



**SKILLSIQ**

CAPABLE PEOPLE MAKE CLEVER BUSINESS

# **IMPROVING QUALITY IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND CARE TRAINING**

**INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES**

**DECEMBER 2016**

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## Background

In August 2015, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) released the strategic review, *Training for early childhood education and care in Australia*. The ASQA review identified significant quality concerns and made ten recommendations for action.

SkillsIQ was commissioned by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) to complete the necessary research and consultation to develop a business case setting out any strategic and evidentiary case for change within the CHC Community Services Training Package in response to the ASQA recommendations.

Under the direction of the Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee (CEC IRC), the SkillsIQ research and consultation focused on the following qualifications and their associated units of competency:

- *CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care*
- *CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care*
- *CHC40113 Certificate IV in School Aged Education and Care*
- *CHC50213 Diploma of School Aged Education and Care*
- *CHC30213 Certificate III in Education Support*
- *CHC40213 Certificate IV in Education Support.*

The AISC asked SkillsIQ to seek industry views on all ten ASQA recommendations, while acknowledging that responsibility for implementing some of the recommendations rests with other agencies.

## How industry use the qualifications

The children's education and care qualifications directly align to the following job roles:

- Early childhood educator – provides early childhood education and care services in a range of settings, including Family Day Care, Long Day Care, Preschool and Outside School Hours Care.
- Education assistant – provides assistance and support to teachers and students in a range of educational settings - for example, in public and independent schools as well as in community education settings.

Much of the early childhood education and care workforce is regulated under the Education and Care Services National Law through the National Quality Framework (NQF), which is overseen nationally by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). The NQF includes requirements for educator qualifications and educator-to-child ratios. Recent regulatory change has led to a significant increase in the number of people undertaking Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications.

Industry expectations for training delivery are clear, and include:

- enrolment of students suited to work in the sector
- training of adequate duration and quality with an appropriate balance of theory and practice
- high quality workplace experiences for students with adequate support from RTOs
- collaboration between RTOs and services
- quality and integrity in skill and knowledge assessment, allowing industry to have confidence in the value of an individual's qualification.

Outcomes of consultation suggest that these expectations are often not being met.

## Research and consultation

### Overview

At the outset, the IRC determined that it was important to consider and consult widely about quality issues beyond those highlighted by ASQA, both within and beyond the Training Package, to provide a context for its work. The review has included:

- a desktop analysis of training products to inform the discussion paper *Improving quality in early childhood education and care training: a discussion paper in response to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) strategic review*
- national consultation with employers, educators, peak bodies and RTOs through the discussion paper, surveys and interviews.

The outcomes of this work are outlined below.

Not surprisingly, given the high-use nature of the ECEC training products, the majority of stakeholder input was received about those qualifications. Feedback on education support qualifications was limited, but did identify the need to review interrelationships between units of competency, entry requirements and work placement issues across all children's education and care qualifications.

### The consultation process

Stakeholder consultation took several forms as outlined in the table below.

Consultation mechanism	Response
<p><i>Improving quality in early childhood education and care training: a discussion paper in response to the ASQA strategic review</i> specifically canvassed views about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each of the ten ASQA recommendations</li> <li>• broader issues affecting the quality of graduates of children's education and care qualifications.</li> </ul>	50 detailed responses (some of these presenting outcomes from group forums – estimated involvement of 100 – 150 people)
<p>Online surveys for both employers and individual educators. Employers were not necessarily business owners, however respondents would most likely have been responsible for the management of staff within the service.</p> <p>Educators must have completed at least one of the children's education and care qualifications in the past 3 years.</p>	<p>213 employer responses</p> <p>114 educator responses</p>
Follow up telephone interviews with employers who had completed the online survey.	15 follow up telephone interviews

Promotion of the above activities was broad, and included:

- CEC IRC members promoting the consultation through their extensive stakeholder networks
- notification to all education and care services on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) national register (over 15,000 stakeholders)
- notification to all stakeholders on SkillsIQ database (around 23,000 stakeholders)

- ASQA notification to all registered training organisations (RTOs) with the children's education and care qualifications on their scope of delivery as well as having a direct link to the consultation from the ASQA website
- promotion at two webinars held by ASQA and SkillsIQ which were specific to the ECEC sector
- promotion at various conferences and events attended by SkillsIQ and CEC IRC members e.g. Early Childhood Australia National Conference in Oct 2016
- a direct link to this consultation on the homepage of the SkillsIQ website.

Attachment A provides a summary of feedback from the discussion paper.

Attachment B provides a summary of feedback from employer and educator surveys.

## Findings of research and consultation

Of the 50 detailed responses (representing the views of over 100 - 150 stakeholders) to the SkillsIQ discussion paper, almost all agreed that the assessment requirements of units of competency needed clarification. Over a third of responses highlighted a need to revisit the qualification structure, and feedback from both employers and RTOs indicate a need to review some content areas to support quality outcomes.

While broader industry and delivery issues have a major impact on quality outcomes, the review of training package content and assessment requirements provides an opportunity for clarification and refinement. Given the extensive issues identified with quality of assessment, training products that provide clear and consistent information about requirements is key to developing a skilled workforce.

### Issues identified

#### Training product issues

##### Content

The majority of stakeholders who provided feedback confirmed the overall appropriateness of content across qualifications, units of competency and associated assessment requirements.

However, some themes emerged in relation to training product content, indicating the need to focus on those areas in detailed review work:

- common gaps in skills and knowledge among graduates - those listed below were raised both in response to the discussion paper, in online surveys and follow up discussions with employers:
  - quality of practical skills across the board
  - meaningful programming and planning for children with diverse needs (at all levels)
  - child development knowledge (at all levels)
  - child behaviour (at all levels)
  - Early Years Learning Framework and NQF knowledge (at all levels)
  - team leadership (at Diploma level)
  - communication skills, including interacting with children, engaging with individual families (at all levels)
  - language and literacy skills, including English language skills (at all levels)
  - teamwork and other generic employment skills (at all levels)
- whether the content of the *CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care* is in excess of what is required in the workplace (links to possible issues with use of overly complex language in units of competency)

- need to address remaining duplication across units of competency and review whether the content of too many units of competency overlap
- specific unit concerns, in terms of applicability of content (e.g. diversity, quality improvement planning, child protection)
- whether there is a need to increase the number of work placement hours

### Relationship of content to Industry trends

Many of the issues highlighted above align with trends identified in the Children's Education and Care 4 year workplan – the importance of communication, leadership, technology and teamwork skills (enterprise skills), plus the ability to respond to increasingly diverse family needs.

The workplan also identified additional areas as follows:

- move by governments in the developed world towards more integrated models of service delivery for early childhood services to provide services that are more accessible and responsive to the needs of children and their families<sup>1</sup>. Integration includes a more interdisciplinary way of working, facilitating collaboration and coordination, networking and referral with a broad range of professionals
- prevalence of domestic and family violence, and the skills and knowledge for an effective response by workers in the children's education and care sector.

It is timely to consider how current training products are placed to meet these trends.

### Structure of CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care

The current CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care largely 'embeds' the *CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care* on the basis that a Diploma qualified educator still needs the skills contained within the lower level qualification, as well as 'higher level' skills to work effectively in their role. There is no entry requirement to this qualification.

Early IRC discussions highlighted that, in practice, this relationship between the two qualifications is proving problematic for a range of reasons, including:

- learners are enrolling (and are being encouraged to enrol) in the Diploma when the Certificate III would be a more appropriate qualification
- the perceived mixing and crossover of 'different level' skills within the qualification (highlighting the need between improved differentiation between existing units)
- the model allows no time for the gradual maturation of skills to achieve Diploma educator outcomes (the issue of skill maturation and time for reflection was mentioned regularly by employers)

Of the 50 responses to the Discussion Paper, 19 also raised this issue in terms of its impact on quality outcomes. Many believe that the Certificate III qualification plus workplace experience should be an entry requirement for the Diploma. However, the inclusion of an entry requirement may not necessarily resolve this issue and there are broader implications for making such a change. This issue needs to be resolved during detailed review work.

### Assessment requirements

The ASQA review highlighted significant issues with the quality of assessment practice. It recommended a review of the assessment requirements of units of competency, identifying the need for:

- clear and unambiguous advice about evidence expectations aligned with the definition of competency and the rules of evidence

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Centre for Community and Child Health 2009, *Integrating Services for Young Children and Their Families*, Policy Brief No. 17. Viewed 28 July 2016.

- clear identification of which aspects of each unit of competency must be assessed and/or demonstrated in the workplace, and which aspects may be assessed and/or demonstrated in a simulated workplace environment
- clear information about whether repeated demonstration in the workplace is required
- clear information about what constitutes an appropriate simulated workplace environment

The SkillsIQ desktop analysis confirmed a need to enhance the clarity of wording and an opportunity to re-confirm specific evidence and assessment requirements with industry. It also suggested the potential to improve the relationship between assessment requirements and performance criteria.

This analysis was presented to stakeholders, where there was almost universal agreement about the need to clarify assessment requirements.

### **Regional and remote communities and the place of Budget-Based Services**

Current training package requirements present challenges for educators in regional and remote communities, particularly in relation to the assessment requirements which specify assessment and minimum work hours to be completed within a regulated education and care setting. Budget-based services are not currently recognised under the NQF and access to a regulated education and care setting may be hundreds of kilometres away. While feedback has been received about the need to provide recognition for these educators with the training package, there are mixed views among stakeholders about how this should be achieved. This issue needs to be addressed during the review.

### **Delivery of the training product**

#### **Overall quality**

The inconsistent quality of both training and assessment remains a key concern for industry, and for the many RTOs that seek to offer a quality service. Across all qualifications, more than 60% of employers answered 'no' or 'somewhat' to the question of whether qualifications were producing suitably skilled graduates. Many of the issues identified in consultation related to poor or inconsistent quality delivery, badly managed work placement, enrolment of students not suited to the job role and students being assessed as competent when they do not have the required skills and knowledge. This situation erodes employer confidence in the qualifications. It also impacts the ability of graduates to successfully progress to early childhood teaching degrees as their underpinning knowledge and skills are lacking. A number of comments have been made about the need for an independent or centrally managed approach to assessment, though this would require the application of significant resources to research and establish. While a review and update of the training products will contribute to improving quality, some of the feedback is outside the scope of the Training Package. However, it is important to highlight.

#### **Work experience / Work placement**

More than 90% of employer respondents offer work placements for Certificate III and Diploma qualifications, with 54% offering work placement for Certificate IV. However, approximately 45% of employer respondents rated the support and guidance of RTOs prior and during work placements as poor or very poor. A recurring theme in employer comments related to the fact that services are being asked to take primary responsibility for 'signing off' students in the workplace with very little support and guidance from RTOs. The need for more communication and collaboration was regularly highlighted. On the flip side, others highlighted poor practice in services as a key issue, the need for a focus on leadership, and the fact that there needs to be more support for RTOs to brief and support services about their role in the work placement. From an educator perspective on the challenges of work placement, 24.4% nominated lack of support from the RTO, with 33.3% nominating workplace or employer issues. Almost 30% of educators nominated that they had spent less

that 120 hours in the workplace as part of their qualification. There are particular issues for work placement in the Family Day Care sector.

