic Plan.” (Minister of Education opening address to the Future for Children Forum).</p>

<p>8. Should government be taking an active approach to managing the early childhood education network, expanding provisions through funding new programmes and more places for children?</p> <p>69% YES 31% NO</p> <p>Note that while the majority of respondents supported the idea of government involvement and government being an active player, concerns were expressed about what the government was doing/not doing and government effectiveness.</p>	<p>“The government is taking an active approach to managing the early childhood education network.” (You’re better off with Labour, 2005 document Questions and Answers document Early Childhood Education, p. 2)</p> <p>“The Strategic Plan for ECE contains an interconnecting framework of strategies, focused on achieving three core goals over the next 10 years... some of the biggest shifts in direction will be ... greater involvement by the Government in ECE, focusing particularly on communities where current participation in quality ECE is low. The Government has a range of approaches it can use to bring about the change in direction and actions this plan requires. The Government can: fund, regulate, inform, support. A mix of these approaches will be used to achieve the plan’s three goals.” (Pathways to the Future: A Strategic Plan for ECE, Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 8)</p>
<p>9. Do you think current issues for children’s health, wellbeing, and care should feature more strongly in early childhood education policy?</p> <p>85% YES 15% NO</p> <p>10. Does the early childhood sector present a unique case/need to be overseen not only by the Ministry of Education (for teaching and learning) - but also jointly by the Ministries of Health (for child health and environments) and Social Policy (for planning and supporting families and communities now and also into the future)?</p> <p>84% YES 16% NO</p>	<p>These two questions arose from presentations and discussions throughout the day at the Forum. Issues for children’s health and wellbeing also featured in a DVD on NZ early childhood services shown at the Forum.</p> <p>Mike Bedford put forward a proposal for a cross-sector approach (see page 45 of the Proceedings).</p>
<p>11. Should policy continue to emphasise the need to inform parents of the benefits only of children attending publicly funded licensed/chartered early childhood education programmes?</p> <p>4% YES 96% NO</p>	<p>“Raise parents’ (and the wider community’s) awareness of the benefits of participation for children’s educational and social success.” (Pathways to the Future: A Strategic Plan for ECE, Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 11).</p> <p>“Employment opportunities are growing primarily because of government policy which has provided a definition of a qualified early childhood teacher ... Additionally, current government policy encourages parents to use childcare facilities by highlighting the educational benefits.” (Career Services: Jobs: Early Childhood Teacher: Auckland</p>

	<p>www.careers.govt.nz</p> <p>“The results of this study warn against making parental choice, parental ability to pay, or the provision of one particular kind of ECS the decisive voices in early childhood policy” (p. 145) “It may be that our measure of parental perceptions is too loose ... [nevertheless] children’s access to good-quality ECSs should not be made dependent on parental choice.” (pp. 117-118, Competent Children Study report by Wylie, Thompson, & Kerslake-Hendricks, 1996).</p>
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Following this Executive Summary the results are presented in more detail. For each question an overview of the range of comments made by respondents is given along with selected comments to illustrate. The overview of comments could provide a useful source of material for the continuation of discussion and debate on the future for children’s early care and education.

Recommendations and Challenges

Public spending on early childhood education has more than doubled from \$284 million in 1997 to \$767 million in 2007, according to the Minister of Education. Given that public investment in early childhood education is of this magnitude and the survey results bring into question major parts of the ideology behind present early childhood policy, a moratorium on the Government’s 10-year Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education is recommended. An independent evaluation of the Strategic Plan and study of the intended and unintended outcomes seems to be urgently needed. This should include present policies and practices of:

- 20-hours Free ECE promoted as benefiting all children and the messages this funding arrangement gives to parents about their role and constraints placed on services;
- teacher qualification and registration promoted as being key to programme quality;
- prioritising the education side of children’s childcare over care, health and wellbeing;
- increasing the intensity of children’s participation in government funded ECE which is promoted as being better for children; and
- focusing on informing parents of the benefits only of ECE.

It would be wise too to put on hold the decision for parent support and development programmes (e.g. PAFT, Family Start and HIPPO) to be transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Social Development as this administrative segregation may only strengthen perception that government does not value parents and their contributions to children’s care and education.

The proceedings of the national forum and the findings of the survey together highlight a need for policy to be driven less by ideology and more by evidence and closer consideration of what is good for children and families. Strong concern has been expressed surrounding policy to promote children’s participation in early childhood education being motivated by labour market needs for parents to be in paid work, the assumption that parents can be replaced well by registered teachers, and declining options for parents to choose what would suit their child best.

The nature of early childcare and education is changing from being a support to parents and enrichment for children to being an industry for children’s institutionalisation. This is not something that most survey respondents (including advocates for children, health and social experts, early childhood leaders, managers and providers, senior teachers, and teacher educators) viewed to be desirable. Clearly, there is urgency for a lot more thinking to occur around what we want for children and study of the best ways of achieving this. There are some major challenges for Members of Parliament from all political parties to get their heads and hearts into.

Results

All comments received on the survey were analysed – percentages were calculated and categories with topic headings were developed to describe the different comments received on each question. Selections of comments illustrating the range of opinions expressed on each question are provided below. Respondents were asked for their opinion and not that of their organisation.

Abbreviations used in reporting selected comments representing the range of opinions are:

- **EC:** This includes people (n = 35) working in or linked to early childhood services, namely delegates from early childhood organisations, committee members, organisation leaders, staff and senior teachers, managers and providers.
- **Adult Education:** This category includes teaching staff, managers, providers of professional development and/or early childhood training/teacher education (n = 12).
- **Parents:** This category includes a small number of parents (5) who responded to the survey and had participated in the forum as parents of young children.
- **Other:** People (n = 8) whose interest/work lay in areas not already covered above, such as people working in organisations for children's rights, staff recruitment, early childhood consultancy, economics, policy and health specialists.

A common term used by respondents is **ECE** (meaning 'early childhood education')

Presenters, politicians, parliamentary staff who attended and invited guests are not included in the survey results. One early childhood delegate, who was not able to make it to the forum on the day, completed the survey and this was included in the analysis. Public officials (23 in total) from various government departments participated in the forum (e.g. Ministry of Education, Social Policy, Treasury, Women's Affairs, Department of Labour, Education Review Office, etc); however only one responded to the survey. The survey presented a conflict of interest as explained by the following two replies:

I would very much like to be able to complete the survey, but at this time and in this context I think I need to cry off as I would not be able to provide a personal review given my role. I hope you understand.

I wasn't sure whether this was a general broadcast or not [the survey], but I've decided it's not appropriate for me to comment on this survey as an individual, given my role as a public servant.

While almost everyone else who attended the forum responded to the survey, it was notable that just over half of those attending from the early childhood training/teacher education and professional development area did not. This may have been for a variety of reasons such as work commitments and time. Another reason may have been that it was unsettling of long held views. As one person working in an organisation that provides teacher education, explained:

Thanks for the forum, I enjoyed the day. I was interested in the many viewpoints but found many statements and themes did not sit comfortably with me. For this reason, with respect, I will not be participating in the questionnaire.

It would be interesting to poll public opinion on the questions and see whether, and in what respects, these results reflect wider social opinion.

The overview of comments (see below) could provide a useful source of material for the continuation of discussion and debate on the future for children's early care and education.

Question 1: Do you think participation in an early childhood education programme is the first stepping-stone on the path to lifelong learning?

29% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Learning starts when children participate in ECE	<p>Interests are developed, explored and expanded within an early childhood programme. (EC)</p> <p>Especially for children whose parents may work full time or are only children as they can get to experience other things which include social interaction and promotes their overall learning and development. (EC)</p> <p>A programme, whether parent-led or teacher-led, helps to shape parenting practice. (Adult Edn)</p>
Also parents can or should have a role	<p>In saying yes I also believe that parents are the child's first teachers – before early childhood learning in centres. (Other)</p> <p>Yes - if it is a high quality emotional environment and programme, and works in partnership with high quality parenting. (EC)</p> <p>However, I feel that the role of parents as educators of their children needs to be more authentically incorporated in the philosophy of early childhood education programmes, whether parent-led or teacher -led. Sociocultural learning views teaching and learning as a process that occurs between child, parent (whanau) and teacher. (Adult Edn)</p>
But amongst the 29% of respondents who replied “Yes” some cautions were expressed	<p>Not necessarily only 'good' learning comes out of attendance in ECE programmes! (EC)</p> <p>In my experience I believe that some programmes could be the stepping stone which facilitates children to stop learning (metaphor of the hot house plant comes to mind. It thrives for a while, while receiving an abundance of force feeding and flowers profusely but eventually dies). (Adult Edn)</p> <p>I also think that how the programme is presented will have an impact on the child's feelings towards education for the rest of their life. If it is associated with care which does not meet the child's emotional needs, great harm can be done. (EC)</p> <p>In many cases I would say yes, but it should be small steps, supportive of the family and should include the family e.g. PAFT, Mainly Music. (EC)</p>
71% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comment.</i>	
Learning begins before entry to ECE	<p>As soon as we are conceived we are on the path to lifelong learning. (EC)</p> <p>Life long learning starts at least from the moment of birth. (EC)</p> <p>I guess we are the first formal institution that children will engage in that enhances what parents have begun. (EC)</p>
ECE is but only one option for children's learning	<p>Education for children comes in many forms. To say the only place they are learning is an early childhood centre is wrong. Learning can happen in many environments, and having an early childhood service supporting that environment merely gives the children and the families options. (EC)</p> <p>While it might help some children, there is no evidence to suggest ECE is</p>

	<p>essential. Many children are brought up without this - provided they have at least one caring adult who loves them and talks with them and helps extend them; plenty of varied experiences; and plenty of time for a wide variety of play then that is all that is a 'prerequisite' to lifelong learning. (EC)</p> <p>Why do you have to go somewhere to learn? (EC)</p>
<p>The first stepping stone is being well-parented</p>	<p>Relationship with parents is first step. (Parent)</p> <p>Parents are the first and important teachers for children. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>A stable, caring, interactive family is the first stepping stone. (Parent)</p> <p>The first step is being well parented – given health, love, security, attention and opportunities to absorb experiences and make sense of the world in the context of family/community life. (Other)</p>
<p>In certain circumstances the early childhood programme can become a more helpful stepping-stone</p>	<p>Parents are the first stepping-stones to lifelong learning for children except when children are in a situation that learning can not happen. For example stress environments, abuse. (EC)</p> <p>The influence of family will always be the first stepping stone to lifelong learning. However, the complexity of some family circumstances, particularly poverty, may be negative on a child's life chances. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Ideally parents will be the ones to develop lifelong learning in their children. Attendance at a programme is not necessary, however for some children it may be an excellent way to advance or begin that journey. (Other)</p>

Policy Implications

- I think too much emphasis on 'learning' in an academic sense can often mask the fact that ECE is often not utilised by adults (or children) as a tool of education but as a tool for enabling parents (especially mums) to be a part of the workforce. (EC)
- The government is making it seem like it's the right thing to do to set children up on the right path, but is neglecting the importance of bonding and family life. Stable family life should be the first stepping stone. (Other)
- I worry that we have oversold early childhood "education" to the extent that I hear parents say they will put their children into centre care because the people there are professionals who know better than they do, what to do for their child! (Adult Edn)
- Children's lifelong learning begins with their very being, and parents (caregivers) ability to engage with babies and young children and support their learning. This needs to be promoted and better understood in our communities. (EC)
- Developing relationships with loved ones, friends, reading, life skills - this is important. If you don't see your parents 'cos you are at centre most of your waking hours, how can you build a relationship with them? (Having said that, playcentre is a place that people can do all this and get together and make a mess and not have to worry about the carpet at home!) (EC)

Question 2: Do you think the best approach to addressing the needs of young children in at-risk families is the provision of quality early childhood education?

32% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Quality ECE is the best approach for children at-risk	<p>The reality is that some families are so dysfunctional children are better out of them. (EC)</p> <p>Depending on the situation obviously, but care outside the home in such situations can be an important safety valve for all involved. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>For children at risk early childhood education outside the home provides a real chance for them to build new knowledge, skills and to be in a safe supportive environment. (Other)</p> <p>I say this based on the Future for Children Forum where David Fergusson referred to his, and international literature, about the benefits of early childhood education for children from disadvantaged and chaotic, abusive homes. (Other)</p> <p>Because these children may come from a home life which is unsettled and have issues to deal with such as alcohol and violent abuse. A quality ECE setting may give them an outlet from this. (EC)</p>
But, other supports should also be in place	<p>Provided that there is a high degree of parental support and education that goes along with the programme. Other factors such as health and housing must also be addressed. (Other)</p> <p>Yes, but parents need to be educated too on parenting etc. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>I qualify this by saying that ... adults - the decision-makers in families - have to have their own learning needs supported before they can respond to the learning needs of their children. (Adult Edn)</p>
And there can be exceptions in ECE services being able to deliver for children at-risk...	<p>Yes, if families are engaged with the centre or service but some families for financial reasons are not. This is where parenting classes may encourage families to become involved. (EC)</p> <p>My "yes" is tentative because from what I have read and experienced (12 years working with at risk children and families in ECE and teaching in teacher education), quality ECE must be culturally and emotionally appropriate for the family. We have had years and years of a range of interventions for children in at risk families and I am yet to find quality ECE education delivers what it promises to do: make a significance difference to the life long learning of children. Wylie et.al 1999, did not consider the impact of ECE on the mental health of young children. (Adult Edn)</p>
68% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
The ability of early childhood programmes to provide for at-risk children is dubious	<p>How well trained are teachers to work with these families? The whole aim should be to have people working in the family home to understand the pressures within that context and then to offer appropriate support. (EC)</p> <p>I feel that we often are councillors without the right qualifications. There needs to be tight and collaborative links between a range of services for children at-risk. (EC)</p>

	<p>Not necessarily - though if it is a high quality small ECE Centre with qualified staff then it could be one of the better approaches. (EC)</p> <p>I have seen in work I did for the Ministry of Health for Well Child, indicate that ECE exposure for at-risk kids could contribute to short term improvements, but that longer term changes needed interventions that worked to improve parenting. (EC)</p> <p>For young children in at -risk families, it (ECE services) needs support from other agencies and should ideally be a carefully planned and thoughtfully implemented consistent overall approach which obtains the 'buy-in' of and lots of support for the family. (EC)</p> <p>I know one centre that caters for such children and it provides a loving, nurturing safe place for children to be. However, they return to dysfunctional situations. Therefore, I do think NZ needs a much more co-ordinated and integrated approach to services and interventions. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Quite often the at-risk families do not always feel comfortable in early childhood education programmes. Also I would question the term 'quality'. How would a 'quality' early childhood programme address the needs of at risk families? Even before that, how do we identify the at-risk families? Should our ECE programmes be more multi-disciplinary in their approach to assist these families effectively? (Adult Edn)</p>
<p>And other issues for families and children must be addressed</p>	<p>Early childhood provision is only a small part of the answer. Other issues are family income, health, housing, parenting support, etc. (EC)</p> <p>I certainly think that it can make a huge difference, but needs to be one prong of attack. The families need to receive support in other areas too – financial, budgeting, medical, and in parenting skills. (EC)</p> <p>It is one of several approaches alongside health and economic support systems - it is certainly important but I don't believe you can say it is "the best" and then sit back and think it a quick fix. (EC)</p> <p>I think a long term goal working towards strengthening the multi-generational family would be better. (Parent)</p>
<p>A better approach is working with parents</p>	<p>ECE that is very deliberate and inclusive of parents and supportive of their learning may be a great option as long as the child's whole situation is being addressed, not just a 'break' provided for parents. (EC)</p> <p>Delivery of support within the family context is the most vital component for ensuring that needs of at risk children are met. (Other)</p> <p>It is firstly not to put the children into little boxes and say – this solution is the only way things will work because it is best.... But rather to provide the support mechanism's around the child or family. (EC)</p> <p>Working with the family to educate and support the parents would be the best approach (Parent)</p> <p>I believe that the best approach is to provide ECE within the context of parenting education. ECE combined with First Start, PAFT or Playcentre-type programmes is very good. Providing ECE while not giving the family</p>

	<p>the tools to support that education and support the children is not going to be particularly effective. (EC)</p> <p>Lots of your respondents will think that 'the provision of quality ECE' will more-or-less mean taking the children away from the family for some of the day. And/or supervision by 'expert' others. But didn't David Ferguson (that fellow with the Christchurch study) say that parents will shift themselves if it benefits their children, where they won't if it benefits them? Seems like taking the kids away to help them misses an important opportunity here. (EC)</p>
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Policy Implications

- It helps but social support needs to take a systems approach to assessment and intervention. Social policy needs to address income and employment issues and families may need support and education to learn how to parent differently. (EC)
- Other avenues including support/services for whole family and communities will help children at risk. Education before families have children, a focus on being part of a community/family throughout primary/high school. (EC)
- First look at the social and economic conditions that create 'At risk' families! But of course any contemporary govt. is not going to do that! I would also very much doubt that children from 'at risk' families would get the best ECE available, they would simply get whatever the prevailing government/ ministry was prepared to allocate from any \$s allotted to their social agenda. (EC)
- Attending the seminar highlighted the issue that the government needs to make it more affordable for either parent to stay at home. (Other)
- I would prefer to see targeted support for at-risk families which include the parents/whanau of the children. (EC)

Question 3: Do you think more intensive participation, attending longer hours and from a younger age, in government-funded teacher-staffed early childhood programmes delivers stronger benefits for all children?

4% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of' comments.</i>	
More intensive participation is better for children	On a very simple level - the more stimulation for a child's learning, the better, I would have thought. (Other)
96% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments.</i>	
Increasing the intensity of participation is not so good for children and adults in centres	Some centres have a 'pack away' late afternoon and children have little to do in the last hours while they wait to be picked up. This is linked to funding and ratios and attitudes. I also believe it is unhealthy for centres not to close over the Christmas and New Year break for both children and staff. I have been informed that even though the parents are on holiday the children continue to attend the centre. Staff and children - indicate exhaustion. (Adult Edn)
There are social and mental health concerns	<p>Children should spend the majority of their time with those adults who love them (i.e. parent/family member). Children need time out and alone/quiet time. All day childcare institutionalises children. The word 'intensive' is scary - athletes do 'intensive' training for the Olympics! (EC)</p> <p>Longer hours is only going to cause them [children] to feel more detached from their primary caregiver. (EC)</p> <p>Life can be hard enough for infants and toddlers as they get to grips with their place in the world without thrusting them into a situation with 25 other children all in the same boat. (EC)</p> <p>Children benefit from spending as much time as possible within familiar, secure, family related real-life settings rather than institutions. (Parent)</p> <p>Longer hours in the same environment means less attention to emotional needs. Where is the research to say that more intensive is better for children than less intensive participation)? Better in what ways?? (Adult Edn)</p>
There are intellectual/learning consequences for children	<p>Children need varied societal experiences to grow and learn - they are very limited in obtaining those when stuck in daycare - even if the daycares take them out there is a big difference between going to the supermarket with Mum and going on a 'supermarket outing' with the daycare. (EC)</p> <p>Children are being increasingly removed from what is real. They learn to understand the rules of their little isolated world - but are these rules applicable in the real world. Are we really preparing them to be competent and confident learners? (EC)</p> <p>A child who might attend a centre for 3 mornings a week can be influenced by and learn from the positive interactions in the centre, far more perhaps, than a child who attends a extremely busy, routine orientated centre for 40 hours per week. (Adult Edn)</p>

<p>And, its not so good for families and our society</p>	<p>Rumania, Russia and the Eastern Bloc all tried this and turned out a social disaster. (EC)</p> <p>Longer hours away from family worry me. Are we getting set for a generation or two of children who as adults will not be able to make long term attachments? (EC)</p> <p>Rules and regulations do not allow for childcare staff to provide fully all children for 5 years. It is very sad to go into centres and see the environment and know that the children are going to be spending much/most of their early childhood years in the centre relying on the staff for care and education. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>I have concerns around children growing up in 'time poverty', and it is interesting that hundreds of years ago there were at least 4 adults involved in raising a child, and now children are perhaps lucky if they have one. (EC)</p> <p>How can anyone think a baby in a centre care situation with an adult who has 4 other babies to look for, is better off than with 1 adult in their own home? Nonsense! (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Participation for longer hours and from a younger age is more related to return to work pressures. (EC)</p> <p>Children should be able to spend time with their parents, and not stressed out time. (EC)</p> <p>Currently ECE settings are not as well integrated with the community as they could be (despite intentions of Te Whariki curriculum). Children are by and large neither seen nor heard in the wider community. (EC)</p>
<p>So, moderation and choice rather than 'more intensive' participation is better</p>	<p>In an ideal world I think infants should be spending, if not all, then certainly most of their time with their families ... and as children grow older they are introduced to a wider range of people and experiences by some exposure to high quality ECE. ECE is a support for children's development and a support for parents who want and/or need to work or study or exercise or otherwise have some time for other interests or enterprises. (EC)</p> <p>With societal changes families need 'flexible choices'. Parents should be able to choose the frequency of ECE experiences or choose to educate their children at home. (EC)</p> <p>More suitable would be days spent with Mum or Dad or Grandparent or other mature, loving adult going about normal daily life with age appropriate play at times through the day. (Parent)</p> <p>Short times at happy places where they can play supported by people they know well will be of far more benefit than hours and hours at centres where they get tired, stressed and unhappy. (EC)</p> <p>I've changed my views on this over the past few years. Personally, my children (from age 1 to 2 1/2) were with a nanny for several days a week while I used to work. If I had my time over, I would arrange our lives differently. No amount of 'quality' can make up for loving, caring, consistent supportive care and education at home or in the community. (EC)</p>

Question 4: Will the 20-Hours Free ECE policy mean better experiences and learning for children in the programmes/centres signed up to the scheme?

15% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
20-Hours Free ECE does or may benefit children	<p>I would like to think yes but this may not be the case. (EC)</p> <p>Transforming the Kindergarten expertise into full time care is probably a good idea. On the basis of modern labour market demands interrupted care, as offered in Kindergartens in the past, is no longer viable. (Other)</p>
It's likely to benefit children if certain conditions are met	<p>It is too early to tell (because there is a shortage of quality provision), but it's a good start. (Adult Edn).</p> <p>Only if the centre 'ethos' and practices are of high quality. (EC)</p>
85% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
The policy is having a negative influence on parents' use and choices of early childhood programmes	<p>I am a trained early childhood teacher currently involved in governance in my local rural Playcentre. 20 free hours has seen my centre which has a strong 40 year history of keeping children till the age of 5 and seeing them off to school across the road lose our older children to the kindergartens in the nearest town, this despite our fantastic environment, great ratios, plentiful space and very high standards and commitment in respect to meeting individual learning needs. Town centres (I have visited) are comparatively overcrowded and very 'teach teach' in their approach. I am not convinced this is a better outcome for the children we have lost. (EC)</p> <p>Should babies/toddlers/preschoolers be separated from their parents for a large part of each day? No, I don't think so. Pressure is put on parents by government and peers that childcare is the right thing to do. (Parent)</p> <p>My experience within the sector has been that many parents are extending their children's hours, or switching to Kindy from Playcentre because it is being so heavily promoted as good for the children, since the government is pushing it. Most parents of young children find the lack of control over their time and the lack of free time to be a source of stress. Having a free, available option promoted by the Government which will give them guilt-free free time is very tempting. I do not believe, that if a parent did not feel that their child was in need of more hours of ECE or childcare before this policy was implemented, that it is likely that their child actually will benefit from it. (EC)</p>
20 hours is not best for children	<p>20 hours is way too long for most preschoolers. (EC)</p> <p>More hours are not necessarily better ... Mike Bedford presented frightening statistics in terms of the health implications for children. (Other)</p>
Because the policy is not targeted to children in greatest need any benefits are not/less likely to be realised	<p>Show me real evidence that this policy is actually directly leading to increased uptake of quality, sessional, culturally appropriate providers that are also supporting the home and parents and parenting in the arse end of NZ like Clendon, Awanui and the far north. You won't be able to. It is an appalling, ill thought out policy - it has nothing to do with educational outcomes or child health outcomes and will detrimentally affect these. (EC)</p> <p>I don't think the policy has really increased participation in early childhood education as the majority of 3 and 4 year olds were already enrolled in early</p>

