



Training on the job: How do home-based co-ordinators support educators to notice, recognise, and respond?

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2008



Teaching and Learning Research Initiative

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New Zealand

www.tlri.org.nz

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Acknowledgements

The research team would like to acknowledge the support and funding from the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative that has enabled this research to be undertaken. We also appreciate the educators, families and whānau, and children who have been willing to be participants in the research.

The co-ordinators involved in this project would like to acknowledge the amazing support given to them over the past year by Hamilton Childcare Services Trust. We have been encouraged, guided and cheered on by senior management and other teaching staff. The administration team has been fantastic and has continued the long tradition of being right behind us so that we can get on with the job at hand.

Without the support of all the above people we would not have been able to undertake this project. We sincerely thank you all.

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1. Aims, objectives, and research questions

The aim of this research was:

To investigate how home-based co-ordinators support educators¹ to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning.

The research objectives were to:

- a) investigate co-ordinators' practice
- b) document educators' understanding of children's learning
- c) discover how (a) impacts upon (b).

There were three research questions:

1. What are co-ordinators doing to support educators to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning?
2. What changes are evident in educators' practice as a result of what co-ordinators do?
3. What factors seem to be important in this process?

Background

New Zealand home-based childcare services, as with all services within the early childhood sector, must meet certain requirements set out by the Ministry of Education. Care and education for children is provided in private homes, and the service is regulated by the *Education (Home-Based Care) Order 1992* and *Amendment Orders* of 1998. Educators are supported by co-ordinators, who work with a "network" of educators. Since January 2005 co-ordinators have been required to be registered, qualified, early childhood teachers, and from 1996 educators have been required by legislation to complete the first module of the Family Day Care Certificate in order for services to obtain a higher rate of Ministry of Education funding.

Government statistics in 2004 showed that between 1990 and 2004 the number of children enrolled in licensed home-based services rose from 1611 to 9922 (Ministry of Education, 2004a), an increase of 616 percent. Although this growth appears to have slowed in recent years (Ministry of Education, 2007a), there is a significant number of children and families who use home-based services. There has been a corresponding increase in networks providing home-

¹ During the course of this research the terminology for a person providing home-based childcare changed from Carer to Educator, to align with the new criteria for home-based childcare being implemented in 2008. We chose to use the new terminology in this report.

based childcare. In 2001, 184 networks were operating compared with 201 in 2005 (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Home-based services are an important provider of early childhood education, but to date very little research has been published in the home-based field within New Zealand. Although research has been carried out in relation to home-based education and care in other countries (e.g., Kontos, 1992; Everiss & Dalli, 2003; Nelson, 1995), the service provided in New Zealand is very different to home-based childcare in other parts of the world. In New Zealand all early childhood services are included in the education sector, and home-based educators work with *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) as their curriculum. In many countries home-based childcare is still under the welfare or health system (although Everiss and Dalli [2003] noted that the service is also part of the education system in Sweden and England). Everiss and Dalli (2003) provided an historical account of the impact upon the New Zealand service of moving from the social welfare to the education sector.

Being aligned to the education sector raises specific challenges, especially in relation to training, and most of the existing research that has been undertaken in New Zealand focuses on this issue (e.g., Education Review Office, 2001; Everiss, 1998; Foote & Davey, 2003; Foote & Ellis, 2003; Nicholson, 1996). These few studies all suggest that increased training for educators is necessary to produce quality learning outcomes for children. Foote and Davey (2003) note the value of training for home-based educators in enhancing children's experiences and empowering the educators. However, Everiss and Keats's (2003) review of what training was available for educators raised questions regarding what should be offered, and whether some existing courses are appropriate for home-based educators. Everiss (1998) and Everiss and Dalli (2003) researched the educators' views and found that they were keen to have appropriately designed training programmes to increase their skills and to encourage the concept of home-based caring as an early childhood career option.

Appropriate training is clearly important, and concern regarding qualifications for home-based educators is reflected in discussions about priorities for the next phase of the strategic plan for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2007b). However, in recent years there has been considerable debate within the sector about what this means in practice (e.g., whether New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) Level 5 should be the benchmark qualification). Such debates have taken place during the annual New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Association (previously Family Day Care) conference and at executive meetings for this association, and three of the research team have been party to these discussions.

When considering the training requirements of home-based educators it is important to take into account the nature of their role. Both paid and unpaid work is merged into their home setting, group sizes are small, and educators work independently so generally do not have others to share the work with or give them a break, as they would in a centre (Nelson, 1995). Unlike their colleagues in other education and care services, educators do not receive a guaranteed income.

Their weekly reimbursement can fluctuate for various reasons such as the number of children they have in care, whether they or one of their dependents is unwell, or whether they take a holiday.

Educators are responsible both for the children in their care and the activities of running a home, such as shopping, cooking, and gardening (Foote & Ellis, 2003). These activities provide rich learning opportunities if educators are alert to their potential and can recognise and respond to children's learning appropriately. Foote and Ellis (2003) demonstrated that professional development sessions could support educators in recognising that learning can happen in authentic and meaningful experiences at home and in the community. They noted the unique features of home-based early childhood education, and the value of fostering children's learning within the events of everyday life, rather than implementing a centre-based approach to curriculum.

A resource for self-evaluation in early childhood services, *The Quality Journey*, (Meade & Hendricks, 2000) poses the question, "How do educators who work alone in a home-based setting feel about their ability to deliver high-quality curriculum, and what support do they need?" (p. 40) as an example of a review topic that could be explored within home-based services. Meade and Hendricks recommend careful analysis of the educators' views regarding the support provided by co-ordinators as a base for action. This study took elements of that approach, focusing on the role of the informal training or "training on the job" (as opposed to formal training leading to qualifications) that is provided by co-ordinators. It looked specifically at the factors which seem to be important in enabling educators in home-based settings to recognise and respond to children's learning in ways that help to improve the learning outcomes for children.

Noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning

"Noticing, recognising, and responding" was chosen as the focus for the Co-ordinators' work with educators as part of an ongoing journey of professional development that they provide for their networks. Noticing, recognising, and responding is explained in the first booklet of *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004b). It builds on the work of Cowie (2000) and Drummond's (1993) definition of assessment for learning:

The ways in which, in our everyday practice, we (children, families, teachers and others) observe children's learning [**notice**], strive to understand it [**recognise**], and then put our understanding to good use [**respond**] (cited in Ministry of Education, 2004b, Book 1, p. 6).

Early childhood educators notice a great deal as they work with children, and recognise some of what they notice as learning (Ministry of Education, 2004b). As noted earlier, research has shown that home-based educators can become skilled in recognising learning in everyday events (Foote & Ellis, 2003). Educators respond to a selection of what they have recognised (Ministry of Education, 2004b), and record some of what they respond to. One way of recording is to document episodes of learning using narrative assessments and learning stories. Such

documentation is informed by clear guidelines for assessment. These guidelines, described below, underpinned the approach taken in this study.

The Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) require educators to implement assessment practices that are consistent with the principles of *Te Whāriki*, thus enhancing children's sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners (Ministry of Education, 1998). In addition, the Ministry of Education (2004) stated that, "a major purpose of documentation is that it will inform everyday, undocumented, interactive teaching and spontaneous feedback, making children's interactions richer and more reciprocal" (Book 1, p. 12). Carr (1998) recommended that assessment should be something that happens in everyday practice, observation based, focused on a child's learning, and purposeful. The interpretation may include reflection and discussion. Children and families can be actively involved in this process (Carr, 2001).

The learning-story approach focuses on a particular form of documented and structured observations (Carr et al., 2001) of the behaviours that are central to children becoming "competent and confident learners and communicators" (Carr, 1998, p. 15). Educators notice and give value to these behaviours in order to promote their growth, so that they become habits or dispositions (Carr, 1998; Carr, 2001). Learning stories take a storied and a non-deficit (credit) approach (Carr et al., 2001). They may include photographs or examples of children's work, and show what happened in the moment of learning and what the teacher did to support the learning, and often suggest how the learning can be further supported. Carr (2001) noted that over time a series of narratives may indicate themes or patterns in the child's learning. Narratives and learning stories can form the basis of individual interest-based planning for children.

Rationale for the study

Meade (2008) identified teaching and learning in home-based settings as an area "ripe for research" (p. 3). As noted above, there has been rapid growth in enrolments in home-based settings (Ministry of Education, 2004a), and yet there are significant gaps in our knowledge about the experiences of children, educators and co-ordinators in this service. In addition, those within the sector note that much of the documentation for home-based childcare (e.g., the current *Licensing Criteria for Home-based Education and Care Services* (Ministry of Education, 2008) can often be information transferred directly, suggesting a need for greater understanding of home-based services. As the sector engages with debates about training and quality of provision, it is important that these discussions avoid generalisations from research conducted in other settings (Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, Burchinal, O'Brian, & McCartney, 2002) and consider the special characteristics of the sector (Foote & Ellis, 2003).

A feature of home-based early childhood education is that co-ordinators have the responsibility to ensure that educators are implementing *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996) and providing individual plans and assessment for children. This study explored the training on-the-job co-ordinators provide to support the educators with this requirement. *What Counts as Quality in Home-based Care* (Education Review Office, 2001) stated, "Where co-

ordinators are able to give caregivers [educators] clear guidance on the use of formal documentation and on putting planning into practice, some networks have been able to show high quality curriculum management” (p. 15). In addition, professional development for early childhood teachers and educators has been shown to have a trickle-down effect for children and a direct relation to improving their learning outcomes (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). However, despite the co-ordinators’ central role in supporting quality provision in home-based settings, there has been very little research on this topic to show exactly how the work carried out by co-ordinators assists home-based educators to understand and promote children’s learning.

This project was instigated by the co-ordinators following a positive Education Review Office report of the home-based networks provided by Hamilton Childcare Services Trust (Education Review Office, 2005). The report included the following statements:

Care environments are of high quality Carers’ [educators’] relationships with children are nurturing, respectful and affirming Children are offered a wide range of learning experiences, both in carers’ homes and in the community Carers receive high quality professional support from the co-ordinators. They express confidence in the organisation and appreciate the level and relevance of assistance and advice. (p. 2)

High quality professional support is readily available to carers [educators] Significant emphasis is placed on providing them with . . . ongoing training to help them fulfill their role successfully . . . professional development opportunities assist carers to progressively improve their practice. (p.5)

It appeared that the approach developed in this setting was working well and supported quality provision for children. Given the debates about training and quality in home-based settings, the co-ordinators at Hamilton Childcare Services Trust were motivated to investigate the ongoing “training on the job” they were providing in order to gain greater insights into their own practice and its impact on the educators they worked with. They invited a university researcher from the University of Waikato to support them in this research.

This study offers important insights into the home-based service in New Zealand, especially the roles of educators and co-ordinators, and is ground-breaking as it appears to be the first time a team of co-ordinators has researched its own practice. It adds to the previous research focused on educator training, providing greater detail of what happens in one setting, and what factors seem to be important in making a difference to the educators’ practice. The findings make a timely contribution to discussions about training.

2. Research design and methodology

Shulman and Shulman (2004) claim that theory begins in wonder, and this was the starting point for the present study. The project was instigated by co-ordinators who were reflecting on their role and seeking to gain a greater understanding of their practice. Participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) was chosen to explore the research questions. Building on the ideas of Kemmis and McTaggart (2000, p. 595), the criterion of useful action research is whether participants develop a “stronger and more authentic sense of understanding and development in their practices, and the situations in which they practice”. By extending the co-ordinators’ usual reflective cycle to include more systematic and rigorous data gathering, analysis, and reflection, the research findings offer insights into co-ordinator practices for other home-based practitioners. This chapter describes the research design and the methods used.

Research team

Coordinators: Tracey Hooker, Frances Bleaken, Sue Biggar

University researcher: Dr Sally Peters

Research context

This study was based in Hamilton Childcare Services Trust’s home-based childcare service, which at the time of the research had four Home-based networks. The project was lead by co-ordinators from three of these networks.

For many years Hamilton Childcare Services Trust has had a strong philosophy of professional development for its staff and educators. Ongoing support and training is provided for educators, including Module One of the Certificate in Family Day Care. At least one compulsory workshop is offered per year along with voluntary options. Educators are also able to access professional development opportunities in the wider community such as courses run through the University of Waikato or Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC). The co-ordinators were encouraged and supported to undertake the research. The management team was always available for discussion and advice. The administration team provides daily support for dealing with parent fees, educators’ reimbursement, Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) payments, and bulk funding, which allows co-ordinators to spend time focusing on educator visits, writing learning stories, and follow-up on enquiries. Hamilton Childcare Services Trust also provides playgroup and

gymnastics sessions for educators and parents to bring the children to, and the co-ordinators are present at these sessions.

Co-ordinators at Hamilton Childcare Services Trust are required to visit each child in care at least once per month and also the educators must be seen in their home whilst children are in care once a month. In reality children are seen more often due to attendance at playgroup and gym.

Participants

The three co-ordinators who participated in this research each work with up to 20 educators in their networks. The focus was on the co-ordinators' role but in order to investigate this it was important to gain data from the educators. All educators in the three networks were invited to participate in the research, and from those who volunteered each co-ordinator randomly selected five educators—15 in all. Co-ordinators were overwhelmed by the interest in participation shown by the educators. The selected educators were then invited to assist the co-ordinator in exploring the research questions, and informed consent was gained at this point. The families of the children the educators work with were approached to gain consent for observations of the educators working with the children, and for the educators' documentation of children's learning to be included in the research.

Participants' background and experience

Co-ordinators

The three co-ordinators involved in the research project had been in the role for more than six years, and had worked for Hamilton Childcare Services Trust for three, six, or 13 years (Table 1). All three have a recognised early childhood qualification, are fully registered teachers, and have a broad knowledge of, and experience in, the early childhood sector.

Table 1 **Co-ordinators' experience and qualifications**

Participant	Length of time in early childhood education (years)	Length of time as a Co-ordinator (years)	Length of time with Hamilton Childcare Services Trust (years)	Qualification
Co-ordinator Network 1	17	11	3	Diploma of Teaching and Learning, Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (ECE)
Co-ordinator Network 2	28	13	17	New Zealand Kindergarten Diploma
Co-ordinator Network 3	12	6	6	Diploma of Teaching (ECE), Bachelor of Education

Educators

The background of the 15 home-based educators ranged from new educators with only five months' experience to experienced educators who had been in the role up to 17 years (Table 2). Eleven educators had been with Hamilton Childcare Services Trust throughout their home-based career, and four had prior experience in private care or other home-based organisations. With more than half the sample having been in the role for five years or more it was clear that these participants contrasted with Everiss and Dalli's (2003) findings that educators are likely to view this as a temporary occupation.

Table 2 **Educators' experience**

Participant has been . . .	Under 1 year	1–4 years	5–10 years	More than 10 years
A home-based Educator	2	5	3	5
With H.C.S.T	2	6	4	3

The educators had a diverse range of qualifications (Table 3). The minimum requirement for home-based educators is the Orientation Module of the Certificate in Family Day Care, and 11 educators had this qualification. Of these, two also had a Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) degree, and two had other additional qualifications related to children's care and education. The four educators who had not been required to complete the Orientation Module had either the Certificate in Family Day Care, Nanny Certificate, or Playcentre qualifications.

Table 3 **Educators' qualifications**

Qualification	Number
Bachelor of Teaching (Primary)	2
Certificate in Family Daycare	2
Nanny Certificate or Playcentre qualification	2
Orientation Module of the Certificate in Family Day Care	11
Other	2

Most of the educators had also attended professional development workshops, including those offered by Hamilton Childcare Services Trust and those run by other providers. Some of the experienced educators had engaged in several years of professional development, indicating that the qualifications provided only part of the picture of the educators' training to date.

The educators had all volunteered to take part in the research. As these educators would be providing feedback on the co-ordinators' work we felt that it was important to understand why they chose to participate. The most common responses were a desire to further their own learning and to "give something back" to the co-ordinators. From their responses to this question educators highlighted the importance of ongoing professional development in their roles. The responses also showed the strength and importance of the relationship between educators and the co-ordinators.

Although gaining professional development was a motivating factor for some participants it is important to note that all the educators in the networks received the same professional development workshops and one-to-one opportunities, and would have done so even if the research had not gone ahead, as this research looked at the co-ordinators' normal practice. However, we will discuss later how participation in the project did appear to provide some additional benefits for some educators, and we have been mindful to try and tease out the impact of being a research participant from the other influences on their practice.