92% of employers indicated their view that a qualified assessor should be assessing students in the workplace. Improved clarity about what this actually means in practice, and for the training products, is a key focus for review work.

### Duration of training

Employer expectations about training duration are summarised below based on feedback received. This is a major issue for the sector. Educator responses indicated that while the most common duration was 10 -12 months for Certificate III and 13-24 months for a Diploma, a significant number were achieving the Diploma in 12 months or less.

	Certificate III	Certificate IV	Diploma
10-12 months	56.4%	32.9%	
13-24 months	19.9%	42.7%	50%
>24 months			41.2%

In discussing this issue, it is important to differentiate between *amount of training* (formal learning activities provided to a learner) and the broader concept of *volume of learning* (all teaching, learning and assessment activities) that is included at each qualification level in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

The ASQA review recommended that minimum benchmarks be set around the amount of training required for each unit of competency and each VET qualification across the whole VET system. While explicit inclusion of this information in the training package is not currently possible under the *Standards for Training Packages*, just under half of discussion paper respondents agreed with the recommendation. Inclusion of an advisory statement about the AQF nominated volume of learning was also supported by a similar number, though multiple stakeholders highlighted its potential limited value. The need to maintain the integrity of a competency-based system that is not based on time and allows for innovation and flexibility was also raised in many responses.

Potentially, enhanced advice about amount of training, at each qualification level, could be included in updated and revised training package Companion Volumes (CVs).

### Other issues impacting quality

Stakeholder feedback and IRC discussions suggest that a number of broader industry and VET issues are having a significant impact on the quality of graduate outcomes. This impact is exacerbated when combined with inconsistent quality of training delivery and assessment or shortfalls in the quality of the workplace.

### Relationship between regulatory requirements and the training package

Industry stakeholders suggest NQF requirements around child to educator ratios, qualification requirements, and the recognition of educators 'actively working towards' qualifications may unintentionally contribute to some of the quality challenges in the sector. For example, some services are variously demanding quick completion of qualifications to meet ratios or slow completion to delay educators moving to higher levels of work. Employer respondents indicated that roughly 60% had current staff working towards a Certificate III qualification, and 80% had current staff working towards a Diploma qualification.

### **Impact of broader commonwealth, state and territory vocational education and training initiatives on the training marketplace**

Programs such as VETFEE Help, the Higher Level Skills Program (QLD) and Smart and Skilled (NSW) may have unintentionally contributed to poor quality outcomes by encouraging more, and sometime inappropriate, enrolments in Diploma qualifications, as these are the qualifications that attract training subsidies, and practices not necessarily supportive of quality (e.g. success being measured by completions leading to 'tick and flick' approaches).

#### **Broader workforce issues**

There were regular comments about the relatively poor pay in the childhood education sector given the increasingly complex skill and knowledge demands and the impact of industrial relations issues on training. This also links to overall attraction and retention of quality staff which is a key sector issue.

### **Next steps**

Based on the outcomes of research and consultation, SkillsIQ has developed a business case for change to the CHC Community Services Training Package. The business case has been approved by the CEC IRC and will be submitted to the AISC, it is anticipated the business case will be considered at its next meeting in February 2017. Information on the progress of the business case will be posted on the SkillsIQ website.

## Attachment A: Summary of feedback on ASQA recommendations

The table below provides a summary of feedback received from *Improving quality in early childhood education and care training: a discussion paper in response to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) strategic review*. Where appropriate, the table also highlights relationships between this feedback and the responses received via online employer and educator surveys.

Due to the interrelated nature of both the recommendations and the feedback received, some recommendations have been grouped together.

SkillsIQ received 50 responses to the discussion paper (DP). Note that some responses represented the views of an individual, while others provided consolidated feedback from group meetings and forums involving significant numbers of people. It is estimated that DP responses represent the views of somewhere between 100 – 150 people.

### **Acknowledgment of ASQA progress on recommendations**

The discussion paper acknowledged and summarised the progress already made by ASQA in relation to several recommendations from the strategic review. This included the March 2016 industry roundtable to discuss stakeholder's current views and concerns about the quality of training and assessment provided by RTOs (follow up meeting in late November) and the series of RTO webinars conducted in October 2016.

More broadly, there were multiple comments from consultation indicating support for ASQA's work in addressing some of the key issues around auditing, assessment and validation.

### **Recording of feedback**

Specific comments about individual qualifications and units of competency have been recorded for consideration during any review work.

ASQA Recommendation	Summary of stakeholder feedback
<h2 style="text-align: center;">Feedback on recommendations that directly impact the CHC Training Package</h2>	
<h3>Minimum benchmarks for amount of training</h3>	
<p>ASQA Recommendation 1</p> <p>It is recommended that—as a matter of urgency—the new training package arrangements which are currently being developed include minimum benchmarks around the amount of training required for each unit of competency and each VET qualification across the whole VET system</p>	<p>Overall, there was a lot of feedback indicating that short course duration was a major factor driving poor quality outcomes in the sector. While largely an RTO issue, there were multiple comments that industry too sometimes drives this 'fast track' approach due to skills shortages and the need for staff to be qualified. The need for time for skills maturation and reflection was also highlighted.</p> <p>Just under half of the DP responses supported ASQA's recommendation for minimum benchmarks for amount of training in both qualifications and units of competency.</p> <p>A broadly similar number agreed that an advisory statement about volume of learning as suggested in the DP would be useful, though there were many comments about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need for flexibility to allow for customisation to particular target groups and situations</li> <li>• the questionable value of advisory statements</li> </ul> <p>The point was also made that ASQA already has powers in regard to volume of learning, and that it needed to use them more pro-actively <a href="#">Clauses 1.1-1.4 - Users Guide to the SRTOs</a> (more pro-active review of RTO advertising was quoted as an example)</p> <p>While the majority agreed that additional guidance materials would be of value ('RTOs need all the help they can get'), others questioned the value of non-mandatory resources.</p> <p>Suggestions for guidance about appropriate duration of training included many of the items listed below for Recommendation 3 and the need to continue to develop Companion Volumes in this regard.</p>
<h3>Training package requirements</h3>	
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>It is recommended that any revisions of the Community Services Training Package include reviewing the clarity of wording and expectations of assessment evidence in the units of competency, in order to ensure that advice is unambiguous, clear and aligned with the definition of competency and the rules of evidence.</p> <p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>It is recommended that any revisions to training packages clearly identify any requirements in each unit of competency for:</p>	<p>There was almost universal agreement about the need for clarification of assessment requirements wording, in terms of performance evidence, knowledge evidence and assessment conditions. Stakeholders agreed with the analysis completed by SkillsIQ about the particular issues to be addressed.</p> <p>In addition, there were multiple comments about the fact that some skills, which are currently required to be assessed in the workplace, could not be, or were not allowed to be, performed in the workplace by a student (e.g. family interactions, medication, responding to distress)</p> <p>Just over a third of responses agreed with the suggested development of national assessment tools without qualification, many quite forcefully; a greater number agreed that national tools would be valuable as long as they could be customised and were developed for different contexts and modes of delivery; another smaller group felt that this was the responsibility of RTOs. There were several references to building on the National RPL tool.</p> <p>Funding would be required for work to develop quality national materials.</p>

<i>ASQA Recommendation</i>	<i>Summary of stakeholder feedback</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workplace delivery and assessment</li> <li>• delivery and assessment to be undertaken in a simulated workplace context (including what constitutes an appropriate workplace assessment in each case), and</li> <li>• repeated demonstration of competencies in the workplace (including what that means for each unit of competency).</li> </ul>	<p>In response to other questions about whether there was need for broader change to the training package, many suggestions were put forward with the most common being related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need for review of the structure of the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (direct entry with embedding of Certificate III)</li> <li>• looking at whether the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care has too many units / too much content to accurately reflect the job role (also language does not always reflect skill level) – balanced against the need for critical thinking at this level</li> <li>• appropriateness of content in specific units (e.g. diversity, quality improvement planning, child protection)</li> <li>• potential need to increase the hours of work placement</li> <li>• need to differentiate between children of different ages</li> <li>• gaps in outcomes indicating the need for analysis of how this content is articulated in units of competency:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ child development</li> <li>○ child behaviour</li> <li>○ National Quality Framework knowledge</li> <li>○ interactions / communication – children, families</li> <li>○ meaningful programming / activity planning</li> <li>○ age specific content</li> <li>○ language and literacy (including English language skills); strengthened foundation skills</li> <li>○ team leadership skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>• consideration of how leadership and management are covered in the Diploma to provide options for those who don't have this focus</li> <li>• need to address remaining duplication (too many overlapping units broken into too small chunks)</li> </ul> <p>Interestingly, several of the gaps identified by DP responses were very similar to those highlighted in employer survey responses. Employers also regularly mentioned the poor quality of graduate practical skills.</p> <p>A number of respondents mentioned the need to refrain from upending the whole framework in the review work to be completed.</p>

ASQA Recommendation	Summary of stakeholder feedback
<b>Feedback on other ASQA recommendations</b>	
<b>Reporting quality concerns</b>	
<p><b>ASQA Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>It is recommended that ASQA, Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, and other relevant stakeholders work with the peak bodies that represent the providers of early childhood education and care to improve the process for, and coverage of, early childhood education and care providers informing ASQA of concerns they may have about the quality of training and assessment provided by registered training organisations.</p>	<p>Several stakeholders made positive comments about the work ASQA is doing in this area. The key themes in other comments were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the importance of engaging at grass roots level where there is the deepest knowledge of what is happening on the ground</li> <li>• the need to pro-actively and systematically tap into the many existing networks across all states and territories (industry regulators, STAs, state ITABs etc.)</li> <li>• potential for use of random and regular surveys of employers / educators, including use of annual census completed by all service providers</li> <li>• potential for greater use of existing opportunities (e.g. pro-active review of RTO advertising for early intervention)</li> <li>• role of ACECQA as key contact point for this type of information.</li> </ul>
<b>RTO communication and education</b>	
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>It is recommended that ASQA—working with the relevant training package developer—develop and implement a systematic communications strategy to engage with registered training organisations delivering early childhood education and care, in order to explain and reinforce the key findings of this review.</p> <p><b>ASQA Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>Given that most RTOs reviewed did not effectively embed structured work placement into the learning and assessment strategies—and given the high level of non-compliance against the assessment standard (Standard 15.5 [Standard 1.8 of the 2015 Standards])—it is recommended that RTOs strengthen their engagement with industry employers to ensure that structured workplace learning and</p>	<p>While acknowledging that some RTOs work very effectively with the current training package and provide a high quality service, there is universal agreement that the quality of training and assessment is very inconsistent with significant input about RTO shortfalls. The need for a balance of industry expertise and currency with VET expertise was widely acknowledged.</p> <p>Approximately 45% of employer survey respondents rated RTO support and guidance during work placement as poor or very poor. Many employers also seem to recognise that a key issue is RTO under-resourcing.</p> <p>Not surprisingly, the vast majority supported initiatives to improve RTO communication and education. A small number of responses highlighted the communication was either improving or was already sufficient if RTOs were prepared to access and use opportunities.</p> <p><b>The nature of communication</b></p> <p>Stakeholders generally supported the types of activities canvassed in the discussion paper and some others, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information bulletins / fact sheets</li> <li>• webinars</li> <li>• face-to-face sessions</li> <li>• moderated online forums</li> <li>• best practice modelling</li> <li>• ASQA You Tube channel and other 'any time accessible'</li> </ul> <p>Key themes were the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regularity</li> <li>• targeted communication so that the right people are reached</li> <li>• genuine collaborative communication and trust</li> <li>• transparency and information sharing with all</li> </ul>

