

**Evaluation of the Extent  
and Nature of Use of the  
*Preschool Curriculum Guidelines***

**Final Report**



**QUEENSLAND  
SCHOOL  
CURRICULUM  
COUNCIL**

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## Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| List of Displays.....   | v   |
| Acknowledgments.....  | vi  |
| Executive Summary.....  | vii |
| 1. Introduction .....   | 1   |
| 1.1 Purposes of the Evaluation.....   | 1   |
| 1.2 The <i>Preschool Curriculum Guidelines</i> .....                                  | 1   |
| 1.3 Evaluation Focus .....  | 3   |
| 1.4 Evaluation Approach.....  | 4   |
| 1.4.1 Survey.....   | 4   |
| 1.4.2 Interviews – Personnel in Preschools, Kindergartens and Childcare Centres..     | 5   |
| 1.4.3 Interviews – Tertiary Education Institutions .....                              | 5   |
| 1.4.4 Interviews – Preschool Age Education Authorities .....                          | 5   |
| 1.4.5 Instruments .....   | 6   |
| 2. Reflection of Current and Emerging Views.....                                      | 6   |
| 2.1 Survey.....   | 6   |
| 2.2 Interview: Administrators .....   | 8   |
| 2.3 Interview: Key Organisations and Tertiary Educators .....                         | 8   |
| 2.4 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 8   |
| 3. Influence on Curriculum Offerings .....  | 9   |
| 3.1 Survey.....   | 9   |
| 3.2 Interviews: Teachers and Childcare Workers.....                                   | 13  |
| 3.3 Interviews: Administrators.....   | 18  |
| 3.4 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 19  |
| 4. Meeting Diverse Needs of Children .....  | 20  |
| 4.1 Survey.....   | 20  |
| 4.2 Interviews: Administrators.....   | 22  |
| 4.3 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 23  |
| 5. Effects on Preschools, Kindergartens and Childcare Centres.....                    | 23  |
| 5.1 Survey.....   | 23  |
| 5.2 Interview: Teachers and Childcare Workers.....                                    | 25  |
| 5.3 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 26  |
| 6. Contribution to Efficiency in Preschools, Kindergartens And Childcare Centres .... | 27  |
| 6.1 Survey.....   | 27  |
| 6.2 Interviews—Administrators .....   | 29  |
| 6.3 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 30  |
| 7. Interfacing with Year 1 .....  | 30  |
| 7.1 Survey.....   | 30  |
| 7.2 Interview: Administrators .....   | 31  |
| 7.3 Interview: Key Organisations and Tertiary Educators .....                         | 32  |
| 7.4 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 32  |
| 8. Needs of School Authorities .....  | 33  |
| 8.1 Interviews: Key Organisations .....   | 33  |
| 8.2 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 34  |
| 9. Pre-Service Courses.....   | 35  |
| 9.1 Interview: Tertiary Educators .....   | 35  |
| 9.2 Summary and Conclusions.....  | 37  |
| 10. Promotion of Familiarity and Uptake.....  | 37  |
| 10.1 Survey.....  | 37  |
| 10.1.1 Raising Awareness (Item 22).....   | 37  |
| 10.1.2 Encouraging Use (Item 23).....   | 38  |

|      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| 10.2 | Interviews: Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers and Childcare Workers ..... | 38 |
| 10.3 | Interviews: Administrators.....   | 39 |
| 10.4 | Interviews: Key Organisations .....   | 39 |
| 10.5 | Summary and Conclusions.....  | 40 |
| 11.  | Enhancing Awareness and Uptake.....   | 42 |
| 11.1 | Discussion .....  | 42 |
| 11.2 | Summary and Conclusions.....  | 43 |
| 12.  | Implications for Council Policy and Practice on Preschool Education .....   | 44 |
| 12.1 | Discussion .....  | 44 |
| 12.2 | Summary and Conclusions.....  | 45 |
| 13.  | Implications for Curriculum Change Processes.....                           | 46 |
| 13.1 | Discussion .....  | 46 |
| 13.2 | Summary and Conclusions.....  | 48 |
|      | Appendix 1: Survey Form .....   | 51 |
|      | Appendix 2: Survey Sample.....  | 54 |
|      | Appendix 3: Interview Schedules.....  | 56 |
|      | Appendix 4: Survey Results Summary .....                                    | 61 |
|      | Appendix 5: Special Needs Encountered .....                                 | 62 |

## List of Displays

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Display 1: Survey Results: Reflection of Current and Emerging Views (Item 21)—Chart of Percentages.....   | 6  |
| Display 2: Survey Results: Influence of Guidelines on Preschool Programs (Item 4) by Familiarity with Guidelines (Item 3)—Frequency Table .....   | 10 |
| Display 3: Survey Results: Familiarity with the Guidelines (Item 3) By Site Type—Frequency Table .....  | 10 |
| Display 4: Survey Results: Familiarity with the Guidelines (Item 3) by Site Type—Chart of Percentages.....  | 11 |
| Display 5: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Made Preschool Program More Effective (Item 7) by Site Type—Chart of Percentages .....   | 11 |
| Display 6: Survey Results: Influence of Guidelines on Preschool Program (Item 7) by Site Type—Frequency Table .....   | 12 |
| Display 7: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Helped Make Program More Effective (Item 7) for Cases where Guidelines were at least Moderately Influential (Item 4)—Chart of Percentages..... | 13 |
| Display 8: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Met Needs of Queensland Preschool Age Children (Item 6)—Chart of Percentages .....   | 20 |
| Display 9: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Served Diverse Needs of Children (Item 12)—Chart of Percentages .....  | 21 |
| Display 10: Survey and Interview Results: Extent to which Guidelines Served Diverse Needs of All Students (Item 12)—For Sites Where Special Needs Reported—Chart of Percentages.....        | 21 |
| Display 11: Survey and Interview Results: Extent Guidelines Served Diverse Needs of All Students—For Sites with Acute or High Incidence of Special Needs.....                               | 22 |
| Display 12: Survey Results: Items Related to Impact on the Work of Preschool or Kindergarten Teachers and Childcare Workers—Chart of Percentages.....                                       | 24 |
| Display 13: Survey Results: Impact on the Work of Kindergarten or Preschool Teachers and Childcare Workers—Chart of Means.....  | 24 |
| Display 14: Survey Results: Item 8—Extent Guidelines Improved the Efficiency of Developing Curriculum for Preschool Age Children—Chart of Percentages.....                                  | 27 |
| Display 15: Survey Results: Prominence of Guidelines in Professional Development (Item 18)—Chart of Percentages .....   | 28 |
| Display 16: Survey Results: Prominence of Guidelines in Professional Development (Item 8)—Table of Means .....  | 28 |
| Display 17: Survey Results: Contribution of Guidelines to Value and Efficiency of Professional Development—Chart of Percentages .....   | 29 |
| Display 18: Survey Results: Interfacing Between Preschool and Year 1—Chart of Percentages.....  | 31 |
| Display 19: Interview Results: Prominence of Guidelines in Pre-service Teacher Education  | 36 |

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We acknowledge the valuable contribution made by all who took part in surveys and interviews, including staff of state schools, Catholic schools, independent schools, childcare centres, community kindergartens and Queensland tertiary education institutions providing preparation for early childhood education and childcare.

## Executive Summary

### The Project

Queensland School Curriculum Council published the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* in 1998 in order to:

- provide teachers and administrators with a framework for an effective preschool curriculum
- guide teachers' reflections on their beliefs and practices and identify key areas for consideration in their curriculum decision making
- highlight the intrinsic value of preschool education and its contribution to establishing foundations for lifelong learning.

The Guidelines provided Queensland teachers in preschool settings with a framework document for curriculum development for the first time, extending thinking about the preschool curriculum through the construct of seven Foundation Learning Areas. The document sought to recognise and affirm the best of current practice.

The Guidelines were intended to describe ways to promote play-based learning and to provide a shared language for teachers to use when communicating with others. They sought to strengthen partnerships between the different providers and between parents, teachers and colleagues. The central component of a preschool program was described as understanding children. Play was promoted as the major vehicle for learning within a flexible learning environment.

The seven Foundation Learning Areas provided a new framework for monitoring learning and planning. They were designed to build on children's learning in their families and communities and at the same time to provide a basis for the key learning areas in Years 1 to 10.

The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* recognised the importance of experiences to help children develop early literacy and numeracy understandings, suggesting strategies for developing these understandings within children's play and through interactions with competent readers and writers.

### The Evaluation

This is a timely evaluation.

A major educational discussion about the universal provision of a full-time preparatory year commenced in 2001, with a Cabinet decision to direct an Inter-departmental Working Party to consider options for a full-time preparatory year.

In December 2001, the Queensland School Curriculum Council commissioned the present evaluation to provide information that would inform the future development of curriculum documents related to preschool education in Queensland.

In March 2002, as the data collection for the present evaluation was in its final days, the Premier announced a major set of Education and Training Reforms for the Future, including a trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education. A new Early Childhood Education Unit, established within Education Queensland, will oversee the trial processes.

The present evaluation preceded the Government's 4 March announcement, but its results will be highly relevant to the development and implementation of guidelines for pre-Year 1 education.

The evaluation also preceded the 1 July 2002 amalgamation of the Queensland School Curriculum Council, the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority to form the Queensland Studies Authority. The findings of the evaluation will be referred to the newly created authority.

The purpose of the present evaluation was to provide advice on:

- the extent and nature of the implementation of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*
- the extent to which the Guidelines is meeting the needs of children and their teachers or caregivers
- the effectiveness of the Guidelines in assisting in the construction of a preschool curriculum at the local level
- the factors which are associated with a high level of uptake of the Guidelines
- the extent to which the Guidelines facilitates the effective interfacing with Year 1 programs
- the extent to which the Guidelines effectively serves the diverse needs and interests of all children, irrespective of background or personal characteristics
- further work which the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) may appropriately undertake in relation to preschool education and in particular, to enhance the implementation of the Guidelines.

The fundamental approach in the evaluation was the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of information on the opinions and experiences of:

- teachers or caregivers in establishments currently providing preschool education to Queensland children
- organisations with a direct interest or stake in preschool education (administration, regulation, pre-service education etc.).

Data collection had four main components:

- a survey of preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers
- interviews with personnel connected with preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres, including teachers, childcare workers, administrators and parents of enrolled children
- interviews with the major authorities involved in education of preschool age children, including Education Queensland, Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC), Association of Independent Schools, Queensland Inc. (AISQ), Creche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland (C&K) and the Department of Families
- interviews with representatives of the tertiary education institutions in Queensland that provide pre-service education for prospective early childhood schoolteachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers.

The main component of the data collection was a survey of teachers in preschools and kindergartens and childcare workers in childcare centres. The sample (N=160) was designed to allow separate results for:

- preschools attached to state schools
- preschools attached to Catholic schools
- preschools attached to Independent schools
- community kindergartens affiliated with C&K
- private childcare centres.

The results of the data collection are presented in the body of the report in a series of graphs and tables, with extensive discussion. The conclusions of the evaluation are reproduced below, organised by the 12 focus questions that formed the basis of the evaluation.



## Conclusions

**Focus Question 1:** To what extent does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* reflect current and emerging views of early childhood education and curriculum development? (Section 2)

**Conclusion:** When the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* was published in 1998, it reflected current views on early childhood education to a high extent, but changing views and situations in recent times require that the Guidelines be revised.

**Focus Question 2:** How familiar are educators in the preschool year with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, and to what extent has it directly influenced curriculum offerings for preschool aged children? (Section 3)

**Conclusion:** Familiarity with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* and its influence on programs for preschool age children were High or Very High in the majority of Catholic preschools, state preschools and community kindergartens. Familiarity and influence were at least moderate in most independent schools and childcare centres but Low or Very Low in many. Where the Guidelines had been influential on the program for preschool age children, the effect had clearly been to make the program more effective.

**Focus Question 3:** How well does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with special needs such as Indigenous children, children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, children in rural or isolated areas, children with a disability and children who are socially or economically disadvantaged? (Section 4)

**Conclusion:** Most preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres have found the Guidelines effective in meeting the needs of a very wide range of children of preschool age. Some sites with high incidences of special needs may need further information or support to interpret the Guidelines in their particular situations.

**Focus Question 4:** What is the extent and nature of the impact of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* upon the work of preschool teachers, and workers in childcare centres and kindergartens? (Section 5)

**Conclusion:** The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* has had significant positive impact upon the work of those preschool and kindergarten teachers and childcare workers who were at least moderately familiar with it, by:

- clarifying their role
- improving their satisfaction with their work as teachers and childcare workers
- increasing the quality of their work as teachers and childcare workers
- enhancing their observations of children
- enhancing their ability to link planning to children's interests
- improving communication with parents
- reaffirming and validating their existing preschool programs.

**Focus Question 5:** In what ways has the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* led to greater efficiencies (in areas such as curriculum development or professional development) in the preschool year in preschools, childcare centres and community kindergartens? (Section 6)

**Conclusion:** Efficiencies have resulted from application of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* to program planning in preschools, kindergartens or childcare centres and to professional development activities for preschool and kindergarten teachers and childcare workers.

**Focus Question 6:** Does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* facilitate interfacing with policies, practices and programs in Year 1? (Section 7)

**Conclusion:** The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* effectively facilitates interfacing with policies and practices in Year 1.

**Focus Question 7:** To what extent has the initiative of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* met the needs of the three school authorities represented on QSCC? (Section 8)

**Conclusion:** The introduction of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* has met, to a high extent, the needs of Education Queensland, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and The Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc. for an approved curriculum document for preschool education in Queensland. Some AISQ member schools have not taken up the Guidelines for various reasons, some indicating that the document may not be suitable for the kinds of preparatory schooling they provide. Likely changes to the configuration of schooling in Queensland will require a new or revised set of guidelines for the education of children prior to Year 1.

**Focus Question 8:** To what extent is the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* influential in pre-service courses? (Section 9)

**Conclusion:** The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* is commonly used as a text in the pre-service preparation of preschool teachers by tertiary institutions in Queensland, but does not feature in general primary courses.

**Focus Question 9:** What processes appear to have been efficient or inefficient in promoting familiarity with and the uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*? (Section 10)

**Conclusion:** Professional development workshops on the Guidelines have been very effective in promoting familiarity with the Guidelines, but the cost of such workshops may be too high initially for some childcare centres, community kindergartens and independent schools, and too high to maintain at system level for Catholic or state schools. Efficient processes for promoting familiarity with and the uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* appear to be:

- facilitation of networking for preschool and kindergarten teachers and childcare workers to discuss and share ideas on the application of the Guidelines
- development of sections of the Guidelines in alternative formats
- provision of updates and newsletters, including practical suggestions on applying the Guidelines to planning, teaching and evaluation.

**Focus Question 10:** In the light of answers to the above, what policies and practices should the Queensland Studies Authority undertake in relation to the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, and more broadly, to preschool education? (Section 11)

**Conclusion:** The Queensland Studies Authority should consider enhancing awareness, influence and uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* or subsequent curriculum documents for pre-Year 1 education by:

- developing a framework and other materials to support the planning for a new round of workshops by the key organisations
- negotiating with C&K and the Department of Families on how the QSA might contribute to development of forms of in-service that are more readily accessible or affordable for kindergarten teachers and childcare workers
- developing modules that provide examples of ways the Guidelines can be applied in the planning and teaching processes

- including provision for school or centre administration, teaching staff in Years 1 to 7 and the children's parents in any information or in-service materials
- strengthening its partnership with the Early Childhood Teachers Association to encourage networking among early childhood teachers by providing information flow in forms such as updates and newsletters, and by providing speakers and other resources for network meetings.