Table 4 **Educators' reasons for research participation**

Reason(s)	No. of Educators*
Gain professional development/learn more/be inspired	6
Help/give something back to the co-ordinators	6
Pride/enjoyment in role and to show what they do to others	3
Will be beneficial to other home-based educators	2
Interested in the findings	2
Like to be involved	2
Have experience/perspective to offer	2
Thought it would be interesting	2
Other	3

* Many educators gave more than one reason

Families and managers

In addition to the main participants, questionnaire data were gathered from 22 families of children being cared for by the 15 educators (a 43 percent response rate), and from two management staff at Hamilton Childcare Services Trust.

Data collection

Initial interviews with co-ordinators documented their background (qualifications and experience) and existing practice. The co-ordinators kept detailed field notes of their work with educators, and their own reflections on their work. A number of methodologies were used to gather feedback on their practice:

- Initial individual tape-recorded interviews documented each educator's background, previous educational and training experiences, experience as an educator, existing ideas about children's learning, and views about the support provided by the co-ordinators.
- Educators were provided with a diary and asked to keep notes on the training they received and their responses in terms of the things they were thinking about with regard to the children's learning. This reflective diary was for the educator's own personal use and to refer to in their final interview (see below).
- During visits to educators' homes (and community settings such as the library, gym, etc.) the co-ordinators informally observed the educators working with children.
- Educators completed evaluations of the professional development workshop.
- The children's families were invited to provide comment on the children's learning as evident in the portfolios through a written questionnaire.

- The Director of Hamilton Childcare Services Trust and the Home-based Team Leader provided written feedback based on the research questions.
- Copies were made of the children’s portfolios, and these were analysed for evidence of change in the way educators were working with children and recording learning.
- At the end of the research period individual reflective interviews took place with the educators regarding the factors that they believed had been influential in improving the educators’ own practice.

Timeline of key events

March	Initial interviews with co-ordinators and educators
May	Workshops
July	Group meeting and portfolio sharing
August	Portfolios collected
September	Families and managers surveyed with a questionnaire
September/October	Final interviews with educators

Research approach

Interviews

The project included semi-structured interviews with educators and co-ordinators and ongoing informal discussions with educators. These interviews and discussions were not just a data collection exercise but a series of a “social, interpersonal encounters” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 279). The co-ordinators and the university-based researcher were aware that the quality of the data obtained from interviewing was likely to be influenced by the quality of relationship they as researchers had built with the people being interviewed (Measor, 1982; Powney & Watts, 1987). The co-ordinators have the advantage that they are already known to the educators. However, we felt that it was important that the educators could speak freely and confidentially about the co-ordinators’ practice and so the university-based researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews with the educators.

The university-based researcher interviewed the educators at both the beginning and the end of the research project, and joined other meetings with the educators, so that a relationship had been formed prior to gathering the important reflective data in the final interview. Successive interviews with the same people are important for generating much richer information than single interviews, as trust develops between the participants and the interviewer (Measor, 1982). In addition, we felt that encouraging the educators to share the goals of the study, and the fact that the focus was on the co-ordinators’ practice in offering support to the educators, fostered trust further.

It was also important to be aware that people feel different with, and say different things to, different interviewers (Connolly, 1997; Scheurich, 1995). Characteristics such as the age, gender, class, and ethnicity of the interviewer may have an impact on what the interviewee says (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Cohen et al., 2000; Measor, 1982; Scheurich, 1995) as might the respondent's concern as to who would see the data (Bassey, 1999). The university-based researcher's own experience in home-based education and care appeared helpful in building rapport, as were the strict confidentiality measures (discussed in the ethics section) that were undertaken.

Human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Yarrow & Waxler, 1979) and the university-based researcher allowed the participants to choose when and where the interviews would be conducted. The playgroup facility was offered as an alternative venue; however, all the educators chose to be interviewed in their own home, often when children were sleeping. Some participants preferred to be interviewed in the evening or at the weekend. The co-ordinators chose to be interviewed in the university-based researcher's office. In all cases we aimed to select locations where interruptions could be avoided, distractions were minimised (Cohen et al., 2000), and the respondent felt comfortable. A wealth of rich data was gathered during the interviews, which lasted between 30 minutes and two hours, most being around one hour in duration.

Observations

During regular visits to each educator's home or community settings the co-ordinators informally observed the educators working with children. These records were made on the normal visit sheets used when visiting educators (Appendix 1), one copy of which is kept by the educator and another on their educator file. Discussions and comments relating to recognising and understanding children's learning, made by the educators themselves and by the co-ordinators in discussion with them as part of their daily practice, were recorded in co-ordinators' individual reflective diaries.

We considered having more formal observations carried out by a third person, but like other home-based researchers (e.g., Ellis & Foote, 2003; Foote & Davey, 2003) rejected this on the grounds that an observer in a home-based setting would be intrusive and likely to change the pattern of interactions, whereas observations by the co-ordinator are already an established part of the co-ordinator's role on a visit. The co-ordinators trialed video recording of visits, but found this method to be overly intrusive and influenced a change in the educator's practice during visits, and for this reason it was not continued.

Multiple data sources

The research questions were explored from many angles and in many ways, which is valuable in coming to understand a situation (Erickson, 1985; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). If the different data sources do not corroborate the findings, this helps to avoid "inappropriate certainty", and may lead the researcher to new lines of thinking (Miles &

Huberman, 1994, p. 267). We found this to be the case, and where, for example, a co-ordinator's reflections differed from those of an educator, it allowed deeper exploration of the situation which gave rise to a more complete understanding than would have been possible from one data source alone. An example of this is an educator attributing change to the workshop while the co-ordinator noted that the breakthrough in changing practice happened only several months after the workshop. Further investigation of the two perspectives indicated that for the educator the workshop and the resulting discussions with other educators had been a major trigger in changing her thinking about noticing, recognising, and responding. However, it was only after receiving some one-to-one help from her co-ordinator that she finally felt able to document the children's learning in an effective way. This illustrated how the different perspectives gave a fuller picture than one source of data alone would have done.

Analysis

The three co-ordinators documented their actions using field notes to capture what they did with, and for, each educator during the research period, along with their observations of the educator's practice. The children's portfolios were collected, and the learning stories written by the educators were included in the analysis. Changes made by the educators, and the co-ordinators' perceived reasons for changes, were analysed by co-ordinators to create case studies of the 15 educators. The interview data were used to create a similar case study from each educator's point of view and the university-based researcher compared the two perspectives. As noted above, inconsistencies were explored and further information sought to explain these.

These detailed case studies compiled from the different data sets were then analysed to look for emergent themes. The themes were shared, discussed, and re-visited at research team meetings and the data were often revisited to explore new ideas that emerged.

Analysis of change in practice highlighted that it was important to also consider the educators' initial practice, because in some instances the Co-ordinators identified that practice was already of a high standard, leaving little room for change. In addition we clarified what was meant by "noticing, recognising, and responding" as changes had been made in different aspects of this, in some cases most notably in documenting children's learning.

The important factors that appeared to lead to change were analysed both in overall themes, and in relation to the different types of change that had been made. Questionnaire data from families and management were analysed as another source of evidence regarding the changes that had been made.

Accountability and generalisability

The approach taken ensured that the study met Graue and Walsh's (1998) descriptions of methodological, interpretive, textual, and praxis-oriented validity. Methodological validity requires appropriate methods to be selected to answer the research questions. Interpretive validity

comes from sharing enough evidence so that the assertions made seem plausible. Erickson (1985) suggested that providing sufficient information allows the reader to become a co-analyst, who can judge the validity of the author's analysis. Textual validity is determined by writing in ways that others can understand what has been learned, and praxis-oriented validity is determined by the possibilities for new understandings that will promote action towards improving lives (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

The study was informed also by Bassey's (1999) notion of trustworthiness as a useful guide for accountability. He presents a series of eight questions as a guide for researchers establishing the trustworthiness of their studies. The first three questions relate to data collection and ask, "Has there been prolonged engagement with data sources? Has there been persistent observation of emerging issues? Have raw data been adequately checked with their sources?" (p. 76). The fourth question relates to analysis and questions whether there has been sufficient triangulation of raw data to provide confidence in the statements made. At the level of interpretation Bassey's fifth and sixth guiding questions ask the researcher to test the emerging story against the analytic statements made about the raw data and to ask a critical friend to challenge the findings. The final two questions occur at the level of writing the report and ask whether the account of the research is sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence in the findings and whether there is sufficient organisation in the data record to allow an adequate audit trail. Holliday (2002) maintains that researchers can maintain rigour through careful articulation of who they are, what they have done and how they responded to the exigencies of the setting, and we have addressed this throughout the report.

The research approach looked at the very concrete particulars of a situation, not at abstract universals, and yet in this intensely local focus it is possible to build theory about the situation that is being studied (Erickson, 1985). The implications for practice beyond the immediate setting rely on Bassey's (1999) notion of fuzzy generalisations, that is, that it is possible, or likely, or unlikely, that what was found in this situation will be found in similar situations elsewhere. By detailing a broad range of features and processes, readers have enough information to assess the match between the situation studied and their own, and judge the implications for themselves (Cohen et al., 2000; Firestone, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The transfer from one case to another is done by the reader (Firestone, 1993). Clarke-Stewart et al., (2002) warn against generalising findings from centre-based studies to home-based settings and a strength of this research is the description of the home-based network in which it occurs, allowing other home-based practitioners to judge the implications for themselves.

Barriers encountered

During the period of the research project co-ordinators were still undertaking their normal workload and this had some impact on the time available for the co-ordinators and the university-based researcher to attend meetings. The support of the Trust enabled this barrier to be mainly overcome, and weekends and evenings were also utilised.

As part of the process co-ordinators and educators were asked to keep a reflective diary. It was hoped that these would become valuable resources for educators to use when it became time for the final interview. However some educators didn't refer to their diaries in the final interview as much as we had hoped. This could be because this is the first time educators have been asked to keep a reflective diary and it was therefore a new concept to many of them.

Some educators were challenged over the year with the erratic attendance of children. This made it difficult for those who had children who did not come into care regularly, or had a lot of children coming in for part-time hours, to plan for children's learning experiences and learning outcomes.

Ethical issues

Approval for this research was gained from the School of Education Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato.

A key ethical consideration was the ongoing nature of the relationships between co-ordinators and educators. The fact that co-ordinators already accessed educators' homes when children were in care and have "right of entry" (*Education [Home-based Care] Order 1992 and Amendment 1998*) during these times was an asset. Educators were familiar with the procedures used by co-ordinators to gather data—such as observations and digital photography—as these are part of their normal work. However, the researchers were mindful that they wanted educators to be able to speak freely about their co-ordinators' practice and that this had implications for their ongoing relationships with co-ordinators. The university-based researcher therefore gathered the interview data from the educators.

Educators had the option of their names being used or being recorded under another name. As only a few chose to use a pseudonym it was decided that to ensure participant anonymity all the educators would be given a different name. Educators were given the option of making all or part of their edited transcripts available to the whole research team, or keeping them confidential to the university-based researcher. Once again, as there were only a few educators who did not want their transcripts to be shared, the university-based researcher randomly selected three (with permission) from each network for the co-ordinators to see. Even the pseudonyms were omitted in the section on further support educators required from their co-ordinator, as it was felt that this data was potentially the most sensitive with regard to preserving relationships.

One educator chose to withdraw during the research period. An educator from the initial volunteers (from the same network) was randomly selected and invited to join the project. She was happy to become a participant.

Any families that came into the educators' care during the research period were given the option of becoming part of the research. Any families that left the educators' care were given their child's portfolio. Copies of learning stories written up to that point continued to be used as research data.

Strategies employed to develop effective relationships and partnerships

Strong effective relationships and partnerships on a number of different levels were a feature of this project. Prior to this research starting the relationships between the co-ordinators were already strongly developed, as they had worked together for three years. Each co-ordinator's unique strengths and talents were utilised in this project, which helped the work load to be shared evenly between them. Their relationships were further enhanced by the small geographical area covered by their networks. The co-ordinators worked out of one central office and saw each other on a daily basis, allowing ideas and issues to be discussed as they arose.

The relationship between two of the co-ordinators and the university-based researcher began when they took university papers that the researcher taught. The researcher's relationship with all three co-ordinators was developed further through meetings during 2006 to discuss the research proposal, ethics, and any issues that may arise. She was invited by the co-ordinators to assist them in researching their practice. During the project the university-based researcher was readily available through phone calls, e-mail and regular meetings. She also attended many of the meetings that were held with the educators and through this the educators became comfortable with her presence, which was beneficial for the final interviews.

Educators had been developing their relationships with the co-ordinators for up to six years. This was evident in the high expression of interest amongst educators for taking part in the project and in the response from six educators who said that they wanted to be part of the research in order to give something back to the co-ordinators, to help support them. The findings indicated that the reciprocal nature of these relationships was important.

Relationships within the team were further strengthened by attendance at the New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Association Conference held in Christchurch during September 2007. Six of the Educators who were research participants expressed an interest in attending (three had attended these conferences in the past). The co-ordinators and the university-based researcher also attended. When it became evident that the educators wanted to support the co-ordinators during the presentation on the project, they were asked whether they would like to help as presenters. This presentation proved to be a powerful experience for them as the workshop was extremely well received and they were congratulated by many of the conference delegates. Consequently these six educators appeared to develop an even stronger bond and relationship with each other, the co-ordinators, and the university-based researcher.

Other issues

As noted earlier, six educators came to the New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Association Conference and agreed to share in the presentation. Their response to this made us realise the value of their input and participation both for the research and for effective dissemination to other educators.

The fact that the university-based researcher already had a sound knowledge of the uniqueness of home-based care and education has meant that as a team we were able to proceed with a clear

understanding of what we were trying to achieve. Having established partnerships between the university-based researcher and co-ordinators and a clear goal and shared vision before the research period started has meant that the year has been productive from the start, which we feel is particularly useful in a one-year project. We have all worked together at the same level, sharing the workload, but taking responsibility for different aspects of the research.

3. Findings and implications

This chapter sets out the findings in relation to the three research questions. The first section provides an account of what the co-ordinators did to support educators to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning. The following two sections analyse and discuss the findings in relation to the second two questions regarding the changes in educators' practice and the factors associated with these changes. A case study of one educator, Peggy, is included to highlight the way in which changes to practice documented during this research project are located within an ongoing journey for both educators and co-ordinators. The findings have a number of possible implications for practice and the chapter concludes with a discussion of these.

“Training on the job”: Support provided by the co-ordinators

The co-ordinators' role and key tasks from their job descriptions are outlined in Appendix 2. The research questions focused on one aspect of the co-ordinator's role, specifically the ways in which they support educators to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning. Their work over the research period was part of the ongoing professional development that the co-ordinators provide. This is evident in the Education Review Office's (2005) report on the service, which noted that in each of the networks:

The coordinator has worked progressively to establish the use of learning stories and photographs as effective assessment tools that focus on children's strengths, interests and learning needs. Carers are developing skills in assessing children's learning and planning appropriate programmes. Strengthening and further defining the use of portfolios should enhance their value for planning children's learning and result in increased interest from parents. (p.2)

This section describes the workshop and other specific aspects of the professional development that the co-ordinators provided during the research period. The co-ordinators noted that their skills in documentation were increasing over time also.

Professional development workshop

During the research year the compulsory workshop was entitled “Celebrating Children's Learning”. The idea for this workshop came from two co-ordinators who attended “The Big Day Out” run by Wendy Lee (Educational Leadership Project) in Tauranga and were inspired by some of the ideas presented there. The co-ordinators wrote and developed the workshop and presented as a team. The workshop was held for all educators as part of Hamilton Childcare Services

Trust's standard practice; however, the results discussed in this report are from the workshops that the research participants attended.