ASQA Recommendation	Summary of stakeholder feedback
<p>assessment is embedded in course delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improved understanding between ASQA and ACECQA of their respective operations and requirements</li> </ul> <p>Generally speaking, stakeholders nominated that SkillsIQ should communicate on training package issues and ASQA on regulatory / compliance issues.</p> <p><b>Issues to be covered through communication / collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• non-compliance trends and solutions</li> <li>• professional development requirements</li> <li>• best practice modelling for compliance (particularly around assessment, workplace learning and assessment, engaging industry in assessment through collaboration)</li> </ul> <p><b>Guidance materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lots of good information in Companion Volumes – build on this, promote their use</li> <li>• de-identified audits with solutions</li> <li>• exemplars for quality work placement, workplace assessment, simulations, lesson plans, order of delivery, appropriate timing for work placement, training package interpretation etc.</li> <li>• FAQ sheets specific to these qualifications</li> <li>• log books</li> <li>• scaffolding</li> <li>• clustering</li> <li>• self-evaluation checklists</li> <li>• templates</li> <li>• nationally validated assessments.</li> </ul>
<b>ASQA strategic audits</b>	
<p>ASQA Recommendation 4</p> <p>It is recommended that, towards the end of 2015, ASQA undertakes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a targeted strategic audit on the implementation of <i>CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care</i> and <i>CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care</i>, and</li> <li>• a targeted strategic audit of distance learning, including online delivery, of early childhood education and care training.</li> </ul>	<p>No specific questions were asked about this recommendation, but several stakeholders made positive comments about the potential benefits of the new ASQA audit model.</p> <p>There were also comments agreeing with a need to focus on online delivery, balanced by some others suggesting that this should not be unfairly targeted. Of interest is that 20.6% of educator survey respondents indicated that their training had been all online.</p> <p>A particular suggestion put forward was for the conduct of a 'benchmark audit' involving industry representatives.</p> <p>Issues with inconsistency in auditing decisions were raised in numerous responses, along with the need for ongoing industry involvement in the auditing process.</p>
<b>Certificate IV in Training and Assessment</b>	
<p>ASQA Recommendation 8</p> <p>It is recommended that at the next review of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment:</p>	<p>The latest version of this TAE qualification released in March 2016 adopts in part the ASQA recommendation.</p> <p>While this recommendation is not specific to the childhood education and care sector, there was broad agreement about the need for a significantly strengthened approach across all facets of</p>

ASQA Recommendation	Summary of stakeholder feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the assessment-related units of competency emphasise the analysis and interpretation of competencies, and</li> <li>consideration is given to the development of qualifications in VET assessment that could be introduced to supplement the current assessment capabilities of many assessors who currently hold the <i>TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment</i> (or other qualifications that are considered to be equivalent).</li> </ul> <p>It is recommended that when RTOs develop training materials for a revised Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, that they strengthen the learning and formative assessment activities related to the analysis and interpretation of competencies, in order to enhance the skills and knowledge of assessors in this area.</p>	<p>the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and its implementation. A small number of stakeholders questioned the relevance of introducing the unit on assessment tool design as this was often not actually done by 'on the ground' assessors.</p> <p>In terms of strengthening the skills of trainers and assessors in the sector, all the items covered in the section above on RTO communication, education and professional development were highlighted.</p>
<b>ASQA focus on assessment and validation</b>	
<p>ASQA Recommendation 9</p> <p>Given the issues with assessment that have been identified in this and the 2013 strategic reviews (ASQA 2013a and 2013b), it is recommended that ASQA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue to focus on assessment and the implementation of validation strategies in its regulatory work, and</li> <li>continue to monitor the effectiveness of the strengthened validation requirements in the <i>Standards for RTOs 2015</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>There were several comments about the extent to which this aspect of ASQA operations has improved over time, and how the Standards for RTOs 2015 should have a positive impact. A range of issues were also highlighted, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>need for employer involvement in the validation of assessment</li> <li>need for consistent auditing (a theme through many responses to this and other ASQA recommendations)</li> <li>recommendations for improved use of exemplars and information sharing</li> <li>concerns about the level and practicality of compliance requirements and negative impact</li> <li>need for focus on quality rather than quantity</li> <li>need for independent validation of assessment – in fact the need for independent assessment was also raised by some stakeholders</li> <li>need for focus on RTOs providing poor quality.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional development</b>	
<p>ASQA Recommendation 10</p> <p>It is recommended that RTOs develop or enhance their ongoing professional development processes by:</p>	<p>In broad terms, everybody agrees about the need for professional development (PD), both vocational and VET related. The two biggest challenges nominated by many were time and cost. There were also comments about challenges in rural and more remote locations.</p>

<i>ASQA Recommendation</i>	<i>Summary of stakeholder feedback</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing advice on relevant professional development for trainers and assessors, and</li> <li>• investigating more systematic models that will assist trainers and assessors to demonstrate compliance with the Standard.</li> </ul>	<p>While some RTO respondents indicated that they had good systems in place already, and that an overarching commitment and culture of review and reflection was the key, a number of other themes emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need for greater clarity around what the requirements are; there were multiple comments that these were too broad and that there was a lack of understanding about what constituted industry currency or sufficient evidence of appropriate PD (note one respondent indicated that BOSTES had developed further guidelines in this regard)</li> <li>• the value of some form of registration system for assessors linked to mandatory PD for trainers and assessors in the sector (note that the SkillsIQ Right Way program developed to support and recognise the delivery of quality training in the service industries could potentially be considered)</li> <li>• suggestions around the many initiatives that work effectively - mentoring, networking, communities of practice, use of collaborative work practices, use of the VET Capability Framework, use of the sector's own QIP mechanisms, need for holistic suite of VET sector capabilities etc.</li> <li>• recommendations for the creation and communication of PD models for RTOs.</li> </ul>

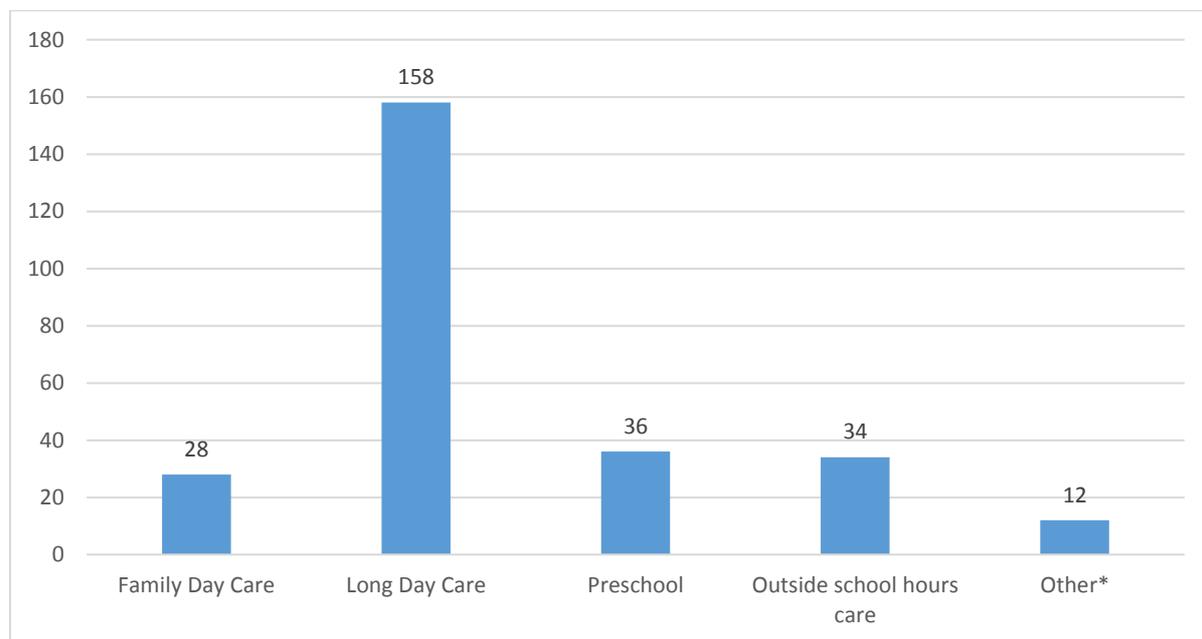


## Attachment B: Summary of employer and educator survey feedback

Online surveys were conducted for both employers and individual educators. SkillsIQ received 213 employer responses and 114 educator responses. The graphs and comments below summarise the results of these surveys.

### Employer responses

In which type of setting(s) does your organisation provide education and care services?

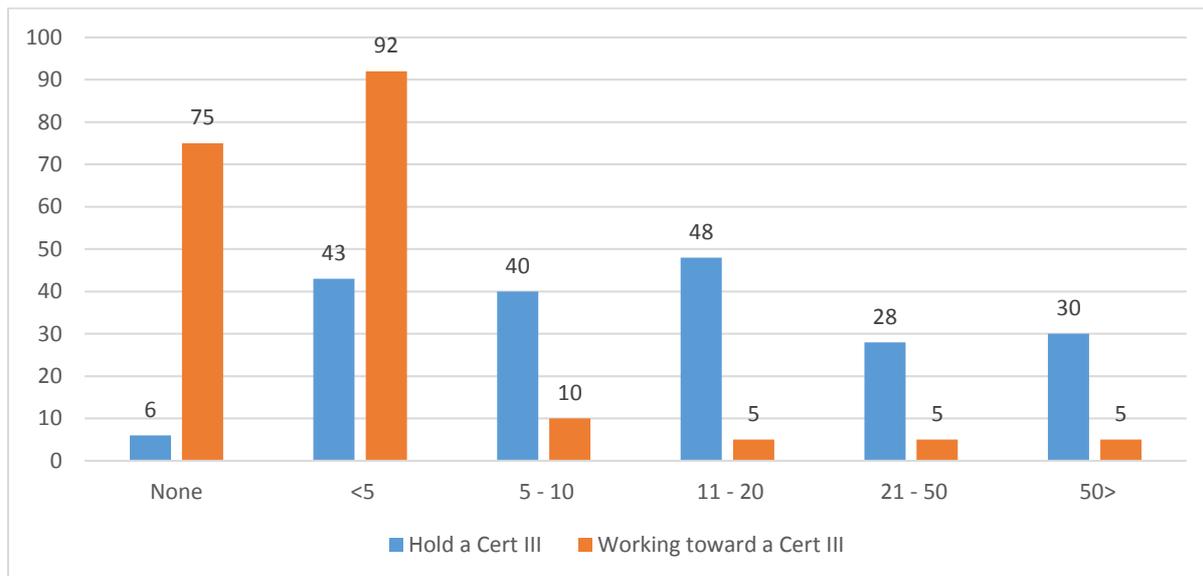


\*Other includes: Vacation care, kindergarten, supported playgroups, university and RTO