	<p>childhood education. Provision of Free ECE for 20 hours won't increase the quality of the experiences for children. (EC)</p> <p>Most of the children receiving the 20 hours free were already attending a centre. The 20 hours free are not targeting the children most in need - rural children, children who are from families who do not appreciate education. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Most kids already attended quite a bit of teacher-led ECE. And the ones who didn't attend probably won't be able to as a result of this policy. (EC)</p> <p>In reality, middle class parents are taking it up - have heard plenty of tales of the Khandallah Mums putting Johnny in [a centre] on '20 free' whilst they go off for tennis and a pedicure. Meanwhile our precious tax dollars are subsidising Kiddicorp and other Australian owned corporates who can't run a real business to save themselves (what other business requires such a massive govt subsidy to stay afloat) and we are seeing the even worse distortion of sessional providers like kindies forced into all day centres to access the 20 free to the further detriment of children and their families and parents who'd actually like just the sessional ECE thank you very much. (EC)</p>
<p>What would make a positive difference is not supported by the 20-hours Free ECE policy</p>	<p>Although the parents are saving money, there are other considerations to be made in regards to the running of a centre. For example are teachers still getting non-contact time to complete observations and portfolios? (EC)</p> <p>The 20 free hours has not improved the quality of care or education in many centres. The centres that had/have quality programmes are not affected by the 20 free hours - it is the centre philosophy, staff disposition etc. (Adult Edn)</p>
<p>The 20-hours Free ECE policy affects the financial security of centres</p>	<p>At our centre we are loosing money on our full week 20hrs people and may have to look at rearranging our fees a little. (EC)</p> <p>I am not sure it will necessarily mean better experiences for children in all centres - has changed little in our centres - certainly not a money-making scheme for us! (EC)</p> <p>As most profit making centres now lose money I am concerned about the impact this has on children attending. (EC)</p> <p>If the extra funding is put up in the centres then there will be some benefit to programmes but [not] if it's used to increase profit. (EC)</p> <p>I think centres who may have been charging low fees previously (due to low running costs - no rent perhaps), will benefit from more resources. I cannot speak for privately owned centres, except to say that I would hazard a guess and say perhaps because the centres might not be receiving the same (free) hourly rate as their normal fee structure - there may not be any benefits for the children. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Setting the rate of the funding for 20 free hours is putting in a pre-\$ into the industry – thereby dictating or controlling the potential earnings of services. Feel very uncomfortable with this. This does not allow for free marketing forces within early childhood services. (EC)</p>
<p>20-hours Free ECE impacts negatively on</p>	<p>The uncertainty of income under the new scheme may compel some centres to actually retrench and reduce costs by cutting spending on experiences and opportunities for children. (EC)</p>

<p>spending decisions and standards within centres</p>	<p>Given that there is never enough money to go around, most centres will probably end up cutting costs in some way to try to maintain/extend existing hours of opening and that is never good for children's learning. (EC)</p> <p>I would suspect it will lead to centres being open more hours, staff working longer hours and many corners being cut to save \$. However it may save some parents some \$s so has benefit in that direction! (EC)</p> <p>I think it is fair that parents receive some financial help but whether or not children receive a better experience, I'm not convinced. Children and teachers will end up doing longer hours, there may an increase in numbers, affecting ratios and group size. No one benefits if they are overstretched and overworked. (Other)</p>
<p>And, services are becoming more similar in operation with options for parents narrowing</p>	<p>No it is not going to change the quality of a centre. What I think it is doing is encouraging traditional Kindergarten assns to change operations to enable accessing all of the 20 hours free. Quality is only as good as the leadership not the money thrown at it! (EC)</p> <p>“20 Hours free” has reduced the availability of sessional and part time education and care. It has forced sessional centres into all day licences and part days within services have been excluded to ensure that they take enrolment for a greater period than 6 hours per day so they are able to bill additional charges (needed to operate at their current levels) to ensure that they do not have to take on optional charges - which is of huge risk to centres. (EC)</p> <p>I feel that the 20 free hours will create more of a war between early childhood services bargaining for space in their centres. I would rather see the government putting the funding towards all services (i.e. increasing the base rate of funding). (EC)</p>
<p>Finally, it promotes children's early care and education as an industry for economic goals</p>	<p>Kindergartens are now moving to all day care and therefore changing their philosophy. It puts the focus to parents on the money side of things rather than the 'quality' side of things. 'Great, I can get free childcare' rather than 'great I can get quality childcare'. (EC)</p> <p>Please can someone tell me why we are so driven by parents and governments economic wants and must haves rather than a child's basic needs! (Adult Edn)</p> <p>I think that while some children may benefit somehow it is a policy designed to support working parents. (EC)</p> <p>No as it is a childcare subsidy and has little to do with education - you cannot access the program without a childcare component! (EC)</p>

Question 5: Early childhood programmes receive an hourly amount from the government for each child enrolled. Should parents also be entitled to this amount, or some financial entitlement to cover wage loss, if they are their child's primary educator? (i.e. they don't use ECE or use an ECE programme for less than the 20 hours)

83% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
<p>Fairness should be inherent in the distribution of taxpayer money for children's early care and education</p>	<p>Many parents have made huge financial contributions to their country, why shouldn't they receive some of their benefits. Everyone else seems to benefit from these taxes so why shouldn't parents and ultimately the children benefit? (Other)</p> <p>This is a fair compromise that should be implemented to value parents as first teachers. (EC)</p> <p>I would support such a move for parents, paid to the mother - like the family benefit used to be. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Parents should be supported financially to stay home with their children. This could take the form of income splitting, tax credits or direct payments. Women (or men) staying home full-time with their children confers a real and measurable benefit on society, while long-term childcare (to use the two extremes) is going to impose a cost as those children grow up. It seems inappropriate that the financial resources are slanted towards supporting the options that are more detrimental to society. (EC)</p>
<p>The parents' role should not be undervalued in funding policy favouring placement in early childcare and education over children being with parents</p>	<p>An interesting thought! Now that really would show that parenting is valued! (EC)</p> <p>Definitely - parenting needs to be valued - and those who choose to stay at home with their children (whether they can afford it or not) should be financially recognised. (EC)</p> <p>This notion is worth debating! Whatever helps to provide parents with choice and the right messages about the value of parenting should be looked at. (Other)</p> <p>It would be a very positive step in encouraging and enabling parents in one of life's most challenging roles. It would help alleviate some of the financial stress faced by families on one income. (Parent)</p> <p>I think the government should encourage parents to stay home with their children - extend parental leave or support them with allowances instead of paying a service. Parents are first teachers and I am concerned that parents feel they cannot teach their children and that they are better off at a centre than being at home with them. (EC)</p> <p>When you have parents sending their 1 year old child to a centre when they clearly don't want or need to, this false shared understanding needs to be addressed. Teacher education is part of this as some teachers also have this view. Yes I think if parents want to stay at home to care for their children, the community through taxes should look at ways of making this possible. (EC)</p>

<p>Parents should not be financially penalised because of their choice for their child</p>	<p>Yes, true choice implies funding for both. (Other)</p> <p>If programmes such as Porse/Barnardos etc. can pay their family carer's (who are often children's relatives such as grandparents/aunts etc.) under the 20 free hours programme, then why can't parents access this too? (EC)</p>
<p>Early childhood services worked in by parents should not receive less government funding</p>	<p>It is a slap in the face having 20 Free promoted so heavily and Team Up promoting 20 Free when Playcentre has been doing this for many years. (EC)</p> <p>If parents commit to participate in parent led ECE, then the 'bounty' should go to the parent. (EC)</p> <p>Playcentres are struggling ... It's one thing to volunteer to be centre president or work on a session, but it's another thing to have mums of young children doing many hours of cleaning a week for free, or tedious compliance-related record-keeping, while at other services adults are paid teachers' salaries to do those same tasks. If we are funding people to do those tasks, all services should be funded for them, not just the ones with teachers. (EC)</p>
<p>While it's a good idea, there would likely be some political difficulties and parent accountability issues to work through</p>	<p>This would be great but I suspect too expensive. (EC)</p> <p>It might not be economically okay according to [current Govt MPs] but the mental health of everyone will be better and possibly "cheaper " for the economy in the end. Can't we change this market driven approach in education? (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Absolutely they should. But on the other hand, I do know some families where the women would see this as an opportunity for more money and the children would not benefit. It is not an urban myth that some women choose to go on having children as a lifestyle choice ... It would make me furious to think they were getting more money for purposes that the children weren't benefitting by. Perhaps analogies could be drawn from home-schooling, where there are conditions around receiving funding? But politically this would be very difficult... (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Fundamentally I would say that the idea of parents receiving some or all of the 20 hours free childcare is a possibility, however it brings with it many issues. How would the children be benefitting from this money? Would we be perpetuating the at risk family issues by them receiving more money from the govt. Hmmm. Perhaps there could be some kind of parenting programmes attached to the funds - however that feels a bit 'police stateish'. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Seems perfectly reasonable to me. But imagine the furore around trying to ensure that parents then do something 'educative' with their child, rather than just sit in cafes and drink coffee!! Remember the outrage over Jenny Shipley's 'code of moral something' for beneficiaries... My perspective is that you can rely on parents doing the very best they know how for their children (See David Ferguson's study). So it ought to work out just fine for 99% of families. But with funding comes accountability. (EC)</p>
<p>There could be some conditions put in place for parents</p>	<p>Radical thought but if there was away to monitor the teaching of the child - why not. (EC)</p> <p>Perhaps it is appropriate that parents demonstrate relevant skills and/or engage in some kind of education that gives them a sense of confidence and knowledge, and ideally the ability to articulate how it is they contribute to their child's learning. But clearly socioeconomic status and background</p>