**Focus Question 11:** In the light of the above, what action should the Authority take in relation to enhancing the levels of awareness of, influence of and uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*? (Section 12)

**Conclusion:** The main factor currently influencing preschool education is the Government's recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education. This event gives rise to the need for new guidelines for pre-Year 1 education in Queensland. In response to the need, the Queensland Studies Authority should:

- seek the cooperation of Education Queensland to establish systematic processes to capture and interpret the experiences of schools participating in the trial
- identify the emerging needs of preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres across Queensland in relation to curriculum for pre-Year 1
- apply the information from these processes to the development of new guidelines for a full-time year of pre-Year 1 education
- work with the relevant key organisations to strengthen and maintain networking among early childhood educators in Queensland in order to maximise the success of the new guidelines.

**Focus Question 12:** In the light of the above, what lessons can the Authority learn in relation to the process of introducing a curriculum change such as that represented by the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*? (Section 13)

**Conclusion:** The evaluation findings indicate the following lessons for the introduction of a curriculum change such as that represented by the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*:

- New curriculum documents need to be supplemented by material that gives practical examples of how the document can be applied in various situations.
- Curriculum documents need to be published in various formats, such as single-topic excerpts or schematic charts, to assist with the processes of conceptualisation and integration.
- It is not sufficient to publish a new curriculum document, promote it and then leave it. Ongoing processes are needed to maintain development and provide for newly assigned staff.
- The value of networking should not be underestimated: The introduction of curriculum change should include processes to cultivate and maintain networking among practitioners.
- It seems too soon yet for heavy reliance on the Internet for professional development or networking activities associated with a curriculum change although the situation could soon change.
- Some form of dialogue may be required to identify whether particular independent schools or childcare centres have needs that are not met by a proposed curriculum document and whether amendments should be undertaken to allow for those needs.
- Within the limitations of QSA's mandate, professional campaigns to inform parents and achieve their support should be considered in the process of introducing curriculum change.

- During introduction of curriculum change, there is a need to highlight the nature of the differences from the previous situation, and to encourage discussion of the main concepts over time, stressing that the desired changes represent a direction or path to be followed, rather than an event that happens in an instant. This needs to be done with care to avoid the implication that what the practitioner has been doing up to that point is wrong.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purposes of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide advice on:

- the extent and nature of the implementation of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* in preschools attached to schools, childcare centres and community kindergartens
- the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* is meeting the needs of Queensland children of preschool age and their teachers/carers
- the effectiveness of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* in assisting in the construction of a preschool curriculum at a localised level
- the factors which are associated with a high level of uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*
- the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* facilitates the effective interfacing with Year 1 curriculum programs
- the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* effectively serves the diverse needs and interests of all children, irrespective of background or personal characteristics
- further work which the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) may appropriately undertake in relation to preschool education and in particular, to enhance the implementation of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*. In July 2002, the Queensland School Curriculum Council amalgamated with the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority to form the Queensland Studies Authority.

## 1.2 The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*

Queensland School Curriculum Council published the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* in 1998.

The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* was the first curriculum document published by the Queensland School Curriculum Council. The document was designed to:

- provide teachers and administrators with a framework to assist in developing, implementing and evaluating an effective preschool curriculum
- guide teachers' reflections on their beliefs and practices and identify key areas for consideration in their curriculum decision making
- highlight the intrinsic value of preschool education and its contribution to establishing foundations for lifelong learning.

The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* and associated materials were developed over two years by officers of the Queensland School Curriculum Council in collaboration with the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc., the Creche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland, Education Queensland, the Office of Child Care and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission.

Wide consultation with people interested in preschool education was invited throughout the developmental process. The guidelines were trialled in 30 preschool settings in different parts of Queensland and with affiliations to different authorities. The feedback from the consultative process and the trial was used to refine the materials.

The document provided Queensland teachers in preschool settings with a framework document for curriculum development for the first time, extending thinking about the preschool curriculum through the construct of Foundation Learning Areas and emphasising the social and cultural contexts in which children's learning has occurred within their families and communities as well as the social and cultural context of learning in preschool settings. The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* sought to recognise and affirm the best of current practice in preschool settings.

The intention of the Guidelines was to describe, rather than prescribe, ways in which teachers might promote play-based learning and to provide a shared language for teachers to use when communicating with others. They sought to strengthen partnerships between the different providers and between parents, teachers and colleagues.

The central component of a preschool program described in the Guidelines was understanding children. Play continued to be promoted as the major vehicle for learning. The establishment of a flexible learning environment and the development of partnerships with parents, children and colleagues were also identified for their contribution to effective preschool learning.

The description of seven Foundation Learning Areas provided a new framework for consideration when monitoring learning and planning. These Foundation Learning Areas build on children's learning in their families and communities. They also provide a basis for the key learning areas that form the core of the curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling. The Foundation Learning Areas are: *Thinking, Communicating, Sense of self and others, Health and physical understanding, Social living and learning, Cultural understanding and Understanding environments.*

The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* also recognises the importance of children's engagement in experiences that will help them develop early literacy and numeracy understandings, suggesting a range of strategies for developing these understandings within children's play and through interactions with competent readers and writers.

A major educational discussion about the universal provision of a full-time preparatory year commenced in 2001, with a Cabinet decision to direct an Interdepartmental Working Party to consider options for the implementation of a full-time preparatory year in Queensland. The Minister for Education directed the Council to provide a report in July 2001 that would contain:

- an outline of the appropriateness/limitations of the current Queensland *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* for use in a full-time preparatory year
- a concise analysis of syllabuses or curriculum guidelines used by Queensland non-government schools currently providing a full-time preparatory year (including assessment frameworks where they exist)
- a comparative analysis of interstate and international best practice syllabuses or curriculum frameworks for a preparatory year with schooling arrangements similar to Queensland's

Related to this, should the Council consider that new curriculum guidelines for a preparatory year would be required, the Council was further directed to provide advice on the rationale and key components for curriculum guidelines or syllabi designed specifically for a preparatory year, with possible implementation strategies, timeframes and cost estimates for their development.

In December 2001, the Council commissioned the present evaluation to inform the future development of curriculum documents related to preschool education in Queensland. The evaluation was to provide a final report in May 2002.

On 4 March 2002, the Premier of Queensland announced major Education and Training Reforms for the Future, including a trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education.

The two-year trial is intended to help the Government answer these questions:

- How important is extra preparation in improving 'school-readiness' and educational outcomes?
- Do all, or only some, children need extra preparation?
- Should extra preparation mean a full year?

- Where should this happen?
- Who should provide it?
- Should we adjust the school starting age?

A new Early Childhood Education Unit, established within Education Queensland, will oversee the trial processes. A Reference Group—including the Queensland Teachers' Union, Primary Principals' Association, community and private childcare sectors, parents and others—will also be established to provide advice to the Minister on early education issues.

The present evaluation preceded the Government's announcement on 4 March, but its results will be highly relevant to the development of new guidelines for pre-Year 1 education.

### 1.3 Evaluation Focus

The focus questions for the evaluation were:

1. To what extent does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* reflect current and emerging views of early childhood education and curriculum development?
2. How familiar are educators in the preschool year with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, and to what extent has it directly influenced curriculum offerings for preschool aged children?
3. How well does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with special needs such as Indigenous children, children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, children in rural or isolated areas, children with a disability and children who are socially or economically disadvantaged?
4. What is the extent and nature of the impact of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* upon the work of preschool teachers, and workers in childcare centres and kindergartens?
5. In what ways has the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* led to greater efficiencies (in areas such as curriculum development or professional development) in the preschool year in preschools, childcare centres and community kindergartens?
6. Does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* facilitate interfacing with policies, practices and programs in Year 1?
7. To what extent has the initiative of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* met the needs of the three school authorities represented on QSCC?
8. To what extent is the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* influential in pre-service courses?
9. What processes appear to have been efficient or inefficient in promoting familiarity with and the uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*?
10. In the light of answers to the above, what policies and practices should the Queensland Studies Authority undertake in relation to the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, and more broadly, to preschool education?
11. In the light of the above, what action should the Authority take in relation to enhancing the levels of awareness of, influence of and uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*?
12. In the light of the above, what lessons can the Authority learn in relation to the process of introducing a curriculum change such as that represented by the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*?

## 1.4 Evaluation Approach

The fundamental approach in the evaluation was the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of information on the opinions and experiences of:

- teachers or caregivers in establishments currently providing preschool education to Queensland children
- organisations with a direct interest or stake in preschool education (administration, regulation, pre-service education etc.).

The evaluation placed a high value in data collection on face-to-face contact and first-hand observation. The data collection was based on a comprehensive sampling frame that took significant background variables into account and allowed the examination of differences according to type of institution.

The main stakeholders for the evaluation were the:

- Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC)
- Minister for Education, Queensland

Other stakeholders were:

- Education Queensland
- The Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc. (AISQ)
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC)
- Queensland Department of Families
- Creche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland (C&K)
- The Lady Gowrie Centre
- Administration, staff and clients of the schools, kindergartens and childcare centres that provide preschool education in Queensland

Data collection had four main components:

- a survey of preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers
- interviews with personnel connected with preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres, including teachers, childcare workers, administrators and parents of enrolled children
- interviews with the major authorities involved in preschool, including Education Queensland, QCEC, AISQ, C&K and the Department of Families
- interviews with representatives of the tertiary education institutions in Queensland that provide pre-service education for prospective early childhood schoolteachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers

### 1.4.1 Survey

The main component of the data collection was a survey of teachers in preschools and kindergartens and childcare workers in childcare centres.

The sample for the survey was designed to allow separate results for:

- preschools attached to state schools
- preschools attached to Catholic schools
- preschools attached to independent schools
- community kindergartens affiliated with C&K
- private childcare centres

The sample included a wide range in the types of school, kindergarten or centre, covering urban, rural and regional city areas, various types of school community including Indigenous communities, and schools for children with special needs.



The sample was selected in two stages. In the first stage, general areas for visits were selected for convenience of travel (South-east Queensland, Central Queensland, Sunshine Coast and hinterland, Far North Queensland). Sites in these areas were selected, within the sampling frame, in a random process using databases published on the websites of AISQ, C&K, Department of Families, Education Queensland and QCEC. In the second phase, the sampling frame was completed in a similar process of random selection from the databases. Data on the sampling frame is included in Appendix 2.

The survey was conducted in two ways. Eighty-four surveys were administered in person during visits to the preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre and 76 were administered by telephone.

Results of the survey are summarised in Appendix 4.

### **1.4.2 Interviews – Personnel in Preschools, Kindergartens and Childcare Centres**

Interviews were held during most of the visits to the preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres. In each of these cases, requests were made for an interview with a teacher or childcare worker, an administrator (principal, director or nominee) or a parent of one of the children. The numbers of interviews of each type were:

teachers and childcare workers: 41  
administrators: 15  
parents: 12.

### **1.4.3 Interviews – Tertiary Education Institutions**

Interviews were held with representatives of the main tertiary institutions providing pre-service education for early childhood teachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers, including:

- Central Queensland University
- Griffith University
- James Cook University
- The Lady Gowrie Child Centre Professional Development Unit
- Queensland University of Technology
- Southbank Institute of TAFE
- University of Southern Queensland

Lady Gowrie and the Southbank Institute of TAFE and some universities offered pre-service courses for childcare workers at the certificate, diploma and degree level (universities only). The universities all offered pre-service courses for a Bachelor of Education degree.

One person from each institution was interviewed. Interviews were conducted individually in a face-to-face situation or by telephone, using the interview questions set out in Appendix 3.

### **1.4.4 Interviews – Preschool Age Education Authorities**

Interviews were held with representatives of the following key organisations with a stake in preschool education:

- Education Queensland
- The Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc.
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission

- Department of Families
- Creche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland
- ABC Child Developmental Learning Centres.

One person from each institution was interviewed individually. Interviews were conducted in person in five cases and by telephone in the other.

### 1.4.5 Instruments

The survey form was printed in three versions, the difference being reference in the instructions and the questions to preschool or kindergarten or childcare centre respectively. A copy of the preschool version of the survey form is shown in Appendix 1.

Each interview followed a planned sequence of questions. The interview schedules are shown in Appendix 3.

## 2. Reflection of Current and Emerging Views

### Focus Question 1

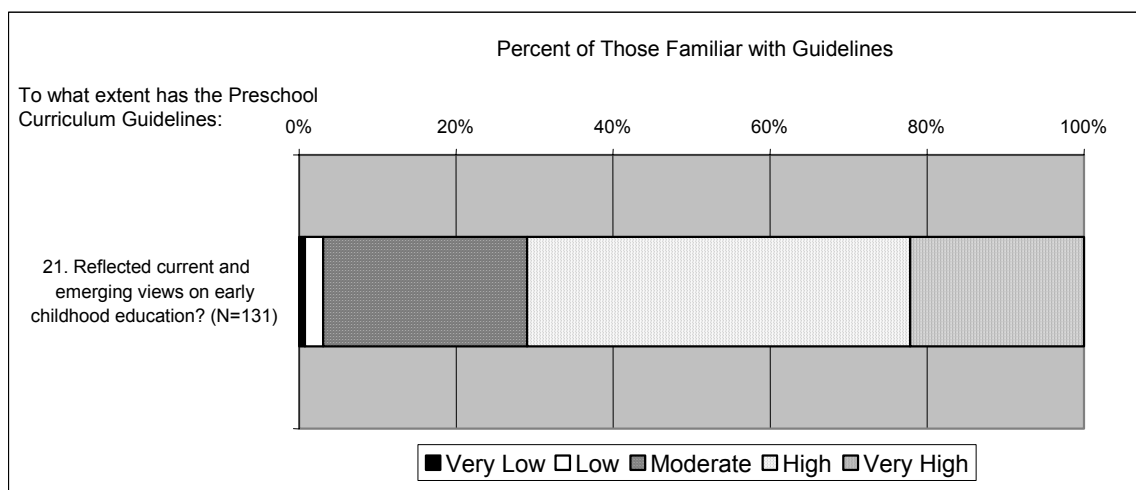
To what extent does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* reflect current and emerging views of early childhood education and curriculum development?

### 2.1 Survey

Survey item 21 asked the teachers/caregivers to rate the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* 'reflected current and emerging views on early childhood education'.

The responses for those familiar with the Guidelines are shown in Display 1<sup>1</sup>. Almost all of the ratings were Moderate or higher, with 71 per cent High or Very High.

**Display 1: Survey Results: Reflection of Current and Emerging Views (Item 21)—Chart of Percentages**



<sup>1</sup> Analysis of the survey data showed that responses to most of the survey items were strongly related to responses to Item 3, which asked respondents to indicate the level of their familiarity with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*. Therefore reporting of the survey results has focused on those respondents who indicated at least a moderate level of familiarity.