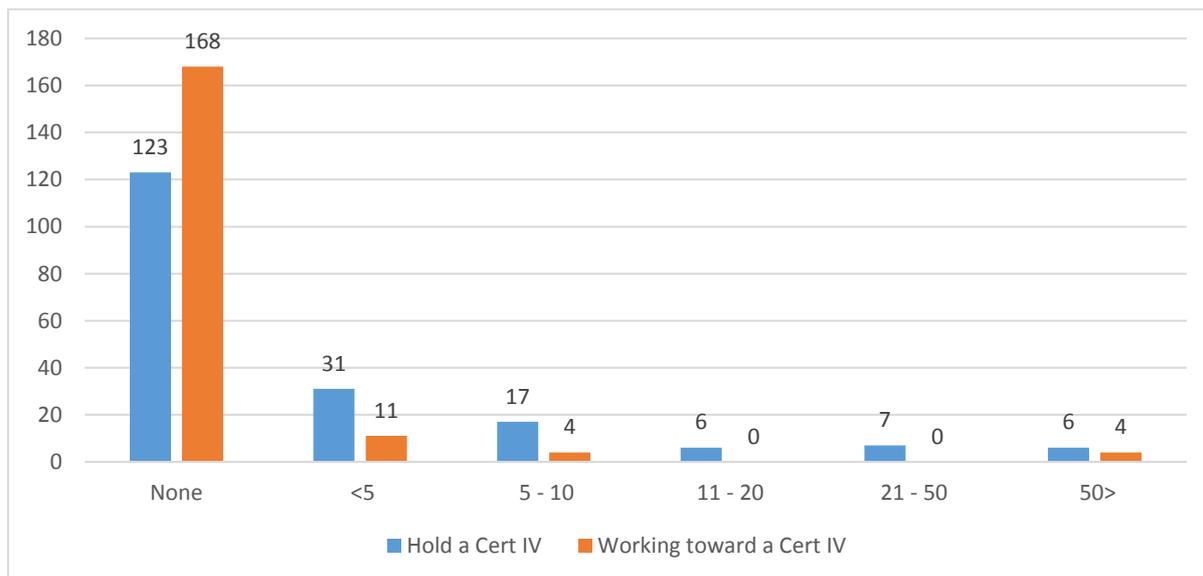
### Comments

Unsurprisingly, a significant majority of respondents were from the ECEC sector. Those qualifications are the most widely used.

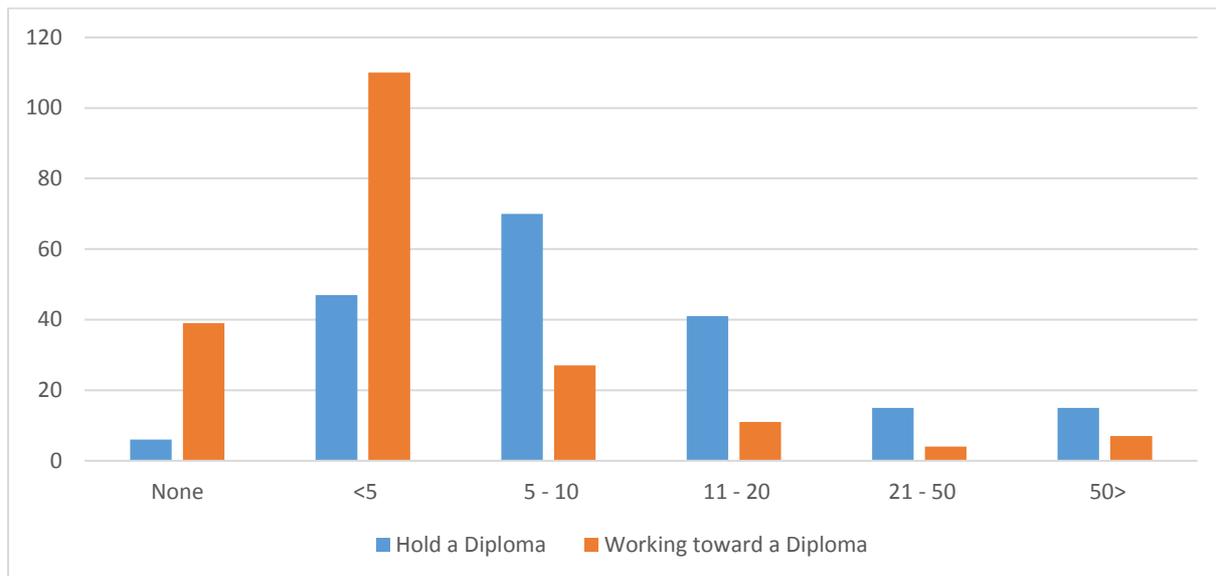
Number of educators employed in the organisation that have completed an Australian Certificate III qualification related to early childhood education and care, compared to number of educators employed in the organisation working toward an Australian Certificate III qualification related to early childhood education and care



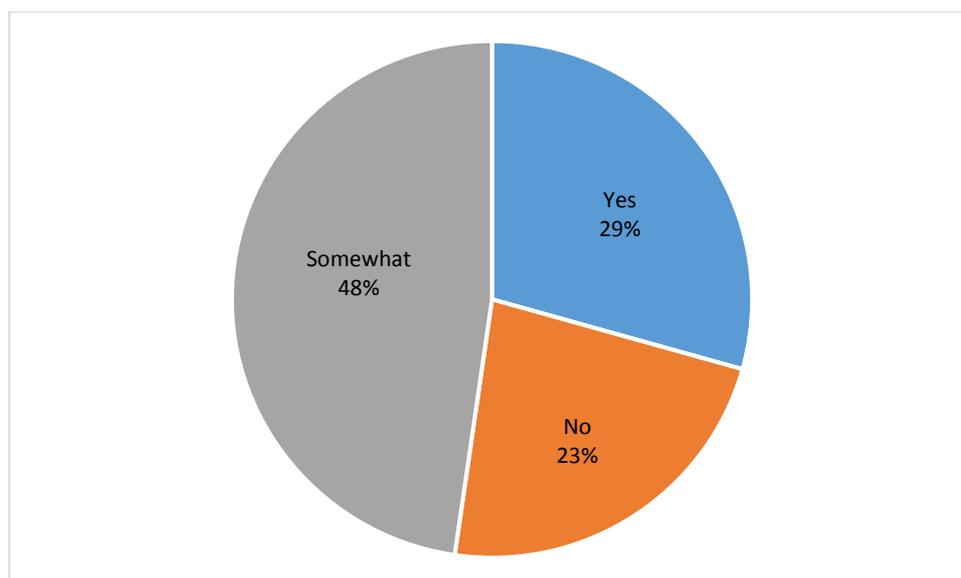
Number of educators employed in the organisation that have completed an Australian Certificate IV qualification related to early childhood education and care, compared to number of educators employed in the organisation working toward an Australian Certificate IV qualification related to early childhood education and care



Number of educators employed in the organisation that have completed an Australian Diploma qualification related to early childhood education and care, compared to number of educators employed in the organisation working toward an Australian Diploma qualification related to early childhood education and care



Are Australian Certificate III qualifications, related to early childhood education and care, producing workers that are suitably skilled for your organisation?



### Comments

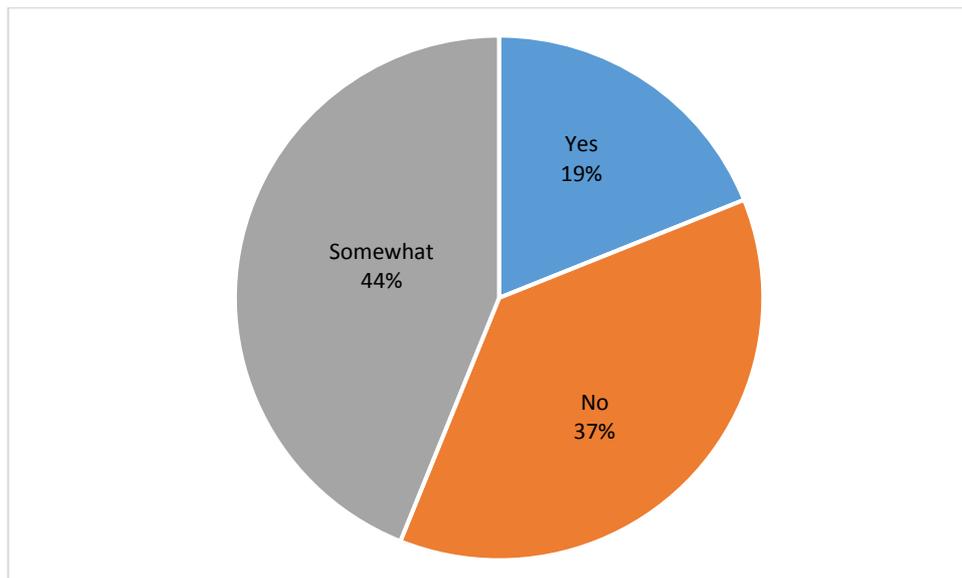
Employers regularly identified the following gaps in their comments:

- quality of practical skills across the board
- programming and planning for children with diverse needs (at this level how to write meaningful observations, contribute to the process, use creative skills)
- child development knowledge
- child behaviour
- Early Years Learning Framework and NQF knowledge

- communication skills, including interacting with children, engaging with individual families
- language and literacy skills, including English language skills (at all levels)
- teamwork and other generic employment skills, including ability to think and reflect

Interestingly, many of the gaps identified at Certificate III level were the same as those identified at Diploma level.

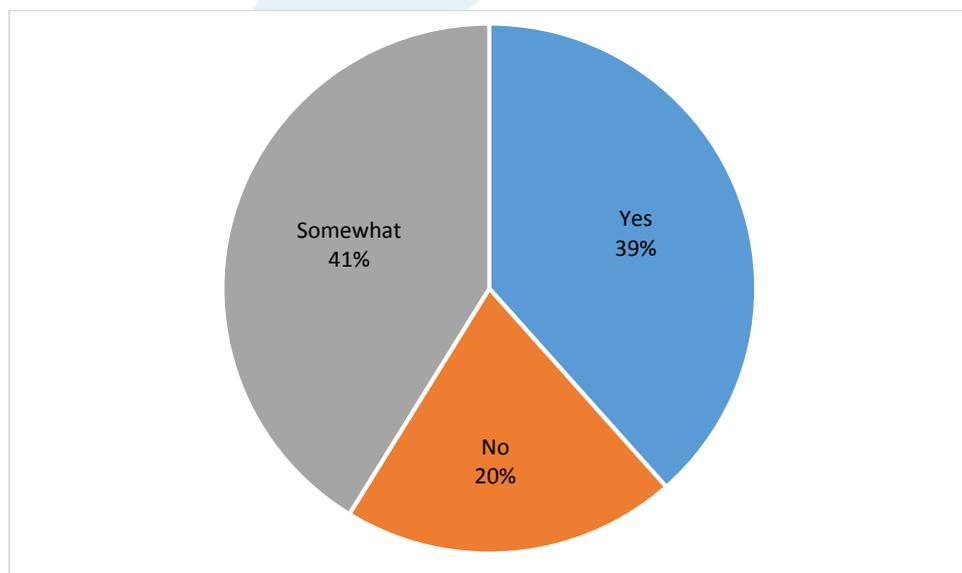
Are Australian Certificate IV qualifications, related to early childhood education and care, producing workers that are suitably skilled for your organisation?



