



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

ABC Developmental Learning Centres  
(NZ) Limited

Trading as New Zealand College of  
Early Childhood Education

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: July 2010

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# Purpose of this Report

*The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.*

## Introduction

### 1. TEO in context

Location:	50 Victoria Street, Christchurch
Type:	Private Training Establishment
First registered:	2007
Number of students:	Domestic: 201 on campus, 290 distance International: 19 students (twelve on campus; seven at distance)
Number of staff:	27 staff
Scope of active accreditation:	Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education) (Level 7)
Sites:	Christchurch only
Distinctive characteristics:	The diploma is delivered on campus and by distance
Recent significant changes:	<p>In December 2007 the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education (NZCECE) changed ownership to become part of ABC Developmental Learning Centres (NZ) Ltd (ABC NZ). The existing senior management team changed. The new college manager began in December 2007 and appointed the other senior management staff during 2008. There followed a period of change and increased staffing.</p> <p>In 2008 ABC NZ's parent company went into receivership. The receivership did not include ABC NZ, which owns 127 early childhood centres, and NZCECE continued to function successfully. At the time of the receivership a chief executive officer was appointed to ABC NZ. The college manager reports to</p>

the chief executive officer ABC NZ.

ABC NZ is currently for sale. The sale is being managed by the ABC Australian receivers McGrath Nicol. While the ownership of the college is currently unresolved, this does not impact on the operation and development of NZCECE.

Previous quality assurance history:

ABC Developmental Learning Centres (NZ) Ltd was previously quality assured by NZQA in July 2008 and met all relevant requirements. During 2008 an initial review was completed on the college's quality management system and an investment plan was established with the Tertiary Education Commission in July 2008. This plan represents the strategic plan for the college. A system of annual planning and self-review was also established. One full cycle of this system has now been completed for 2009. The diploma was due for its five-year re-approval in 2009 and achieved this milestone.

Other:

The distance-delivery student numbers were originally very small but are now the dominant form of delivery. Approximately 200 students study on campus and 300 students study via distance.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The mandatory focus areas selected were:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- International students – pastoral support.

The other focus areas selected were:

- Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education) (Level 7) (Distance)
- Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education) (Level 7) (On Campus)
- Early Childhood Education Leadership Programme.

The Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education) by distance and on campus is the main qualification offered at the college. The Early Childhood Education Leadership Programme was requested by NZCECE as a focus area as it represents an innovative response to identified learner needs in the early childhood education sector.

### 3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/docs/eer-policy-conduct.pdf>*

The evaluation team comprised one lead evaluator and one external evaluator. The EER was conducted on the college's only site in Christchurch. The team met with the NZCECE college manager, administration manager, innovation manager, academic manager, and 19 academic staff teaching the Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education). The team also met with 14 year two and three students, three international students, and a student representative for the distance-education students, as well as two members of the board of studies. The visit was scheduled for two days but required two and a half days to collect the information required to make robust judgements on educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **ABC Developmental Learning Centres (NZ) Limited Trading as New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education**.

NZCECE provides a unique combination of qualifications which enable students to graduate with three qualifications at the completion of the Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education (ECE)) on campus. These qualifications prepare students to work as a nanny or early childhood educator in New Zealand and overseas.

NZCECE sets targets for enrolment, student completion and withdrawal rates, and qualification completions each year. The students always meet and often exceed these targets.

In 2009, 72 per cent of the on campus stage 1 students, 94 per cent of the on campus stage 2 students, and 100 per cent of the on campus stage 3 students completed their qualifications. Each stage of the college's distance programme can be completed over two years. Of the students beginning a stage during 2008, the following completion rates were achieved in 2009 after one year: 53 per cent of stage 1 students completed after one year, 48 per cent of stage 2 students completed after one year and 76 per cent of stage 3 students completed after one year.

Evaluations by on campus and distance students in 2009 showed that typically 85 per cent of students rated quality of teaching, pastoral care and overall satisfaction as a 4 or better on a 6 point scale.

All stage three graduates from 2009 seeking employment (not including students going overseas) were in employment by February 2010. NZCECE gained successful re-approval and accreditation of the Diploma in Teaching (ECE) programme.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **ABC Developmental Learning Centres (NZ) Limited Trading as New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education**.