## 2.2 Interview: Administrators

The interview for administrators of preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres included an item asking them to rate ‘the degree to which current and emerging views on early childhood education are reflected in the Guidelines’.

Of the 12 administrators who responded to this item, seven indicated High or Very High ratings and five indicated Moderate. Comments varied, with some of those accompanying the moderate ratings indicating a need for the Guidelines to respond to recent changes, for example:

- *It needs to evolve. We have come to a crossroads and need to sort out a direction to go in.*

The administrators’ responses indicate recognition by some that the Guidelines needs to be revisited in the light of changing views and situations.

## 2.3 Interview: Key Organisations and Tertiary Educators

The representatives of the key organisations and the tertiary educators were asked to rate and comment on the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* document reflects current and emerging views of early childhood education.

The consensus among the schooling authorities and other key organisations was that the document reflected current and emerging views to a high degree. There was a sense, in the replies offered, that the document was reflective of preschool practice at the time it was produced:

- *The philosophy is right. It was a grass roots document and because it was, it develops a range of theories that are prevalent in the field. As far as curriculum development goes, it was reflective of the time. (QCEC)*
- *Play remained as an important part of preschool education. Teachers felt that the Guidelines documented for them what was important. (Education Queensland)*
- *I have talked to a lot of teachers across the full spectrum of early childhood beliefs. Almost everyone found a place for themselves in the curriculum guidelines. (AISQ)*

The C&K Association elaborated on perceived shortcomings of the document from a current perspective:

- *I hold great respect for the document and those who developed it. The thinking about early childhood education has moved on with further research and theory. There has been the OECD report on education and care, the Victorian report on preschool education and the research on brain development. The document is not clear on the philosophy that should underlie curriculum development. It tries to link the Foundation Learning Areas with teachers’ views of child development. Teachers use the language but don’t believe in it.*

Apparently, from the perspective of tertiary educators and key organisations, the Guidelines document was in tune with views about preschool education that were current when it was framed, but views are changing.

## 2.4 Summary and Conclusions

Most of the ratings of the teachers and childcare workers (71%) were High or Very High. Most of the remainder were Moderate.

From the perspective of tertiary educators and key organisations, the Guidelines document was in tune with views about preschool education that were current when it was framed, but views are changing.

The administrators' responses indicate recognition by some that the Guidelines should be revisited in the light of changing views and situations.

Going beyond the interview data, the most evident changes in situations and views are discussed below.

In terms of situations, the most significant development has been the Queensland Government's recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education. According to a media statement on 18 April 2002, the Minister of Education believes that 'Queensland is out of step with other Australian states, which already provide full-time preparatory programs to prepare students for schooling'.

Another situational change is represented by the publication since 1998 of new syllabuses for Years 1 to 10 in several key learning areas. Changes from previous school programs, especially in the early childhood years, can be expected to have implications for preschool education.

In terms of changing views, early childhood education and care continues to be a topic of research and discussion. Since publication of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* in 1998, there have been a number of significant publications on ways of conceptualising the preschool curriculum in various social and cultural contexts. The *OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policies* (DETYA 2000) describes approaches to early childhood education in OECD countries. The response of these diverse cultural contexts to education for young children includes perspectives that range from a knowledge orientation to schools as core social centres where children are viewed as the shared responsibility of parents, the community and government. In other contexts, there has been a move from traditional frameworks for the preschool curriculum towards closer alignment with the curriculum for school aged children.

Another field in which views are changing is represented by the growing interest in research on early brain development by some early childhood educators in Queensland. This work needs examination for its relevance to preschool education. Claims are made by researchers that early childhood experiences are critical to the development of certain structures in the brain and that our decisions to intervene in children's experiences at particular times needs to be informed by the research.

**We conclude that:**

When the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* was published in 1998, it reflected current views on early childhood education to a high extent, but changing views and situations in recent times require that the Guidelines be revised.

### 3. Influence on Curriculum Offerings

Focus Question 2

How familiar are educators in the preschool year with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, and to what extent has it directly influenced curriculum offerings for preschool aged children?

#### 3.1 Survey

Three survey items relate to Focus Question 7:

- Item 3 asked the teachers and childcare workers to indicate their familiarity with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*.
- Item 4 asked to what extent the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had been influential in the development of the preschool program in their preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre.

- Item 7 asked to what extent the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had helped to make their programs for preschool children more effective.

The results for Items 3 and 4 are cross-tabulated in Display 2.

**Display 2: Survey Results: Influence of Guidelines on Preschool Programs (Item 4) by Familiarity with Guidelines (Item 3)—Frequency Table**

| Familiarity (Item 3) | Extent to which Guidelines were Influential in Program (Item 4) |     |          |      |           | Totals |
|----------------------|---|-----|----------|------|-----------|--------|
|                      | Very Low  | Low | Moderate | High | Very High |        |
| Very Low             | 11  | 0   | 1        | 0    | 0         | 12     |
| Low                  | 1   | 3   | 5        | 3    | 1         | 13     |
| Moderate             | 7   | 10  | 22       | 21   | 1         | 61     |
| High                 | 0   | 2   | 15       | 28   | 8         | 53     |
| Very High            | 1   | 1   | 2        | 4    | 12        | 20     |
| Totals               | 20  | 16  | 45       | 56   | 22        | 159    |

Missing=1

Chi-square=132, df=16, p<0.00

Display 2 indicates generally high levels of both familiarity with the guidelines and influence on programs for preschool children:

- Familiarity with the Guidelines was rated as Moderate, High or Very High by 84 per cent of the teachers and childcare workers.
- The influence of the Guidelines was rated as Moderate, High or Very High by 79 per cent of the teachers and childcare workers.

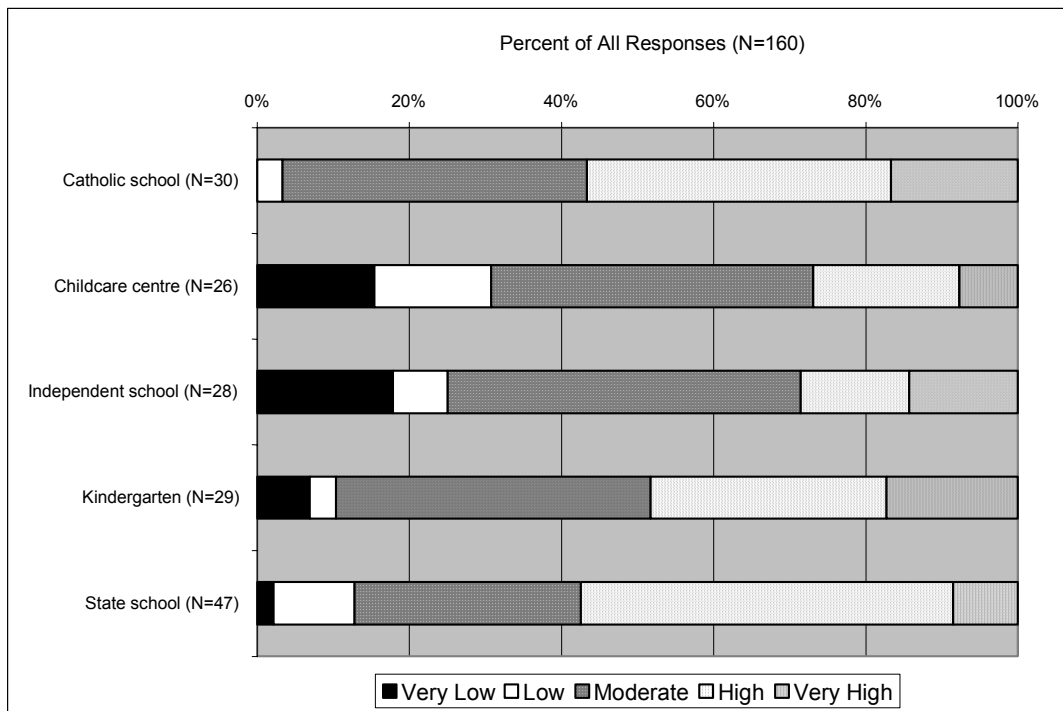
Display 2 shows that familiarity with the Guidelines is strongly related to the influence of the Guidelines on the preschool program. This is probably a two-way relationship, but the nature of the preschool program is likely to be decided to a large extent at school or system levels. In schools or centres where the program is based on the Guidelines, familiarity is likely to be higher among staff than in places where it is not. On this line of reasoning, influence on the program is likely to result in higher familiarity, but familiarity would not necessarily lead to higher influence.

**Display 3: Survey Results: Familiarity with the Guidelines (Item 3) By Site Type—Frequency Table**

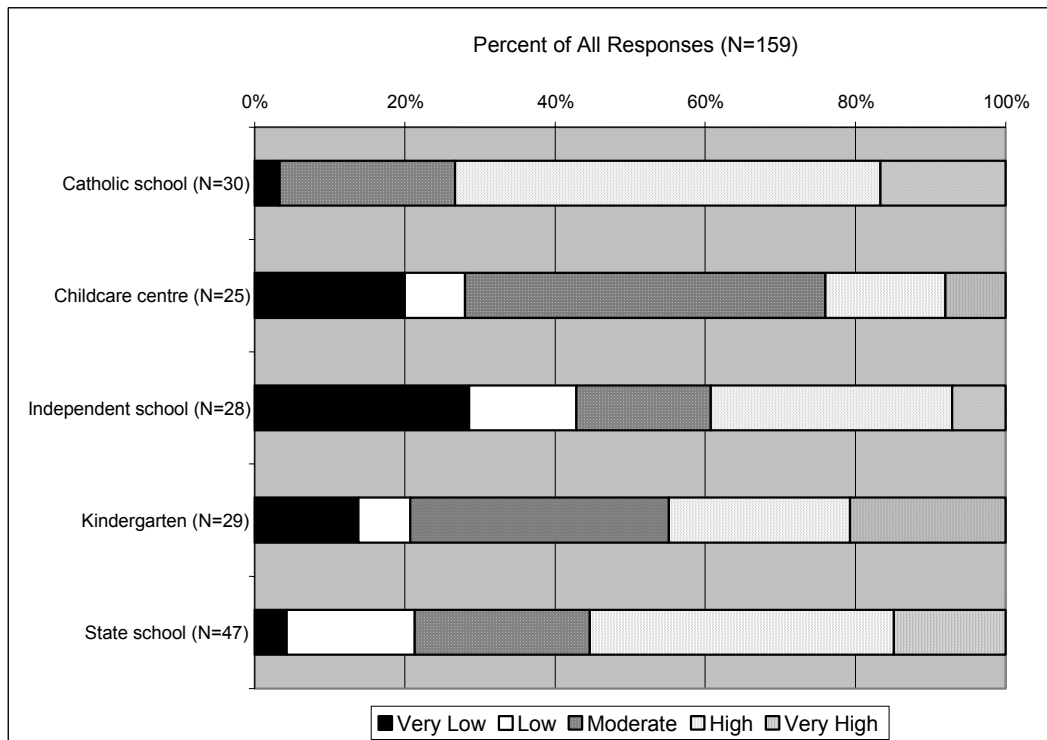
| Type of site       | Familiarity with Guidelines (Item 3) |     |          |      |           | Totals |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-----|----------|------|-----------|--------|
|                    | Very Low                             | Low | Moderate | High | Very High |        |
| Catholic school    | 0                                    | 1   | 12       | 12   | 5         | 30     |
| Childcare centre   | 4                                    | 4   | 11       | 5    | 2         | 26     |
| Independent school | 5                                    | 2   | 13       | 4    | 4         | 28     |
| Kindergarten       | 2                                    | 1   | 12       | 9    | 5         | 29     |
| State school       | 1                                    | 5   | 14       | 23   | 4         | 47     |
| Totals             | 12                                   | 13  | 62       | 53   | 20        | 160    |

Chi-square=26.1, df=16, p=0.053

**Display 4: Survey Results: Familiarity with the Guidelines (Item 3) by Site Type—Chart of Percentages**



**Display 5: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Made Preschool Program More Effective (Item 7) by Site Type—Chart of Percentages**



The study sample was designed to allow separate results for the five types of preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre, namely Catholic preschools, childcare centres, independent schools, kindergartens and state preschools. Familiarity and influence of the Guidelines in the different site types are investigated in Displays 3, 4 and 5.

Displays 3 and 4 indicate that low levels of familiarity with the Guidelines were concentrated in the independent schools and childcare centres (25% and 31% respectively). In the Catholic and state preschools, close to 60 per cent reported being familiar with the Guidelines to a High or Very High extent. This result is probably explained by the knowledge that the Guidelines was adopted at system level in the Catholic and state preschools but many of the independent schools and childcare centres, being independent, have taken different approaches to preschool education.

Displays 5 and 6 show that the influence of the Guidelines on the program for preschool children was highest in the Catholic and state schools. Almost all of the Catholic preschool teachers and close to 80 per cent of the state preschool teachers indicated at least moderate influence on their programs. By contrast, more than 40 per cent of the teachers in the independent schools indicated Low or Very Low influence.

Display 7 shows responses to Survey Item 7, rating the extent to which the Guidelines helped to make the curriculum for preschool age children in the preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre more effective. Display 7 includes only those cases where the influence of the Guidelines on the program was rated as Moderate, High or Very High.

Display 7 indicates that where the Guidelines had been influential in the development of the program for preschool age children, they helped to make the program more effective. More than 60 per cent of the teachers in Catholic and state schools, and close to 60 per cent in independent schools and kindergartens, indicated High or Very High ratings. Childcare workers were more moderate but still predominantly positive in their ratings.

The generally good result here is probably better than it appears, because in the administration of the survey, many respondents commented that they were not willing to give High ratings because the Guidelines had reinforced that they were already providing effective preschool programs, and had not actually improved the programs as such.