#### Comments

Given the ECEC profile of the majority of respondents, there was some confusion in responses about the Certificate IV (as this is a school age care qualification). While the comments received were broadly similar to those for Certificate III and Diploma, a number commented about not having educators at this level or not being familiar with the qualification. Detailed review work needs to ensure consultation with school age care stakeholders.

Are Australian Diploma qualifications, related to early childhood education and care, producing workers that are suitably skilled for your organisation?

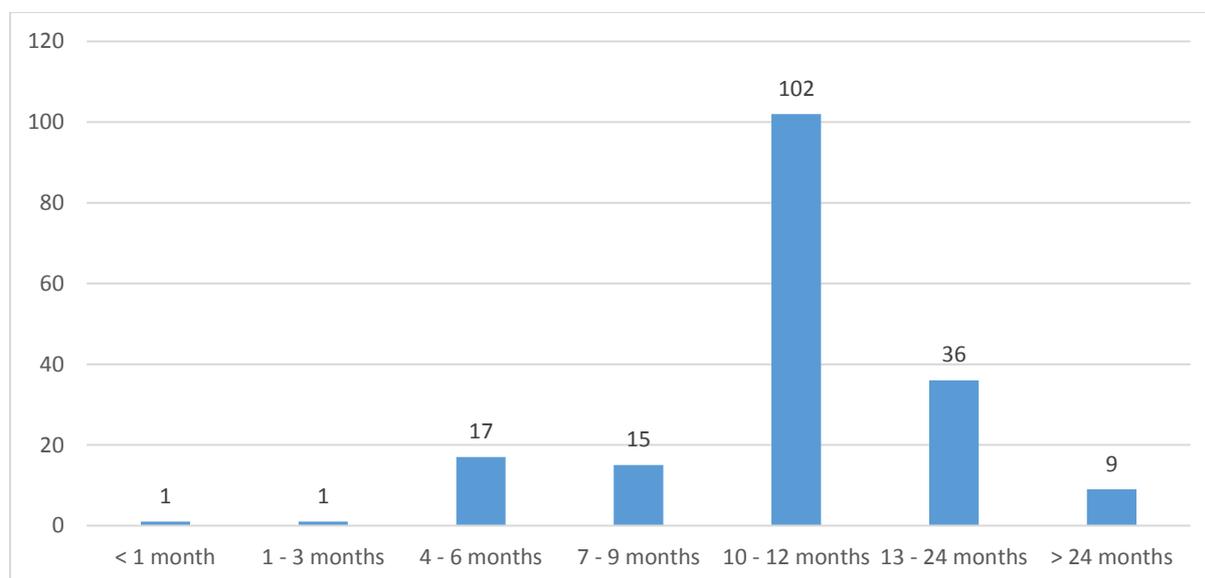


## Comments

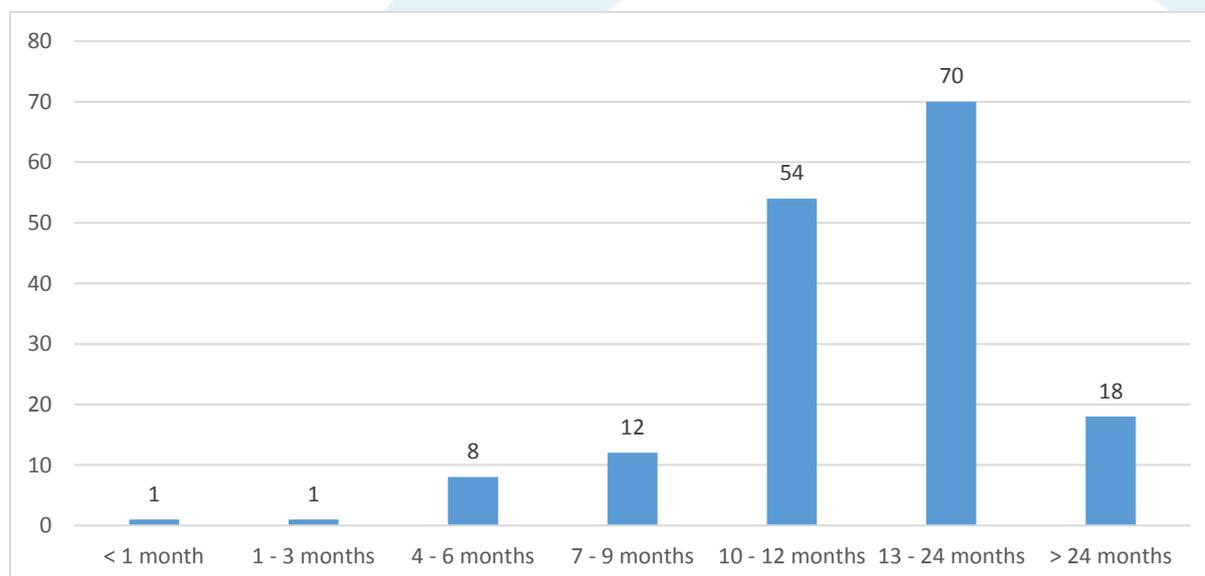
Employers regularly identified the following gaps (broadly the same as for Certificate III except for leadership skills):

- quality of practical skills across the board
- programming and planning for children with diverse needs
- child development knowledge
- child behaviour
- Early Years Learning Framework and NQF knowledge
- team leadership and other generic employment skills
- communication skills, including interacting with children, engaging with individual families
- language and literacy skills, including English language skills
- teamwork and other generic employment skills, including ability to think and reflect

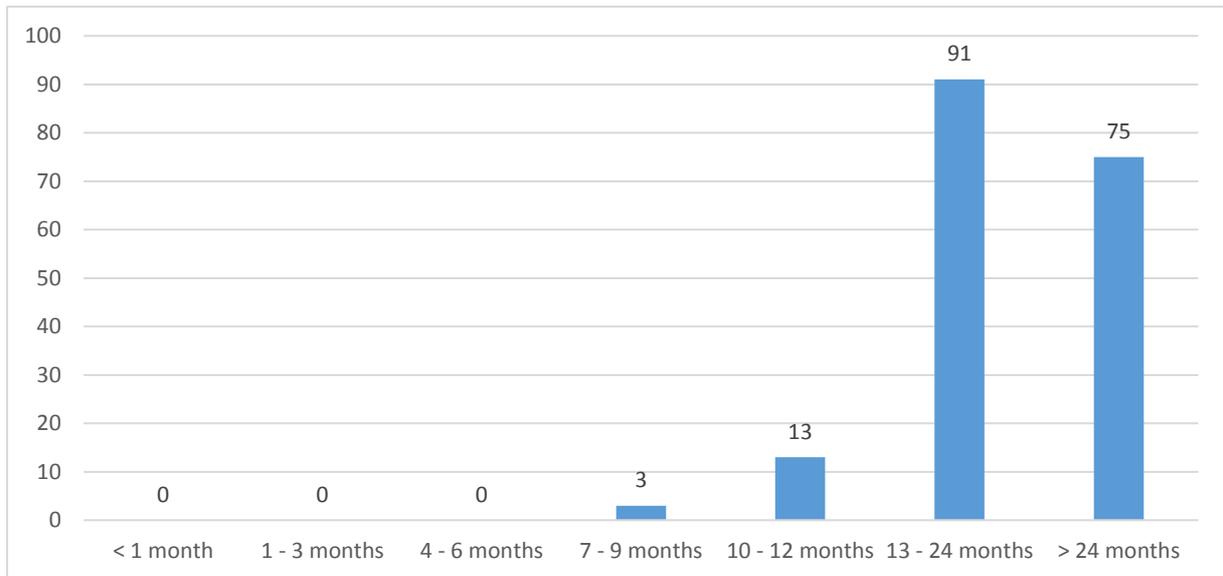
How long would you expect a full time learner should take to complete a Certificate III level qualification related to early childhood education and care?



How long would you expect a full time learner should take to complete a Certificate IV level qualification related to early childhood education and care?



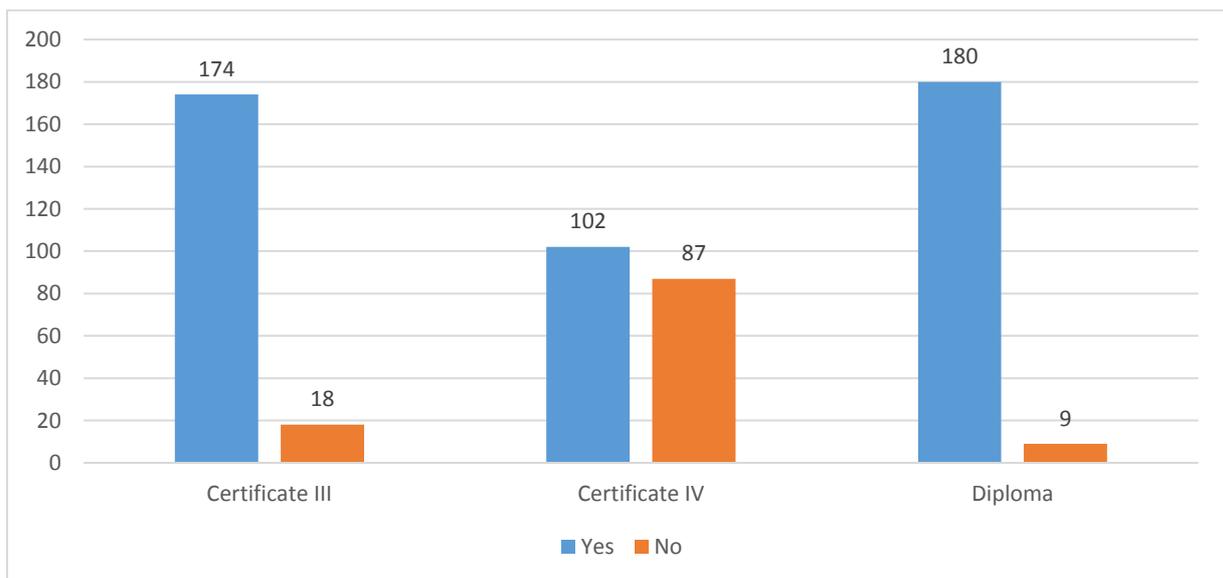
How long would you expect a full time learner should take to complete a Diploma level qualification related to early childhood education and care?



### Comments

Employer answers about duration of training provide some clear indicators about expectations in this area.

Do you offer work placement opportunities to students undertaking an Australian qualifications related to early childhood education and care?