A comprehensive annual plan details the implementation of the college's strategic plan as well as teaching and learning and operational developments. The plan also provides the self-review framework to improve outcomes for the college.

The plan has four sections: teaching and learning, professional development, quality management system development, and innovation and course development. Embedded within the four sections are self-review performance indicators or targets to ensure organisational improvement and accountability. Areas of focus are also established for the year along with specific focus areas for self-review. At the end of each year the annual plan from the previous year is evaluated. The major self-review focus for 2009 was the

development of course documentation and materials, in particular course outlines and distance workbooks.

NZCECE gained successful re-approval and accreditation of the Diploma in Teaching (ECE) programme. Recommendations from the re-approval panel have been actioned.

## TEO response

NZCECE agrees to the factual accuracy of this report.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

NZCECE is accredited to teach the New Zealand Certificate in Nanny Education which is included in the on-campus study of the Diploma in Teaching (ECE) at stage one (year one). Students study all aspects of childcare, including human development, family interaction, and nutrition. A student can finish their study at the end of the first year with a nanny qualification which means their year of study has been acknowledged and is useful for future employment options.

Incorporated into the on-campus studies in stage two (year two) of the Diploma in Teaching (ECE) is the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) Diploma (UK). CACHE has ongoing assessments throughout the year and moderators from the United Kingdom regularly visit the college to ensure high standards are maintained. At the successful completion of stage three, a student can graduate with the Diploma in Teaching (ECE).

The college also offers the Diploma in Teaching (ECE) via distance learning. Students on this course are required to be involved in a licensed early childcare centre for a minimum of 15 hours a week. Students complete regular assignments and are required to attend face-to-face courses during their study.

NZCECE sets targets for enrolment, student completion and withdrawal rates, and qualification completions each year. Students always meet and often exceed these targets.

In 2009, 72 per cent of the on campus stage 1 students, 94 per cent of the on campus stage 2 students, and 100 per cent of the on campus stage 3 students completed their qualifications. Each stage of the college's distance programme can be completed over two years. Of the students beginning a stage during 2008, the following completion rates were achieved in 2009 after one year: 53 per cent of stage 1 students completed after one year, 48 per cent of stage 2 students completed after one year and 76 per cent of stage 3 students completed after one year.

Evaluations by on campus and distance students in 2009 showed that typically 85 per cent of students rated quality of teaching, pastoral care and overall satisfaction as a 4 or better on a 6 point scale.

All stage three graduates from 2009 seeking employment (not including students going overseas) were in employment by February 2010. Students' achievement levels and rates of employment indicate that NZCECE prepares students well for the early childhood sector.

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<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

Graduates from the college also have the opportunity to go on to degree-level study at a New Zealand university.

NZCECE provides a unique combination of qualifications that enable students to graduate with three qualifications at the completion of the Diploma in Teaching (ECE) on campus. These qualifications prepare them to work as a nanny or early childhood educator in New Zealand and overseas.

## 1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

NZCECE has a comprehensive programme of engagement with stakeholders including ABC early childhood centres, New Zealand Kindergartens Inc, and private pre-school owners. During December/January each year an annual plan for the college is developed by the college management team in consultation with staff and key stakeholders. The plan details the implementation of the college's strategic plan as well as teaching and learning and operational developments. The plan also provides the self-review framework to improve outcomes for the college.

The plan has four sections: teaching and learning, professional development, quality management system development, and innovation and course development. Embedded within the four sections are self-review performance indicators or targets to ensure organisational improvement and accountability. Areas of focus are also established for the year along with specific focus areas for self-review.

At the end of each year the annual plan from the previous year is evaluated. This includes an analysis of specific performance indicators, evaluations of goals and objectives, and summaries of the focus areas for each review. This evaluation contributes to the establishment of the annual plan for the coming year. The college has evaluated the 2009 annual plan, completing one self-review cycle. Student feedback is used to make improvements. For example, student feedback was used to make changes to work experience (practicums) and to the nature of the block courses for distance education students.