	<p>should not disadvantage any family's ability to be financially supported. (EC)</p> <p>But we must ensure that parents are capable of delivering this 'education' (whatever form this may take, be it play etc) to their children, if not they must be assisted in doing so. The option of centre care should remain. (Other)</p> <p>The model of a teacher-led centre, or even a home-based network, is not the only way. Funding for a “visiting teacher” to support in the home could be a way for parents and children to benefit from an early childhood education. (EC)</p> <p>I want to support [propose] a programme of “in Home Educators” where suitably screened mothers can be paid to be at home educators of their own children from the time paid maternity leave finishes until the age of 2 years. This option is not to be available to mothers supported by a benefit (domestic purposes or other) as they can already be at home educators. (Other)</p>
<p>17% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i></p>	
<p>Parents may use the money inappropriately</p>	<p>No, this would be open to abuse -“some” would spend this at the pub, T.A.B, other forms of gambling and children would gain nothing. (EC)</p> <p>This would be a taken for granted and is too hard to look at, people of NZ are already look for a cheap way out and this would be adding to it. (Other)</p>
<p>It would be better to look to employment policy</p>	<p>I would support other policies - e.g. parental leave - that encourage parents to stay with little children. (Adult Edn)</p>

Additional Comments

- Parents, parenting and children are just naturally devalued. A classic quote from a newspaper article the other day around the ABC centres collapse in Australia (from a NZ Childcare sector manager), talking about the teacher 'crisis' in NZ ECE 'teachers are the heart of our business, so it's all about them'. Right - children obviously not that important then. Let alone families. (EC)
- Parents should be valued, yes. BUT - dollars may not be best indicator of value. Parenting is not a job, it is a relationship. (Parent)
- I think some reimbursement could be useful and it may help parents feel a bit more valued than currently but it still sends messages that money is more important than what is truly best for children. Even better than reimbursement would be if we were taxed less in the first place. I am not convinced that ECE is something the government should have control of. (Parent)
- Despite the fact that while childcare has increased seven-fold in the UK since 1997, mother's employment has stayed static. What might this tell us and New Zealand policy makers about mothers' preference to be at home and responsible for providing their own children's education? (EC)

Question 6: Do you think that children are more likely to receive higher quality care and education if the staff in an early childhood programme are all registered early childhood teachers?

There was a noteworthy difference between two groups of respondents on this question. The majority of people (75%) associated with adult/teacher education agreed with the importance of employing only teacher qualified staff with registration compared with under one-third of people (35%) associated with early childhood services.

43% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Yes on average it's better to have registered teachers	<p>Government policies are always blunt instruments, but in general qualifications do add quality value to learning programmes. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>I think that teacher led services are better equipped to give a more rounded education [than parent-led]. (EC)</p> <p>If early childhood education is funded from vote education it must be about education. Do not blur the boundaries nor ask teachers to do other work they are not specifically trained for. (Other)</p>
However, there should still be room for recognition of experience or other types of qualifications	<p>More likely, YES! qualified, educated staff are good, but no I don't think that this is always the case nor that other qualifications are worthless, just look at the way some other countries do ECE, often better than us I think! (EC)</p> <p>Other qualifications and life experiences can certainly enhance what a registered teacher can offer; I believe registered teachers do/should offer higher quality to a programme for many reasons. If a centre staffs above regulated staffing, it can afford to have others on the staff - e.g. in training, other qualifications, etc. (EC)</p> <p>ECE qualified staff are preferable but other prior learning is always an advantage for children. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Obviously an ECE centre that has staff who have social work, Karitane, or Playcentre (to name a few) trained people within their midst would be delivering an holistic programme. However I am an advocate for qualified and registered ECE teachers. (Adult Edn)</p>
And it all depends on the rigour of training, the registration process, and teachers' attitudes	<p>One would hope this was the case. It brings up a few issues though around the rigour of the training, the rigour and honesty of the registration process. And again it comes back to leadership and attitude of teachers to their own going learning. I have been into some pretty dodgy places even with trained registered teachers!!!!!!!! (EC)</p> <p>Yes. But it depends on why the provider is offering teacher education and who they are graduating. I think its bums on seats for providers and in some cases trained and registered teachers don't offer high quality care and education. (Adult Edn)</p>
57% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Having registered teachers does not necessarily mean higher quality care and education	<p>There are some fantastic untrained teachers out there and some shocking trained ones. Being registered doesn't make you a better teacher. (EC)</p> <p>I have been visiting in enough centres to see with my own eyes that qualification makes NO difference. Just last week I saw a fully qualified, fully registered teacher make a 2 year old eat a sandwich that she had dropped on the floor and squashed with her foot. However, once everyone is</p>

	<p>a registered teacher, at least we are able to make complaints at a higher level than the centre management about such matters. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>How valuable a person is in their role is dependent on far more criteria than simply academic vocational qualifications. (Parent)</p>
<p>Other qualifications are relevant for providing early education and care</p>	<p>I have a BSW and MSW and early childhood education experience from before this. I am a parent, had a long period on the DPB with voluntary involvement at playcentre and the local kindy. Some professional development should be in place but other relevant qualifications should be considered also. (EC)</p> <p>How about microbiologists, dancers and electricians? (I'm thinking of a playcentre near here.) We actually want to get away from thinking of the early years as critical for health and education specialists. What kids need are diverse real workers. (Ok, a smattering of educational theory as well!) (EC)</p> <p>I would like to see a more varied skills set (EC)</p> <p>Absolutely no, but qualified in some way, yes! Karitane Nurses, Nurses both registered and enrolled, social workers all can contribute extensively to programmes. Teachers Registration is a worthless racket (in our opinion). The NZ Teachers Council is in total disarray, many worthwhile people are being eliminated from the sector as their qualifications are older than 6 years, the NZTC will not recognise their qualifications they are expected to totally re-train (minimum 3 years). We are losing huge numbers of Infant and Toddler experienced Teachers as a result of this. It breaks my heart to see people 50-65 years of age leave the sector as a result of this. (EC)</p>
<p>Teacher education training may actually attract/produce less competent staff</p>	<p>I know one woman (a life member of my Playcentre, with three school age children), who enrolled for an ECE qualification purely out of interest. She dropped out after several weeks as the content was so basic it was almost demeaning and did not teach her anything. She had spent most of her time mentoring the other participants and sharing her knowledge with the tutors, but had not learnt anything herself. She considered her Playcentre training of far more value. (EC)</p> <p>I am concerned about the level of trained teachers coming out as those involved in the degree course have no or limited practical knowledge particularly in under-2 care. Also concerned that private providers are also involved in centres i.e. ABC taking over training providers - ethical concerns here. (EC)</p> <p>My sister in law, now doing her masters in ECE and highly experienced as a senior teacher in kindy, ECE and previously (with her kids) right through playcentre, tells me of horror stories of the students in her class doing the degree 'she wouldn't want near' a young child. (EC)</p> <p>Personally I would rather have my children spend time around a group of other qualified Playcentre parents (or even unqualified Playcentre parents! - most PC Dads are fantastic with their kids because they CHOOSE to be with them) than with any amount of qualified teachers who may be straight out of training, young and have very little practical experience with children. Children need to be valued, cared for and enjoyed for who they are rather than 'taught' at the age of 3. (EC)</p>