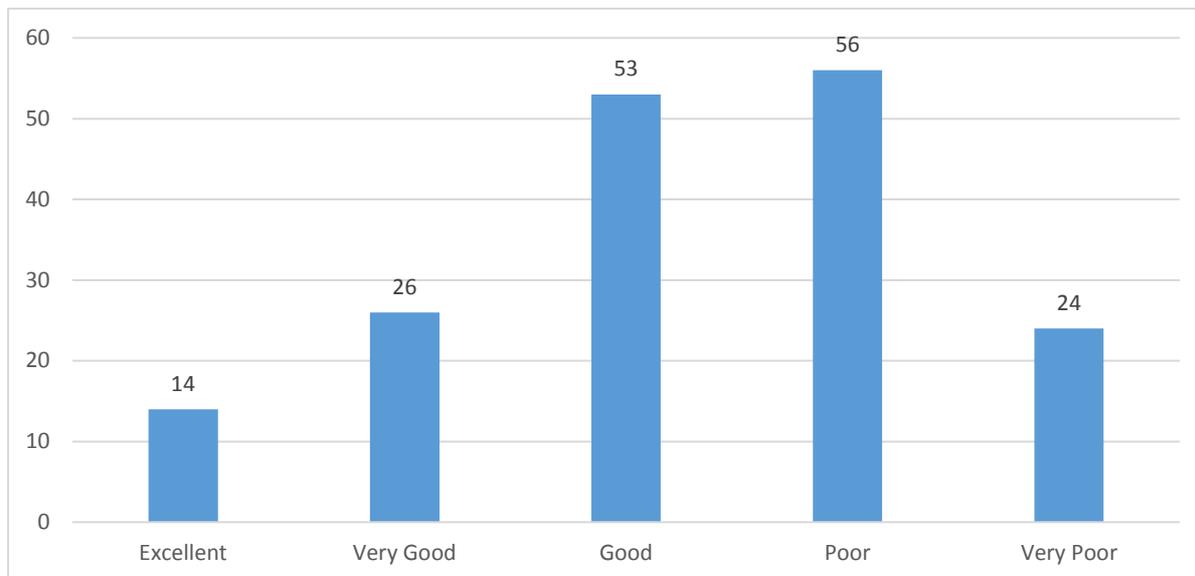


### Comments

The very high level of employer involvement shows industry commitment to the work placement experience. Of the 10% who did not offer work placements, the reasons were varied, and included:

- not being asked
- inadequate resources
- preference to use resources to support those already in the workplace.

Rate the level of support/guidance you receive from the training provider prior to taking on a work placement student?



### Comments

A regular comment on this question was 'it depends'. It is clear that some RTOs are doing a good job and others a very poor job. Many employers had experienced work placement arrangements with more than one RTO, and over time had decided to only use those in which they had faith. The key theme about what made work placement successful was the need for good communication and collaboration, with a genuine two-way exchange of information and feedback.

Lack of clarity about expectations (including on the part of students) was regularly mentioned.

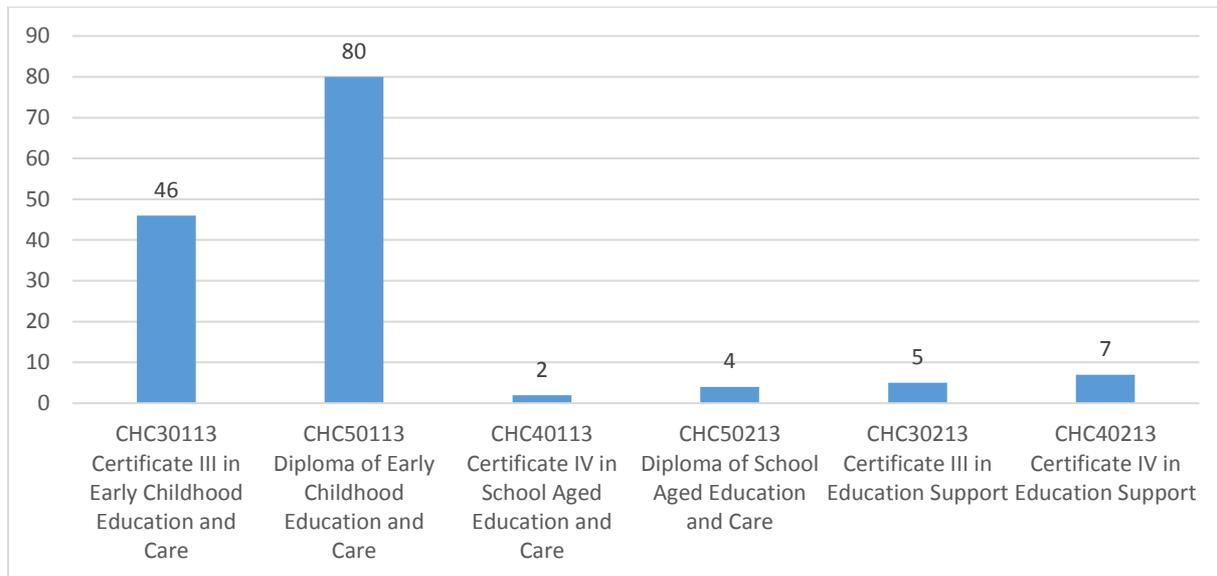
### Role of the workplace supervisor in work placement

Employer comments emphasised that it should be the assessor who makes a judgment about a student's competence, not the workplace supervisor. Many felt that too much responsibility was placed on the workplace in this regard. Employers felt that the workplace supervisor role should mainly involve:

- workplace guidance and support for the student
- mentoring
- feedback
- validation
- liaising with the assessor.

## Educator responses

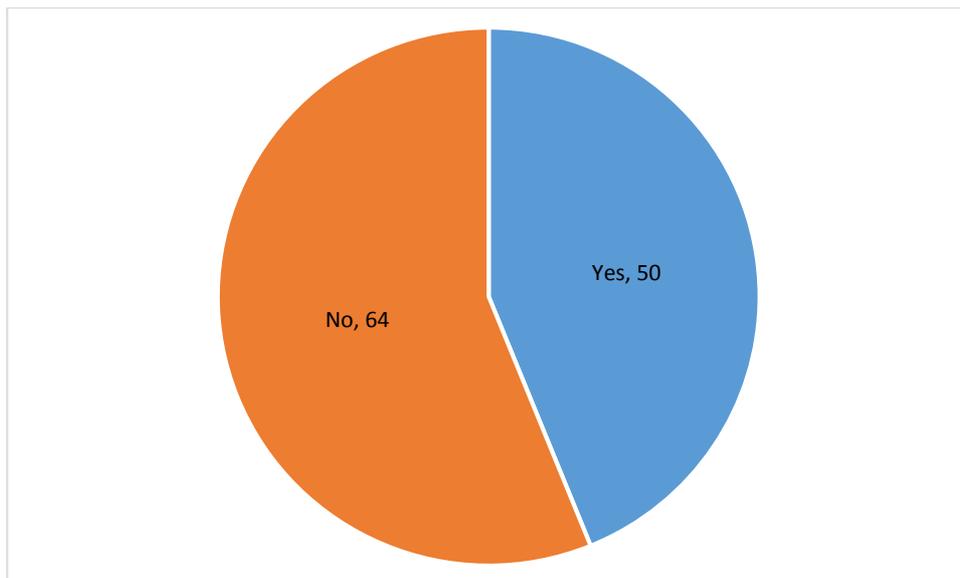
Which qualification(s) do you hold?



### Comments

Consistent with the employer survey, the vast majority of educator responses were also from those working in ECEC.

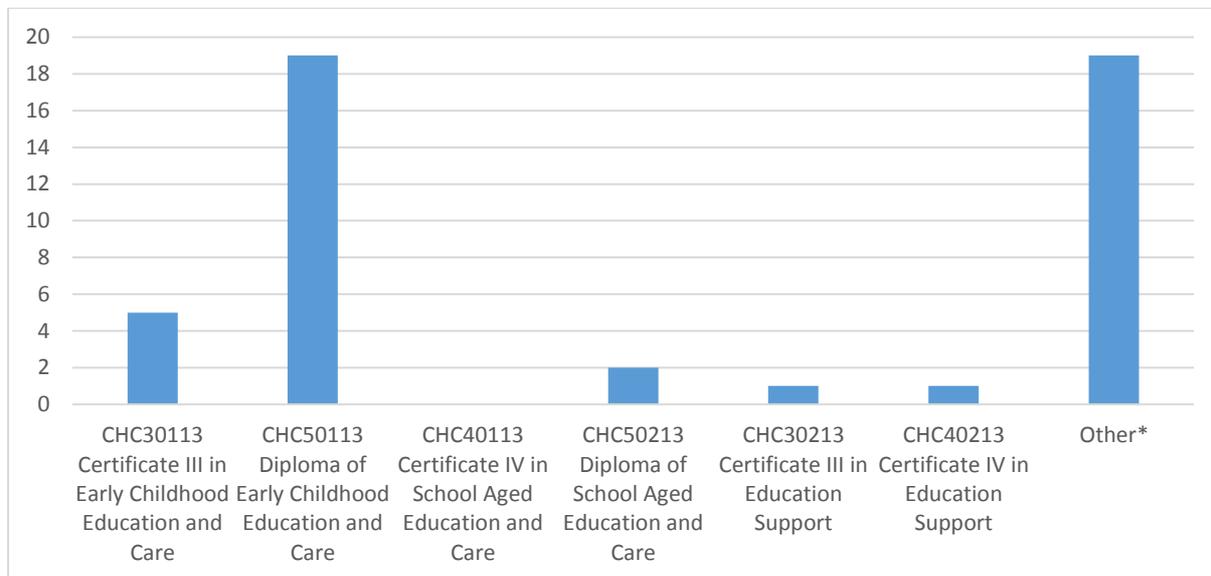
Are you currently working toward another qualification?



### Comments

The high number of educators working towards qualifications could be reflective of NQF qualification requirements.