The workshop was run over the course of two nights. Each session was 2 ½ hours in duration. (Four workshops were offered, three in Hamilton and one in Cambridge). Each workshop was attended by 15–20 educators at a time. The educators involved in the research were invited to attend the workshop the first time it was offered. Thirteen of the 15 research participants attended the initial workshop. The others attended the workshops with different groups. The workshop explored five topics:

1. *Getting to know yourself*

Educators were encouraged to look at and reflect on sociocultural contexts. The aim was for educators to become aware that it is important to know themselves and where they come from when providing care and education for children, and to reflect on how this could impact on what they may provide. One of the tasks set in relation to this goal was to design a “me page” (Appendix 3). The co-ordinators had developed their own pages and these were shared with the educators on the first night of the workshop. Educators were asked to have a go at making their own page before the next session. This turned out to be a powerful exercise and for some educators made a difference to the way they felt about portfolios because they felt part of the children's portfolios and evident in their lives and learning. Written feedback was gathered after the workshop so that the co-ordinators could analyse the educators' responses to what had been offered.

2. *Getting to know your children*

The second learning outcome for the professional development was really getting to know the children. Educators were encouraged to become reflective practitioners. They learnt to take a step back and “look at the big picture”. During the workshop a series of photos of young children involved in various activities was used. Educators were asked to reflect on their initial response to the photos. This exercise produced a lot of discussion and for some became the turning point where they really started to notice and recognise children's learning.

3. *Learning to be reflective practitioners*

Workshop participants were encouraged to become reflective practitioners, as defined by O'Connor and Diggins (2002):

As a reflective practitioner, you commit to learn continuously about your teaching, by teaching and then thinking about what you've done, what others did, and what happened during the process. (p. 9)

To support this all of the educators were given copies of *On Reflection* (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002), which proved to be a very useful text. One educator commented that she “found it so beneficial she made her husband read it too” (Tess, Int. 2, p. 2).

4. *Becoming confident in noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning*

During the second session educators were further challenged to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning. They were asked to bring along a photo of a child in which they could see learning happening. They discussed these in small groups and wrote learning stories for their photos. During this exercise co-ordinators noticed the support the educators were giving to each other. Later, we discuss how a community of learners (Brown et al., 1993), developed and the beginnings of this were evident at this workshop.

5. *Learn to record and revisit*

The final part of the professional development workshop was to support educators to discover ways to document and plan for children's learning and ways to share their own stories. *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004b), were used as a resource and educators were given time to read through them. Copies of the exemplars are available for educators to borrow as they continue their reflective journey.

Follow-up meeting

A follow-up meeting to share portfolios was held two months after the professional development workshop for those educators involved in the research. Co-ordinators were unsure what to expect at this meeting, as educators can sometimes be unwilling to share their work. However, they were astounded by what happened. As soon as the educators were in the door they were showing each other their portfolios and the room was filled with a real buzz of excitement. The educators were able to bounce their ideas off each other and the co-ordinators at this meeting. It was obvious that they were proud of their achievements and that they had learned that there was no right or wrong way of documenting children's learning. This meeting appeared to strengthen the group as a community of learners as they were supporting each other, sharing their knowledge and showing enthusiasm for what others were doing. Practical support also came from this meeting as those with computer skills made time to help those who needed assistance in this area.

One-to-one opportunities

Appendix 2 includes a description of what typically happens when a co-ordinator visits an educator's home. Part of the beauty of regular visits to educators by co-ordinators is the opportunity this allows to further discuss ideas and developments from any professional development undertaken by the educators. During the research period these visits allowed the co-ordinators to focus on specific areas covered by the workshop that individual educators were working on. Ideas were shared and sometimes puzzled over together. Support and assistance provided by the co-ordinators was designed to scaffold the educator's learning, and connecting with what they were currently doing, providing positive feedback on current work, and then extending on this by offering ideas to expand on what else could be done.

Playgroup and gymnastics sessions

Co-ordinators attend the playgroup and gymnastics sessions and these are ideal environments for developing relationships. These operated as normal through the research period. They provide opportunities for role modelling of practice by co-ordinators, and for co-ordinators and educators to discuss and share ideas. Educators who attend these groups also benefit from interacting with a co-ordinator responsible for a different network.

Summary

The co-ordinators offered a range of “training-on-the-job” opportunities. In the research period the educators attended a workshop (run over the course of two evenings), a follow-up meeting where portfolios were shared, and received one-to-one support from the co-ordinators during the regular home visits and contact at other venues such as playgroups and gym.

There is an ongoing challenge for the co-ordinators to put together workshops in a manner that responds to the different levels educators may be at, yet be able to stimulate them all. Some of this happens during the visits that follow a workshop, which allows ideas shared in workshops to be revisited. Overall, the co-ordinators aimed to work within each educator’s “zone of proximal development”. This is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as:

. . . the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving . . . in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

Thus, whatever the educator’s current understanding and practice, the co-ordinators aimed to challenge and extend this further. It was therefore important for co-ordinators to take the time to examine workshop feedback in detail and look at what was important for educators when it comes to “grasping” the concept being presented.

Progress is at the educator’s pace and the co-ordinators were aware that it is important to know where each educator is at in their learning journey and to be mindful of what may be going on in their personal life, as this may impact on how open they are to training or professional development. Roles and relationships within the home, or external factors, can all impact on both children’s and educators’ learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The “training on the job” provided by the co-ordinators at Hamilton Childcare Services Trust includes many of the features of effective professional development outlined in the best evidence synthesis (BES) on professional development (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). The characteristics identified in the BES that were particularly evident in the co-ordinators’ practice were: the professional development incorporated the educators’ own aspirations, skills, knowledge, and understanding into the learning context; educators were invited to investigate their own pedagogy, and during this year were asked to collect data on this by utilising their reflective diaries and in written documentation of learning stories; and the focus was on empowering educators to change and enhance their practice, to open them to critical reflection and examination of differing

perspectives, and to gain awareness of their own thinking, actions, and influence. This approach was consistent with international recommendations summarised by Everiss and Dalli (2003) in that the training was:

- sensitive to the educators' needs both as caregivers and adult learners
- designed to acknowledge and build on their experiential knowledge base
- differentiated (in the one-to-one support) to their different levels.

The following section explores the impact of this work on the educators' practice.

Changes evident in educators' practice as a result of what co-ordinators do

Using both educator and co-ordinator assessments of the educators' practice, four main areas of change were identified as a result of the training the co-ordinators had provided. These were:

- portfolio work
- noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning
- developing a community of learners
- confidence.

In turn, increased confidence and willingness to share their practice appeared to foster further learning and development.

In addition to the main themes, one educator, Tess, mentioned that she had been reading more as a result of the workshop and the *On Reflection* text. Although this only happened to one person, it was an important change for her. After reading this book she joined the library and has been getting more books out about children and their development. Tess commented, "This has given me that extra nudge and I'm learning more and I'm finding I'm enjoying learning more" (Int. 2, p. 2).

Portfolio work

Changes in portfolio work were identified for 13 educators. This was a focus of much of the co-ordinators' work with both new and existing educators as new requirements for documentation of children's learning had been introduced in 2003 by Hamilton Childcare Services Trust. A number of experienced educators described in their initial interviews how challenging this had been for them, their lack of understanding about the role of documentation, and their frustration and dislike of this aspect of the job. The university-based researcher shared the educators' concern with the co-ordinators (without identifying specific educators), so that this could be addressed in the training provided.

The experienced educators tackling this new challenge appeared to be experiencing what Beach (2003) described as an “encompassing transition” that occurs when individuals are faced with changes within an existing role. This can result in reversals in expertise as newer or younger members of a community may be in a position to assist older or established members. We discuss later how this may have assisted in establishing a community of learners, despite the differing backgrounds of the educators involved.

A major change for educators arising from the professional development provided was in their understanding of why they were documenting children’s learning, and the purposes of the portfolios. It was noticeable that confidence and ownership of the portfolios increased along with their practical skills in documentation. The following vignettes illustrate two educators’ changes in this area.

Lily

In her initial interview Lily noted that she had been an educator for a long time. This year she felt she had “refined” her practice rather than making major changes in noticing, recognising, and responding to children’s learning. She felt she was a bit more professional now, with a “bit more polish”, and was able to communicate this new professionalism as an educator to others (Int. 2 p. 10). Her major change had been in her documentation—“It’s opened the doors for easier learning stories”—which she was now able to write in “child- and parent-friendly language . . . It’s available now to the children so they can watch their progress” (Int. 2 p. 9).

Lily was enjoying incorporating photos into her documentation, and the children liked revisiting the pictures. This was a major change from the first interview when, although she had always taken photographs of children, “all the writing” was noted as a pitfall of the job—“The paperwork builds up and you get behind and you start to feel guilty” (Int. 1 p. 5). “Writing” also came up as the thing Lily said she liked least about the job during the first interview. Learning stories had initially been “just a nightmare” when they had to categorise the learning “into boxes”: “I don’t like putting kids into little boxes” (Int. 1, p. 6).

At the beginning of the research period Lily’s co-ordinator noticed that Lily was writing learning stories and narratives for her care children in their record books. She suggested to her that she find a different way to record the children’s learning in their portfolios and that she didn’t need to use the set forms. In April the co-ordinator received a phone call from Lily asking if she would be in the office as she wanted to show her something. Lily arrived with a portfolio full of narratives. The co-ordinator was thrilled to see the effort she had put in and noted, “This is an amazing turnaround for someone who has always struggled with the concept of planning and assessment”. Lily said, “The light has switched on”.

An example of this change is illustrated in the following two excerpts from one of the children’s portfolios. In 2006 Lily took a photo of Michelle looking at a magazine and wrote:

Michelle showing an interest in books.

Lily had then linked this to *Te Whāriki* by pasting an excerpt from Communication/Mana Reo, Goal 3, under the photo.

During 2007 Lily again wrote a narrative for Michelle around books. This time she took the children on a visit to the local library and documented what happened. Lily took several photos and wrote captions to go with each:

Michelle finds a book that she finds interesting.

Michelle sits on the alphabet mat and looks for the letters that match her book, lots of fun learning going on here, well done.

Michelle has learnt that she can look at any book when she wants to. After she reads it she climbs up on the stool to put it back on the shelf, showing respect and care for the library books. Sometimes we all sit on the mat and share story time together, this is a fun time for all of us.

Lily linked the learning that she recognised to Communication/Mana Reo, Goal 2, in *Te Whāriki*. She was able to identify that Michelle was experiencing an environment in which children develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes.

Lily credits the workshop and subsequent follow-up night with being a key turning point, after which she claims, “The penny dropped when I could do one [write a learning story] and I was worthwhile” (Int. 2 p. 17). When the group met again she was keen to share this with the other educators, and “from then on it was just, ‘Yay!’” (Int. 2 p. 17).

At the October interview Lily claimed, “I can now do a learning story without getting lost” (Int. 2, p. 8). She concluded, “I feel I’m a better person for it [the training this year], and made some lovely friends, and speak now with a lot more enthusiasm about my learning stories” (Int. 2 p. 28).

Jessie

Jessie’s co-ordinator noted that:

Jessie has developed her portfolio work during this year and has some wonderful examples of planning, assessment, and evaluation—“the package deal”. Her practice with children has always been excellent and now her written work is showing how she is more focused on what she is doing. Jessie’s confidence in this area has grown this year. After the workshop Jessie commented, “I always knew there was something missing, and now I know what”. Her written work reflects this new knowledge.

Undertaking the compulsory professional development workshop for the year, Jessie said she hoped to:

... learn more about the portfolios and what I could put in them. A lot of the knowledge is inherent, you know it’s happening but actually being able to put it into words isn’t always easy and I am hoping I’ll find more ways I can do that. (Int. 1 p. 4)

By October, Jessie felt her ability to notice, recognise, and respond had improved. “I do it more consciously now. I always think I was aware but now have a better understanding of how to record it and do learning stories (Int. 2, p. 3). As a result, she was “far more enthusiastic about doing learning stories now” (Int. 2, p. 3).

Noticing, recognising, and responding to children’s learning

Changes in their ability to notice, recognise, and respond to children’s learning were evident for 10 educators. This is illustrated in the vignette of Natalie below, and is also highlighted in the stories of Louise and Peggy later in this chapter.

Natalie

At the first interview Natalie said, “I feel confident that I do realise what their [the children’s] needs are, and things that they’ve done, and new things that they’ve learnt, and when they need to move on to something else” (Int. 1 p. 8) and this came from years of experience. She also used *Te Whāriki*, “where it gives you examples of other things that you could be doing and the next step. They’re things that I know and recognise myself, but sometimes they might just spark me to think of something else” (Int. 1 p. 8). She said she was providing learning outcomes for children by “doing things”.

In October, Natalie said she had improved her practice and was:

. . . able to see the different things kids do . . . being able to see a bigger picture of things and from that it’s broadened my way of thinking about how kids think and learn, and listen[ing] to them more and noticing what it is they are doing. (Int. 2 p. 4)

Natalie said she was now more attuned to noticing little learning opportunities and was also revisiting learning with children:

Portfolios used to be buried down in a box and you would be lucky to see them a couple of times a year and now they’re like a magazine on a coffee table and they [the children] get to see them all the time and they love seeing them and they sit and talk together about them and even that has turned into more learning stories. (Int. 2 p. 11–12)

Revisiting the learning that is happening with children is evident in the following example of a learning story Natalie wrote for Paris:

Paris had been spending a lot of time playing with farm animals, fences, etc. She began to take herself and the animals and fences to a quieter room away from the younger children so her play was uninterrupted. She asked for assistance to put the fences together and put the animals into the paddocks in no apparent order. Over the following month a lot of time was spent making farms, talking about the animals and the different sounds they make. At the end of this month Paris could recognise the animals individually by their shape and sound. She was now making the paddocks herself and grouping the animals by type in pairs, into different paddocks.

Natalie *noticed* Paris's interest in animals, she had *recognised* that Paris needed space by herself for uninterrupted play, and encouraged this particularly when the younger children were in bed. Finally, Natalie *responded* by providing opportunities to extend Paris's knowledge of animals and encouraging her verbally.

Developing a community of learners

Both educators and co-ordinators noted that some of the changes that had taken place were around increased sharing of ideas and discussions about children's learning. This changed the nature of the conversations that educators had with each other, so that they were no longer just discussing what they could do with children, but started to talk about how they could expand on the children's learning within the activities they were providing. Their planning focus changed and planning children's learning became much more apparent in their discussions and what they did as a group. In addition, some educators also documented experiences of children who were in care with other educators through writing learning stories and taking photos when they noticed moments of learning for these children. (These events were usually at settings such as playgroup and gym or out in the community.) Educators emailed these photos and learning stories to each other and to co-ordinators, which was an unexpected outcome during the year.

Another change for some of the educators was the relationships they felt they had developed with all of the co-ordinators, not just their own. For example, Rebecca said she felt that she was now closer to all the co-ordinators.

One of the educators, who was a trained primary school teacher, said she was already very confident especially in observing, recognising, and responding to children's learning, but a change for her had been in talking more with other educators:

I felt that other caregivers [*sic*] have got a lot out of it so they're more inclined to discuss observations with me more. I do feel it's opened that connection to start talking more about what we're observing in children I found it has opened a communication line where we discuss, we're more aware to discuss what children are achieving at the time The most impact probably is the communication lines that they [other educators] are on the same wave-length I suppose in noticing children's learning and discussing it openly, while it's happening. (Alex Int. 2 pp. 3–4)

Confidence

Many educators commented on how they felt more confident about various aspects of their work. For example, Anne said she had more confidence now, and her families had been impressed when they saw the learning stories she had written, which further increased her confidence. Denise noted, "[activities this year] have built up my confidence and my self esteem I've got more confidence. I'm quite happy for my parents to come and browse through my learning stories now" (Int. 2 p. 6). Denise's families also commented on this new-found confidence and enthusiasm.

Louise had gained confidence in presentation of learning stories and use of the computer, making her feel proud of what she was now producing.

Lucky felt “very confident” about noticing, recognising, and responding. “I think just going for a walk to the park. Tying their shoelaces up. Going to the supermarket. They’re learning all the time, every single day. Talking to children and children talking to each other” (Int. 1 p. 8). Similarly, Kirsten felt she had more confidence in supporting children’s learning, and providing differentiated challenges within one activity. Jessie said she had also gained confidence in her ability, which was having a positive effect on all that she did.

Changes in several areas of practice

Of all the educators participating in the research, the greatest changes could be seen in Louise. She had developed and refined her skills in each of the four main areas of change identified above.

When Louise was first interviewed (in June because she replaced a participant who withdrew) she had already made some changes to practice as a result of the workshop:

I had real problems—if you talked to [co-ordinator], she’ll tell you. I had real problems doing all the kids’ portfolios and I don’t have a problem at all now. In fact, I’m a bit naughty because I’ll sit most of the afternoon when the kids are busy and do it all up and I get a bit carried away but things like that. (Int. 1 p. 7).