<p>Experience and skills counts</p>	<p>Having been an associate teacher for many of the tertiary providers I have been dismayed at the calibre of teachers. I have found that those teachers with experience of working and caring for children have far more skills and practical knowledge than those who are simply studying. The emphasis on qualifications and registration will mean that we will lose the people who genuinely care about the welfare of our children. Their skills and other specialities are vital but Government policy is pushing them away and telling them that they are of no value. It seems to be much more about quantity than quality. (Other)</p> <p>Some of the best teachers I have ever seen, as my children's teachers or working alongside them as colleagues, have been 'untrained'. There should be still be recognition, as there used to be, of other skills and experiences which people can contribute. This should be possible in an ECE setting because teachers do not work alone with children but alongside other teachers and is a different situation to primary and secondary when teachers teach alone. (EC)</p>
<p>Shared history and relationship with the child counts</p>	<p>Grandmothers/fathers have a way of being with babies/ children that no young qualified teacher can bring because its their life experience they convey to the child. (EC)</p> <p>Mothers are generally the best providers of care and education for their own children. If the parents are running the service, then the quality of education will be as high as that provided by teachers. (EC)</p>
<p>Personality counts</p>	<p>Qualifications don't denote quality one iota. The way the question is asked will lead most to say yes. ECE is about one-on-one interactions and the educators' skills in building trust and enthusiasm for learning. Where does personality come into the qualifications nexus? (EC)</p>
<p>The context and support counts</p>	<p>[We have] a lot caregivers out in the community that have a tremendous amount passion and commitment to care for children, and the majority of them would have no formal ECE qualifications. By having our early childhood team working beside them, provides them with additional support and specific guidance with regards each child they care for. The fact they do it in low ratio's means they are also able to give good quality time to each child (1:4 ratio). (EC)</p> <p>I am a manager of an ECE service, am originally kindergarten trained and have managed 3 centres previously. In my experience it is not training that determines quality - it is the quality of the individual and when this is supported by quality training and experience in a 'quality centre' then, yes you have an excellent teacher. (EC)</p>

Question 7: Do you think the length of the early childhood training course a person undertakes is directly related to the quality of the early childhood programme for children and families?

There was a noteworthy difference between two groups of respondents on this question. 100% of people associated with adult/teacher education (who responded to this question) compared with 22% of people associated with early childhood services considered that the length of training was important. Clearly people working in adult/teacher education are more likely to perceive the length of training makes a difference whereas those involved in leading early childhood organisations, running services and working in services mostly think otherwise.

36% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Longer training can help students to develop maturity and competency	<p>As a teacher educator I know it takes time for me to help student teachers do the emotional work necessary before they are people I would leave my children with. This cannot be rushed - yet it is also individual. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>A 4 year programme is needed for some student teachers. (Adult Edn)</p>
Longer courses enable teacher education to be more effective	<p>Teaching is a complex profession. If you are going to teach other people's children then you need to be as knowledgeable, as competent and as effective as possible. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>In my experience as a tertiary tutor/lecturer the three years is necessary. It certainly takes time for the student to understand how theory and practice relate. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Now that most institutions are offering the degree course. e.g. 3-4 years I agree. The students that are coming out on practicum have a very intensive program to follow, much more so than when I was enrolled 12 years ago. (EC)</p> <p>Because during a 3 year plus teacher education programme the persons responsible for graduating an ECE teacher must ensure a graduated teacher achieves a high standard as set by the qualifying authority for this country. (Adult Edn)</p>
But while longer training is believed to be important there are some conditions on this ...	<p>Degrees are good for early childhood. Courses need both a practical and theoretical base though, not just all theory. Need to watch this balance. (EC)</p> <p>However, the graduate is then reliant on the culture of the ECE programme they enter as to whether she or he can implement what they have learnt. There needs to be a high ratio of qualified and registered teachers already present in the centre for the graduate to undergo mentoring, and not be put into areas of responsibility just because they are qualified. (Adult Edn)</p>
64% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Course quality and teaching is more important than the number of years of study	<p>The length of the course is less important than the quality of the course and the teaching of that course. (EC)</p> <p>There is huge variance in the quality of delivery with some training providers. (EC)</p> <p>University/Tech study in NZ may be long but is not effective in many instances. (Other)</p> <p>No it has got to be about the quality of the training as well. Am beginning to</p>

	<p>feel that not enough time is spent on sociology, psychology and other related topics. We need to understand people and community really well before we can start dealing with children in these current climates. As a lecturer in the past I feel a lot of really important stuff is just glossed over. (EC)</p> <p>The greatest value comes from the first year. There is a significant drop off in value in each year after that is of consequence... Our training programs have become top heavy in theory; we are totally missing the values of the areas of play and how we can create programs for children. Documentation has become a huge focus but at the expense of quality and meaningful interactions with children. (EC)</p>
<p>You have got to look at student selection in the first place and who gets to graduate</p>	<p>There is a need to look at the people they readily accept for EC courses (i.e. "God knows what to do with them, I know maybe they can be an EC teacher?") ... Some courses are crap, some students are crap. Some students are very good despite a crap course! I think with so much emphasis on students passing (in order to make the institution look good) you're going to get crap teachers even if the course was 20 yrs long! (EC)</p>
<p>So, more years in-study do not necessarily add value</p>	<p>There are certain fundamentals that need to be known in order for an educator to understand how to support children's learning, but these can be learned without multiple years at university. (And I speak as someone who highly values a university education and has two degrees myself.) (EC)</p>
<p>And, there are some essential things that can't be taught/learnt easily no matter how long the training is</p>	<p>I have on occasion witnessed programmes for children or interactions which I'm sure Piaget or Vygotsky would have been proud of, but at that particular time or for that particular child were not of value. There is a lack of understanding of child behaviour - that children develop in different ways at different rates... Programmes must be sensitively delivered, this can not always be taught no matter how long you attend [training] College. (Other)</p> <p>You may be very good academically and get A pluses all through your training, but be useless on the floor and unable to relate to parents - I know it does happen. (EC)</p> <p>You would hope so, but not guaranteed as more is required to be sure of quality – excellent work ethic, integrity, great people skills, time management skills, good health. (Parent)</p> <p>We value what we can measure, but that doesn't mean that what is measurable is the most valuable. How do you measure temperament, life experience, empathy, patience, joy ... Some training is certainly useful. (EC)</p> <p>I think it depends on the persons attitude to children, if they believe in them as people in the here and now who have something to contribute to the world and that their (the child's) world view is as relevant as their own, they will be the best facilitator of the child's development. (EC)</p>

Question 8: Should government be taking an active approach to managing the early childhood education network, expanding provisions through funding new programmes and more places for children?

69% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Government has a duty of care for its citizens	<p>The government of a democratic, egalitarian, well educated society should take responsibility for this. (EC)</p> <p>Before there are more provisions made for early childcare the Government needs to improve what is already out there. Some centres are ramshackle, mouldy old buildings which need a good clean. No one can tell me these provide opportunities for lifelong learning. (EC)</p> <p>Yes, although the reasons for the government doing this are not solely related to providing good early childhood experiences for children in an altruistic sense. Parents' needs for childcare while they work are a major reason ... we have to accept this as a reality of life ... so let's try to provide as good an alternative to being home with mum (or dad) as we can. (EC)</p>
Where there is need that can't otherwise be met Government must be active	<p>This is certainly necessary in places of urban poverty and disadvantage...and considering policies that encourage the development of "family centres" for integrated provision of service support. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Since the 1990s, they have (all governments) relied on private enterprise, and community sweat, to meet the demand for places. The 'privates' go where there is a profit to be made. The 'communities' go where there is already good community organisation. The kids 'most in need' (if you can live with that phrase) are the ones who miss out. (EC)</p>
Government should be active in controlling the establishment and ownership of services	<p>I have real concerns over corporatisation. I do not think that shareholders necessarily have children's best interests at heart. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Or there should be some overall plan. Concerned that private centres can go into areas next door to community based. No ongoing plan about stopping development if detrimental to other centres i.e. not enough need. (EC)</p> <p>The government should be actively looking at what types of ECE are needed and how and where they should be provided ... so that community services are not driven out by services with big financial backers. (EC)</p>
But government should be responsible and answerable for how it manages and spends	<p>Yes, but I have my reservations here! Govt. ran things are usually cumbersome, inefficient & highly politicised, functioning as little more than oligarchies. So I think it requires some very firm checks & balances here to keep a state ran sector honest. (EC)</p> <p>Fiscal responsibility needs to be taken in to account. As someone involved in the public Kindergarten sector I would have to say we are able to focus on the business of education while remaining fiscally viable and responsible. (EC)</p>
31% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Funding is needed but not management by government	<p>Surely it would be better to have a contestable fund whereby communities can bid for funding showing demand, community backing. Government has shown a 'paint by numbers' approach to date, or 'predict and provide'. It is far better for sustainability for ECE to grow organically. (EC)</p>