**Display 6: Survey Results: Influence of Guidelines on Preschool Program (Item 7) by Site Type—Frequency Table**

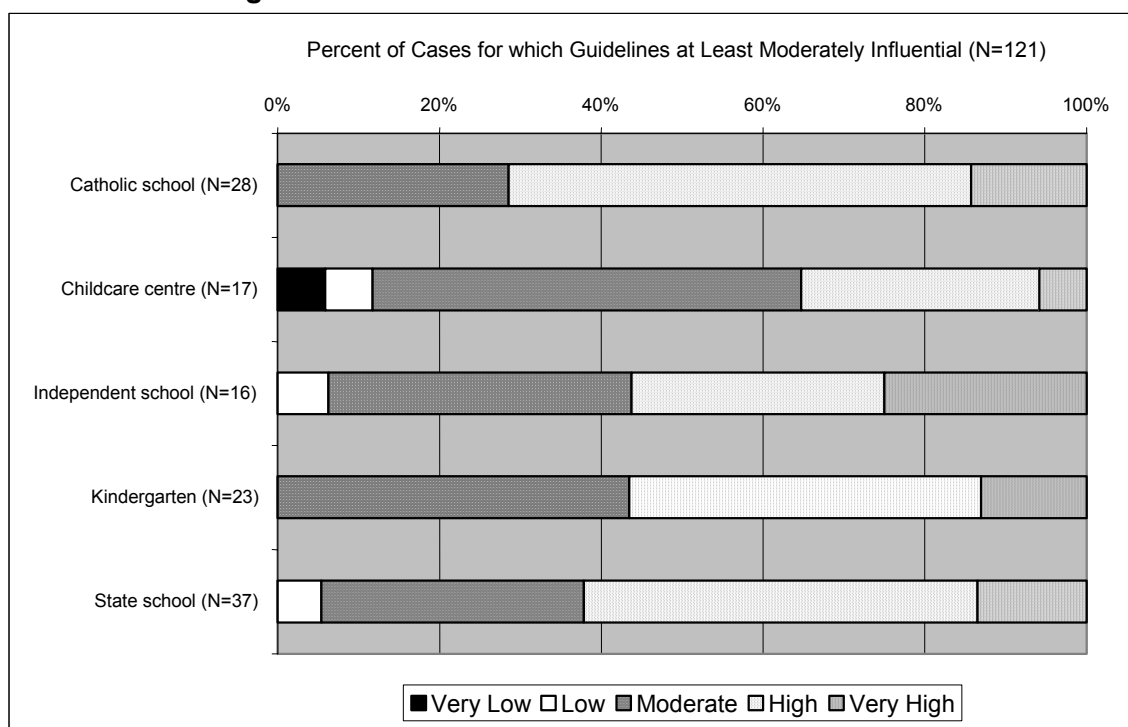
| Type of site       | Extent to which Guidelines Influential in Program (Item 7) |     |          |      |           | Totals |
|--------------------|--|-----|----------|------|-----------|--------|
|                    | Very Low   | Low | Moderate | High | Very High |        |
| Catholic school    | 1  | 0   | 7        | 17   | 5         | 30     |
| Childcare centre   | 5  | 2   | 12       | 4    | 2         | 25     |
| Independent school | 8  | 4   | 5        | 9    | 2         | 28     |
| Kindergarten       | 4  | 2   | 10       | 7    | 6         | 29     |
| State school       | 2  | 8   | 11       | 19   | 7         | 47     |
| Totals             | 20   | 16  | 45       | 56   | 22        | 159    |

Missing=1

Chi-square=33.9, df=16, p=0.0056



**Display 7: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Helped Make Program More Effective (Item 7) for Cases where Guidelines were at least Moderately Influential (Item 4)—Chart of Percentages**



### 3.2 Interviews: Teachers and Childcare Workers

In the interviews, the teachers and childcare workers were asked to elaborate upon their responses to Survey Item 7 by indicating ways in which the preschool program had been affected by the Guidelines. Most of the comments indicated that the Guidelines:

- gave, through the Foundation Learning Areas, a framework to define the program and bring balance to it
- helped refine observation of students
- provided validation for the preschool program
- proved useful in communication with parents about the program and their children's progress.

The Foundation Learning Areas were the focus of much of the change reported. Teachers and childcare workers commented that the Foundation Learning Areas provided them with a wider focus on children and their learning:

- *It helps keep balance in the program - it makes us aware that what the child is has been influenced by a variety of factors outside and inside the preschool.*
- *It changed what we used to call our areas. It probably helped to integrate them more. Now they seem to mesh together and flow to KLAs. Before it seemed to primary teachers that we were talking another language.*
- *It focused on the learning outcomes – what children were actually getting out of it. The outcomes also show you where you are going with the children.*
- *It made me aware of the cultural diversity and I started thinking about different ways to give children ideas of different cultures across the world.*

A few teachers made particular mention of the effects of the Guidelines on their observations of children for planning:

- *It has helped me with observation skills a lot. I have found good guidelines for observing children.*
- *Because of the reflection, there has been more on emphasis on observing children's interest to develop curriculum.*

Several teachers, almost one from each sector, commented that the Guidelines had validated their programs and the value of play for preschool children:

- *It supported what we do. There is pressure from outside to be more structured and bring more formalised reading and writing into the preschool.*
- *I can show employers what I should be doing.*
- *It legitimises play and reminds people not to be too structured.*
- *It validated my role as a preschool teacher and reinforced the value of play.*

A few kindergarten teachers found the Guidelines useful in communication with parents about the program and their children's progress. A typical comment was:

- *It made it more concrete for parents to relate to. The effectiveness comes about through the discussion with parents. The concrete document is an effective tool when dealing with parents.*

Several independent schoolteachers and childcare workers reported that the Guidelines had little impact on their program because their approach to planning was already similar to that of the document:

- *I answered Moderate because we already were doing these things.*

One teacher kept her planning framework in line with the primary:

- *Moderate to low input to mine. Being part of the school, I know what teachers are looking for - thinking, problem-solving, sense of self.*

A few comments from teachers were unclear about the everyday use of the document, but they indicate the document was an influence of the preschool program:

- *I did use a couple of examples on note keeping for observations.*
- *We are rewriting our preschool program so the guidelines have been helpful for that.*

The interview with teachers and childcare workers included an item asking how their program for preschool age children addressed the Guidelines in terms of the key components described in the Guidelines, namely Understanding Children, Partnerships, Flexible Learning Environments, Play and The Foundation Learning Areas.

The results indicate that the Guidelines often represented reference material from a dependable source. The teachers and childcare workers described the Foundation Learning Areas and the Understanding Children sections as having the most impact on their programs. The influences of the other areas – Partnerships, Play and Flexible Learning Areas – were often described in terms of 'reaffirming' traditional practice. The Foundation Learning Areas had strongest influence in Catholic and state preschools.

### **Understanding Children**

According to the Guidelines:

*Children are the focus of the preschool curriculum. In the preschool setting each child is viewed as a valuable and contributing member of the learning community as well as an individual learner with special abilities and needs. Teachers value the similarities and differences between individuals and within and between groups of children. They also consider the way this diversity is constructed through social experiences.*

*Understanding the characteristics of young children and the contexts in which they learn ... provides the context for collecting and analysing information on children as individuals and as members of groups. (p. 13)*

A large number of teachers and childcare workers, representing all sectors, made reference to the Guidelines when answering this question. Several people spoke of the Guidelines as affirming their beliefs on using observations of children to plan:

- *I would say it lines up very well.*
- *All of this is in our program. I recognise these things in our program.*

Quite a few responses made reference to learning from the section:

- *It has become clearer through the guidelines in terms of the different areas to look at the children.*
- *It encourages me to look at all FLAs, which provides more depth and colour than just looking at social, emotional, physical and intellectual areas.*
- *Understanding children is all about using the foundation learning areas effectively.*
- *Observing children, using the example with the post-its in the Guidelines. It's process driven - we provide opportunities for children - we start from where the child is.*

A few described observing children as important to planning programs but made no explicit mention of the Guidelines:

- *From the enrolling form, I find the needs (of children) and observe them for one week before I program.*
- *We definitely want the child to be the centre. We want to plan for individuals and we believe in the developmental philosophy.*
- *A lot of our program is based on observations of children.*
- *It's what you do all day. Understandings of children and parents are so important.*

Two teachers believed understanding children came with experience:

- *For me this comes through experience teaching this age level.*

Some said they did not use the section:

- *I rarely use the guidelines in this aspect - I found it a little too general in this area.*
- *I haven't read it.*
- *It didn't because we base all learning on sensory integration. We use lots of motor planning and dance routines.*

## **Partnerships**

The section of the Guidelines on the key component of Partnerships states:

*Effective partnerships involve consultation, negotiation and collaboration between and among children, teachers, parents, other family members and colleagues. (p. 20)*

Teachers and childcare workers from all sectors divided almost equally into those who talked about partnerships in the breadth discussed in the Guidelines and those who focused on partnerships with parents. Typical responses from the first group are given below. Some made specific mention of the Partnership section of the document in their responses:

- *I found the guidelines fantastic for the idea of partnership. This is what is important in our setting and the guidelines really helped clarify that.*
- *The partnerships part has helped me when I have been observing the children for child-to-child interactions, and in working alongside my aide and valuing her contributions. Also in trying to have a positive partnership with parents.*

- *This is very important for us. It is a very open communication we have with parents. I get on really well with my teacher assistant. There are good partnerships with other teachers. Partnerships are central to our program. Our program could not exist without partnerships - and good ones.*
- *We've tried to. It is OK with staff but it's hard with parents. They are not interested, or working or too busy. We've followed the suggestion in the guidelines.*
- *With home tutors and children. Sometimes regional schools when we go out to cluster groups.*

Almost half of those who answered the question concentrated their efforts on building partnerships with parents. Some made the point that they had always built relationships with parents:

- *We have always worked really strongly with parents and the guidelines have reinforced what we have done.*
- *It has made me aware of the need to continue to build partnerships with parents. Partnerships between teachers and parents are not always comfortable because a parent's love is unconditional and a teacher's love is conditional.*
- *Building partnerships is a huge thing for us but we were doing this before the guidelines came in.*
- *We spend a lot of our day communicating with parents. Most terms we would have three encounters organised with parents. We have a parent group that meets once a month and these focus on education or a particular part of the guidelines.*
- *Parents are limited in what they want to be involved with. We use "Marketing Play".*

### **Flexible Learning Environments**

The section of the document on Flexible Learning Environments states that when teachers are planning, they must make decisions about the physical environment, the social and affective environment, and the use of time. (p. 26)

Only three responses referred specifically to the Guidelines:

- *We do as much as we can in addressing that section, considering our environment.*
- *I used them to think about the broadness of the program.*
- *I always believed that and it is reinforced in the Guidelines.*

The majority spoke of flexibility in terms of following children's interests and adapting the program and the physical environment to accommodate those interests. Some stated that they had always been flexible and a few said the Guidelines had not changed that aspect of their program:

- *The program always changes. The flexible learning environment is based on changing to suit the needs of children. Activities are usually child initiated with teacher input.*
- *When children come up with their own idea I follow through with that. This is a deliberate strategy in our program. We build on and extend children's own ideas. We may leave our planned ideas to follow children's interests as they come up.*
- *The environment changes all the time depending on what children are doing. The building itself is not very flexible but we try. That's what I've always done.*
- *I don't use this part a lot. I agree with the basis of it but this was already part of our whole preschool philosophy.*
- *We have a flexible learning environment and always have.*

Four teachers, three from independent schools and one from a state school, spoke of flexibility in terms of children having a choice of activities:

- *We do phonics first thing then there is time to play. There is free time for exploration. Then maths activity and free exploration again etc. We allow choices among activities for children.*
- *My program includes choice, a wide range of activities.*

Teachers from a school of distance education reported how the Guidelines helped in the provision of flexible learning environments:

- *We include suggestions for the tutors on how they can adapt activities to the local situation. We made a video to illustrate the ideas.*

## **Play**

According to the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*:

*Children learn in many ways, including through observation, interaction, play and real-life experiences. Play, however, is the fundamental medium for young children's learning and is central to an effective preschool curriculum. It is a natural activity for children through which they make meaning of the world around them. Play facilitates all development and is 'an invaluable means for initiating, promoting and sustaining learning within a preschool curriculum framework'.*

Many responses referred to this section of the Guidelines as reaffirming the importance of children learning through their play experiences:

- *It reinforces what I believe in. If only we could have another word to represent what children learn through play.*
- *We can use the document to legitimise our play-based program.*
- *Play is very important in our program and I like how the guidelines give lots of examples of different kinds of play. In a day I would cover most if not all of them.*
- *My program has always been play based and the guidelines have supported me in knowing that what I am doing is the right thing.*

Many spoke of play as central to their program but made no reference to the Guidelines:

- *Play is paramount. It is the focus of all we do. This is the best way children learn.*
- *Play is the work and work is the play. Play should not be taken out of context and transformed into stereotyped activities such as worksheets.*
- *It is the number one component. I work with each child's potential through play.*

A few described play as a component in their program:

- *Play is built into our program although we have structured activity such as phonics as well.*
- *There is free playtime outside.*
- *They have choice - it's play based.*

One state school teacher learned about play this way:

- *A C&K workshop opened my eyes to how to use play for learning.*

## **The Foundation Learning Areas**

According to the Guidelines:

*The foundation learning areas provide a framework for exploring and reflecting on the content component of the preschool curriculum. Exploring content is one component of an effective curriculum and is interwoven with other key components. The foundation learning areas are based on the view that children learn from birth about themselves, others and the world by engaging in ever-widening and increasingly complex social contexts. Learning takes place as children make sense and share their understandings of the world. (p. 33)*

A pattern emerged in the responses to this question:

- The Catholic and state school teachers were most likely to use the Foundation Learning Areas as a starting-point for planning.
- The childcare workers and kindergarten teachers tended to use the Foundation Learning Areas mostly as a reference.
- Most of the independent school teachers did not use the Foundation Learning Areas at all.

Many teachers, with representation to differing degrees across all sectors, used the Foundation Learning Areas as the basis for their programs:

- *It is the heart and soul of our program. I use them as a guide to make sure I am not just doing the same one all the time. It gives balance to the program, catering for more individual needs.*
- *I use these all the time to develop my fortnightly objectives and refer to them in teaching and assessment.*
- *This is where the guidelines have really been important. We use the areas as a check that we cover them all each term. On our weekly planning we refer to them again.*

A few kindergarten and state preschool teachers described the Foundation Learning Areas as having an influence on particular aspects of their programs:

- *We have these posted on the wall and use them to make sure our program is covering all those things.*
- *It probably changed the ways I organise resources and groups.*

Quite a number of teachers, especially kindergarten teachers and childcare workers, used the Foundation Learning Areas as a source of ideas when needed:

- *We use them to give ideas, especially in the sciences.*
- *Not to a big extent. Elements of them are included in the profiles.*
- *It is not prominent in our thinking but we feel that we cover everything. It is there but we aren't thinking about it all the time.*

Four independent school teachers and one kindergarten teacher reported that the Foundation Learning Areas were not used for planning:

- *We are a little bit more directed by the emphases in our Christian school. We have an underlining learning area that is Christian-based that is not really addressed in the guidelines.*
- *We don't pay much attention to them. I could slot them into Gardner's multiple intelligences if I had to.*
- *Our subjects cover these areas, but ours are more similar to the Key Learning Areas.*

### **3.3 Interviews: Administrators**

The interviews with school, kindergarten or centre administrators yielded widely varying results with no clear patterns emerging. Some of the responses on the influence of the Guidelines on programs may illustrate some of the factors operating in the different site types:

- *It's not used. We are constantly observing children and planning in developmental areas. (Childcare centre)*
- *We use it in a marketing way. The state preschool is across the road. Often when children reach preschool age their parents send them to the state pre-school. When I talk to parents I tell them the program is developed based on the guidelines and this gives our program more standing in their eyes. (Childcare centre)*

- *We have a Prep year and the program is part of early primary program based on the KLAs. (Independent school)*
- *They are a reference only for our teachers. (Independent school)*
- *We believe in the foundations and the basis of social emotional and cognitive development of each child. (Catholic school)*
- *Very High because of the preschool teacher's professionalism and her participation in seminars on the guidelines. (Catholic school)*
- *The teacher uses her own experience but does use the Guidelines as a reference document. (state school)*
- *Our preschool teachers run a quality program and use the guidelines effectively. Parents are highly satisfied even though it may not strongly reflect the guidelines. (state school)*
- *One of the benefits is that when you talk to parents at interview time you can clarify the links between the child's education and what they see happening in the program. (Kindergarten)*
- *The guidelines have made us think about what we are doing and where the children are heading. (Kindergarten)*

### **3.4 Summary and Conclusions**

In the Catholic preschools, state preschools and kindergartens, the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* was familiar to most of the teachers and had been influential in the development of their preschool programs. In the childcare centres and independent schools, familiarity and influence were lower, with more than one-quarter in each case rating them Low or Very Low.