After the workshop Louise felt that she was a lot better at noticing, recognising, and responding to children’s learning. She commented:

. . . a lot better now than I was. In fact I’ve become a bit of a pain in the butt—“That’s a learning story!” But that is probably one of the few things that I feel that I could do better in. I’ve gone from very little knowledge to a little more but could probably do with a bit more help, even. (Int. 1 pp. 10–11)

The way Louise had begun recognising and responding to children’s learning in a variety of different contexts and places is evident in the following example written for Matthew and Sam, which she documented at playgroup:

Matthew, this morning at playgroup you and Sam were playing in the sandpit and I watched you both working together to fill the bucket with sand. At the beginning you were both trying to get the sand in at the same time but it wasn’t working and more sand was ending up back in the sandpit. I came and talked to . . . both of you and suggested that you take turns starting with Sam and then you, Matthew, to fill your spade up and pour it into the bucket. You both did very well and after a couple of attempts there was a lot more sand going into the bucket. Well done Matthew!

Louise went on to link what she had noticed, recognised, and responded to in this learning moment to *Te Whāriki* when she included a learning outcome from Contribution/Mana Tangata in the learning story: “Children develop strategies and skills for initiating, maintaining, and

enjoying a relationship with other children—including taking turns, problem solving, negotiating and taking another’s point of view” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 70).

Louise highlighted the change she had made when she said:

For lack of a better way of putting it, it makes me more honest about what I do with the children so that they are benefiting because of the way that I am thinking rather than just doing things for the sake of doing them. (Int. 2 p. 13).

In September, Louise noted that the main change was in her portfolios:

It’s been really good, I’ve really enjoyed it. It’s put a new look onto . . . basically about the portfolios. I had one that I’d never done anything on and I’ve had the child for three years and I finished it in a matter of six weeks, the whole lot because I knew what to do. Once I started then it all fell into place . . . Of course, I had from photos to all sorts of stuff of his. I’d jotted down notes and different things over the period of three years but I put it all together and it’s really cool . . . The way we used to do them was very boring, it was so complicated. The way they’ve shown us now how to do them, the way you’re able to do them now, it’s simpler. (Int. 2 p. 2).

The portfolios, they’re all up to date, they all look good . . . (Int. 2 p. 7).

In the past Louise’s learning stories often consisted of nothing more than a photo or two and a link to *Te Whāriki*. The portfolios now demonstrated a major change in Louise’s ability to notice, recognise, and respond to children’s learning. An example of this is the learning story that she wrote for Megan about building with blocks:

In the mail today some new Mega Blocks arrived. Megan, Tony and Catherine couldn’t wait to see how the blocks worked, so once afternoon tea was over the children opened the box and got started. Megan, you did very well following the instructions the best you could and eventually you created something you were very pleased with. Finally you all put together what you had made and the Outlaw’s Cabin looked very good to me.

Louise accompanied this story with pictures of the building process and the three children working together. She then linked what was happening in the story to the following goals for children’s learning from *Te Whāriki*, Contribution/Mana Tangata:

Opportunities for learning are equitable and each child’s contribution is valued.

Children experience an environment where they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 64)

Louise had been networking with other educators for some time; however, she found that the focus of these networks had changed:

You are sitting there and something will come up and you’ll start talking about it and someone will say, “Oh, that’s how you can do that.” . . . There’s about five of us carers [*sic*] that all get together at different times during the week at different places and we’ve actually included those places now in our portfolios as well as out in the community. Everywhere we go now we go with the idea of being able to use it and of course you see the parents

benefit because they get to see what we're doing and the cool photos and stories. (Int. 2 pp. 2–3).

Her co-ordinator noted:

Louise's confidence in what she can achieve as an educator has greatly improved over the research period. Her commitment and effort over a few months was amazing. Louise is noticing learning that is happening in everyday moments and sometimes emails photos to me so I can see it too!

Managers' reflections on the changes that have taken place

The management team offered an additional view on the changes noted by the co-ordinators and educators. In their questionnaires managers commented that educators are enthusiastic and focused in their work with children. Consistent with the co-ordinators' and educators' perspectives, managers stated that they had noticed an increase and improvement in the recording of children's learning, and that educators were open to different ways of seeing things.

Managers suggested that, "The research has helped educators develop a strong sense of belonging to the organisation". However, the co-ordinators believed this was more likely to be the case because of the educators' attendance at, and participation in, the New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Association Conference in September.

Summary

The findings reinforced the view that the educators were all on individual learning journeys. They were at different points on this journey when the research began, and they proceeded at different paces. Analysis of change was therefore specific to the individual. While all educators were assessed (by themselves and by the co-ordinators) to have made some changes during this time, the nature and degree of change varied. In addition, a number of educators said that major changes in their practice had occurred prior to the research period and these changes were consolidated during the research period.

The data from the educators who said they had made changes to the ways in which they noticed, recognised, and responded to children's learning prior to the research period, and the factors that had been important in these changes, were consistent with the findings during the research period. This gave support to the co-ordinators' belief that they were gathering data on their "normal" practice.

One example of the way in which the journey continues beyond the research period came when the findings of the project were shared with the participants in November. One educator asked for more information about the "package deal" planning (Appendix 4) as seeing it visually in several different formats (in the data from other participants) helped her to understand.

The nature of the changes made by educators reflects the different categories of an accomplished teacher discussed by Shulman and Shulman (2004). These are being:

- ready (possessing vision)
- willing (having motivation)
- able (both knowing and being able to do)
- reflective (learning from experience)
- communal (acting as a member of a professional community).

The planned professional workshop and follow-up sessions focused largely on the educator's vision (a particular approach to noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning) and the practical aspects of being able, particularly with regard to planning for children's learning and writing learning stories. Given this focus, the improvements in portfolio work and noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning were unsurprising outcomes.

What was unanticipated was the manner in which the shared focus on children's learning, the educators' own learning about their practice, and the co-ordinators' interest in both—and their own learning about ways to enhance the former—fostered a new sensibility. This appeared to foster the sense of being what Brown et al. (1993) described as a “community of learners” and Shulman and Shulman (2004) call the communal aspect of the accomplished teacher that includes “deliberation, collaboration, reciprocal scaffolding, and distributed expertise” (p. 265). Wenger's (1998) descriptions of learning as social participation provide insights into this process. Participation shapes not only what is done, but also participants' identity and interpretation of their actions. Through the professional development focus on children's learning, (supported perhaps by the name change from Carer to Educator) many educators began to embrace this aspect of their role more fully, which in turn changed how they viewed themselves and others, and changed the patterns of interaction and focus of the community. Positive feedback from others (children, families, other educators, and co-ordinators) enhanced educators' confidence further and led to consolidation or extension of improvements to practice (i.e., enhancing motivation). These aspects of the findings are of particular interest as they indicated how initial professional development inputs could lead to much deeper and long-term changes to practice. The notion of a community of learners as it related to home-based settings is revisited in the following section, and discussed further in Chapter 6.

Important factors in changing educators' practice of noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning

There were different inspirational points for different people, and this reflected the different journeys that individual educators were making in their own learning. The main influences in enhancing their practice in the course of the year had been:

- co-ordinators
- workshops
- networking with others.

Other aspects (mentioned by one or two educators each) were the conference, reading *On Reflections* (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002), positive feedback from parents or children, and the change of title from Carer to Educator.

Although the data are presented under key themes, these should not be seen as isolated issues. For many educators it was a combination of factors that made a difference. As Lily noted:

A combination [of influences] because if we hadn't had the workshops, we wouldn't have had the discussions so it's like a stepping stone because everything that came out of that was positive so it's a combination. You can't define. You can't just say, "It's talking to the others", because we wouldn't have been together if it hadn't been for the research and the willingness to talk about it and the fact that this was a place [in which] we felt safe enough to say, "I haven't got the hang of it", so we felt safe enough to know that whatever fear we had or not understanding wasn't going to be ridiculed, wasn't going to be put down. There was no negativity about saying how we felt, a lot of confidence in the things you weren't quite handling, total job satisfaction . . . (Int. 2 p. 9)

The interconnected nature of the influences on practice is illustrated in more detail in the case study that is presented later in this section.

Co-ordinators

All 15 educators commented on the role the co-ordinators played in enhancing their practice. This directly contrasted with Everiss and Dalli's (2003) finding (based on Everiss's survey of nearly 400 home-based educators) that New Zealand home-based educators did not see their co-ordinators as fulfilling a professional development role. The important aspects of the co-ordinators' support fell into two broad, interrelated categories: practical assistance, and relationships.

(a) Practical assistance from co-ordinators

The workshop was clearly a major form of practical assistance, and this has been analysed separately. A range of other forms of practical assistance was mentioned, including providing resources, taking photographs, setting deadlines and offering computer assistance. The ones that were noted most frequently were role modelling (including writing learning stories), offering help and suggestions to tackle specific issues, and talking about portfolios and planning.

Role modelling

The educators noted the value of the role modeling that co-ordinators provided (both intentionally and unintentionally):

Even just seeing what she [co-ordinator] does with [a child] while she's here on a visit and then how it transfers to her learning stories, I've learnt from that. (Anne, Int. 2 p. 6) . . . with the support of our co-ordinators who are trained and highly skilled in that area, transferring that knowledge to you is all part of the process of becoming [an educator] and it's not just about caring, but about us learning as well, and within the job without having to do any extended training if you don't want to . . . how they're taught to notice, recognise, and respond. How you can transfer that to everyday life and I think that's a neat thing that's happened here. (Anne, Int. 2 p. 12)

[Co-ordinator] would say, "Well, that's a learning story. All you have to do is write that in there." She would constantly reassure me. (Lily, Int. 2, p. 13)

I liked the way she showed her passion in her playgroup topic when we studied other countries and cultures . . . things like that were good because it made us question the children's thinking and respond to them so I thought that was very good. (Alex, Int. 2 p. 5)

Role modelling of attitudes was also important:

Her being and doing and her excitement about children is rubbing off on to me and it's giving me a new sense of love for my job. She's helped me notice the small things are big.
(Natalie, Int. 2 p. 7)

They are constantly reviewing their practice to suit our needs and suggestions. I think they've got a renewed passion in the recognising and responding to the children and I think they're quite excited which can be contagious and that's a good thing . . . I think that they're inspiring us . . . they are excited and more happy about what they are doing (Alex, Int. 2 p. 5)

Help and suggestions

The co-ordinators had to strike a delicate balance between being co-learner and also taking the role of more capable or knowledgeable peer (as discussed by Vygotsky, 1978). Whilst educators said they enjoyed feeling they were learning alongside the co-ordinators as both parties developed skills in documentation, they also saw co-ordinators as "experts" and valued the expertise and knowledge that they shared:

I think it's really important that they come and do that especially if we've got any questions about anything . . . I'm always on the phone "[co-ordinator], can you come and talk to me?" I think that it's really important that they come in and we discuss what's happening and hopefully solve it. (Lucky, Int. 1 p. 5)

She's always got great ideas where I can go with it and coming from that different perspective too is always good. (Jessie, Int. 2 p. 5)

If you've got a problem you can ring her and ask her for help or if you needed her she'd be here, just "bang", like that, just knowing that you can ring them anytime for any reason and she's there for support. (Kirsten, Int. 2 p. 7).

Rebecca said that working one-to-one with her co-ordinator at home after the workshops was of most benefit:

It was more talking about the portfolios with [co-ordinator], that just . . . whenever she comes for a visit, you tend to ask them a few more questions when no one else is listening. I'm not one to talk in a big group so her following up and talking about stuff at home was helpful. (Int. 2 p. 4)

Both role modelling and offering help and suggestions were evident in the ways co-ordinators were supporting educators with portfolios and planning.

Talking about portfolios and planning

Rebecca had seen the example portfolio prior to the first interview and thought this was helpful:

. . . because you don't know what other carers [*sic*] are doing and it can be nice thinking, "Oh, mine are quite good", or, "I should do this next time" . . . when I started I thought it sounded all scary but you see them and you think, "Oh, is that all?" so I think that's important . . . when you see them and talk to the co-ordinators it's so easy. (Int. 1 pp. 7-8)

Other comments about planning and portfolios included:

[Co-ordinator] gave me an example portfolio and I went through that and that gave me some ideas. (Louise, Int. 2 p. 2).

They help us with our portfolios and give us ideas on monthly planning or term planning and help us with those sorts of things. (Natalie, Int. 1 p. 7)

Lots and lots and lots of discussions about all topics and going over the learning stories with me until I've got it because, like, I say, that was my hardest thing. I couldn't get it . . . I was having real problems linking; I just couldn't get my head around it . . . (Peggy, Int. 2 p. 10).

I look forward to her coming really, working through talking about my planning and where we're at, what we're doing, and she's always positive (Denise, Int. 1 p. 6). The last one [visit] we went through the learning portfolios and it made me click because she said to me that the learning stories, the planning and the evaluations really all need to link and I hadn't always been doing that so I've been making my work really hard for myself but it seems so easy now. (Denise, Int. 2 p. 5)

The co-ordinators were aware that a key factor underpinning some of the changes to documentation was the fact that in the past few years they had changed the style of the assessments that they were asking educators to do. They had made them simpler and more focused on capturing learning that was happening, rather than having to fit the type of learning into predetermined categories (this was referred to in the vignette of Lily in the previous section). This allowed educators to have input into, and ownership of, their learning stories and to document children's learning in their own style.

An example of this ownership is in the following learning story Sarah wrote for James, which clearly shows her personality and sense of humour:

Today James, Emma, Charlie, and Kelly made some very cool necklaces. We used beads, buttons, and straws. We concentrated really hard and were proud of our colourful creations. James did this by himself and had no trouble threading the beads onto the elastic. “It’s cool Sarah, not beautiful, I’m not a girl”, he says to me. James loved this so much he helped Emma and Charlie finish theirs. James really enjoyed this activity and maintained concentration for 45 minutes. He shared his enthusiasm and skills with Emma and Charlie by helping them finish theirs. James would benefit from more art and craft activities to build on these skills and achievements and of course for his own sense of achievement and enjoyment.

Sarah highlighted the links in this story to *Te Whāriki* by noting the skill and process developed by being involved in creative activities and the benefit of these activities for manipulation and fine motor skills.

(b) Relationships with co-ordinators

Being supportive, responding to the educators holistically, being available, and offering positive reassurance and encouragement came through as key features of the co-ordinators’ relationships with educators. Overall, more comments were received on features of the relationships than on practical support.

Responding to the educator holistically

Jessie described her co-ordinator’s approach as “holistic” (Int. 1 p. 2). Others noted:

I love it when she does come here, it doesn’t always have to be about the care of children; she talks to me about my life and my children and it just makes me feel that we’re people. . . she’s got a relationship with my children and they love seeing her and when my partner comes home she jokes to him and it’s really nice; you’re not just a worker . . . just being a friend as well and discussing other things . . . It’s just nice being able to talk with a friend. (Rebecca, Int. 2 p. 5)

[Co-ordinator] never makes me feel like a number, she’s always there when I need her, professionally or personally . . . (Peggy, Int. 2 p. 12)

She shows you respect, friendliness, it’s not just a job thing. We can talk about family life . . . She shows you respect, friendliness . . . you always feel that she listened to you, you’re a worthwhile person and you are on the right track and she’s just brought it out in me and slowly encouraged without me even knowing it. (Lily, Int. 2 p. 14)

Availability

The educators really appreciated the availability of the co-ordinators and the way they responded to requests for help:

If I need anything I can just ring and I know she's always willing to talk and if I needed her I could ring her and say, "Could you come out? I need you", and she'd be here. . . . I feel comfortable with her that I can talk to her about anything and she'll be honest and helpful. (Kirsten, Int. 1 p. 6)

She's always a telephone call away for everything, any little thing that I have a query about whether it be some behaviour that the children have had or other things. They support us in everything we do, well [co-ordinator] does (Louise, Int. 1 p. 9). She's just at the other end of a phone, always. . . . [co-ordinator]'s great. I don't have a problem with anything. She's always enthusiastic, she's always encouraging, yeah I probably do need a bit more than other people but she does, she persists with me and in the end gets what she wants. (Louise, Int. 2 p. 6).