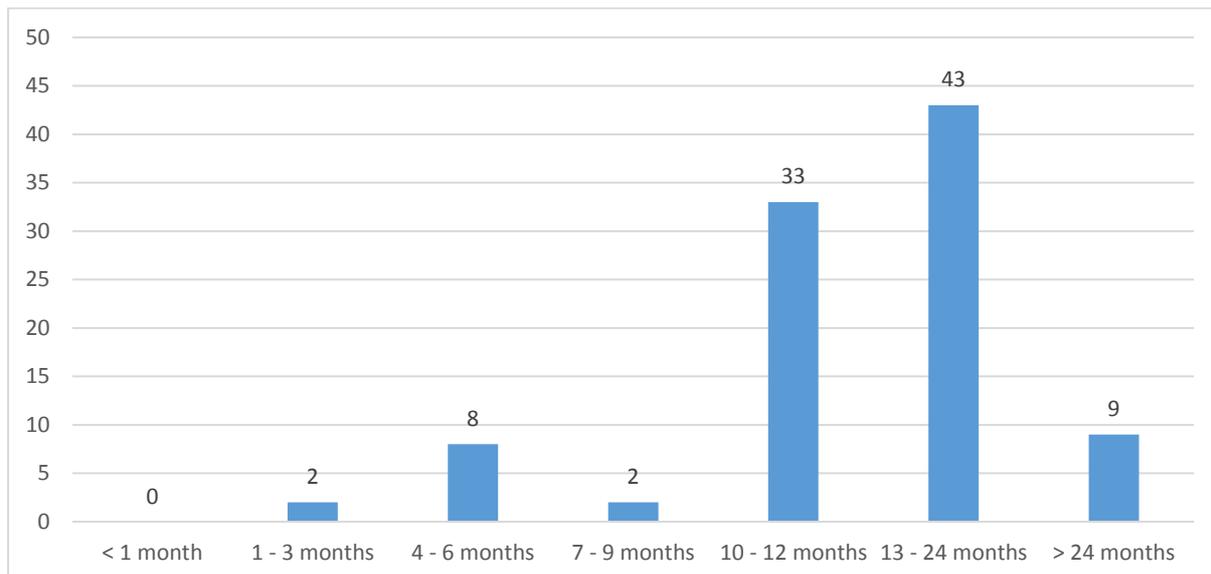
What qualification are you currently working toward?



\*Other includes: Bachelor degree, Masters degree, Certificate IV in TAE, Graduate Diploma of Management

**NOTE: THE FOLLOWING ANSWERS SHOULD BE BASED ON THE QUALIFICATION THE RESPONDENT CURRENTLY HOLDS, NOT THE ONE THEY ARE WORKING TOWARD**

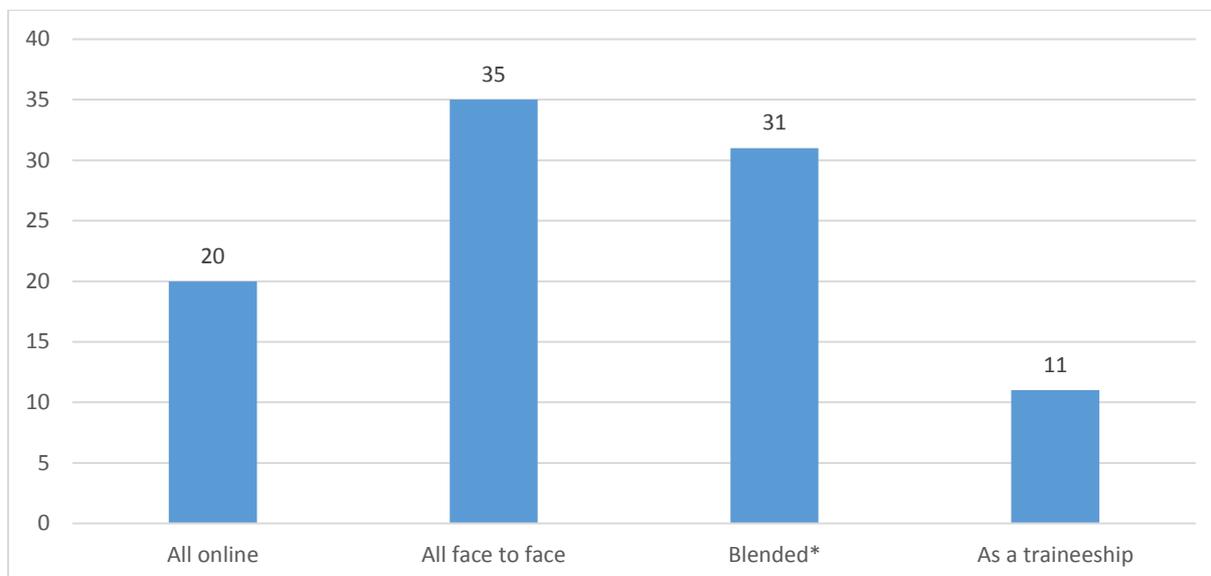
How long did it take you to complete the qualification?



**Comments**

A closer analysis of responses matching qualification level to length of time showed that 13 24 months was the most common duration for a Diploma qualification, and 10 – 12 months for Certificate II. However, 20 educators indicated completion of Diploma in 10 – 12 months.

### How did you undertake the qualification?

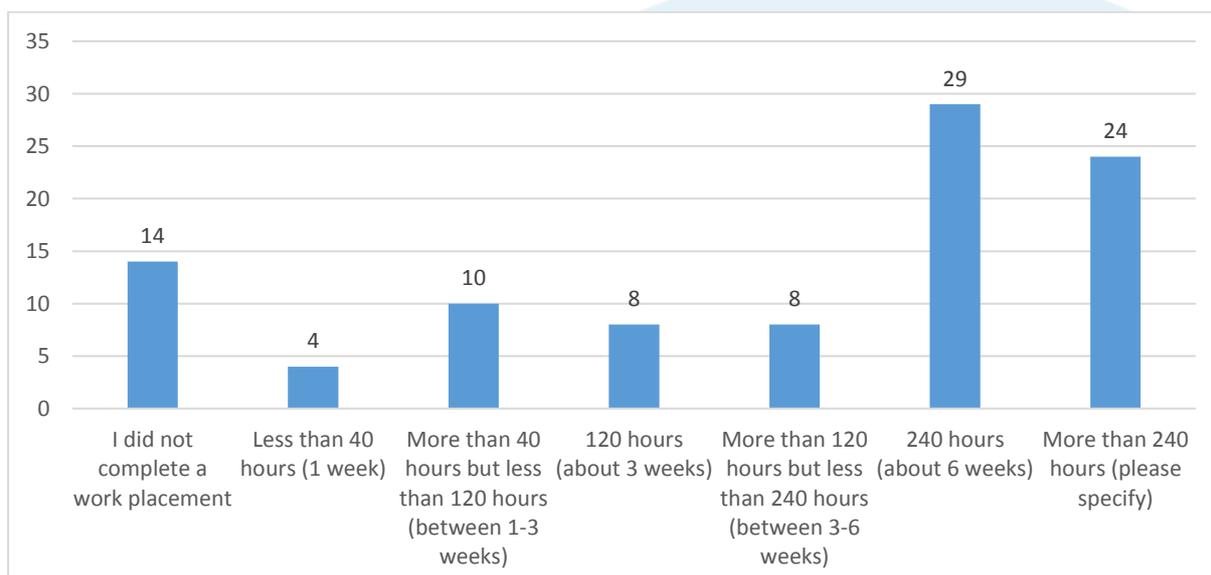


\*Blended – combination of face to face and online

### Comments

Just over 20% of educators indicated that their training had been 'all online'. There is some concern in the sector about the prevalence and effectiveness of online training as the only mode of delivery for children's education and care qualifications.

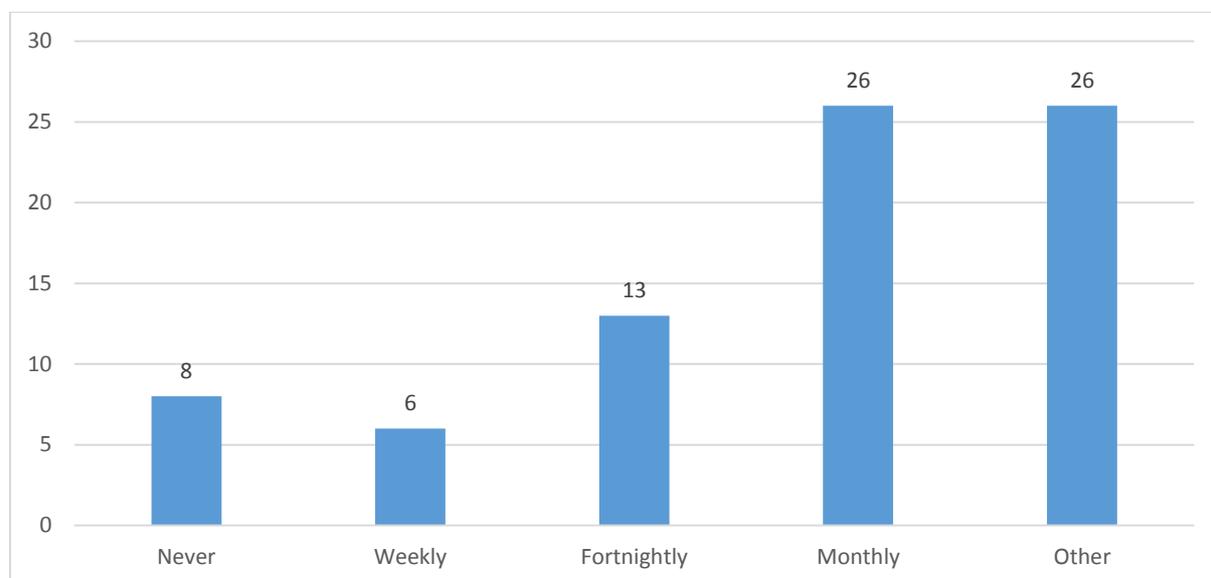
### As part of the qualification, did you complete a work placement? If so, in total, approximately how many hours did you spend in the workplace as part of the qualification?



### Comments

Nearly 30% of respondents spent less than the minimum required hours by the Training Package on work placement. However, it is worth noting that, given the timeframe of the past three years, some respondents may have been completing older qualifications where work placement was not mandatory.

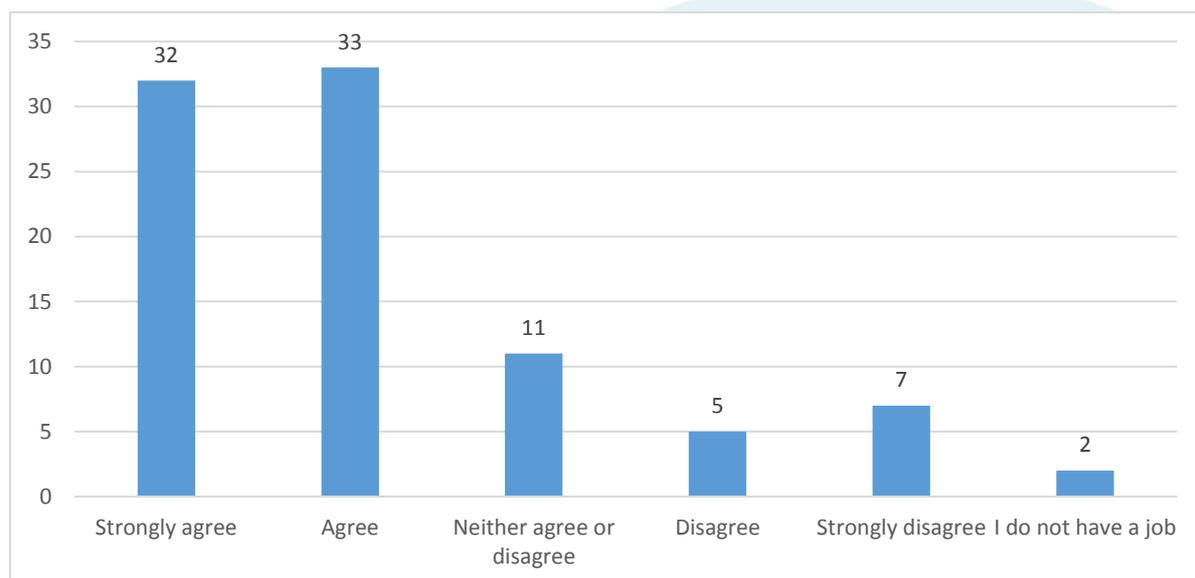
How often did the trainer/assessor/teacher visit you on work placement?