In those preschools, kindergartens or childcare centres where influence had been rated as moderate or higher, the great majority of teachers or childcare workers saw the Guidelines as helpful in making the program for preschool children more effective by:

- giving, through the Foundation Learning Areas, a framework to define the program and bring balance to it
- helping to refine observation of students
- providing validation for the preschool program
- assisting in communication with parents about the program and their children's progress.

The Guidelines often represented reference material from a dependable source. The Foundation Learning Areas and the Understanding Children sections had the most impact on the development of programs. The influences of the other areas – Partnerships, Play and Flexible Learning Areas – were described in terms of 'reaffirming' traditional practice.

#### **We conclude that:**

Familiarity with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* and its influence on programs for preschool age children were High or Very High in the majority of Catholic preschools, state preschools and community kindergartens. Familiarity and influence were at least Moderate in most independent schools and childcare centres but Low or Very Low in many.

Where the Guidelines had been influential on the program for preschool age children, the effect had clearly been to make the program more effective.

## 4. Meeting Diverse Needs of Children

### Focus Question 3

How well does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with special needs such as Indigenous children, children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, children in rural or isolated areas, children with a disability and children who are socially or economically disadvantaged?

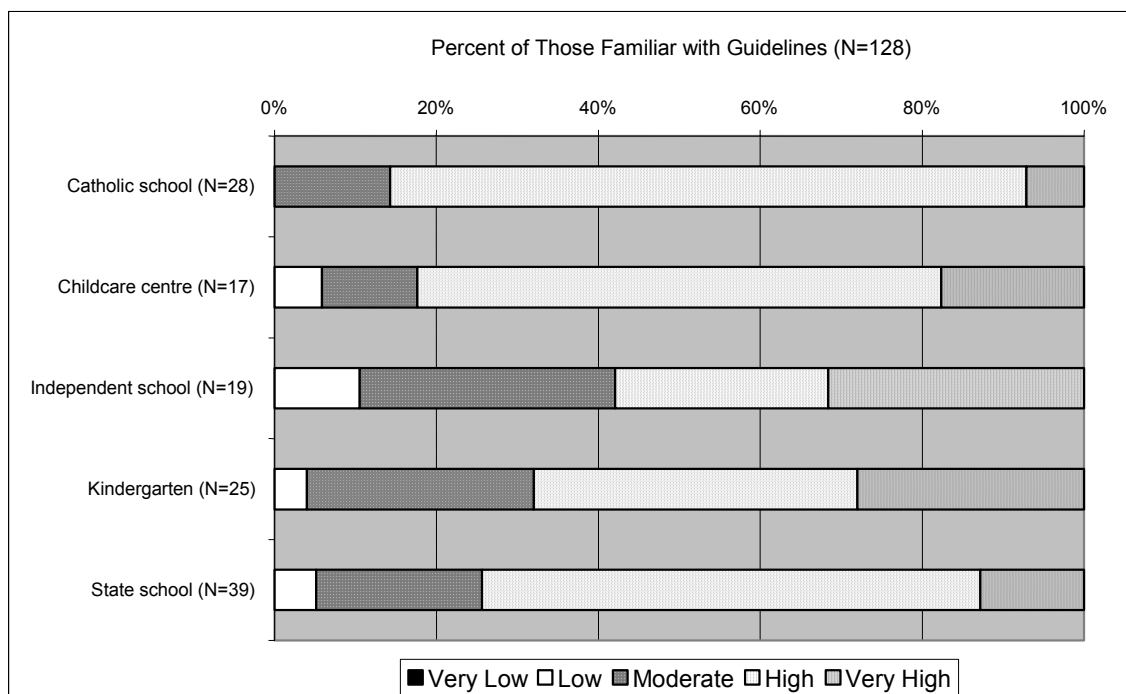
### 4.1 Survey

Two survey items relate to this focus question. Item 6 asked the teachers and childcare workers to rate the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* met the needs of Queensland children of preschool age. Item 12 asked to what extent the Guidelines effectively served the needs of all students.

Results for those who indicated at least moderate familiarity with the Guidelines are shown in Displays 8 and 9.

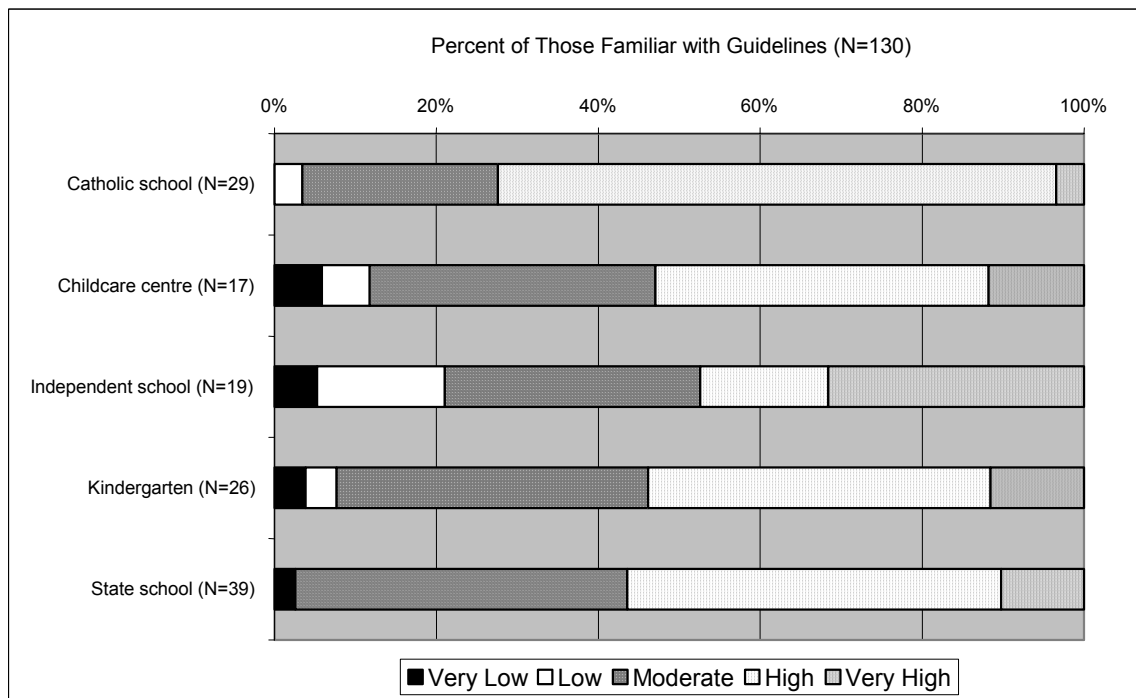
Displays 8 and 9 show that in all site types, for those teachers and childcare workers with at least moderate familiarity with the Guidelines, a majority rated the Guidelines as meeting children's needs to a High or Very High extent. Small minorities of childcare centre workers and independent school teachers gave Low or Very Low ratings for meeting children's diverse needs (Item 12), but the data do not shed light on why this should be so.

### Display 8: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Met Needs of Queensland Preschool Age Children (Item 6)—Chart of Percentages

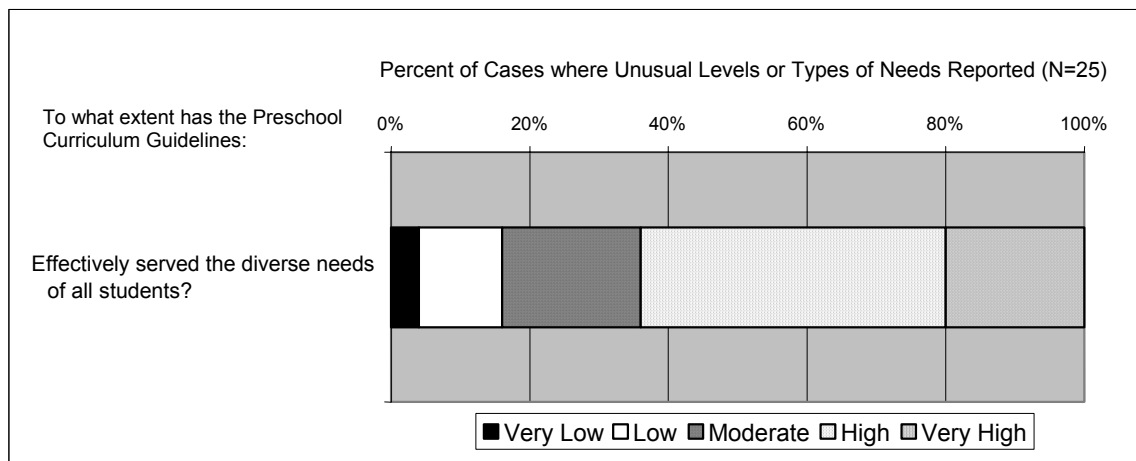




**Display 9: Survey Results: Extent Guidelines Served Diverse Needs of Children (Item 12)—Chart of Percentages**



**Display 10: Survey and Interview Results: Extent to which Guidelines Served Diverse Needs of All Students (Item 12)—For Sites Where Special Needs Reported—Chart of Percentages**



The interviews with teachers and childcare workers included a question on what types of special needs had been encountered in the respective settings. A very wide range of examples encompassed many of the sites. Appendix 5 provides a summary and supports a conclusion that the needs of most children can be met within the Guidelines.

Further analysis of the interview responses revealed 25 cases where more than isolated incidence of special needs was reported. The responses on Survey Item 12 were examined for these 25 cases and the results are shown in Display 10.

Display 10 indicates that of the 25 sites that reported more than isolated incidence of special needs, more than 60 per cent rated the Guidelines as High or Very High in effectively serving the diverse needs of all students. Fewer than 20 per cent (seven cases) gave Low or Very Low ratings.

In another analysis, seven sites were selected as standing out from the others in terms of the range or extent of the special needs reported. Display 11 shows that the ratings on Survey Item 12 for these cases range from Very Low to Very High. These results could indicate that the Guidelines did not meet the needs of children in particular or extreme cases, but an alternative explanation is that the ratings are to some extent a function of the way the Guidelines document is interpreted or applied.

**Display 11: Survey and Interview Results: Extent Guidelines Served Diverse Needs of All Students—For Sites with Acute or High Incidence of Special Needs**

| Description of Site                                  | Interviewee's Comment on Special Needs  | Survey Item 12 |
|--|---|----------------|
| A school of distance education                       | Geographical isolation. The fact that home tutors are teaching the children – sometimes more than one child – means they need access to materials and support. We're experienced teachers and use our background. | Very Low       |
| A Catholic school in Logan city                      | We have quite a number of ESL and Asian children and a very small percentage of emotional or LD children.   | Low            |
| A Gold Coast independent school                      | I've had children with cerebral palsy, autistic, ADHD, language delayed, global developmental delay. I have to work to an IEP for these children from the Special Education Unit.                                 | Low            |
| A regional city kindergarten for Indigenous children | Indigenous children, hearing impaired.  | Low            |
| A regional city kindergarten                         | 70% of our children are Indigenous children. The emphasis of the document is on diversity and social context and family are addressed.  | High           |
| A Brisbane special school                            | Severe disability of most kinds - this is a special school. The bottom line is how teachers take this and use it with their children.   | High           |
| A state school in an Aboriginal Community            | All our children are Indigenous students, so we don't have to cater for a diverse group. You need local knowledge as well as what is in the Guidelines.   | Very High      |

**4.2 Interviews: Administrators**

The administrators of the preschool, kindergarten or childcare centres were asked to rate the effectiveness of the Guidelines in serving the diverse needs of all students.

The responses were quite varied, but seven of 11 ratings were Moderate. Some comments were:

- *It's not for the child who displays high level of readiness for Year 1. (Independent school, rating Moderate)*
- *Because it emphasises dealing with individual children, it helps to meet diverse needs. (state school, rating Moderate)*
- *It gave a framework for observing children but didn't give specific direction on how to handle various types of special needs. (Kindergarten, rating Moderate)*

- *Nothing to do with special needs really stood out and grabbed me or gave me something that I can use directly. It was more just an outline of the general principles in dealing with disability and cultural diversity. (Childcare centre, rating Moderate)*
- *Play isn't necessarily the best way for children with a specific disorder to learn. For our speech and language impaired children, we rely a lot on structured activity. We also have to teach children to play. (Independent school, rating Low)*
- *It allows the flexibility to cater for the needs of all students. (Catholic school, rating High)*
- *The guidelines makes people aware of the diverse backgrounds of students. (state school, rating High)*

### 4.3 Summary and Conclusions

For those teachers and childcare workers with at least moderate familiarity with the Guidelines, a majority rated the Guidelines as meeting children's needs to a High or Very High extent.

The interviews with teachers and childcare workers indicate that the needs of most children can be met within the Guidelines. Low or Very Low ratings from some schools or centres could indicate that the Guidelines did not serve the needs of children in particular or extreme cases, but high ratings in other cases support an alternative explanation that the ratings are to some extent a function of the way the Guidelines document is interpreted or applied.

The interviews with administrators of preschool, kindergarten or childcare centres showed moderate ratings of the effectiveness of the Guidelines in serving the diverse needs of all students.

#### **We conclude that:**

Most preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres have found the Guidelines effective in meeting the needs of a very wide range of children of preschool age. Some sites with high incidences of special needs may need further information or support to interpret the Guidelines in their particular situations.

## 5. Effects on Preschools, Kindergartens and Childcare Centres

### Focus Question 4

What is the extent and nature of the impact of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* upon the work of preschool teachers, and workers in childcare centres and kindergartens?