Even if I ring with a problem or a question and if [co-ordinator] is not there as my co-ordinator . . . they all know enough about you and the child or if they don't they'll put you on to someone who knows you a little bit better to be able to help you, so that, to me, that's important. (Peggy, Int. 1 p. 6)

Only one person had found that it seemed to take a long time before she gained a response to her request. In that situation it appeared that the issue was perhaps more distressing for the educator than the co-ordinator realised. In addition it highlighted the fact that educators were used to fairly immediate responses to their requests for help, but sometimes the co-ordinators had to seek additional information, which took time. This was another example of the way that the co-ordinator's role requires a careful negotiation of the balance between co-learner and expert.

Positive reassurance and encouragement

The educators said that all three co-ordinators made them feel supported and encouraged:

She just gives you confidence, [she's] a positive person and gives you confidence and encouragement. (Kirsten, Int. 2 p. 7).

[Co-ordinator] helped me with the transition [to written documentation], with her support . . . she never, ever corrected . . . total encouragement all the way through. (Lily, Int. 2 p. 14)

Her support's just wonderful, that's one of the things that make this job not only worthwhile but do-able. I think without that co-ordinator support it will be really, really, hard work (Jessie, Int. 2 p. 5). [Co-ordinator]'s always good, she's really inspirational and she's really supportive. (Jessie, Int. 2 p. 2)

So I'm just talking to her and she'll go, "I don't know what you're worried about, you're just doing it, it's just happening, don't stress" . . . she makes me aware that it is happening. . . . (Denise, Int. 1 pp. 4–5).

Although Sarah said she did not feel her practice had changed this year she acknowledged that the support she received from her co-ordinator was:

. . . huge, probably couldn't ask for more really (Int. 2 p. 3). Anything you need or want you can just ask for it and they just come through with it every time. Just really supportive and they almost go beyond what's expected of them, I think, in the way they've supported me

(Int. 2 p. 5). They just do everything. They're just so good and I don't know any different so I've got nothing to compare it [with] really. I don't really know how they could do anything any better really. (Sarah Int. 2 p. 6).

The co-ordinators noted that like many educators, Sarah had faced some challenges. They had found that supporting educators through a difficult time was often when the relationship strengthened. This enhanced relationship could be the catalyst for their beginning to work more closely with educators to support their professional development.

Workshops

The workshops were analysed separately from the data on the co-ordinators' influence, because although the work of the co-ordinators includes running professional development workshops, the nature and content of these sessions varies. Comments here related to the workshop held during the research period.

The written evaluations returned by the educators after the completion of the professional development workshop indicated that educators found it to be very valuable. Of the 13 educators who attended the first workshop sessions, 10 returned evaluation forms. The feedback from these was as follows:

How do you feel about your ability to notice, recognise, and respond?

The majority of the responses indicated that the educators felt "confident", "getting the hang of it now", or "much more confident after attending this workshop."

What are three things this workshop has helped you with?

Educators' feedback fell into three categories:

- Content, writing and presentation of children's portfolios. (The majority of comments related to this category.) Different ways of writing narratives, and ways of presenting them, were strongly identified. Value was placed on "seeing other educators' work in their portfolios" and "being able to talk to each other about their work".
- Reflection and reflective practice. Comments included: "getting another perspective", "looking at things in a different way", and "the value of reflection".
- Educators' own personal understanding and learning. Definition of terms like "notice, recognise, and respond", "interpretation", and "description" were used, and comments included: "to deconstruct events", "stay open to change", "learning happens in lots of different ways and contexts".

How can you incorporate these things into your practice with children?

Responses to this question reflected two main themes:

- Educators wanted to incorporate a more reflective attitude to their work with children: “step back and take another look”, “watch a bit longer”, “see things from different perspectives”.
- Example of actions included: “ways of extending children’s learning”, “putting pen to paper”, “talking to others”, “provide learning experiences so children can get to know themselves”, “observe what is happening”.

The interviews expanded on this initial feedback. Eight educators described the workshops offered this year as being an important influence on their practice. Key elements appeared to be the discussion of photographs of children, “me stories” and the later opportunity to share and discuss their portfolios.

The discussion of photographs of children appeared to be particularly influential in enhancing the way educators recognised children’s learning in the actions they noticed:

. . . there was a group of women here that all had different opinions of it. Some saw it as being dangerous, some saw it as being fun, so I guess seeing the pictures and being able to relate it instantly to a situation was something I could easily understand. (Anne, Int. 2 p. 5)

I’m not one to speak up but it was quite cool listening to everybody else’s [ideas]. I wouldn’t go and talk to someone and ask them . . . but listening to other people’s ideas and the way they do things and the different things they do and things like that—I probably got the most out of that and just a bit more confidence that what I’m doing with the kids is right, they are learning, they are doing things. (Kirsten, Int. 2 p. 15)

Kirsten felt her initial response to the photographs had been “wrong” and she could understand the other viewpoints when they were explained. She said that this experience had made her look at everything in a more positive way: “all the negatives, I always turn them around into a positive type thing” (Int. 2 p. 4). The advice and encouragement of others had also been important:

. . . them being here and talking to them—“maybe do it this way”. It’s their positive influence really . . . and talking to other people and taking on board what everyone else is doing. (Int2 p5).

For Lily, everything (especially the workshop and discussions with other educators and the coordinators) had combined to be influential, but the “me stories” at the second workshop had particularly caught her interest—“I was just buzzing” —and she “came home and wrote one immediately.” Looking at the other educators’ stories was a defining moment, and when the group met again Lily was keen to share this story with the other educators, and “from then on it was just ‘Yay!’” (Int. 2 p. 17).

Desiree also noted that the “getting to know yourself workshop” and the learning stories made the penny drop: “It took a while but it happened”. The workshop talked about “getting to know yourself, getting to know your children and different styles of documenting and that there is no wrong way really” (Int. 2 p. 6).

For Peggy, discussing other people's portfolios was important. These had been a "pet hate" because it was difficult to know what to write, but after discussing why other people wrote what they did, Peggy was motivated to write her own.

For some, the workshop consolidated some things rather than being something new: "I felt that I almost kind of had a handle on it but I wasn't quite there yet" (Anne, Int. 2 p. 9). Anne felt this workshop should be compulsory for all new educators: "If you start off with that, that's your base" (Int. 2 p. 14).

Networking

We have described the way in which one of the changes this year included the development of a "community of learners" (Brown et al., 1993). Related to this was the impact on educators' practice of the increased networking, both social and professional, that developed in the course of the year. This networking was identified by 14 educators as an important factor in helping them to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning, and in providing support for them in their role. Networking developed as a result of the workshop and the small group meetings that were facilitated by the co-ordinators, but in many cases was continued and extended by the educators themselves.

The relationships that formed between educators led to groups of educators meeting at playgroup and gym, in each other's homes, and on planned activities in the community. Networking was significant for both new and experienced educators.

Anne explained that as a new educator, forming relationships with other educators allowed her to "tap into their knowledge" (Int. 2 p. 1). Anne said she knew some people by sight beforehand, but not personally. She became especially friendly with Peggy during the year and they now met weekly with the children, and she was planning to do the same with Denise. When she was tired and finding the job challenging the support from Peggy helped to remind her, "we keep going and we're doing it for these reasons" (Int. 2 p. 12).

Kirsten enjoyed "talking to other people . . . just their different ways of dealing with different children and how they've dealt with different things and that . . . looking at other people and then you got ideas, it gave you different ideas: "Oh, maybe I could try this way" (Int. 2 p. 1).

An experienced educator, Lily, said she found the group of educators she was part of had been a safe place to talk and express uncertainty. "We felt safe enough to know that what fear we had, or not understanding, wasn't going to be ridiculed, it wasn't going to be put down", and a lot of confidence had developed from being able to discuss things in this open way (Lily, Int. 2 p. 9). This was an important issue for these experienced educators, faced with changes to their role imposed by the requirements for improved documentation. As noted earlier, Beach's (2003) consideration of encompassing transitions is helpful in interpreting what was happening. While the newer educators were gaining knowledge and skills to enhance their participation in the sociocultural practices of the home-based educators' community, experienced practitioners were

adapting to changing circumstances in order to continue their participation. The helpful and supportive context in which this took place was important to both groups.

Several educators mentioned the way that conversations with other Educators now centred on children's learning, further fuelling their enthusiasm. The networking also enabled educators to share their written documentation and support each other with this. For example, Jessie attributed a lot of her changes to:

. . . that sharing with the others and coming up with different ways of presenting them [learning stories] and I'm proud of what I'm producing now (Int. 2 p. 3). The networking with the other carers [*sic*], especially the opportunity to share what we're doing when we took our portfolios [to portfolio evening] and we were able to have a look at each other's that was great. (Jessie, Int. 2 p. 2)

Lucky and Kirsten also discussed how much they enjoyed networking and seeing the learning stories written by others.

Friendships blossomed from what were initially professional connections. For example:

I've met and made new friends because I talked to people more on a day-to-day basis so I've made some connections with the other caregivers [educators] and got to know some of them. (Alex, Int. 2 p. 7)

I've made some good friends and one in particular that we meet up regularly now . . . and we've got a good friendship so that's really good. (Rebecca, Int. 2 p. 4)

Including the educators who were participating in the research in the same workshop and in subsequent meetings allowed educators to meet people they didn't usually mix with, and this was beneficial for some because it extended their existing social networks:

I had to step outside my comfort zone and get to know other educators . . . and now I move in three different networks almost on a daily basis. (Natalie, Int. 2 p. 12)

Being able to meet them [other educators] and some that you don't usually meet anyway, like, if you go to gym or playgroup . . . you might not see everyone so seeing who else is involved and their views on it, that was really great. (Rebecca, Int. 2 p. 1)

Being part of a small group had been a key feature in fostering these relationships:

When you do see them and recognise them from the research and the meetings . . . so you're more inclined to go, "Hi, how's it going?" and it leads to other conversations so I've found that really good. (Rebecca, Int. 2 p. 10)

The smaller you bring [group size] down, it really blooms . . . You've got more of a chance of learning about each person and then they will contribute because you're part of a team and it gives you a sense of belonging, the same as [with] the children. (Lily, Int. 2, p. 7)

Preparation for the conference and subsequent conference attendance and presentation appeared to strengthen the relationships amongst those six educators further. Lily mentioned that meeting with the groups of educators who went to conference was influential for her. "It was neat to feel

we were part of something” (Int. 2, p. 5). They had seen each other at playgroup and gym prior to this, but had not had “the social side” before.

The Educators’ involvement with other groups beyond Hamilton Childcare Services Trust meant ideas were extending beyond this group of educators. For example, Rebecca said that she met regularly with educators from other services and had been sharing with them what she’d been doing. She said that these other educators didn’t necessarily do as much noticing, recognising, responding, and documentation as she did but they were interested in, and could see the benefits of, what she was doing. Peggy also noted, “Everyone is benefiting, because everyone’s connected . . . it’s almost like a pyramid effect, you tell one and it spreads” (Int. 2 p. 16).

Hearing the co-ordinators differently

Two educators commented that they didn’t think that the co-ordinators were doing anything differently this year but a combination of factors had led to their now “hearing” them differently:

Possibly they’ve always done their job exactly the same way as they’re doing now but I think my mindset may have moved more or a lot. The research has changed my way of thinking. I’m now more confident about asking for help with the children’s learning. I’m more confident with asking for help with things so I don’t know whether their role has really changed. (Natalie, Int. 2 p. 6)

I don’t think they have changed any during this [time]: I think I have changed personally so their responses are the same but I’m hearing them . . . if you know what I mean. (Peggy, Int. 2 p. 9)

Lily agreed that, “there really has been no difference in [co-ordinator]’s support . . . she was brilliant to begin with” (Int. 2 p. 13). For Lily, a combination of factors, especially the workshop and networking, had helped to clarify some things for her in the course of the year.

Managers’ reflections on what factors had been important for change

In the management questionnaires, manager commented that in their opinion the focused nature of the professional development provided, and the ongoing support provided by co-ordinators, were important factors in the changes for educators. Managers also believed that the expectations placed on educators are manageable (and therefore motivating because they are attainable). The managers’ views were consistent with those of the educators (reported above). In general educators do not have direct relationships with managers as these are usually mediated by the co-ordinators. Nevertheless managers were aware of the increased networking between educators and attributed the educators’ changes in practice to the increased sharing of ideas, encouraging each other to have a go, and being supported to ask questions and gain clarification. Managers believed that the educators had become more enthusiastic and focused in their role.

Feedback from families

Nearing the end of the research period written questionnaires were sent out to participating families. Of the 51 questionnaires sent out, 22 were returned. The purpose of these questionnaires was to see if parents had noticed a change in their educator's practice and documentation during the year, or if they had remained the same.

Parents were asked to note whether they had noticed any positive changes in their educator's practice. The most noticeable change identified was activities and experiences being provided for children.

Table 5 **Parents' views of positive changes in their educator's practice (n=21)***

Aspect of improved practice	Yes (n)	No (n)	Not sure (n)
Activities provided for children	13	5	3
Experiences provided for children	12	6	3
Communication with parents	11	7	3
Documentation of learning	11	8	2
Interactions with children	9	8	4

* One family did not respond to this question as their child was not in care the previous year.

The parents who noticed positive changes were asked what they thought had influenced the change. Some parents commented that they felt educators had gained confidence and had begun focusing on children's learning in their documentation. They believed educators had begun utilising what home-based childcare had to offer, and were more confident to provide activities and take advantage of their communities. Two parents responded that they had seen co-ordinators more at the educator's home, and that their role in the children's learning experiences was becoming more evident. The co-ordinators said they had not visited more frequently but the timing of visits may have meant the parents saw them more often, and they were also featuring more in the children's portfolios, which was possibly why these parents were more aware of them. Those parents who did not notice a change in their educator's practice felt that they were already receiving a high standard of care and education for their child.

The parents' questionnaire contained a section on children's portfolios in which parents were asked how often they looked at the portfolio. Most parents looked at their child's portfolio once a month or less frequently. When asked about the way educators documented children's learning it appeared that there may have been some confusion between portfolios and the daily record book. Overwhelmingly, parents appreciated the documentation of their child's learning and their comments were extremely positive. Parents enjoyed being able to share the record books and portfolios with their children and particularly liked the inclusion of photos. The time and effort that educators put into writing in the portfolios and record books was mentioned and appreciated.

Of the 22 replies, only one remarked that the educator “could do better, limited information about what my child has learned”.

Changes to the documentation during the research year were noticed by 12 of the respondents. Of those who hadn’t noticed any changes, four commented that the documentation was already outstanding and had always been this way.

Ways in which co-ordinators could enhance their support

The picture provided by the data was very positive in terms of the “training on the job” the co-ordinators were providing. The educators indicated that the co-ordinators were offering a very high level of support. Of the 15 educators interviewed, 12 in the first interview and 11 in the second interview said that no further support was necessary, for example: “No, just carry on doing what she’s doing”; “Any more than they’re giving now would be interfering”; “She’s just really good but without being in your face all the time . . . she’s very good”. One educator commented on the importance of the current high level of support being ongoing in order to help her keep focused.

The suggestions for further support came from people who were happy with their co-ordinators, but had some advice about how the support could be enhanced even further. This included four educators who expressed a desire for more information or resources, for example: “More resources or places to go for resources”; “Sometimes bring me things around every time they visit or tell you about things that are happening”. For two educators this was particularly related to challenges they had faced. One suggested that more research information related to specific issues she faced would be helpful, and another explained the frustration of waiting for more information or help when faced with a difficult situation.

Two educators said they would enjoy more visits and one said she would appreciate even more opportunities to sit down and work one to one “with planning and with evaluations, like, sit down together and actually write them out together, look at the learning stories that I’ve got from the planning that we’ve had, and help me do the evaluations”.

Further training and professional development

All 15 educators said they would welcome further opportunities to extend their knowledge. Comments included:

I like training courses because it gets me involved and gets me that extra nudge.

I would probably be quite happy to do more refresher courses, which I believe will keep me motivated and energised.

I feel I'm able to be a good educator as I am but I would never turn down anything offered. (Pseudonyms omitted – see Ethical issues, p. 27)

One person suggested that there should be follow-up sessions after workshops to see whether people had made changes, asking, for example, “How have you seen yourself improve? What have you got out of this?”