**Comments**

There was huge variation in the number of times students were visited by their trainer/teacher/assessor during work placement among the just over 30% who answered 'other' and then provided details. Frequencies nominated ranged from hardly ever, once or twice to regular visits of once per term or placement block or every 3, 6, 8 or 12 weeks. Given the variety of work placement experiences (some multiple short blocks, other single longer blocks), these responses of themselves are not surprising.

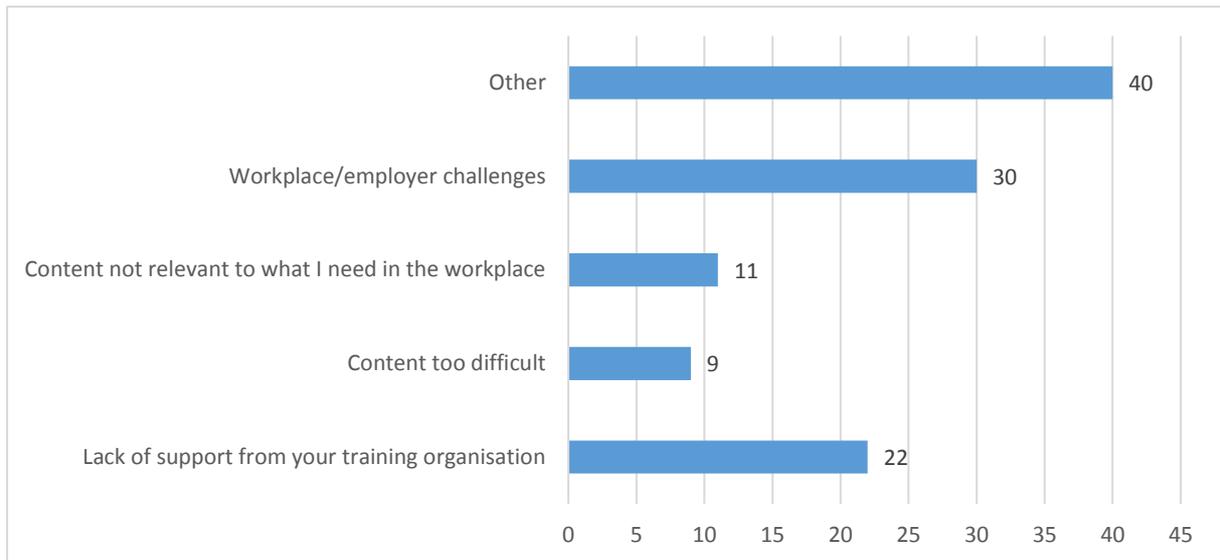
Do you think what you have learnt from completing the qualification has adequately prepared you for work in children's education and care?



**Comments**

Responses to this question revealed a mismatch between educator and employer perspectives. While 72.3% of educators felt adequately prepared for work, across all qualifications, over 60% of employers answered 'no' or 'somewhat' to the question of whether graduates were suitably skilled.

What, if any training-related challenges did you experience in completing your qualification?



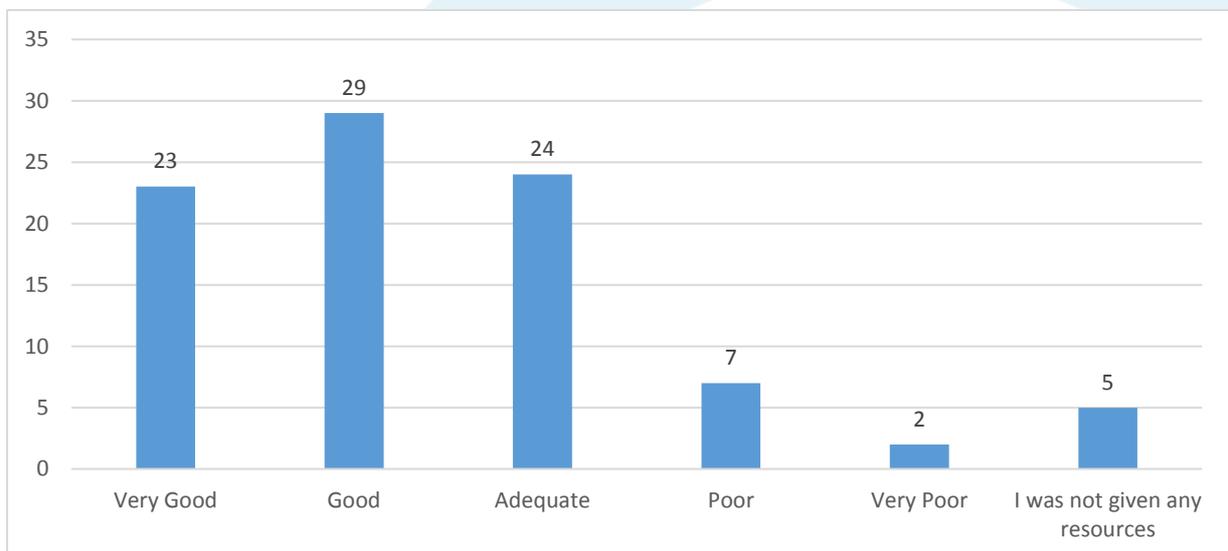
### Comments

Educator comments about challenges were very varied without a consistent pattern. These included comments that training was:

- good – no challenges
- too superficial, too basic
- too difficult and too much for the level
- repetitive
- not always relevant

Interestingly, workplace / employer challenges were nominated as a more regular challenges than lack of support from the training organisation.

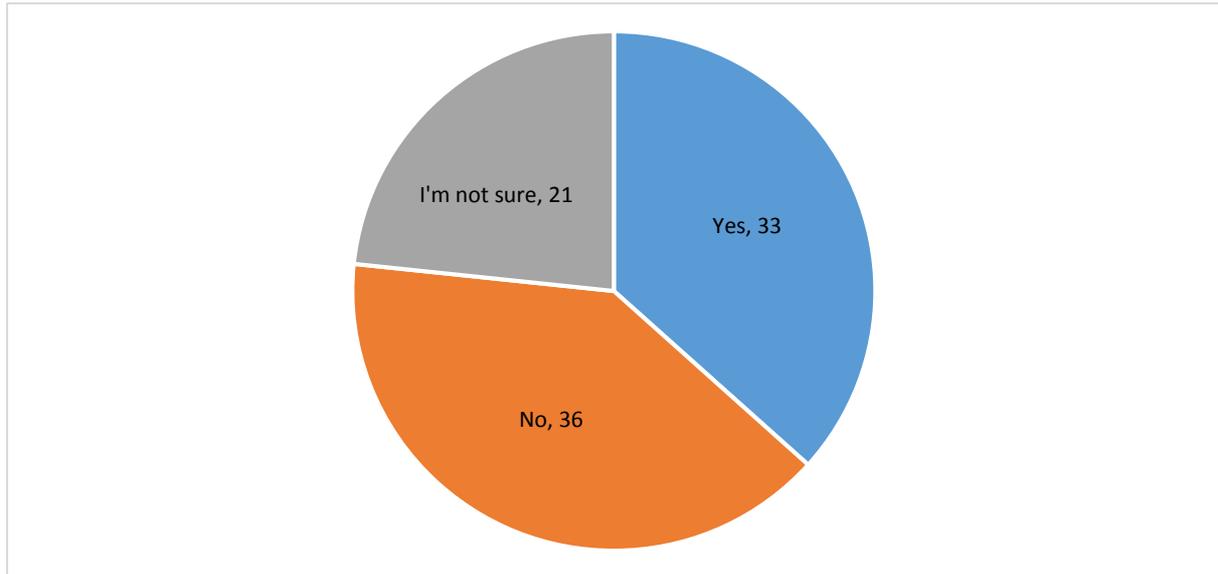
How would you rate the learning resources e.g. textbooks, video links, reading, tasks, provided to you by the training organisation?



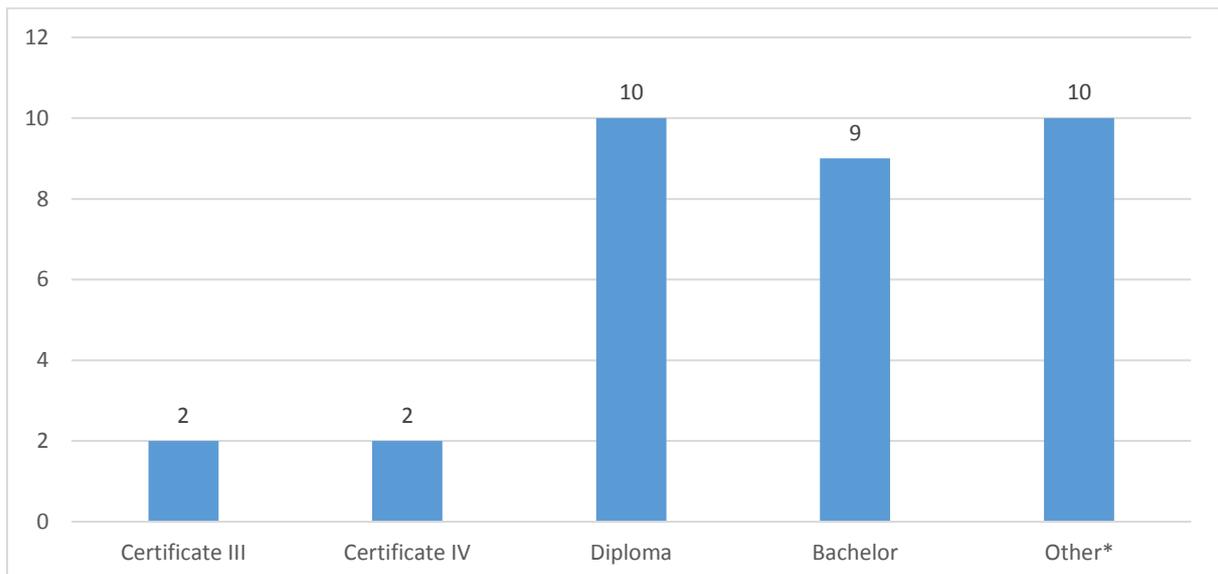
## Comments

Again, there is variation in educator responses. The fact that nearly 60% rated learning resources as either very good or good is a positive, and this rose to nearly 85% when the 'adequate' response was included.

Are you planning on undertaking any further study in the next 12 months?



Please specify at what level



\*Other included: Masters, Advanced Diploma and non-accredited training

## Comments

While a smaller number of educators gave a response to questions about further study, feedback suggests that educators are significantly involved in ongoing education.

### General comments

General comments about qualifications and RTOs were received from around a third of educator respondents. These were quite varied and personal in nature, but overall there were equal numbers of positive and negative comments about training organisations.