	<p>The Discretionary Grants Scheme was designed to fund Maori and Pasifika communities as well as areas of high population growth. There has been very limited funding provided to High Population growth areas. There are many communities of need across all Decile areas not just lower Decile communities where funding has historically been targeted. (EC)</p> <p>Not necessarily, although there are financial implications for early childhood educators in terms of qualifications/length of training etc. (Other)</p>
<p>The mismatch between political ideology and what a community wants/needs can be a problem</p>	<p>The Ministry has encouraged the licensing of play groups in communities through the Discretionary Grants scheme. These groups have been set up for failure. Many are small centres which are financially unviable; governance and management issues are unclear, financial management systems are poor with accountability of monies not adequate. (EC)</p> <p>Research what's out there now. WHY are we continuing to build orphanages for children (licensing for 90, 70 children)? Mike Bedford's metaphor of battery eggs or maybe barn eggs comes to mind. AND we haven't got enough teachers to staff these orphanages. (Adult Edn)</p>
<p>Personal responsibility and family choice is preferred to government management/control</p>	<p>The less government control the better. For the best outcomes for children all members of society need to be encouraged to take personal responsibility for the care and education of the younger generations. (Parent)</p> <p>At present the government seems to be more focussed on getting parents back into the workforce than on children's needs. So they should probably get out of the sector and leave parents to be more in control. (EC)</p> <p>Are more places needed? The government seems to be taking a lot of control away from families and wanting to dictate how we should do it, although I feel they are missing the mark. (Parent)</p>

Further Issues Commented on:

Funding Discrimination

- There is a danger in spreading the funding too wide, trying to fund new things, to the detriment of quality programmes developed within Aotearoa/NZ. For example, Kohanga Reo and Playcentre, both of which have suffered hugely under the latest funding (20 Free Hours). (EC)

Government Focus on Participation/Quantity over Quality

- Could they just be more active in reducing the child/teacher ratio in current places? Or reducing the social expectation that children should be in care younger and longer? (EC)
- Must be accompanied by quality - if we can't get quality sorted, stop providing quantity until what we have is good for children. (Adult Edn)

Government Reasons for Actively Managing the Sector

- It depends what the government's agenda for this is. If it's to get more parents into the paid workforce then no, if it's to deliver better services for children which meet their needs rather than the governments then yes. (EC)
- I am not in favour of early childhood education for profit - also not sure about the government "managing the ECE network"??? We need to discuss an option that allows everyone a fair deal and by that I mean children, families, teachers, society and others. (EC)
- I personally am concerned about the role of local authorities in the ownership and provision of buildings for community child care centres. As a rate payer I do not support this. (Other)

Question 9: Do you think current issues for children’s health, wellbeing, and care should feature more strongly in early childhood education policy?

85% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
<p>Early childhood education policy should give greater attention than it does to children’s health, wellbeing and care whilst they are in programmes</p>	<p>The govt should certainly be more concerned with ensuring that the physical and emotional health needs of children attending centres are being met. The rates of illness have such a huge impact on families and the community in general. (Other)</p> <p>Aware of the serious public health implications for early childhood if these matters are not given attention. (Other)</p> <p>Most definitely - children are people not objects to be managed or considered as economic units. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>As children are spending long periods of time in institutionalised care, this care needs to provide high levels of quality. Quality needs to be defined, and redefined, as the needs of children and their families change. We need to be looking at centres in relation to children's whole-selves now and the impact attending a centre will have on them in the future. Structures of quality should not be linked to \$ (EC)</p> <p>I think "small" is best and deplore the idea of larger numbers of children in "Big" commercial centres. Stressed children - stressed teachers. A recipe for chaos. (EC)</p>
<p>A multi-disciplinary approach for early childhood education is needed</p>	<p>I would like to see a strengthening of the relationships between health and ECE. We are lucky in Wellington to have a good provider but not all regions are this well served. (EC)</p> <p>... perhaps there needs to be more thought into the health and well-being of children. This is where I would advocate for a more multidisciplinary approach to looking after the ‘whole child’. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Children are exposed to more early childhood diseases when enrolled in ECE, despite NZ's rigorous immunisation program for under 5's. Common illnesses such as recurrent ear infections and gastro tummy bugs need to be taken more seriously. So often an outbreak occurs, and no-one from the Ministry of Health gets to hear about it because the centre does not want to be closed down for any length of time as this loses money. Also staff and parents contract these and have to take time off in addition to their child being sick. (EC)</p>
<p>Better regulations focussing more on health and care needs could be an answer</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education has delayed the issue of space and group size in early childhood centres for too long. I don't think what some centres provide in terms of space and numbers of children in one place is in the best interests of children. (EC)</p> <p>Space is a real issue. Often problems and issues are a direct result of overcrowding and lack of space. It limits possibilities. Noise levels become an issues and cross infection is unavoidable. Some places licensed are far from ideal however, they meet minimum requirements. I would like to see minimum requirements raised. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>Some centres I have visited have so little free outdoor space once the essentials are put in – bark/ sand areas for children to actually run, jump, and</p>

	<p>use those great large muscles - especially boys!! With the down sizing of home sections to bare minimum and the longer hours children are spending in ECE the space needs to be greater for everyone's well being. (EC)</p> <p>The government should also be ensuring that ratios and group size are significantly improved before they start pushing for increased participation. Every cm of space is so important in an early childhood centre as more children means more money rather than more space for children to run around in. Centres should be required by Govt to provide a dedicated family/whanau space which can be used for breastfeeding as breastfeeding has such huge emotional and physical health impacts for child, mother, family, community. There are ridiculously high numbers are gastroenteritis and respiratory infections associated with early childhood centres, that something needs to change. (Other)</p>
<p>15% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i></p>	
<p>If it means more regulations or higher financial costs then 'no' to children's health, care and wellbeing featuring more strongly in education policy</p>	<p>There is too much regulation as it is! There is a fixation that we can achieve perfection. That is unrealistic. Given today's climate I could not honestly see how Playcentre could ever had started. I don't mean all the changes have been bad but there is a centrally driven imposition over what is ideal which adds massive cost to a sector where cost is critical. There is too little consultation and indeed, a co-regulatory requirement as exists in several industries would seem a better outcome. I genuinely fear that by eliminating any degree of risk by way of regulation, we will turn out a generation of automatons' and not a generation of Neil Finns or Peter Jacksons. (EC)</p> <p>Whilst we all want the very best, economics play a huge part in this? Who is going to fund it? Especially in the larger cities where land and building costs are spiralling out of control. Space requirements are not the only component, good design impacts hugely on how spaces are used. (EC)</p>

Policy Implications

- Is it the policy, or is it the implementation? Consider: Mike Bedford talked about some really 'cr*p' centres - which actually met education regulations. (And I've seen some myself.) I don't know enough about how policy, regulations and implementation relate, but it seems that there should be someone to judge and rule against the really stark outdoor areas we are seeing in inner-city areas.
- With the removal of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) services supporting centre development we have removed a useful independent advice and guidance component for the sector, this has been of huge disadvantage to developing centres. (EC)

Question 10: Does the early childhood sector present a unique case/need to be overseen not only by the Ministry of Education (for teaching and learning) - but also jointly by the Ministries of Health (for child health and environments) and Social Policy (for planning and supporting families and communities now and also into the future)?