Topics suggested for courses included child psychology, play, te reo, extending older children's learning, handling difficult children, and experiencing outdoor activities. Help with interview skills would also be welcomed to assist in communicating with prospective parents. Many of these courses have been offered in the past, but newer educators in the research group may not have been with Hamilton Childcare Services Trust at the time.

Given the debates around training that underpinned the rationale for this research, it is important to note that the educators were talking about training opportunities they could undertake “on the job”. As Everiss and Dalli (2003) have already noted, distance learning may be an additional option to consider as this allows educators flexibility to work in their own time. However, given the importance these educators placed on the impact of relationships and networking it appears any distance education opportunities would be most helpful if they included discussions between educators.

Three educators planned to complete or undertake an early childhood education degree or diploma but these were related to long-term career aspirations in other areas of early childhood education, and not for their role as home-based educators.

Summary

The co-ordinators already knew that their work made a difference to the educators' practice, and research question two cast light on specific aspects of this. However, the third research question regarding the factors that made a difference was a central one as this was the aspect co-ordinators were puzzling and wondering about, which led to the project. The findings indicated that there were two main aspects to the co-ordinator's role which made a difference to their learning, the practical support they provided, and also the supportive relationships they developed with the educators. Workshops and networking with others were also important.

Although the findings have been presented thematically, there were individual variations in what was effective. For example, one co-ordinator noted that she seemed to have spent many months explaining the learning cycle verbally, when it later became apparent that showing the educator visually a couple of times appeared to have made the difference.

Overall, the factors that make a difference related to the aspects of teaching discussed earlier—being ready, willing, able, reflective, and communal (Shulman & Shulman, 2004)—and these aspects, were interwoven. For example, practical support and workshops require knowledgeable co-ordinators, but sharing this information effectively draws on their relational and pedagogical

skills. The scaffolding provided by the co-ordinators is enhanced by intersubjectivity, which Rogoff (1990) described as a shared focus of understanding and purpose, embedded in nurturing and caring relationships. The findings helped to show how this intersubjectivity can be developed, through getting to know each educator as a person, being readily available, and providing positive reassurance and encouragement.

When the educators' comments about the important influences on their learning were analysed, the principle of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) were reflected in their descriptions of credit-based approaches, being viewed holistically, and having warm, reciprocal relationships with the co-ordinators. This suggests a more complex and implicit layer of modelling in addition to the explicit one they described.

The respectful and supportive relationships that were a key factor in enabling the educators to learn from the co-ordinators in turn enhanced both their relationships with children and their ability to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning.

In addition, networking between educators was both a change and a reason for change, as the networks that developed enhanced practice further. They supported each other, shared ideas and expertise, and reflected on children's learning. Educators were also inspired by the co-ordinators' passion for learning, and further motivated by the responses of the children they worked with. As Peggy's case study indicated, the children's responses and knowing she had made a difference to their learning was "better than a pay rise".

The co-ordinators in turn were energised and excited by the work that their educators were doing. Gaining feedback from the educators during this research appeared to strengthen these reciprocal relationships further as co-ordinators received affirmation of the work they had been doing, and greater insights into their own role.

The co-ordinators found that their own relationships with each other also impacted on their work with educators, and noted the benefits of having time to work together, plan training opportunities, and reflect on both what was working well and which areas to improve. With this shared focus it became clear that they were accepting and supportive of their different styles of working, acknowledging that, just as the educators had different styles of achieving quality outcomes for children, co-ordinators, too, could be effective in achieving shared goals, despite working in different ways.

The work of educators with children was therefore at the heart of a nested set of reciprocal relationships, and learning outcomes for children appeared to be enhanced when there was a positive learning environment for all.

The previous sections have addressed the findings from each of the three research questions in turn. These are discussed further in Chapter 6. The following section provides a case study of one educator, drawing together the different threads that have been discussed so far.

Case study: Changes in “noticing, recognising, and responding” to children’s learning, and important factors in this process

At the beginning of the research Peggy had been an educator in home-based childcare for four years and had been working with her current co-ordinator for the last three years.

Peggy’s initial contact with home-based care was as a parent, and she later became an educator. She now saw this as her career and commented to the co-ordinator that she was “in it for the long haul”. If she wasn’t doing home-based childcare she would want to work in a centre. She loved being at home for her daughter and said that her daughter was a “big sister” to the children she cared for. The children were made very much part of her extended family. Peggy saw the personal connections and relationships as a huge benefit of home-based care, and her relationships with the children and her co-ordinator were an aspect of the job that she really enjoyed.

In Peggy’s view the only pitfalls were that some educators might not want to take children part time, but this wasn’t an issue for her. She also thought it might be helpful to support educators with interview skills so that they could communicate well when prospective parents came to meet with them.

Peggy had been a nanny overseas and a nurse aide. She had taken positive-parenting courses, and her own mother had been a huge influence on the way she worked with children. Peggy had completed the initial training, undertaken several workshops since, and attended New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Association conferences. She had also completed a paper in child psychology by correspondence and was keen to do more study online or by correspondence. She thought there should be options for educators to train at different levels.

Personal issues, caring for a very challenging child who eventually led to the child leaving care, and irregular attendance by two of her care children (siblings), impacted on Peggy’s implementation of changes during the research period. Nevertheless major changes in her noticing, recognising, and responding to children’s learning were noted, along with some changes to documentation.

Practice

Peggy’s co-ordinator assessed Peggy’s practice as already good prior to the research starting. She noted that Peggy had developed lovely relationships with her children and families, and had noticed an increasing professionalism in Peggy’s relationships with families. The co-ordinator said:

Humour is a huge part of Peggy’s life and her house is always full of fun and laughter. She has a great sense of humour and can act the clown for children. Her care children can be often seen shrieking with laughter as she interacts with them.

Peggy has firm and fair boundaries with children and keeps consistent routines. She has a very child-friendly home with an excellent indoor/outdoor flow; children can easily access a

good range of indoor and outdoor equipment. A parent has recently commented that her home is set up like a kindergarten with special places, and hooks for children's belongings, and lots to do outside in her huge back yard.

Peggy attends playgroup and gymnastics each week and sometimes attends Mainly Music sessions.

Documentation

At the start of the year Peggy's co-ordinator felt that Peggy's documentation was "in progress", with more work to be done:

Peggy had done some planning but it was not something that she had really embraced. She had written planning for "settling in" children. I think it was possibly something that she hadn't fully understood.

Peggy had made entries into the children's folders but discovered that one child had many while others had few. This was because she was focused on this child's health issues. At the workshop in May Peggy commented that she wanted to produce learning stories like those in the example book, and that she saw in some of the other educators' portfolios.

Changes to practice

Co-ordinator's view

The co-ordinator noted that Peggy's practice with children had improved during the research period:

She notices what is happening and thinking/reflecting on it better. This is evident through discussion at visits. Peggy's knowledge has moved forward this year and she has renewed her enthusiasm. Something has "clicked" and she is producing better narratives [Appendix 5]. I talked to her about doing the "package deal planning" [Appendix 4], and this is underway.

Educator's view

Even though she felt "very confident" in her ability at the first interview, Peggy said that her ability to notice, recognise, and respond had improved "100 percent" over the year:

I see what the children are actually doing now instead of just observing them, and that, to me, is the biggest change. They're not doing anything different, it's how I'm seeing it is different and it's amazing it's blowing me away" (Int. 2 p. 4).

Instead of seeing the mess children were making when painting, for example, she was now recognising a lot more learning, focusing on this, and becoming involved in it with them. This was happening in all contexts:

Before, I would think that they were just playing but now I'm actually seeing what they're doing instead of just playing . . . I said to [co-ordinator], "How come I am seeing things that I didn't see before?", and she said, "It's only because you changed the way you are thinking

about it.” . . . It’s amazing me . . . I must have been asleep half the time not to notice it but now you do it’s just little things I didn’t see before because it was daily routine . . . It gave me the tools to look further than in front of my face. (Int. 2 pp. 5–6)

Peggy felt that she now had a lot more confidence: “I’ve changed in so many ways I feel much more confident in what I’m doing, I feel I see more now, I feel really proud to be in this organisation and doing this job” (Int. 2 p. 13).

What factors made a difference?

Co-ordinator’s view

Peggy’s co-ordinator focused on the changes to documentation, and said that she visited and showed Peggy some ways she could do things on her computer. However, she felt that Peggy really got inspired when another educator came around and helped her with developing computer skills—Peggy got very excited and started to have a “play” with ideas.

By the middle of the year, the co-ordinator noted her own frustration, “as I felt that I was not getting the message across to Peggy very well”. In July, the co-ordinator discovered some of Peggy’s old learning stories, which she had written well. The co-ordinator visited while the children were asleep and spent some “focused” time with Peggy, showing her what she had written. Peggy said she was “gob-smacked” and made the comment, “Oh my God, it’s going back to basics”. She was genuinely surprised at what she had achieved. During the co-ordinator’s next visit Peggy was keen to show what she had done, and was “back on track again”. “Peggy has gone from strength to strength. She links the penny dropping to the workshop, but I saw the most difference after the July visit.”

Educator’s view

Peggy attributed her changes to a number of interrelated factors, especially the workshops, her co-ordinator, networking with other educators, and the responses of the children.

Workshop

Seeing and hearing different points of view had been hugely influential. Becoming aware of these different views made Peggy “stop and think about how I was looking at things” (Int. 2 p. 6).

The workshop made me realise that nobody had a wrong way of doing it. There wasn’t a wrong way. At the workshop they put photos up on the projector and you had to tell what you thought was in the photo and I missed most of what the others picked up and I was, like, “Where did you get that from?” “How did you get that?” It was children building blocks and then standing on a chair and my first instinct was, “Oh, that’s not really safe”, but everyone else saw, “Oh, look how creative they’re getting”, and when I got to talk to them afterwards and understand their views . . . It made me think differently, definitely . . . I think that was the trigger for me, knowing it wasn’t wrong to not see it, or it wasn’t wrong that someone wrote something completely different to you about the same photo. That, to me, had the most impact . . . the workshop that was the specific boon for me, that was the

trigger, I guess . . . when I got up and read out mine, two or three said, “That’s what I’ve got”, and I thought, “Oh, thank goodness it’s not only me”, but she [co-ordinator] was saying the point that they were trying to prove was that everybody sees things differently, everybody views things differently . . . That was the one specific incident that made me think, “I’m glad I’m doing this”, probably it wasn’t until then. (Int. 2 pp. 7–8)

Discussing other people’s portfolios was also important. Peggy said these had been a “pet hate” because it was difficult to know what to write. In March, Peggy talked about there being “10 pages in the rubbish before I get one that’s ok” (Int. 1 p. 10), but after discussing why other people wrote what they did, she said she was motivated to write her own. By September, Peggy was proud of her learning stories and no longer saw them as “just part of the job” but as something that was “enjoyable” to do.

The workshop provided a forum to open these discussions. Learning that there was no wrong way of doing things, hearing other people’s views about learning, especially when discussing the photograph scenarios, and being able to “talk to them afterwards and understand their views and why”, had a huge impact on helping Peggy to think differently.

Co-ordinator

As her co-ordinator noted, Peggy believed the workshop had been the main trigger for these changes, because it clarified that people saw things differently, and there was no one right way. However, Peggy also acknowledged that working with her co-ordinator had helped her to improve her documentation of learning:

Lots and lots and lots of discussions about all topics and going over the learning stories with me until I’ve got it because, like, I say, that was my hardest thing. I couldn’t get it . . . I was having real problems linking; I just couldn’t get my head around it . . . So every time she came out I’d bring out my portfolios and go, “I need help”, but she’d go, “They’re fine”, and I’d go, “No they’re not”, but letting me know it was ok to deal with issues, support me with certain issues . . . heaps of discussions about learning stories but I finally got it. I think once I stopped worrying about what other people are going to think; that was my biggest problem—I was thinking it wasn’t good enough. (Int. 2 p. 10)

. . . when she [co-ordinator] finally got it through to me that it was ok, there was no wrong way or right way and then one day I was watching the kids and, “Oh!”, and then when they went for their sleep I wrote up their learning story and I emailed it through to her because I was actually really proud of myself . . . and she just went, “Yay, you’ve got it!”, and it was, like, “Yes!” It was a real “Yes!” moment because she knew how much I was struggling with it. (Int. 2 p. 11)

Peggy felt that her relationship with her co-ordinator was an important factor in the changes she had made. This relationship had been strong prior to the research, being one of the things (along with the children) that Peggy mentioned at the first interview that she enjoyed most about being a home-based educator. Peggy also noted at the first interview that all the co-ordinators were helpful.

At the second interview Peggy talked about the fact that her co-ordinator is:

. . . always there when I need her, professionally or personally . . . no more could be given . . . she doesn't ever make you feel annoying or a disruption. It doesn't matter if you ring and she's busy, she always rings you back. (Int. 2 p. 12)

Although she found everyone approachable prior to the research, Peggy thought that she now had a better relationship with the other co-ordinators. This also meant that she could now talk to them more freely. The overall effect was greatly increased confidence in Peggy's work with children, and pride in her role as an educator.

Networks

Networking with other educators was very important in supporting these changes: "We brag about what our kids have done and it's nice" (Int. 2 p. 15). There had been a "huge ripple effect" from her enthusiasm, with other people seeing this motivation and wanting to know what had brought it about.

Responses of the children

At the first interview Peggy noted that seeing the children responding and knowing she had made a difference was "better than a pay rise" (Int. 1 p. 23). In the second interview she commented that the children in her care were excited by her new approach to documentation, and "follow me to the computer, jumping around waiting for it to print" (Int. 2 p. 17). Children were eager to share these learning stories with their parents and the portfolios were being used a lot more than in the past. Peggy noted that the parents had commented on her enthusiasm and the children's positive response to this: "You're like an energizer bunny, you're buzzing" (Int. 2 p. 16).

Continuing the changes

Peggy was keen to continue the discussions with other educators and co-ordinators and also to have some more workshops to keep "on that buzz" (Int. 2 p. 17). "I'm able to be a good educator as I am, but I would never turn down anything offered . . . A year ago I thought I was good at what I did but, being involved in the research for this year, I've realised that I can be better than what I was" (Int. 2 p. 19).

Peggy felt that talking was the most important way of bringing others on board: "Just keep talking to people about what we're doing. Keep motivated and pass on the lessons we learn" (Int. 2 p. 18).

Being a research participant

For Peggy the actual research component, especially going to present at the conference, appeared to be influential, but it was just one part of an interwoven experience that had led to her increased confidence and enthusiasm.

Implications for practice

This study explored what co-ordinators do to enhance educators' ability to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning, and the factors that appear to be important in this process. The findings highlighted the complexity of the co-ordinator's role, of which the requirement to ensure that educators are implementing *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996), including providing individual plans and assessment for children, is just one facet. The research findings give an important message to service providers and managers. Not only do co-ordinators need to be carefully selected, they also need to be supported to do their jobs. Time, professional development, and trust and support in particular have important implications when considering the co-ordinator's role.

1. Time

That co-ordinators have significant relationships with educators is a pivotal finding of this research. Co-ordinators need time to develop successful relationships with their educators. Supporting co-ordinators with the administrative aspects of their role allows more time and attention to be given to supporting the educators in enhancing their work with children.

2. Professional development for co-ordinators

It is important for co-ordinators to keep their practice current. Providing co-ordinators with opportunities to undertake professional development enables them to further their own knowledge base and keeps them inspired. Their knowledge and passion can then be passed on to the educators, who in turn pass these on to children. If educators are inspired by co-ordinators, and co-ordinators are inspired by educators, this allows for reciprocal and responsive relationships to develop and strengthen between service providers, co-ordinators, educators, families, and, most importantly, the children.

Co-ordinators must be sensitive to an educator's position on their learning continuum and it is beneficial if they recognise the educator's passion, in order to develop learning programmes that are directly related to each individual. The value of knowing about and recognising different adult learning styles also became apparent over the course of the year. Understanding the different learning styles and catering for them can make a difference to being able to get the point across. To support this co-ordinators themselves could benefit from undertaking professional development on adult learning and teaching.

3. Trust and support

Trusting co-ordinators to handle the regulatory aspects with care, and in ways that they feel are most appropriate given their knowledge of the individuals concerned, appeared also to be important, so that relationships are maintained or strengthened. For example, co-ordinators talked

about sometimes finding it helpful to take a step back and reflect on the best way of handling a situation, rather than acting immediately. Already identified is the support the co-ordinators received from Hamilton Childcare Services Trust management. The co-ordinators acknowledged that being able to discuss matters as they arise and share ideas is central to working in a team. In addition, trusting co-ordinators to use their expertise and have input into formulating ideas for change is empowering and can lead to job satisfaction.

