Quality home-based education & care from the sector’s perspective: Implications for practice

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This presentation will…..

Discuss:

• The background to and nature of the study focussing on quality home-based education and care for children under 2 years of age

• Some key findings

• The implication of these for practice
Why this focus?

HBC for children under 2 of “questionable quality”

Fastest growing participation rate, but largely unqualified workforce

(Taskforce report, 2011; Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011)
Concern re compliance in 1/3 of services, including,

“poor personnel practices in bringing about improvement to the performance of coordinators and educators”

(ERO report 2009, cited Early Childhood Taskforce, 2011, p. 57)
**BUT**, also concern from the sector that the nature of HBC is not fully understood by the MOE, (Stovold, personal communication, 2012).
Significance of the home-based sector

- Low ratios
- Authentic experiences in the home & community
- Mixed age group

provide huge potential for quality environments for learning & development for very young children.
Significance of the home-based sector

At 2012

- Providers grown 76.3% since 2003
- Enrolments > 2.5% since 2011
- Average hours per child under 2 spent per week = 23 (25 in centre-based)

(Ministry of Education, 2013)
Background - Quality

Quality in EC services has been defined as,

“...the essential components of early childhood environments which are valued in our society, and which support the well-being, development and rights of children, and support effective family functioning”

(Smith, Grima, Gaffney, & Powell, 2000, p. 44).
NZ literature review on quality

Key components of quality practice for children under 2 years of age as:

- **children as active partners** in their education and care;
- **secure attachments**;
- **sensitive, responsive relationships** between children and teachers/educators;
- **parents/whānau and teachers/educators working in partnership**;
- **child-initiated play**

(Dalli, White, Rockel, Duhn et al., 2011).
The Early Childhood Taskforce (2011) suggested that a crucial component for all services is qualified staff who:

work collaboratively with parents/whānau to ensure a culturally responsive, “complex curriculum”, in which they engage with children in “sustained, shared thinking”, and allow children to, “investigate and think for themselves” (p. 49).
My research

.....to determine what quality HB education & care for children under 2 years of age means from a:

• family/whānau;
• educator;
• visiting teacher & service provider and
• academic perspective

The ultimate goal is to develop a ‘tool’ to evaluate quality in home-based settings.
Focus group approach

To ascertain what quality HBC is for this age band from the perspectives of 4 key groups. By organised group discussions exploring a specific “issue”, And group interaction which generates data for analysis.

(McLachlan, 2005)
Focus group questions

• What do you believe is quality home-based education and care for children under 2? What does this “look” like in practice on a day to day basis as educators engage with family/whānau and child/ren in the home and community?

• What do you believe the service provider’s role is in ensuring this quality, e.g. the role of the visiting teacher; support for educators

• What do you believe the ministry of education’s role is in ensuring this quality?
Findings at the micro & meso levels

Multiple relationships
Relationships

Educator with parents/whānau

Educator with visiting teacher

Child/ren with other families/whānau

Child/ren with child/ren

Educator with child/ren in the home & community

Educator with child/ren
Educator with parents/whānau

- Professional
- Mutual knowing of beliefs and values
- Robust “meso” links
- Effective relationships are modelled
Educator with child/ren

- Physical contact
- Attachment & bonding and consistency of care
- “Depth” of relationship
- Responsiveness – reading and responding to cues
- “Engagement”
Educator with child/ren in the home & community

• Learning and engagement embedded in “multiple sites”
• Valuing opportunities the home environment provides for learning
• Provision of experiences parents unable to provide e.g. “everyday things”; linking with the community
• Developing relationships with people in the community
Educator with child/ren in the home & community

- Lots of stimulation and physical play
- A purposeful environment
- Optimising of learning opportunities
- **BUT** being aware of the impact of other children’s schedules on infants’ routines
Child/ren with child/ren

• Possibilities for “amazing relationships with other children”
• Children learn to “fit in” and be mindful of others
• Mixed-age
Child/ren with other families/whānau

• Relationships children develop with other families
Visiting teacher with educator

• Being able to articulate what learning is happening as it happens
• Supporting the educator to value the potential for learning in authentic experiences
• Honesty re good practice & areas for development
• Knowing supporting govt agencies to tap into for support
• Knowing what funds of knowledge the educator can bring to their role
• Effective liaison & link between service provider and educator
Time

The allowance of **TIME** was implicit in the discussions around engagement – its importance when working with children under 2.

And

That the low ratio of children to educator, and the home environment, allowed for this.
Taking time to stop and talk about what’s happening,

“...if something turns up in the street, or something happens... you can go out and explore” (Educator).
Macro Implications

• Greater understanding of the unique nature of HBC from MOE and ERO
• More rigorous & selective licensing criteria for services
• Greater support for educator qualifications
Exo Implications

Quality service providers with:

• Robust selection process to ensure experienced multi-skilled visiting teachers
• Robust selection process for educators
Exo Implications

Rigorous VT & educator induction processes

- Te Whāriki
- focussed on professionalism & professional relationships
- engaging in exploration about aspects of care that are specific to children under 2, e.g. routines
- children’s learning in the home & community; care & education relationship
- assessment
- documentation
Exo Implications

• Monitoring & care of and for VTs & educators
• Ongoing PD for VTs & educators
• Provision of learning contexts outside of the home, e.g. playgroups
Micro Implications

- VT & educator exploring the special characteristics of HBC e.g. time; quality of relationships between educator and child; child and other children; child and other families; children & home and community

- Regular VT & parent/whānau contact
Micro Implications

- Ensuring policies and procedures are understood and living?
- Professional VT-educator relationships
- VTs articulating learning and T Wh in context
- Support with documentation of engagement & learning
• Thoughts, feedback???
Kia ora

Thank you 😊