84% Yes	<i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>
<p>Yes, because government department responsibility urgently needs clarification</p>	<p>Definitely there needs to be a more holistic approach. Families do not develop in isolation and at this moment no organisation knows what the other is doing so how can families possibly benefit. The Ministry of Health have not yet acknowledged early childhood centres as an area which has significant illness rates for example. (Other)</p> <p>Whatever brings the argument of early childhood care and education to the fore is the way to go. I was told by [name of a head official] that the Ministry of Education was not responsible for Early Childhood Education, given that it is not part of the compulsory education sector!!! (Other)</p> <p><i>An additional comment provided by a respondent which seems very relevant here, was:</i> I know from our own experience that we are busy lobbying the government because we have identified a huge gap for a community of children – but the MOE is pushing it sideways as they don't see it as their problem..... So my wonder is at what point does the government care about it versus doesn't care about it.... And which department takes (overall) responsibility for it...it is a mystery. (EC)</p>
<p>A broader focus at governmental levels than education alone is needed</p>	<p>Children's development and wellbeing cannot be, and should not be, viewed from the perspective of education only at a policy decision making level. (EC)</p> <p>The Ministry of Ed is mostly concerned with curriculum and early childhood definitely needs a broader scope including health and social policy. (Other)</p> <p>The sole focus on education has meant important aspects of health and care have been missed out from policy affecting families with very young children. (EC)</p> <p>This is essential - the dangerous way in which the Ministry of Education is putting out a false message that 'kids NEED AT LEAST 20 hrs a week is a case in point. (EC)</p> <p>There are a huge number of factors that influence children in early childhood and it's important that government support for children be more integrated, so that the needs of children are supported within the context of their families and their wellbeing not just their intellectual development. (EC)</p> <p>I want early childhood to stay out of the compulsory sector. This mediates the control of government to some extent. However, I see the need to have a much more integrated approach where all these Ministries are involved. (Adult Edn)</p>
<p>And, government departments need to be talking and</p>	<p>Working collaboratively would be a start. Currently very separate. (EC)</p> <p>I am leaning more and more to the three being more in communication with</p>

<p>collaborating better together</p>	<p>each other. (EC)</p> <p>More inter departmental cooperation, and even should I be so bold as to suggest that some parts of the Ministry of Education talk to other parts!! (EC)</p> <p>A collaborative approach from these services would be fantastic way forward!!!! Coordination and getting over the barriers to the change could be a challenge – but worth having!! (EC)</p> <p>Absolutely!! Cross-sector, inter-agency work is essential. (Other)</p>
<p>There would be benefits for children in bringing health and social support into early childhood education</p>	<p>A combined approach would have advantages for children at risk or for children who have high health needs (Other)</p> <p>Attendance at ECE programmes provides a great opportunity for young children to be provided with early intervention i.e. regular visits from health nurses, dentists, opticians. We have NEVER had any of these visit the mixed age centre where I work! (EC)</p> <p>Integrated policy would help. Certainly family service centres would offer stronger support for children - and their adult carers - than simply expanding education facilities. (Adult Edn)</p>
<p>But there are two cautions ...</p>	<p>It would need to be co-ordinated, not just heaps more paperwork. (EC)</p> <p>There certainly needs to be better wrap-around services and communication between agencies but I think people may be wary of the social control/surveillance aspect of government. (EC)</p>
<p>16% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i></p>	
<p>It would lead to greater bureaucracy and confusion</p>	<p>This would be a nightmare. Compliance requirements are totally out of control [now] in the sector. Can you imagine the mis-interpretation across three or four agencies? (EC)</p> <p>More bureaucracy creates more complications and less is achieved for children/families. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>One Government department is bad enough. (Parent)</p> <p>Interesting idea, it has strong initial appeal but I am at the same time terrified of the thought of the extra bureaucracy that might be spawned – and its cost. (EC)</p>
<p>It is too early to make any change</p>	<p>There is always a case for working more collaboratively in terms of a child being a whole person, not segregated into parts which can be addressed through individual agency involvement. [But] until we have an authentic position of the child being central I would not support this. (EC)</p>
<p>And, it is best to stay under the Ministry of Education with links to other agencies only as needed</p>	<p>I think it should stay under education, but to have the other departments working beside ECE would be excellent. Where our educational service can't help, the right professional can be contacted and appropriate support put in place that can help ... Social, Health, Education, Justice, and the wider community. (EC)</p>

Question 11: Should policy continue to emphasise the need to inform parents of the benefits only of children attending publicly funded licensed/chartered early childhood education programmes?

4% Yes <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
The benefits of government funded ECE programmes only need be emphasised	<p>Yes, if the institutions are properly managed, supervised and allow for parent participation like in Scandinavia, risks will be minimal anyway! (Other)</p> <p>Yes. What are the risks? - the sickness involved? (EC)</p>
96% No <i>Below is an overview of the range of comments</i>	
Parents have a right to know and be enabled to make informed decisions	<p>More open, balanced information and a real commitment to up skilling parents and the community for their responsibility to our children is needed. (EC)</p> <p>Parents should have, and be entitled to, all the information they need to help them make the best decision on early childhood care/education for their child/family. (Other)</p> <p>Parents have the right to know everything about what can happen for their children in ECE. (EC)</p> <p>Parents need more info to enable them to make informed choices. (Adult Edn)</p> <p>What is most important is providing parents with informed choices as a result of balanced information. (Other)</p>
Being fully informed means any likely negative consequences can be reduced or remedied	<p>For parents to be fully informed all information must be available, including risks and problems. If these are not included it reduces the odds that problems will be identified and addressed. (Other)</p> <p>Children with continued behavioural problems are not always dealt with appropriately in an ECE setting because staff may not have had specific training to deal with this. Unfortunately they get to school and become a playground bully as a result of being in daycare for too long over a period of 5 years. (EC)</p>
It is to the greater benefit of children and families if parents are informed of likely experiences and effects of participation in early childhood education	<p>We need to be open and discuss all issues. (Other)</p> <p>Many parents feel bad if they don't send their children to ECE. I can't believe that a much loved child from a well balanced family who doesn't attend ECE is going to be more at risk of failure in life than a child from a dysfunctional family that has attended ECE full time from 6 months old! (EC)</p> <p>More parents need to be informed that centres can be noisy, overcrowded stressful environments particularly for infants. Parents are given info about enhancing brain development (hence the market for ridiculous flash cards etc, which are supposed to make the child a genius) but are rarely informed of the need for emotional stability as an essential factor. (Other)</p> <p>I think it is important for parents to have an informed balanced view of the pros and cons of putting their child/ren into publicly funded ECE</p>

	<p>programmes. However, it must be handled in a way that doesn't add to parents concerns but that simply allows them to become more informed. (Adult Edn)</p>
<p>Equal promotion of all types of services and options for parents and children should be a policy aim</p>	<p>Inform parents on benefits of being with your child and having them at playcentre as well as other services. 20 free is a big advert for other services. (EC)</p> <p>Give information about benefits of early childhood services, but also give information about possible risks. Parents should not be led to believe that they will be doing their children a disservice if they don't use an early childhood service. (EC)</p> <p>I was shocked to see how pervasive the modern ideology of ECE is when one of the fathers on the panel, a stay-at-home father said that he felt he had to be looking for ECE - for his six month old child! So yes, there should be equal weight given to informing parents that longer, earlier consumption of publicly funded licensed ECE is not necessarily the only or best option. (EC)</p> <p>It is important that government recognises that not all one scenario fits all families. Some don't want day-care or kindy, others want Home-based. Some want to do it themselves, some don't, and that is okay. It is important that parents/guardians have information and can make informed choices and not feel pressured about what their choices are for them and their family. (EC)</p> <p>When the main information from the government is on how to choose a childcare or ECE programme, rather than on how to identify what needs their particular child may have (such as the need to be home with mum, or the need to spend fewer than 50 hours a week in care), it sets up a false paradigm, where parents believe they're making the best choice, when in fact they're only making the best choice out of a small subset of the options they should be considering. The focus needs to shift onto how families work and what children need (and onto children as actual members of society, not just small beings who will be members of society some day when they get bigger and less demanding) (EC)</p>
<p>Not everyone is aware that policy is to promote the benefits of ECE to parents</p>	<p>Is this current policy? Where is that written down? I do think that parents should be given full information. (EC)</p> <p>I didn't know that was official policy actually. How deceitful not to present a full picture. Parents should be treated with more respect. (Adult Edn)</p>

Other Relevant Comments

- I agree that parents perhaps need to be better informed ...[but] I have had a conversation with a professional parent looking for a quality centre, the centres on their list were all full so they were having to look for anything - this is concerning! (EC)
- Educated parents seek out information...uneducated parents don't access it even if it is there. Certainly information is important, but I wouldn't build a big case on "what kind of information"... because it is always politically driven, whoever is presenting it. There is no independent view. (Adult Edn)