4. Team meetings for co-ordinators

Co-ordinators found that the small teaching-team meetings held on a regular basis to discuss how the project was going helped with their everyday practice, and they would like to implement this as an ongoing requirement of understanding their job.

The implications described above are from insights gained regarding the role of the co-ordinators. The following points relate to specific aspects of practice.

5. “Me pages”

Although co-ordinators had been writing learning stories and narratives for the educators for some time, it wasn't until after the workshops that many of the educators took this style of writing and presentation on board. It appeared that the inclusion of the educators' “me pages” empowered the educators to take ownership of the portfolios. This also helped the educators to understand how important it was for them to be evident in their documentation of children's learning. Becoming part of the children's portfolios appeared to provide affirmation of their role as an educator and their importance in the children's lives and learning. This highlighted a major change in the educators' practice as their portfolio work became something that they enjoyed doing; it was no longer seen as a chore.

6. Examples of Assessment folder

The Examples of Assessment folder was identified as a valuable way of gaining ideas for formatting learning stories and planning, as well as seeing what other educators were writing stories about. As a result of this success, another example book is planned and examples from the research participants' planning and assessments are to be included.

7. Deadlines

Several educators involved in this research said that having deadlines worked well for them. This was discovered at the portfolio evening when educators brought their children's portfolios along to share, and later when the portfolios were collected for analysis. The co-ordinators reflected that having deadlines and collecting the children's portfolios is something that could be beneficial in

the future. By collecting the work co-ordinators will have more focused time to read the assessment documentation and set learning goals for the educators in their network.

8. Designing and facilitating workshops

The co-ordinators wrote and facilitated the workshop for educators and found the response to this was more positive than on other occasions when the facilitation has been equally shared amongst the whole teaching team. They will look at continuing this practice of workshop designers also facilitating them in the future.

9. Small group meetings for educators

The feedback from the small group meetings held for educators was very favourable. Educators felt their voices were better heard and if educators from different home-based networks were included, it supported both new and existing social and professional networks.

10. One-to-one support from co-ordinators

The one-to-one opportunities were very beneficial. Co-ordinators already take the time to do this, and noted the importance of recognising this was more than just a visit to see the children.

11. Educators as mentors

Having educators like Peggy who are so motivated to share with others might be important in bringing new people on board and also in maintaining the enthusiasm of experienced educators.

4. Limitations of the project

In any research, the data gathered will be influenced by the preoccupations and agendas of the participants, including the researcher(s) (Holliday, 2002). The focus for this study arose from the co-ordinators' interest in documenting and analysing aspects of their practice that they felt were working well. This was a potential limitation, but the random selection of educators to provide feedback, and the inclusion of the university-based researcher in the data collection and analysis, has helped to overcome this potential bias. Nevertheless, the data from the educators was gathered from those who volunteered to participate and they may have been more motivated to engage in the training opportunities provided than those who did not volunteer.

This case study is of three co-ordinators' practice, from one home-based service. As Holliday (2002) noted, such a study is based on a small segment of the much wider *mélange* of social life. Nevertheless, such restrictions are necessary and justifiable as the intention was to explore in depth the work of the three co-ordinators. The intention was to identify and analyse the concepts, relationships and issues within a detailed case study (Pollard & Tann, 1993) and looking too widely may have reduced the opportunity to look very carefully (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Rich descriptions of the setting and participants have been provided to assist readers in assessing the match between the situation studied and their own, thus providing a natural base for generalisation (Cohen et al., 2000; Firestone, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994). We feel that the supportive nature of the environment of Hamilton Childcare Services Trust in which this research took place, and the experience, capability and enthusiasm of the co-ordinators are particularly important aspects that must be taken into consideration.

The boundedness of a case study also includes the dimension of time (Holliday, 2002). The data provided a brief picture of an ongoing process of training and the educators were at different stages of a potentially infinite journey of enhancing practice.

In the initial interviews educators were asked about prior training and qualifications related to children. On reflection it would have also been beneficial to collect information around the level of schooling and other qualifications and experience the educators had gained outside early childhood education to see whether this appeared to impact on their response to training.

The impact of being participants in the research has meant that the educators involved can be seen, in some instances, to have developed more in their understanding of noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning than other educators contracted to Hamilton Childcare Services Trust, and this could be seen as a limitation of the project. However, historically, co-ordinators have found it has long been the case that educators are all at different levels in their development in noticing and responding to children's learning, and that although it may appear

that the research group had benefited more, they were chosen to provide a random sample of what happened in each network. We have analysed features of being a research participant that were possibly influential in leading to changes to practice, and this has signalled implications for future work with all educators. For example, the opportunities experienced by educators to work together in small groups, creating opportunities for new educators to get to know other Educators and foster relationships, creating opportunities for Educators to mix with people from networks other than their own, collecting portfolios for co-ordinators to read, providing opportunities for educators to give feedback about their co-ordinators and “have their voices heard”, are all aspects that will be continued beyond the project.

5. How the project contributed to building capability and capacity

The partners in this research were Sue Biggar, Frances Bleaken, and Tracey Hooker, who are all employed as co-ordinators in home-based networks for Hamilton Childcare Services Trust, Hamilton, and Dr Sally Peters, a senior lecturer at the University of Waikato.

The research had an unexpected outcome in that the educators who started out as participants also became partners in the research. This was highlighted by their willingness to share their knowledge, thoughts and experience with others at the New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Conference in September 2007.

The findings provide valuable insights into an area of early childhood education on which, to date, little information has been available. In particular the study sheds light on the nature of the co-ordinator's role and the ways in which co-ordinators work with educators to enhance outcomes for children. Chapter 3 identified a range of ways in which the findings contribute to practice within the Hamilton Childcare Services Trust home-based network, and details of this case study have been provided to allow other organisations to judge the implications for their own practice.

A key feature of this research is that it was a teacher-led project, driven by co-ordinators who are passionate about children's learning, and that home-based services, and educators within these services, are able to provide quality care and education for children. The co-ordinators themselves initiated and conducted the research, supported by a university-based researcher. The approach contributed to the building capacity and capability aim of the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative by:

- building the capability of teachers to improve their teaching practice through engaging with the findings of research
- enabling teachers to gain expertise as teacher-researchers, supported by researchers.

Through contact with the university-based researcher, the co-ordinators were supported to apply for the research funding. This support was maintained through all aspects of the project. The approach taken avoided the separation of researchers and practitioners, which Carr and Kemiss (1986) noted is disempowering for both. Instead it embodied democratic principles within its practices, allowing the research to be empowering for both the university-based and teacher researchers (MacNaughton, 1996) and, in some instances, the educators as well.

The three co-ordinators reflected that the research project has been invaluable professional development. The process has been ongoing for the past two years from expressing an interest in

undertaking the research, to the development of the proposal, then carrying out the research and writing the final report.

The project has contributed to the excitement and enthusiasm of the co-ordinators and the educators and highlights the value of undertaking a practitioner-led project which investigates an issue of importance to them. Research at this level was a new experience for all three of the co-ordinators. It provided the opportunity to develop an understanding of the processes of research and its value to practice.

The university-based researcher also gained much from the experience, valuing the opportunity to have a shared research focus with co-ordinators and to engage in deep reflection on their practice. The partnership model also allowed for much closer contact with educators than may have been possible if the project had not been driven by the co-ordinators' interests. The findings have contributed to the university-based researcher's reflection on her own teaching in tertiary settings, especially the relational aspects.

The excellent relationship skills that are so much a feature of the findings were equally reflected in effective relationships between the teacher-researchers [co-ordinators] and the university-based researcher. It appeared that building the capacity of both parties was enhanced by shared vision, open communication, and a high level of trust. The co-ordinators' relationship with the university-based researcher was fostered by their passion, and the university-based researcher's response to that, by becoming part of the team, being willing to meet with the educators at group meetings and informal gatherings, as well as always being available by phone or email for advice and guidance.

From the university-based researcher's perspective it has been valuable to have had experience in a number of larger projects prior to this in order to provide the support required by the teacher-researchers. Key features of this role again mirrored aspects of the co-ordinators' role with educators, as the university-based researcher engaged in both shared puzzling, drawing on the co-ordinators' expertise regarding the setting and their role, whilst also providing leadership as a more experienced researcher. Power is an important consideration in relationships (Bergum, 2003), and when it ebbs and flows between partners at different points in the research process this appears to assist all researchers to feel a sense of co-ownership of the work.

The co-ordinators see the findings of this research as invaluable for understanding their teaching position and recognising ongoing improvements that can be made to the service. The research has served as a platform to document what already works extremely well in the service and what could be done better.

Dissemination of the research

During the research period the findings to date were presented at the New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Conference in Christchurch, and the Early Childhood Education

Convention in Rotorua, both during September 2007, and at a Hamilton Childcare Services Trust combined staff meeting. Co-ordinators also shared a presentation with the research participants at the final research meeting.

The presentations at both conferences were very well received, particularly in Christchurch where the educators were part of the team of presenters.

The presentation to staff of Hamilton Childcare Services Trust was important as it enhanced the knowledge of home-based childcare to other staff members (centre staff, including administrative staff, attended). This presentation was also well received and enabled staff to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of the uniqueness of home-based childcare.

Dissemination of the research will continue in 2008 through the publication of papers and further conference presentations.

6. Conclusions

A notable feature of this research was its contrast to earlier New Zealand studies of home-based educators. In 2000, for example, there was still a prevalent view amongst home-based educators that their role was aligned with parenting and did not require training (Foote & Davey, 2000) and as recently as 2002 curriculum was a relatively recent concept in home-based care (Foote & Ellis, 2003). In contrast, in 2007 we found that there was a high degree of professionalism, with all of the participant educators working with the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) and showing enthusiasm for “on-the-job” training opportunities. In addition, many educators saw this as their career and as Peggy noted, they were in it “for the long haul”, unlike the findings of earlier studies that it was likely to be a temporary occupation (Everiss & Dalli, 2003). This study therefore draws attention to the progress in what was described in 2003 as “an emerging professional service” (Everiss & Dalli, 2003, p. 75), and indicates the value of current research to inform decisions about the home-based sector in New Zealand.

The co-ordinator’s role

At the start of the project we were aware that in a service where qualified co-ordinators have the responsibility to provide professional advice and guidance to educators, the quality of care and education that children receive depends very much on the support co-ordinators provide. The Education Review Office (2005) noted the high quality of provision being offered in this particular home-based service and the co-ordinators wanted to understand more about their role in order to maintain and enhance this provision. Looking at the co-ordinators’ role in detail it was evident that they need a strong knowledge of effective pedagogy so that this can be modelled in their interactions with children, and in their own documentation. Being able to convey this through workshops and one-to-one support provided to educators is also important.

In addition, the requirement for co-ordinators to assist educators in planning and evaluation (Education Review Office, 2001) has not been static, but has evolved in response to developments in sociocultural assessment practices, which have influenced the whole early childhood sector in New Zealand (see, for example, Ministry of Education, 2004b). This research explored one step in an ongoing process, in this case the co-ordinators’ focus on supporting educators to notice, recognise and respond to children’s learning, as described in the first booklet of *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004b). As discussed in Chapter 3, a basic issue highlighted by this study is the importance of training for co-ordinators, who not only have to have a good knowledge of early childhood education and practice, but also need opportunities to keep their own knowledge current in order to be able to

support educators with developments within the field (such as the changes to documentation that were a feature of this study). The changes in assessment practices the co-ordinators were supporting the educators to implement occurred long after the co-ordinators' own qualifications were gained. Their understanding of them had been developed through professional development workshops and postgraduate, university-based study. Therefore, any consideration of what co-ordinators do (Research Question 1) will be dependent on the co-ordinators' own knowledge.

The nature of the training provided by co-ordinators must recognise that educators have different prior experiences and vary in their current knowledge and understanding. The findings suggest that professional development for educators needs to:

- be reflective of what their role entails
- be meaningful, useful, accessible, and carefully planned
- be designed to encompass the needs of the group
- allow for the educators' voices to be heard.

The first three points add weight to Taylor, Dunster, and Pollard's (1999) claim that training and/or professional development for educators must be meaningful. It must include content that is useful for them in their everyday practice with children, and it must be accessible. In addition, the findings suggest that when providing training and/or professional development for educators it is vital that co-ordinators reflect their passion for the educators' ability as well as children's learning. The findings support the Education Review Office's (2001) acknowledgement that the role of the co-ordinator differs significantly from that of an early childhood education centre supervisor. There is a greater emphasis on professional leadership, for example, and therefore there should be training opportunities for this role, which include a focus on teaching adults.

Changes to educators' practice

The findings of this study build on earlier research (e.g., Everiss & Dalli, 2003; Foote & Ellis, 2003) and illustrate the ways in which educators with the required initial training can be supported in noticing, recognising, and responding to children's learning, and to document this learning. It is important that ongoing support and professional development is provided by trained co-ordinators.

The support provided by co-ordinators (which they termed "training on the job"), is ongoing, as opposed to professional development that has a specific duration. However, the study itself had a limited timeframe and the documentation of change relates only to a seven-month period within this long-term journey. During this time changes were made at both the individual and community level in being ready, willing, able, reflective, and communal (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). However, individual educators developed more in some aspects than others. Overall, while there was movement towards a particular vision of children's learning, and enhanced motivation and ability to achieve this, the reflective aspects of educators' evaluating, reviewing,

and learning from experience were only touched on. Nevertheless, the development of learning communities opened the possibilities for this to be fostered further over time. It is important to note that this study focused on the work of co-ordinators and aimed to gain feedback on their practice from educators. Intensity and duration of professional development are important considerations when looking at the impact on participants' pedagogy (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003) and therefore to explore changes for educators more fully would require a longitudinal design.

Important factors

The findings of this study indicated that some of the features of effective professional development advisors identified by Mitchell and Cubey (2003) (see below) are also relevant to the role of home-based co-ordinators. Professional development advisors need:

- strong theoretical, content, and pedagogical knowledge
- ability to collect and analyse data and teach data collection and analysis skills
- excellent communication and relationship skills
- to be reflective thinkers and practitioners themselves
- to be able to mentor, model, provide feedback, challenge, and model reflective thinking
- to practice effective pedagogy themselves. (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003, p. xiii)

However, although Mitchell and Cubey (2003) included "excellent relationship skills" in their list of characteristics, it is important to note that the co-ordinators' relationships with educators are much broader than is typically required in professional development, because the co-ordinators are engaged with educators on so many levels. These include pedagogy, administration, regulation, and support, as well as holistically. Co-ordinators have to be particularly sensitive in handling the regulatory aspects of the role to ensure that the necessary relationship for fostering intersubjectivity (Rogoff, 1990) in the learning process is maintained with the educator.

Related to this is the challenge often faced by co-ordinators of fostering relationships while maintaining professional boundaries. With all of the talking and sharing going on, co-ordinators can get to know the educators very well. This can be compounded when dealing with difficult situations such as an occasional breach of regulations.

Darby's (2005) view that both instructional pedagogy, (the ability to foster understanding), and relational pedagogy, (the ability to nurture relationships) are important, helps to interpret the interweaving of practical support and relationships that were evident in the factors that led to change for educators. Trying to understand what it is like to be the learner, having respect and empathy, being caring and non-judgmental, modelling successful learning and social interactions, and empowering learners to take responsibility for their own learning and actions, have all been noted as aspects of effective teaching in school and tertiary settings (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006; Carpenter, McMurchy-Pilkington & Sutherland, 2002; Klem & Connell, 2004; Hawk, Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland, 2002) and were also evident in this home-based context. So too were

the personal characteristics of high involvement, motivation, and commitment which Aitken (2005) noted could be important aspects of support in the workplace.

Chapter 3 highlighted that the relationships between co-ordinators and educators are one part of a complex nested system of reciprocal relationships (which include managers, co-ordinators, families, educators, and children). It appeared that when these relationships are balanced and synchronised, and there is suitable inspiration, a community of learners can develop. Brown et al. (1993) suggested that, ideally, in such a community all participants become acquirers, users, and extenders of knowledge in a sustained and ongoing process, and this was apparent for the educators and co-ordinators. The encompassing nature (Beach, 2003) of the transition to using written assessments and documentation required experienced educators and co-ordinators to adapt to new demands. Traditional patterns of expert and learner were disrupted in this aspect as, rather than inducting new educators into an established “community of practice” (as described by Wenger, 1998) both experienced educators and, to some extent, the co-ordinators themselves, were learning alongside newer educators, perhaps supporting the free exchange of ideas that developed.