A board of studies provides feedback on strategic management issues such as the leadership programme. The board of studies' members interviewed by the evaluation team were impressed by the openness and responsiveness of the management team at NZCECE. They commented that board of studies meetings were challenging and that they all benefitted from discussions where different points of view and perspectives were debated.

Guidance is also sought from an advisory committee, which has representatives from across the early childhood sector, including student representatives. An employer/graduate survey undertaken in 2010 included face-to-face interviews conducted by the NZCECE management team. The survey involved visiting early childhood centres where NZCECE

graduates were employed. This gave managers first-hand experience of early childhood centres and insight into the opportunities and challenges faced by graduates.

NZCECE produces an excellent e-newsletter, four to five times a year, which is distributed across the sector. It has links to further information and online response forms using Survey Monkey.

Since the new management team has been at NZCECE, the organisational purpose and clarity of vision developed at the college have led to a number of significant improvements to curriculum development, teaching approaches, staff involvement, and student feedback mechanisms. The major self-review focus for 2009 was the development of course documentation and materials, in particular course outlines and distance workbooks.

### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The college is situated in a modern campus. There is a library for students and the campus atmosphere is inclusive and stimulating. Staff have professional development for one afternoon each week and the director encourages them to participate in external professional development opportunities.

Programme design is reviewed regularly to incorporate ongoing needs analysis, maintain relevance to learners and employers, and reflect changes in subject content. An example is the recent changes made to the distance-delivery approach in response to student feedback and staff evaluation. The nature of block courses was changed and there was a complete revision of the workbooks and resources and the way the course material was introduced to students. During 2008 the diploma structure was consolidated from 13 to six courses. This change simplified the course material and aligned the distance students to the on-campus structure. The number of practicum weeks offered at the college is 42. The New Zealand Teachers Council stipulates a minimum of 20 weeks. Students interviewed noted that the standards expected at the college were very high and they appreciated the quality of the education they were receiving.

The college has developed a graduate profile which demonstrates the college's philosophy of developing teachers who have a strong combination of professional teaching practice, theoretical knowledge and understanding, and personal and professional qualities.

Professional teaching practice is 45 per cent of the overall grade for the programme, academic study is 45 per cent of the overall grade, and personal and professional development is 10 per cent of the overall grade.

Professional teaching practice is determined by assessments relating to teaching practice in licensed early childhood centres. Assessments include: reflective journals, self-evaluations, written teaching practice evidence, associate teacher evaluations, and visiting tutor assessments. The academic study grade is determined by combining the course grades from the relevant modules: education studies, teaching studies, curriculum studies, research and

management studies, and social and cultural studies. Personal and professional qualities are linked to the New Zealand Teachers Council's Graduating Teacher Standards which include inclusive practice, commitment, honesty and integrity, time management, attendance, personal presentation, ability to work as part of a professional team, respect for te reo Māori, and readiness for employment as a qualified teacher.

Employers surveyed said the college's graduates were well prepared for work, having both the professional and personal skills required for the early childhood sector. The college's mission to provide excellence in early childhood teacher education and to graduate high quality professionals is a reality.

## 1.4 How effective is the teaching

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The learning environment at the college is planned and structured for the benefit and needs of learners. Diploma students have a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge acquisition over the three years of the diploma, which means they have opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge when on placements in childcare situations. The distance diploma students are already working in childcare centres and attend block courses to ensure their practical knowledge is informed by current theoretical models.

Formal and informal assessment is ongoing throughout the diploma course. Students interviewed said they were being taught by well qualified practitioners with recent industry experience. Programme evaluations for 2009 showed that 85 per cent of all students (distance or on campus) thought that tutor support, the quality of assessment feedback, and the effectiveness of the teaching were good or excellent. The college's approach is underpinned by sociocultural theory where effective instruction or teaching leads to higher-level cognitive development. Teachers and children work together to create meaning and understanding.