### 5.1 Survey

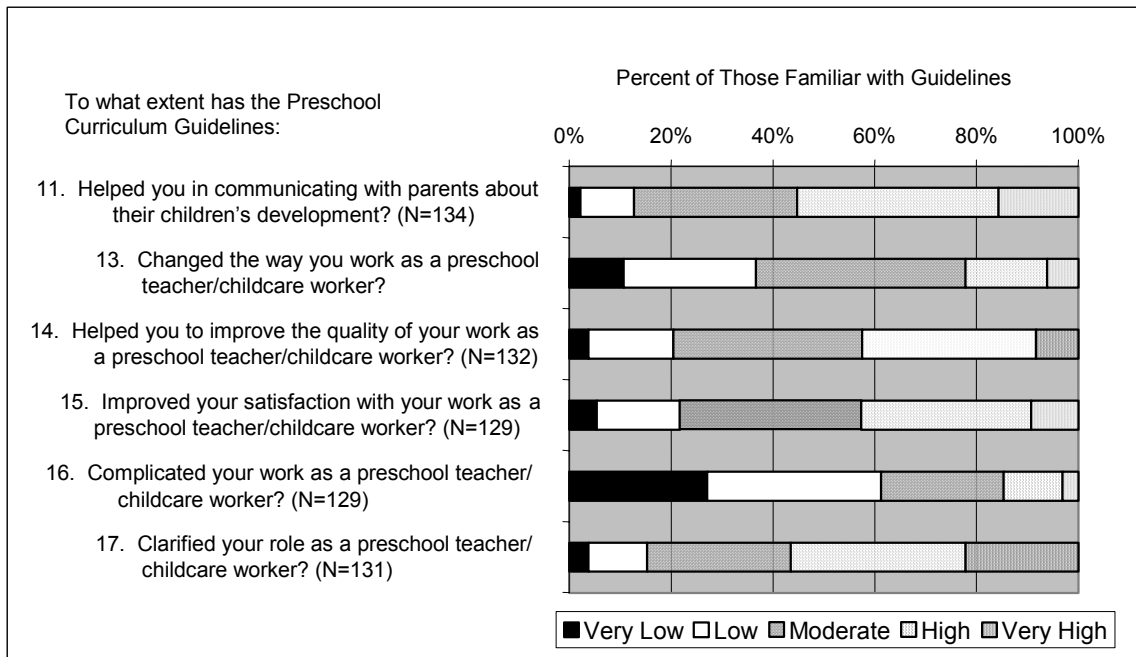
Six of the survey items related to this focus question. These asked respondents to rate the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had:

- helped in communicating with parents about children's development (Item 11)
- changed the way they work as a preschool teacher, kindergarten teacher or childcare worker (Item 13)
- helped them to improve the quality of their work as a preschool teacher, kindergarten teacher or childcare worker (Item 14)
- improved their satisfaction with their work as a preschool teacher, kindergarten teacher or childcare worker (Item 15)

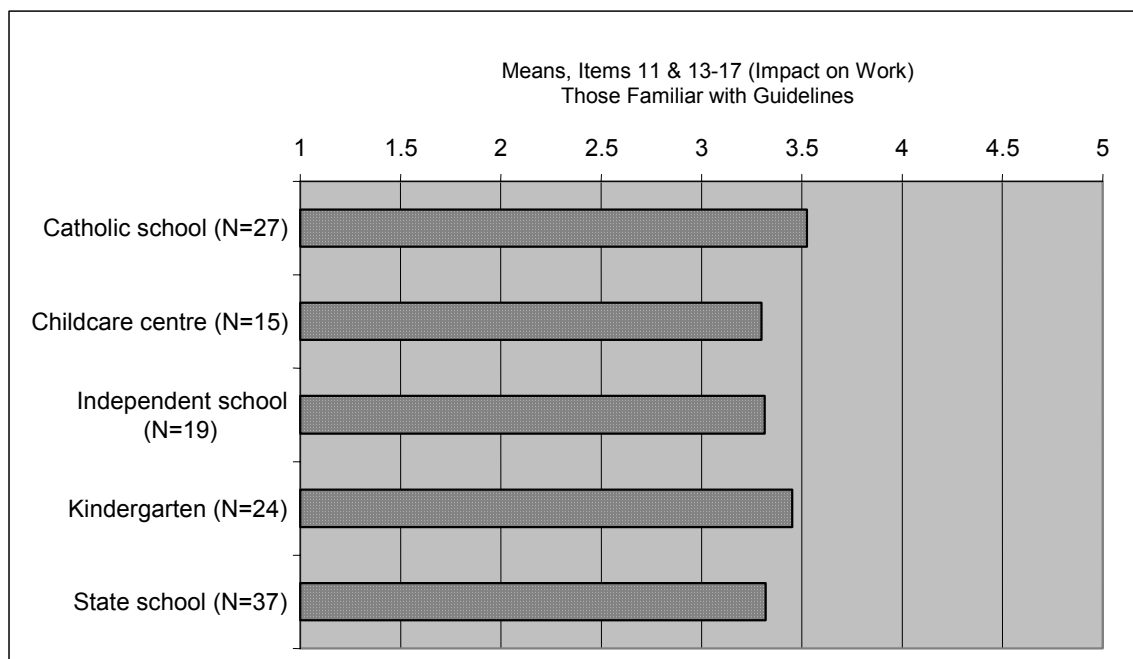
- Complicated their work as a preschool teacher, kindergarten teacher or childcare worker (Item 16)
- Clarified their role as a preschool teacher, kindergarten teacher or childcare worker. (Item 17)

Display 12 shows results for those at least moderately familiar with the Guidelines.

**Display 12: Survey Results: Items Related to Impact on the Work of Preschool or Kindergarten Teachers and Childcare Workers—Chart of Percentages**



**Display 13: Survey Results: Impact on the Work of Kindergarten or Preschool Teachers and Childcare Workers—Chart of Means**



Note: Item 16 reverse scored in calculating the means

Display 12 indicates a moderate to high level of impact on most of the preschool or kindergarten teachers and childcare workers who were familiar with the Guidelines. A majority said that the Guidelines had clarified their role and helped in communicating with parents to High or Very High extents. Generally, the Guidelines had helped to improve the quality of their work and their satisfaction with their work without changing or complicating their work to any extent.

The results were consistent across the various site types for those who were at least moderately familiar with the Guidelines. Display 13 illustrates this by showing means on the six items for each site type. (Means were calculated by assigning scores of 1 to 5 to ratings of Very Low to Very High except for Item 16, which was scored in the reverse order. ANOVA results were  $F=0.59$ ,  $df=4,117$ ,  $p=0.67$ .)

## 5.2 Interview: Teachers and Childcare Workers

The interview for preschool and kindergarten teachers and childcare workers included a question asking for elaboration on ways that their work had changed as a result of the Guidelines.

Most of the teachers and childcare workers interviewed talked about how their engagement with the Guidelines had changed their practice, their thinking, or both. Those reporting a change in their planning formed the largest group. The sectors represented here were Catholic preschools, kindergartens and state preschools:

- *When I program, instead of focusing on the activity that is planned, I focus on what the children will learn in terms of the guidelines.*
- *I use the guidelines for curriculum planning - now based on the FLAs. I use the terms and the language in my planning, teaching and assessment.*
- *It hasn't changed the way I work but it's changed the way I record my planning. I use the FLAs as a framework for planning. I take an outcome and plan experiences to meet it.*
- *It gave me confidence in what I was doing. The way I record what happens during the day was a big change that I picked up from the guidelines and I now write a daily diary.*

Two teachers from state schools mentioned the link they were able to make from the Foundation Learning Areas to the Key Learning Areas:

- *I see how the FLAs are developmental to the KLAs and how the children are still at the play stage in Year 1.*
- *The link from FLAs to KLAs made it easier to develop materials that fit with the primary program.*

The next largest group, mostly kindergarten teachers, reported that their observations of children had been enhanced as well as their ability to link planning to children's interests:

- *In the way that I look at children. Before I looked at them in a more narrow way. The aspects of children's development in the guidelines have helped here.*
- *It has changed the way I plan but in my face-to-face teaching it has made little difference except to look at children with all of the FLAs in mind.*

A few teachers, mostly from the independent school and childcare sectors, spoke specifically about a change in their thinking after becoming familiar with the document:

- *Since I've done the survey, I've gone back to the Guidelines and I see that I'm more aware of the thinking and communicating and cultural understandings than I used to be.*
- *It has helped me realise the importance of play.*

- *It has been part of a process of change with the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, PD, readings and reflection. It has sparked people's interest generally and then there was a lot of information coming out.*

Three teachers commented on improved communication with parents as a result of their use of the Guidelines:

- *The ways I observe and plan are different. I now have a good understanding of how to talk to parents about how children learn and what is important. It has added new direction for me.*

In keeping with earlier responses, seven interviewees, most from independent schools and childcare, said the Guidelines had not changed the way they worked since 'they were already doing it' – some noting that the document had reaffirmed and validated the preschool program.

- *I have never changed the way I have worked. I keep up to date.*
- *I've made no changes - it's more a reaffirming document.*
- *It hasn't changed too much the way I work. It has validated the value of observation and reflection and the teacher's role with the children.*

### **5.3 Summary and Conclusions**

The survey results indicated that the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had a moderate to high level of impact on most of the preschool or kindergarten teachers and childcare workers who were familiar with them. The Guidelines had clearly helped many teachers and childcare workers in clarifying their role and communicating with parents about children's progress.

Generally, the Guidelines had helped teachers and childcare workers to improve the quality of their work and their satisfaction with their work. The Guidelines had not complicated the work of most teachers and childcare workers to any extent.

The interview results revealed that the Guidelines had impacted on the work of preschool or kindergarten teachers and childcare workers by:

- changing their practice, their thinking, or both
- enhancing their observations of children
- enhancing their ability to link planning to children's interests
- improving communication with parents
- reaffirming and validating their existing preschool programs.

#### **We conclude that:**

The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* has had significant positive impact upon the work of those preschool and kindergarten teachers and childcare workers who were at least moderately familiar with it, by:

- clarifying their role
- improving their satisfaction with their work as teachers and childcare workers
- increasing the quality of their work as teachers and childcare workers
- enhancing their observations of children
- enhancing their ability to link planning to children's interests
- improving communication with parents
- reaffirming and validating their existing preschool programs.

## 6. Contribution to Efficiency in Preschools, Kindergartens And Childcare Centres

### Focus Question 5

In what ways has the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* led to greater efficiencies (in areas such as curriculum development or professional development) in the preschool year in preschools, childcare centres and community kindergartens?

### 6.1 Survey

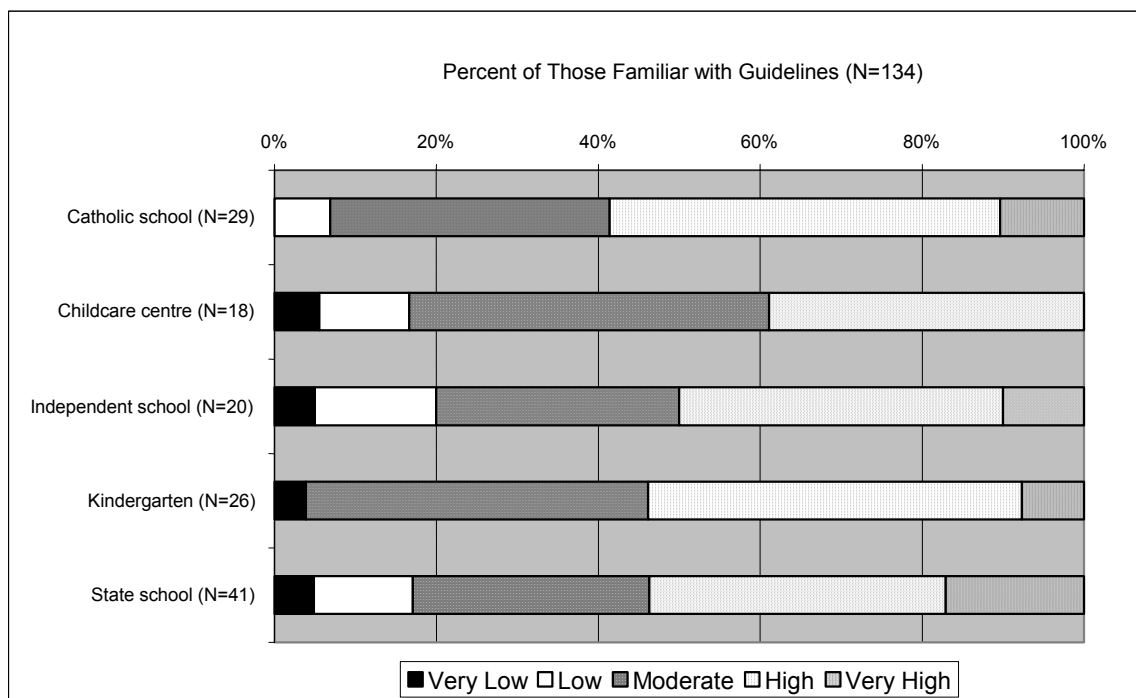
Four survey items related to this focus question. Item 8 asked the childcare workers and teachers to rate the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had improved the efficiency of developing their site's curriculum for preschool children. The other three (Items 18, 19 and 20) related to professional development.

The results for Item 8 are shown in Display 14. Clearly, most of those teachers and childcare workers who were familiar with the Guidelines reported improved efficiency in developing their curriculum for preschool age children. Differences between sites are not significant when familiarity with the Guidelines is taken into account.

Three items related to professional development. These asked the teachers and childcare workers to rate the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had:

- been prominent in professional development attended since 1998 (Item 18)
- been valuable in professional development attended since 1998 (Item 19)
- helped make professional development on preschool more efficient (Item 20).

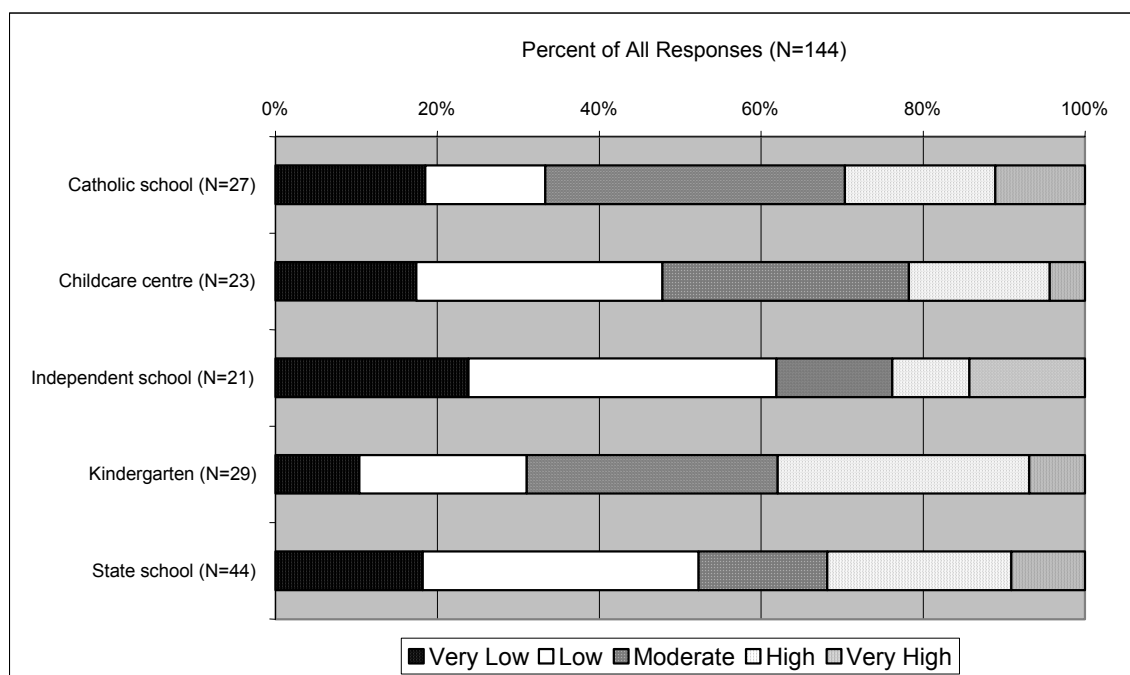
**Display 14: Survey Results: Item 8—Extent Guidelines Improved the Efficiency of Developing Curriculum for Preschool Age Children—Chart of Percentages**



[ANOVA: F=0.78, df=4, 129, p=0.54]

The prominence of the Guidelines in professional development attended by the teachers and childcare workers was quite variable. Results for Item 18 are shown in Display 15. The apparent differences between the site types are not statistically significant. This result indicates wide variability in the ratings within the groups (variance within the groups large compared to variance between the groups). Display 16 gives the means and standard deviations for each site type, showing the variability within the site types.