Training issues

An important issue for home-based settings arising from the ongoing nature of the “training on the job” co-ordinators provide, is that debates about training are prevalent but what is meant by training is not always clarified. Training may be taken to mean something that is preservice and leading to qualifications, whereas the model presented here is ongoing and builds on initial entry qualifications. Similarly, the recommendation of the Early Childhood Education Strategic Plan Working Group (2001) for all home-based educators to have an appropriate qualification, does not clarify what is meant by “appropriate”.

It is important that any discussions about training and qualifications considers how these terms are being used, and also takes into account the unique nature of home-based settings, and the ways in which home-based differs from centre-based early childhood education (Nelson, 1995). In addition, of this small sample, all the educators were keen to pursue further professional development opportunities and ongoing “training on the job” as discussed in this study. However, the few who planned to undertake formal qualifications in the form of degrees or diplomas in early childhood education did so with aspirations of careers in centres or as co-ordinators themselves. In the current context it appears that on gaining higher teaching qualifications home-based educators may leave their role, thus defeating the purpose of requiring higher levels of training. This issue of retention of qualified educators in home-based settings was also noted by Everiss and Dalli (2003).

The issue of retention adds another layer of complexity to these debates. Professionalisation of home-based provision is important, not just to enhance quality for children but to avoid marginalisation of the educators who work in this service (Moss, 2003). However, simply

requiring the same qualifications as centre-based services may lead educators to pursue centre-based careers. More creative approaches to training and qualifications may need to be developed for the home-based sector; alternatively debates about training for educators may need to distinguish between training leading to qualifications and training that enhances quality of provision for children. This study has provided some insights into the latter, and suggests that "training on the job" that builds on to the current minimum requirements is an important option for enhancing home-based early childhood education as a service.

The current model of "training on the job" is supported by international research (cited by Everiss & Dalli, 2003), which indicated the value of individualised support for successful training outcomes, but noted that tailored support is more expensive and time intensive than a more broad-based approach. However, the one-to-one approach to providing professional development documented in the present study is closely aligned with mentoring, which, as Aitken (2005) noted, can be described as "a strategy to ensure legitimate workplace learning while remaining relatively cost effective as a means of educating and supporting novice teachers" (p. 23). As a result of this study the co-ordinators have been reflecting on ways to develop a coaching or mentoring relationship between educators as well as between co-ordinators and educators. David Hargreaves (2005) highlighted the benefits of this when he commented:

Mentors and coaches illustrate how it is no longer a simple matter to determine who is teaching and who is learning in a situation, for teachers also learn and learners also teach. (p. 5)

Mentoring by co-ordinators, and possibly other educators, appears particularly appropriate in the context of home-based early childhood education, and addresses not only the induction and support of newcomers, but also the ongoing development of more experienced educators.

Possible areas for further research

Home-based childcare is an important service within the early childhood sector but is, unfortunately, not widely understood. The uniqueness of home-based care and education must be recognised and protected to enable it to remain viable as a quality childcare choice for children and their families. One way of achieving this could be by the home-based sector becoming more evident in arenas such as teacher training institutions and Ministry of Education documentation. For this to happen it is therefore essential that robust research continues to be carried out in this field. A number of possible avenues for future studies have been signalled by this study:

- This project looked closely at the work of co-ordinators in one home-based service. It would be useful to explore whether the professionalism and quality that were evident within these three networks are reflected in other home-based settings.

- The co-ordinators in this study were experienced and confident in their role. Nevertheless, training and professional development issues were highlighted as important for them. Further research into how new co-ordinators are inducted into their role, and the challenges that they experience, may shed further light on the training requirements for co-ordinators.
- As noted earlier, this study looked specifically at the role of co-ordinators. Further longitudinal studies would provide greater insights into the impact of “on-the-job” training for educators.
- The power of educators as mentors for their peers was hinted at in this study. This could be explored further in a more systematic way.
- Co-ordinators found the reflective diary to be an integral part of the process, and plan to continue using this method for ongoing reflection of their practice and that of the educators in their networks. However, we found that for educators the concept of keeping a reflective diary was a foreign one. We had hoped that the educators’ reflective diaries would provide details of the more subtle nuances of the effect of specific conversations the co-ordinators had with educators during their visits. Once educators are more familiar with this process this would be an interesting area for future research.
- The educators clearly enjoyed participating in a research project and as critical analysis of data and discussion has been identified as an essential part of a professional development programme (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003), involving educators more centrally in an action research project could be another area that is worthy of exploration.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Visit sheets

Hamilton Childcare Services Trust – Homebased Childcare Carer Visit Sheet

Carer's Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ to _____

Children _____ in _____ care:

Review of previous visit sheet/goals.

Child & Carer observation and interactions:

Child portfolios (noticing, recognising, and responding)

Safety standards met	Yes	No	If No, comments
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Carer's goals and support from Co-ordinator:

Signatures

Administration

Educational Resources

Household

Equipment

Monthly Focus:

Reminders:

Home-based Childcare Visit Sheet

Playgroup / Gym / Drop In

Date: _____

Time: _____

Co-ordinator: _____

Educator: _____

Children Present: _____

General Information:

Learning stories

Parent contact

Appendix B: The role of the co-ordinator

This study focuses on the role co-ordinators play in supporting educators to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning. Co-ordinators are required to be registered early childhood teachers. The co-ordinators describe their role as including the following:

- Educators are contracted to our service on completion of necessary checks—we may be responsible for doing this if they are coming directly into our networks, otherwise they transfer with completed certificate from another network.
- The certificate required as a minimum is the Orientation Module of the Certificate in Family Day Care.
- We enrol families once they have determined which educator they wish their child to go to.

In addition, co-ordinators are responsible for:

- visiting the educator's house while children are in care at least once a month
- visiting all children in each educator's care at least once a month
- working with educators to establish learning goals for each child
- discussion of any related issues, e.g., behaviour management, health
- discussion of unrelated issues that may have impact on educator and their ability to work—family issues, personal issues
- role-modelling appropriate behaviours and relationships with children and adults
- regularly monitoring the safety of the home
- building relationships with educators, children and families through regular contact and support
- providing professional development for educators
- helping educators to notice, recognise, and respond to children learning through discussion and role modelling
- arranging alternative care when educators unavailable
- providing supervision and role modelling at playgroup and gymnastics
- following up on complaints.

Some of the key tasks as specified in our job description are to:

- give guidance and support in implementing *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) throughout all aspects of the child's day
- monitor progress in achieving aims and goals and methods and behaviour management as set out in the Charter, Policy, and *Education (Home Based Care) Order 1992 and Amendment 1998*
- work with children on home visits

- understand and help educators to apply the *Education (Home Based Care) Order 1992 and Amendment 1998*
- provide in service training for educators and support and encourage participation in outside courses
- have total support and liaison with parents; be available to parents for consultation
- interview prospective educators when required; have the ability to select the best person for the job
- maintain accurate records of all administration.

The research questions focused on one aspect of the co-ordinators' role, specifically the ways in which they support educators to notice, recognise, and respond to children's learning. This includes the support provided when working one-to-one with educators during visits to educators' homes, the professional development workshops run by co-ordinators, follow-up meetings and role modeling, and discussions at gym and playgroup sessions.

What co-ordinators typically do on a visit

Co-ordinator visits to educators have many facets. During regular monthly visits co-ordinators develop their relationship with the educator in various ways. This relationship can be built and strengthened by discussing pressing issues, current issues, and by sharing our knowledge. Co-ordinators also support their educators in whatever manner they feel is relevant, while maintaining professional boundaries.




Co-ordinators also build up a relationship with each child and role-model interactions with children by getting down to their level to play and converse with them. On a visit co-ordinators discuss each child's learning goals and the Educator's ability to work towards that. Questions are asked—How we can assist with achieving this? Is it being recorded and how can we help with this?—and goals are set.

During visits co-ordinators also record evidence of children's learning. Visit sheets (Appendix 1) are completed either during the visit or later (in the case of a drop-in, for example). Co-ordinators also often digitally record children's learning, taking photos and writing learning stories and narratives.

Co-ordinators' own styles influence how they work, how long it takes to do the work, how effective they are at imparting knowledge, and how good they are as a communicator.

Appendix C: The “me page”

A warm friendly family is what I have
Ben is the name of my hus and
Cuddles are a must and can always make me smile
Doing mosaic is my hobby to do on weekends
Every Christmas we always go to the beach for two weeks
Fruit is my favourite food
Getting together with family is great for us all
Have always wanted to work with children
I love having children over to play at my house
Jazz ballet was my passion while I was just a little girl
Kids make me smile every day and they keep me happy
Love to cook while listening to music
My job is the best job, I love meeting more children
Nathan is the name of my son
Often enjoy a night out with my girl-friends
Playing puzzles with Samantha is fun
Quilt making is quite a fun hobby
Red is my favourite colour that I like to wear
Samantha is the name of my daughter
Tracy is my name
Used to work in the hotel industry
Very happy at home with my lovely children
We love entertaining with people in our home
X is for x-ray
You are always welcomed in our lovely home
ZZZZZZ is the sound I love to hear from my kids after a great playful day





**Hello, my name is
Xxxxx Yyyyy . I have
been a home-based
carer since 1995.**



I love to encourage children to create works of art which I keep for them in their scrapbooks.

**I live with husband Zzzzzz
in a little house with a big
yard surrounded by native
trees and magic gardens.
We grow sunflowers and
swan plants each year.
Children develop a pas-
sion for nature and living**



**I enjoy many activities at home and outings with
the children in the van: playgroup, gymnastics,
mainly music, kindergarten pick-ups and drop-
offs, and visits to local parks and playgrounds.**



**Our big yard, trampo-
line, and collection of
bikes encourages
plenty of physical activ-
ity and outdoor play.**



Kia ora.

My name is xxxxxxxxxxx. I am the Co-ordinator for the Dinsdale, Frankton, Nawton, Forest Lake and St Andrews areas, for Hamilton Homebased Childcare. I have worked in Homebased childcare since 1996, firstly in Christchurch for 7 years, and now in Hamilton.



I come from a strong dutch background, and would love to go back to visit.

I am married with four adult children, none of whom live at home. They left us with their cat!



I love to get out on my bike for a bit of exercise. Or go out for a walk.



I love my job because I get to visit and play with children on a regular basis. They inspire me by the way they learn so much so quickly, sometimes without us even noticing how.



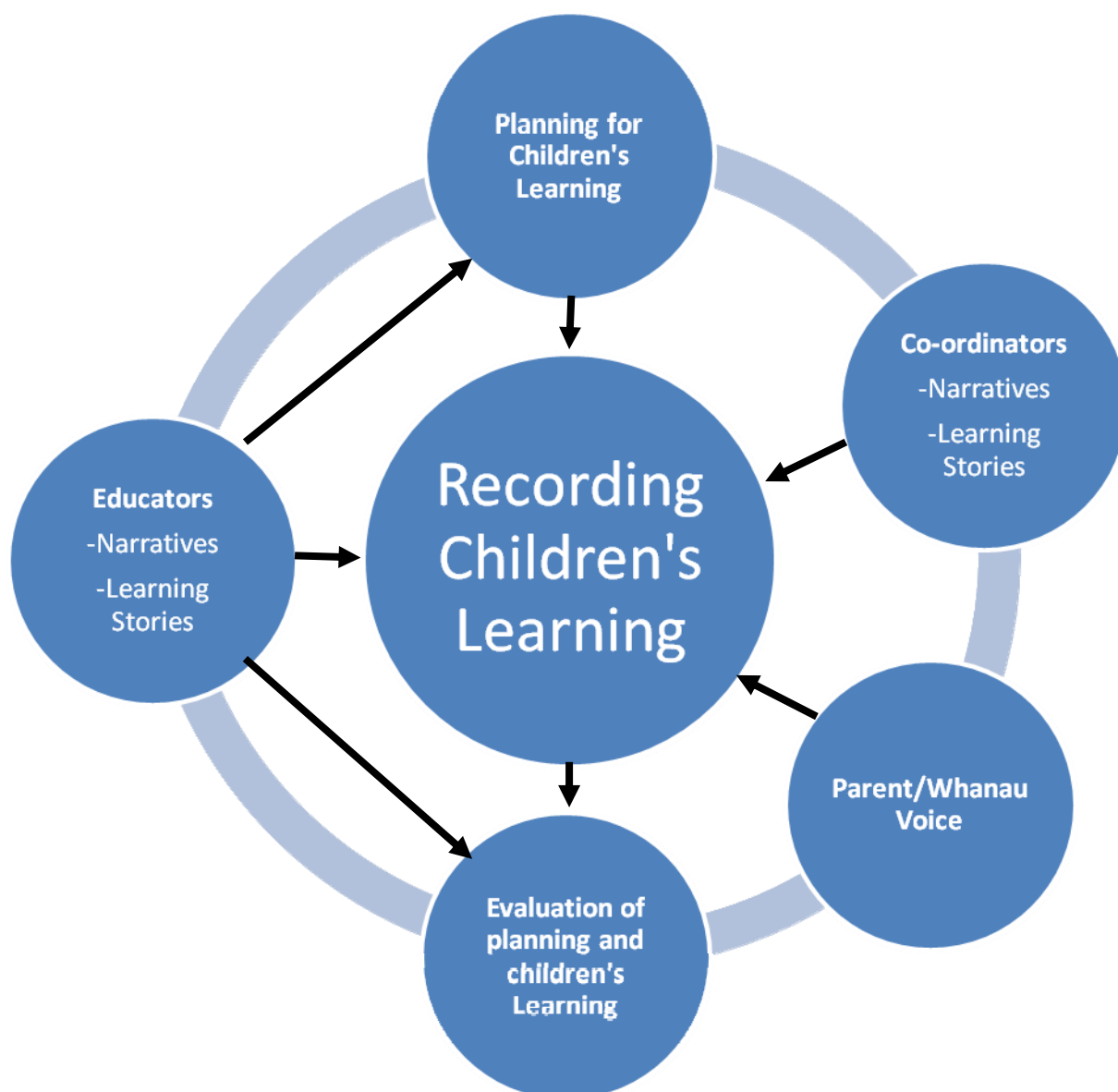
One of my sisters lives in the Far North. An idyllic place for a holiday.



And when I get the chance, I love to get behind my sewing machine and be creative.

May 2007

Appendix D: The “package deal”



“The package deal” is a term co-ordinators have used to help explain to educators the planning cycle. Examples of a “package deal” planning cycle are included in the Example of Assessment folder that is available to educators to read and get ideas from.

Appendix E: Learning story example (Peggy)

This example shows how Peggy has noticed, recognised and responded to Simon's learning. It also shows how she is improving her ability and confidence in recording them.

First version:

I Can Do It!!

I have some new trikes for the kids to ride and I spent ages with Simon on Monday trying to get him to [pedal] them. He could not get the idea of pushing his legs so he used his feet on the ground to move the bike. Today (Wednesday) he got on the bike and said "look Peggy!" and started [pedaling]!!! Well done Simon you can do it!!

When her co-ordinator visited the story was discussed and Peggy rewrote her story.

Second version:

I Can Do it!!

I have got some new trikes for the kids to ride and spent ages with Simon on Monday trying to teach him to push his legs forward to make the bike go but he just couldn't get it so he used his feet to push himself around on it. Today (Wednesday) he got on the bike and went backwards a few times then started going forwards. He yelled "Peggy look!" as he went past me. Wow what a good boy!! He really persevered until he got it and he was so happy when he did it was lovely to see. Well done Simon, you can do it!!!

Peggy also linked her learning story to *Te Whāriki*. In her first learning story she chose Well-being/Mana Atua Goal 3 "Children develop confidence that they can participate and take risks without fear of harm" (p. 52). She later changed this and chose Exploration/Mana Aotūroa Goal 3 "Children experience an environment where they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning" (p. 88).

Peggy was able to make these changes without any co-ordinator prompting or suggestion. This example highlights Peggy's growth in being able to notice, recognise, and respond to the child's learning. Her written story is starting to reflect what she is verbalising.