The holistic graduate profile required to be an effective teacher is made up of these elements: understanding about learning and how people learn, including understanding one's own learning; being passionate about early childhood education and advocating for children; having confidence in the ability to make a difference; building strong relationships; valuing cultural diversity and appreciating New Zealand's rich history and traditions within a global environment; having strong, practical skills underpinned by evidence-based best practice and academic research; being professional and a committed member of the teaching profession; having a commitment to lifelong learning; understanding the influence of personal, historical, cultural, and social influences on education; being inclusive and able to teach across contexts and meet the needs of a diverse range of learners, families and whānau; and critically reflecting on and refining teaching practice and anticipating and responding successfully to change.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Learners are provided with comprehensive and timely study information and ongoing support to help them achieve their goals. The college information handbook is comprehensive and user-friendly.

The best example of learner guidance and support is the “tutor group model”, which creates learning communities of students across stages one to three of the diploma. Each group has a dedicated contact person throughout the three years who provides mentoring, monitors student progress and attendance, and encourages students to support each other. Virtual tutor groups were also introduced for the distance students in 2008. Responsibilities were defined in the staff handbook and further development of the virtual tutor groups are in the 2010 annual plan. Students noted that tutors are very generous with their time and make themselves available to discuss academic and other issues on a regular basis. An Auckland tutor position was also established in 2009 to improve the assistance to distance students in the upper North Island.

The learning environment is inclusive. Although the number of international students on campus is not large, the pastoral support offered to them is impressive. International students have a dedicated tutor to assist them with their English and assignment writing. They are a highly valued part of the student group and the college celebrates the contribution they make to understanding cultural diversity within the college and in the childcare sector itself.

The guidance and support offered to learners is comprehensive and informed by reflective practice across all levels of the college staff. Staff model reflective practice and guide students to develop critical thinking skills to inform themselves and their study and their professional teaching practice.

## 1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Governance and management are highly effective in supporting educational achievement. A variety of external sources have input into decisions. These include e-surveys, the board of studies and the advisory committee comprised of sector representatives, and feedback from associate teachers in the field.

NZCECE gained successful re-approval and accreditation of the Diploma in Teaching (ECE) programme. Examples of progress towards meeting recommendations from the re-approval panel that have been actioned are: references in all course information have been reviewed and updated, and the advisory committee membership has been widened to include a Māori and a Pasifika representative and several associate teachers.

Since 2008, when the current college manager was appointed, there has been a devolution of responsibility to tutorial staff. Staff interviewed said this had provided them with a sense of ownership because their knowledge and expertise was valued. The staff were very positive, dedicated, and energetic. They attributed this to the support, leadership, and professionalism of the college manager and senior staff.

The senior management team at the college anticipates and responds to change, uses the results of self-assessment constructively for improvement, and balances innovation and continuity. It has a clear organisational purpose and direction, provides effective leadership, and allocates resources to support learning teaching and research. This work is informed by a shared conceptual framework made up of a clear mission, graduate aims, and a philosophical knowledge base incorporating the New Zealand Teachers' Council Graduating Teacher Standards.

In response to comprehensive consultation it was found that there was a gap in the market for a leadership qualification which would better prepare students for leadership roles in early childhood centres. There was evidence that new graduates were often put in a leadership role at an early childhood centre soon after graduation, and that they lacked the life experience or knowledge to cope with this responsibility. Also, the group of students represented in the distance-diploma delivery were often more mature, had the necessary life skills and experience, but lacked any understanding of leadership theories.

The leadership programme could meet the needs of both groups and provide a logical career progression after completing the diploma. The leadership programme is an example of NZCECE's proactive approach to innovation. The college is in the unique position of being owned by the ABC Developmental Learning Centres with 127 centres across New Zealand. ABC is committed to the proposed programme as a way of upgrading staff and is therefore prepared to fund students into the one-year leadership diploma.

The evaluation team was impressed by the commitment, cohesion of purpose, and effective processes developed to support educational achievement demonstrated by the management team at the college.

## Focus Areas

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

### 2.2 Focus area: International students

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

### 2.3 Focus area: Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education) (Level 7) (Distance)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

### 2.4 Focus area: Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education) (Level 7) (On Campus)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

### 2.5 Focus area: Early Childhood Leadership Programme

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

# Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from this external evaluation and review.

# Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.*

*In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.*

*This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.*

*The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.*

*External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.*

*External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website ([www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)).*

*Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>*

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