**Display 15: Survey Results: Prominence of Guidelines in Professional Development (Item 18)—Chart of Percentages**



ANOVA:  $F=0.74$ ,  $df=4,139$ ,  $p=0.57$

Overall, the teachers and childcare workers did not consider that the Guidelines had been prominent in the professional development they had attended since the introduction of the Guidelines in 1998.

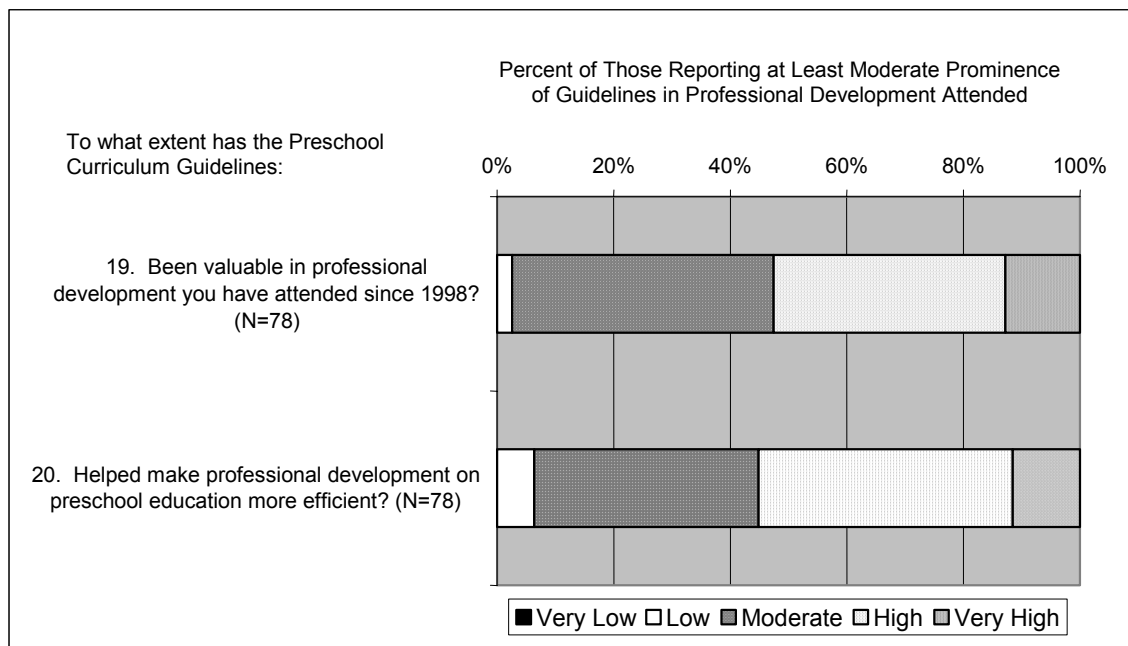
**Display 16: Survey Results: Prominence of Guidelines in Professional Development (Item 8)—Table of Means**

| Site Type          | Mean | N   | Std Dev. |
|--------------------|------|-----|----------|
| Catholic school    | 2.89 | 27  | 1.25     |
| Childcare centre   | 2.61 | 23  | 1.12     |
| Independent school | 2.52 | 21  | 1.36     |
| Kindergarten       | 3.03 | 29  | 1.12     |
| State school       | 2.70 | 44  | 1.27     |
| All Types          | 2.76 | 144 | 1.22     |



Survey Items 19 and 20 were examined for those teachers and childcare workers who indicated at least moderate ratings on Item 18. This considers ratings of the contribution of the Guidelines to the professional development only where it logically applies. The results are shown in Display 17.

**Display 17: Survey Results: Contribution of Guidelines to Value and Efficiency of Professional Development—Chart of Percentages**



Display 17 indicates Moderate to Very High ratings in almost all cases. More than half of the ratings were High or Very High. For teachers and childcare workers who had attended professional development in which *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had been at least moderately prominent, the Guidelines had clearly been valuable and helped to make the professional development more efficient.

## 6.2 Interviews—Administrators

The interviews with administrators included an item asking them to rate the value of the Guidelines in making professional development on preschool education more efficient.

Of 13 ratings, one was Very High, six High, three Low and three Very Low. Lower ratings seemed to focus on a lack of professional development provided. Some of the comments were:

- *It is now ingrained in what we do and we don't necessarily refer to it specifically in in-service. (Kindergarten, rating High)*
- *If I were developing PD for preschool teachers, I would go to the document first. (state preschool, rating High)*
- *Our Central Office focuses PD on issues about preschool. (Catholic preschool, rating High)*
- *They are a great tool as a base for training staff. (Childcare centre, rating Very High)*
- *It's not happening. It's been put on the back burner. (state preschool, rating Low)*

- *There has been none specifically designed for preschool. (Independent school, rating Very Low)*
- *The guidelines are not prominent in this centre although we realise the necessity to have good knowledge of them in order to be able to communicate with teachers from other regular preschools. (Independent school, rating Very Low)*

The results indicate the usefulness of the Guidelines as a basis for professional development activities for preschool or kindergarten teachers and childcare workers.

### 6.3 Summary and Conclusions

Most of those teachers and childcare workers who were familiar with the Guidelines reported improved efficiency in developing their preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre curriculum for preschool age children.

Overall, the teachers and childcare workers did not consider that the Guidelines had been prominent in the professional development they had attended since the introduction of the Guidelines in 1998.

For teachers and childcare workers who had attended professional development in which *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had been at least moderately prominent, the Guidelines had clearly been valuable and helped to make the professional development more efficient.

The interviews with administrators indicate that the Guidelines can provide a good basis for professional development activities for preschool or kindergarten teachers and childcare workers.

#### **We conclude that:**

Efficiencies have resulted from application of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* to program planning in preschools, kindergartens or childcare centres and to professional development activities for preschool and kindergarten teachers and childcare workers.

## 7. Interfacing with Year 1

### Focus Question 6

Does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* facilitate interfacing with policies and practices in Year 1?

#### 7.1 Survey

Two survey items (9 and 10) related to this focus question. These asked teachers and childcare workers to rate the extent to which the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* had:

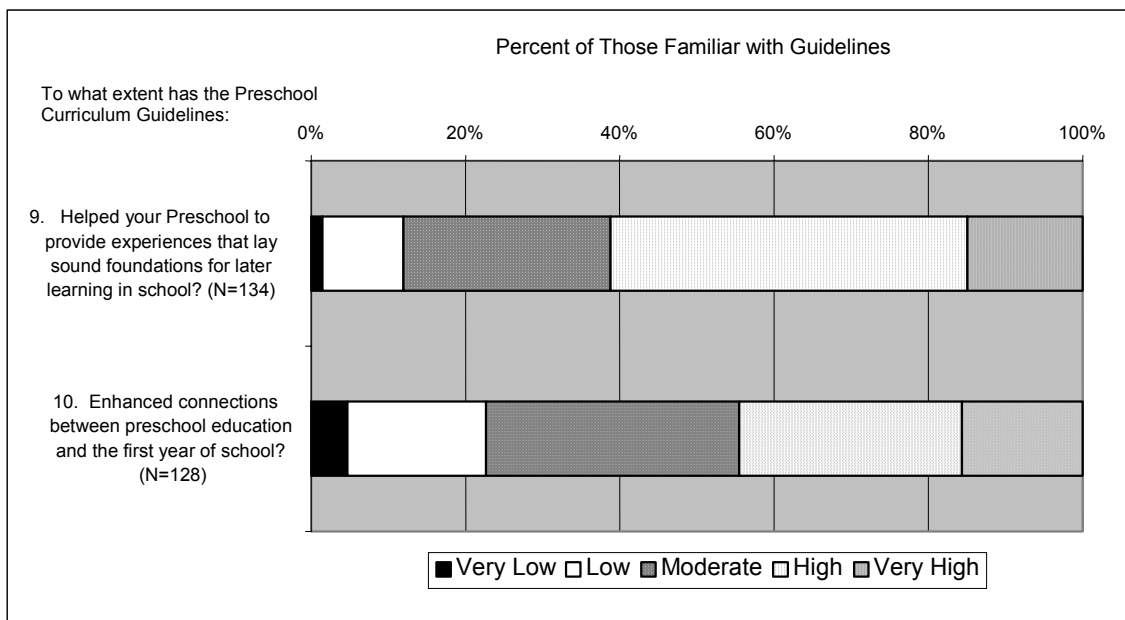
- helped their preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre to provide experiences that lay sound foundations for later learning in school (Item 9)
- enhanced connections between preschool education and the first year of school (Item 10).

The results for those familiar with the Guidelines are shown in Display 18.

A majority (61%) of the teachers and childcare workers who were familiar with the Guidelines gave High or Very High ratings to the extent to which the document had helped their preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre to provide experiences that lay sound foundations for later learning in school. Ratings were generally lower for the extent to which the Guidelines had enhanced connections between preschool education and the first year of school: a majority of the ratings were Moderate (33%), Low (18%) or Very Low (5%).

An explanation for the difference may be that Item 9 relates to internal processes, mostly in the control of the preschool, kindergarten or childcare centre, while Item 10 would involve cooperation with school personnel.

**Display 18: Survey Results: Interfacing Between Preschool and Year 1—Chart of Percentages**



Generally, the teachers and childcare workers found the Guidelines to be valuable in helping to provide experiences that lay sound foundations for later learning in school and enhancing connections between preschool education and the first year of school.

**7.2 Interview: Administrators**

The interviews with the administrators (Item 6) asked them to rate ‘the value of the Guidelines in enhancing connections between preschool education and the first year of school’.

Of the 14 ratings, six were High or Very High, six were Moderate and two were Low.

Some comments were:

- *We have a P-3 play program and the guidelines were used as a framework in setting this up. (Catholic school)*
- *We are a New Basics school and have a three-year plan that includes preschool. The FLAs give us a basis to build on and to fit with what we're doing in New Basics. (state school)*
- *The Guidelines should make stronger links with other primary documents. (primary school)*
- *It didn't go far enough in making the links between preschool and school. (community kindergarten)*
- *If they are moving on from here to a State preschool the programs are similar. We use this as a selling point. (Childcare centre)*

The responses of the administrators indicate that where efforts had been made to enhance connections between preschool education and the first year of school, the Guidelines had been found to be quite helpful.

### 7.3 Interview: Key Organisations and Tertiary Educators

The representatives of the key organisations and the tertiary educators were asked 'To what extent do the guidelines help to facilitate transition of children into Year 1?'

Most respondents rated the facilitation as High. The definition of Foundation Learning Areas was the component of the document cited by most representatives as the major factor in facilitating transition into Year 1. Comments reveal that the Foundation Learning Areas enable teachers to make links with the Key Learning Areas that feature in the Years 1 to 10 syllabuses. Several people noted, however, that facilitation depended to a large extent upon the teachers involved, both preschool and primary.

- *Those schools with a will to have links with preschools and kindergartens will make it work. It provides an excellent link for a practitioner to use to talk about how the FLAs lead to KLAs. (C&K)*
- *For those teachers committed to using the Guidelines, it is Very High. In centres where teachers are not committed to the Guidelines, barriers are there. (Dept of Families)*
- *Often times Year 1 teachers put up the barrier to continuity but the document certainly promotes it. (QCEC)*
- *It is effective in enhancing liaison with primary teachers. (ABC)*
- *In what ways? Development of shared philosophies in P-3. (EQ)*
- *Greater understanding of the role of the Preschool and the links from the Foundation Learning Areas to the Key Learning Areas of the primary school. (EQ)*
- *Shared language across early childhood settings both state and non-state – in some instances became a motivator for increased communication thus assisting in a smoother transition into the schooling sector. (EQ)*

This comment from the AISQ representative includes a criticism of the diagram on page 90 of the Guidelines.

- *I think the spaghetti diagram confuses the P to 1 transition. Either show the links from FLAs to KLAs clearly or don't try. Most teachers believed they were contributing to KLAs by giving children the building blocks in an integrated program.*

Generally, the representatives of the key organisations and the tertiary educators indicated that contingent upon the willingness of the teachers involved, the Guidelines document helped in several ways to facilitate the transition from preschool to Year 1.

### 7.4 Summary and Conclusions

Generally, the teachers and childcare workers found the Guidelines to be valuable in helping to provide experiences that lay sound foundations for later learning in school and enhancing connections between preschool education and the first year of school.

The responses of the administrators indicate that where efforts had been made to enhance connections between preschool education and the first year of school, the Guidelines had been found to be quite helpful.

Generally, the representatives of the key organisations and the tertiary educators indicated that contingent upon the willingness of the teachers involved, the Guidelines document helped in several ways to facilitate the transition from preschool to Year 1.

#### **We conclude that:**

The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* effectively facilitates interfacing with policies and practices in Year 1.

## 8. Needs of School Authorities

### Focus Question 7

To what extent has the initiative of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* served the needs of the three school authorities represented on QSCC?

### 8.1 Interviews: Key Organisations

The interview with representatives of the key organisations included the three school authorities represented on the QSCC (AISQ, Education Queensland and QCEC). The key organisations were asked 'What are the expectations of your organisation on the use of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* document in preschools?'

The Guidelines document was seen by the key organisations to have provided preschool teachers, parents and administrators with an approved curriculum document that could be used across Queensland in all sites offering preschool education.

For Education Queensland, the Guidelines was to be adopted in all state preschools:

- *Guidelines are identified as an approved syllabus and as such there is an expectation that they would be fully implemented and used in all state preschool centres following the 3-year implementation phase. All state preschool teachers will use the Guidelines as a basis for preschool curriculum decision making.*

For QCEC, use of the guidelines by Catholic schools was encouraged but not mandated:

- *In broad terms, it was decided that we would adopt the PCG as they were seen to be best practice at the time for preschool curriculum. We had an expectation that the teachers would use the Guidelines.*

For AISQ, the decision on whether to implement the Guidelines was made at each site:

- *AISQ is not a system and each school makes its own decision about adopting curriculum materials.*

The Education Queensland representative indicated various observed benefits of the Guidelines in the state system:

- development of shared philosophies (P-3)
- use of common language and shared expectations across school sites
- greater understanding of the role of the preschool and the links from the Foundation Learning Areas to the Key Learning Areas of the primary school
- building partnerships as a key component
- shared language across early childhood settings, government and non-government, encouraging increased communication and assisting in a smoother transition into the schooling sector.

The QCEC representative spoke of a range of benefits from the Guidelines for preschool education in Catholic schools:

- *The philosophy is right. It was a grass roots document and because it was, it develops a range of theories that are prevalent in the field. For many teachers it is a formal ratification of early years education. Before the Guidelines, it was up to the line of thinking done in the organisation you came from or belonged to. Oftentimes Year 1 teachers put up the barrier to continuity but the document certainly promotes it. The Foundation Learning Areas meshing into the Key Learning Areas promotes continuity. Now we have a common language and teachers feel that they have something substantial and they have to respond to it in a professional way. The changes have been subtle rather than dramatic.*

The AISQ representative believed that the Guidelines could encompass most independent schools' views about preschool education:

- *I have talked to a lot of teachers across the full spectrum of early childhood beliefs. Almost everyone found a place for themselves in the curriculum guidelines.*

A criticism from the AISQ representative was of vagueness surrounding the connection between the Foundation Learning Areas and the Key Learning Areas:

- *Provide clear links between FLAs and KLAs and support materials with planning and assessing examples. As it is, it doesn't cater for P-1 classes very well. I think the spaghetti diagram confuses the P-1 transition. Either show the links from FLAs to KLAs clearly or don't try.*

The AISQ representative found that the Guidelines fulfilled a need for validation of preschool education:

- *I'm not sure of changes but the Guidelines did give teachers a sense of being taken seriously. It was something that they could hold up and show they were 'real' teachers.*

None of the three authorities indicated that the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines was falling short of serving their needs.

The results from the survey and interviews would indicate that in Education Queensland preschools and Catholic schools, expectations of wide use of the Guidelines have been met. The results do indicate a much lower level of use of the Guidelines in independent schools. This could indicate that the Guidelines was not meeting the needs of some of those schools. Comments made by independent schools that were not applying the Guidelines to the preschool year indicated that most of those schools were focusing more on preparatory work for Year 1, for example in literacy and numeracy. Such schools either have not considered the Guidelines or have found the Guidelines to be inappropriate for the kind of preparatory education they wish to provide. It would be up to AISQ to determine whether a segment of their membership would prefer the Guidelines to encompass their philosophy and needs in relation to preparatory teaching of preschool age children.

An important point is that the Guidelines filled a vacuum—there was nothing in the way of a defining curriculum document for preschool education previously. Publication of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* gave Education Queensland and QCEC a means to specify to schools their expectations for preschool education and to structure their support for teachers and schools. The Guidelines also gave the independent schools a clear indication of what would be happening in state and Catholic preschools. The state, Catholic and independent schools had access, through the Guidelines, to a set of concepts and vocabulary that can facilitate communication between schools, among preschool teachers and between schools and parents.

The situation has, however, been changed by the recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education. The clear implication of this announcement is that permanent changes to the current configuration of schooling in Queensland will require a new or revised set of guidelines.

## **8.2 Summary and Conclusions**

The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* is seen by the key organisations to have provided preschool teachers, parents and administrators with an approved curriculum document for preschool education.

The results indicate that in Education Queensland preschools and Catholic schools, expectations of wide use of the Guidelines have been met. Use of the Guidelines in independent schools has been at a much lower level, possibly indicating that the Guidelines did not meet the needs of some independent schools. AISQ may need to determine whether a segment of their membership wish the Guidelines to encompass the kinds of preparatory teaching of preschool age children that they provide.

Publication of the Guidelines gave Education Queensland and QCEC a means to specify to schools their expectations for preschool education. The Guidelines also gave the independent schools a clear indication of what would be happening in state and Catholic preschools as well as a set of concepts and vocabulary that can facilitate communication between schools, among preschool teachers and between schools and parents.

The situation has been changed by the recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education. Any permanent change to the current configuration of schooling in Queensland will require a new or revised set of guidelines.

### **We conclude that:**

The introduction of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* has met, to a high extent, the needs of Education Queensland, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and The Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc. for an approved curriculum document for preschool education in Queensland.

Some AISQ member schools have not taken up the Guidelines for various reasons, some indicating that the document may not be suitable for the kinds of preparatory schooling they provide.

Likely changes to the configuration of schooling in Queensland will require a new or revised set of guidelines for the education of children prior to Year 1.

## **9. Pre-Service Courses**

### Focus Question 8

To what extent is the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* influential in pertinent pre-service courses?

### **9.1 Interview: Tertiary Educators**

Representatives of seven tertiary education institutions were asked 'To what extent is the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* document used in the pre-service course for early childhood teachers /carers offered at this institution?' A follow-up question asked how the document was used.

The results are shown in Display 19, which indicates use of the Guidelines as a text in all early childhood curriculum courses for preschool teachers and childcare workers in the seven major tertiary institutions. The extent of use was rated as High or Very High by six of the seven representatives. Uses included observation, planning, evaluating, early childhood philosophy, pedagogy, ethics, and critical analysis. The extent of use across all TAFE settings or within tertiary courses was not available from the interview.

Several interviewees commented that the Guidelines did not appear in general primary courses. This led one educator to comment:

- *We have been told that Early Childhood graduates will not be distinguished from the generalist cohort by staffing officers in Education Queensland, so teachers may teach without being familiar with the document.*

**Display 19: Interview Results: Prominence of Guidelines in Pre-service Teacher Education**

| <b>Institution</b>                        | <b>Rating</b> | <b>Comment</b>   |
|---|---------------|--|
| Lady Gowrie Professional Development Unit | High          | Used for in-service of teachers and pre-service for workers in childcare – certificate and diploma (in Community Services – Children’s Services – a national accreditation). We try to incorporate the document into observations, planning, curriculum and environment. A lot of childcare people aren’t aware of it. We are constantly trying to incorporate it into pre-service courses and workshops.  |
| Griffith University, Mt Gravatt           | Very High     | The document is used a lot in the Early Childhood major but in general primary subjects, students wouldn’t get a look at it. It is used as a text in two subjects for planning and orientating to the Early Childhood philosophy, pedagogy, and ethics and probably to show links to KLA’s.  |
| Queensland University of Technology       | Moderate      | The document is used in a number of units as well as for practice teaching in state preschools and in kindergartens. Also in Science, SOSE, HPE, it is always a reference and discussed along with the syllabuses. In in-service, we use it in the Masters course and Grad Dip Early Childhood Education. Teachers will write a critical analysis of the document or a segment of it. Some are scathing, especially relating to dealing with equity and diversity. |
| Central Queensland University             | Very High     | We make links to the document in almost every subject in Early Childhood Education and use it sometimes for critiques by students. With childcare worker courses we use a distance education mode for courses whereby they can upgrade their diploma. The use there is Moderate to Low – it is due for a rewrite.  |
| James Cook University                     | Very High     | The <i>Guidelines</i> is a prescribed text in 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> years. It is used extensively in the Early Childhood Course but not in the generalist Primary course. Now we have been told that Early Childhood graduates will not be distinguished from the generalist cohort by staffing officers in Education Queensland, so teachers may teach without being familiar with the document.                                    |
| University of Southern Queensland         | High          | Our University was a big stakeholder in the in-service for the implementation of the <i>Guidelines</i> so people here had an intimate knowledge of the content. It was easy for us to use it in all courses taught in Early Childhood. We are committed to it and advocate the use of it. It is used in the four-year Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) and the three-year Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies (Childcare).                                  |
| Southbank Institute of TAFE               | High          | We link the document to various competencies of the training package for childcare carers and teachers. We can bring the two together in planning, implementing, evaluating and observing children (portfolios). Of course the sections on play and partnerships with parents are also used. The document supports the whole of programming.   |



## 9.2 Summary and Conclusions

Interviews with representatives of providers of pre-service education for preschool teachers and childcare workers indicated that the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* was used as a text in all early childhood curriculum courses. Uses included observation, planning, evaluating, early childhood philosophy, pedagogy, ethics, and critical analysis. Several interviewees commented that the Guidelines did not appear in general primary courses.

### We conclude that:

The Preschool Curriculum Guidelines is commonly used as a text in the pre-service preparation of preschool teachers by tertiary institutions in Queensland, but does not feature in general primary courses.

## 10. Promotion of Familiarity and Uptake

### Focus Question 9

What processes appear to have been efficient or inefficient in promoting familiarity with and the uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*?

### 10.1 Survey

Survey items 22 and 23 asked respectively:

- What would be the best way to raise teachers'/childcare workers' awareness of the Guidelines?
- What would be the best way to encourage more teachers/childcare workers to use the Guidelines?

#### 10.1.1 Raising Awareness (Item 22)

A wide range of suggestions characterised teachers' and childcare workers' responses on how best to raise awareness of the Guidelines. Provision of in-service seminars or workshops and facilitation of networking with peers were the two most prominent suggestions.

Most of the suggestions could be summarised by the following categories:

- Provide more in-service seminars or workshops, including follow up in-service from that provided in the initial release of guidelines. (77 cases)
- Facilitate networking with other preschools, childcare centres or kindergartens for discussion or visits. (30 cases)
- Reduce the cost and increase the availability of in-service provided. (21 cases)
- Provide examples of practice or planning – more in-depth information on day-to-day implementation. (15 cases)
- Provide updates and newsletters. (13 cases)
- Increase the coverage in pre-service education, including more reference to the Guidelines in TAFE courses. (12 cases)
- Develop more community and whole-of-school awareness of the Guidelines. (8 cases)
- Provide an Internet-based in-service. (3 cases).

Further investigation of the suggestions shows that:

- networking was more prominent in the schools' suggestions than in those of the other site types
- in-service/workshops were less prominent in the childcare centres' suggestions than in those of the other site types
- pre-service training was more prominent in the childcare centres' suggestions than in those of the other site types
- reducing costs of in-service was more prominent in the independent schools' and kindergartens' suggestions than in those of the other site types.

### **10.1.2 Encouraging Use (Item 23)**

Suggestions for encouraging teachers and childcare workers to use the Guidelines were generally similar to the suggestions for raising awareness. Less emphasis was placed on seminars or workshops, and more emphasis on improving the Guidelines document.

Most of the suggestions could be summarised by the following categories:

- providing in-service seminars or workshops giving practical suggestions (36 cases)
- making the Guidelines more user-friendly by simplifying the format and providing practical examples of activities related to the Foundation Learning Areas and planning ideas (25 cases)
- facilitating Networking with other preschools, childcare centres or kindergartens at meetings or visits (24 cases)
- reducing cost and increasing availability of in-service and materials (a copy of the book to all teachers, in-service during work hours etc.) (14 cases)
- making the Guidelines more prominent in pre-service education (8 cases)
- providing access to consultants or advisers (8 cases)
- providing updates and newsletters with practical ideas (7 cases)
- focusing in-service based on the Foundation Learning Areas (6 cases)
- raising awareness of and support for the preschool program among primary teachers, the school administration and the broader school community (4 cases)
- developing a suitable website (4 cases).

## **10.2 Interviews: Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers and Childcare Workers**

The interviews with the teachers and childcare workers tended to support the survey results. Some thoughtful comments from teachers and childcare workers were:

- *Having an easy to read, brief document works. Having a large technical book that is hard to read doesn't work.*
- *After the initial workshops, people coming in from other places don't have access to in-service apart from reading.*
- *Some simple posters, focused on just one point, are very good.*
- *Ongoing professional development is needed, with the emphasis on ongoing. People need to be reminded and it needs to be something that you go back to again and again to ensure you are dealing with all of the learning areas and the important aspects of preschool education.*
- *There is very little PD that is relevant for preschool teachers except on Saturdays. You need a professional development day in the area where the teacher is released and can go along and have a look at these documents.*
- *If you were studying and had to read the book word for word you would do it, but it is not the kind of reading you would just sit down and do. PD days give you the opportunity and incentive to do this and you get the networking as well.*

- *Follow-up is needed from the initial launch otherwise this will just sit on the shelf.*
- *I attended a two-day workshop in Brisbane and that was excellent. It would have been better though if we had gone to a couple of preschools to see what they were doing.*
- *I think it needs to be top-down. It's difficult for teachers on their own to take them up - it needs to come from the administration.*
- *Networking is useful. Just having one experience with it doesn't work - it has to be ongoing.*
- *Too much talk and not enough action is what doesn't work. It must be practical.*

### **10.3 Interviews: Administrators**

The interview question, 'What would be the best way to encourage more preschool teachers to use the Guidelines?' elicited quite varied responses from the administrators of preschool, kindergarten or childcare centres. Some of the suggestions were:

- *If they sent short overviews of sections for busy people like us in childcare. (Childcare centre)*
- *Support through written information and workshops that apply the guidelines to specific situations, especially for early childcare. (Childcare centre)*
- *Through networking, professional dialogue about preschool pedagogy. (state school)*
- *Give them time on pupil free days to work on them. (state school)*
- *Make them more relevant. (Independent school)*
- *If teachers had time on pupil free days to consider sections of the Guidelines in cluster groups. Release time to visit centres where the guidelines are in practice would be useful. (Independent school)*
- *If they feel confident with them and they are supported in school with release time and PD. Teachers also have got to be open to change. (Catholic school)*
- *Seeing people using them and using them well, and understanding of the philosophy underpinning the guidelines. (Catholic school)*
- *After the initial workshops, people coming in from other places don't have access to in-service apart from reading. (Kindergarten)*
- *What doesn't work is the jargon. (Kindergarten)*

### **10.4 Interviews: Key Organisations**

The representatives of the key organisations with an interest in preschool education were asked what processes their organisation had used to promote the use of the Guidelines. The follow-up question was 'What worked well and what was ineffective?'

The processes used by the different organisations naturally reflected the size of the organisation and the expectations of teachers by that organisation. For instance, the implementation processes undertaken by Education Queensland were comprehensive and complex including appointments of project officers; education advisers in every district and training for those advisers; websites; funding for teachers and administrators to attend professional development courses; and a framework of outcomes considered critical for the successful implementation of the Guidelines.

All employing organisations provided access to the professional development courses available. QCEC and AISQ offered support reflective of the number of preschool teachers employed in their schools.

- *We definitely made a commitment to the schools that wanted to take up the Guidelines to provide in-service for teachers around the State. AISQ employed (a consultant) to provide in-service and we followed this with other workshops, resources and teacher release where it was needed. (AISQ)*

- *We contracted University people to run courses on the Guidelines with the strong expectation that all principals and preschool teachers would attend. There were follow-up workshops by QUT presented at Preschool teacher network days which took place at that time four times a year. Now preschool teachers have two of their PD days specifically dedicated to preschool topics. (QCEC)*

The Crèche and Kindergarten Association not only promoted the Guidelines to the affiliated teachers but also provided professional development courses to all teachers. This organisation and the Lady Gowrie Centre continue to provide in-service on the Guidelines through workshops and conferences.

- *Our organisation was involved in the provision of professional development to all preschool teachers on the Guidelines. This in itself promoted the Guidelines to C&K teachers. We have ongoing PD for teachers, including our conference, where aspects of curriculum planning and teaching are discussed.*

In the childcare setting, access to the initial professional development courses depended on employer support and time.

- *Families sent out information on the Guidelines and the in-service courses available. (Dept of Families)*
- *We sent administrators to the initial in-service and then we developed a program here to in-service our staff on the Guidelines. We base our checklist and goals on the Guidelines as well as training for all new staff. (ABC)*

All interviewees rated their promotion of the use of the Guidelines as effective.

The QCEC representative believed they had improved their method of promotion:

- *The initial in-service received a mixed response. Now there is a teacher committee to plan the workshops and these are most effective.*

Similarly, AISQ noted that their promotion strategies were effective because they responded to the expressed needs of teachers and administrators.

The Department of Families representative noted:

- *It is often difficult for childcare teachers to access in-service courses for many reasons.*

Relating the results from these interviews with key organisations back to the results of the survey of teachers and childcare workers, it seems that the strategies employed in the initial promotion of the Guidelines were in line with those strategies suggested in the survey except for facilitation of networking. It also seems that the initial activity has not been followed through, with the result that teachers who have been assigned to pre-school in the last couple of years may not have been exposed to any structured in-service or pre-service education on the Guidelines. There are suggestions from the survey that the available in-service may be too costly for some Community Kindergarten and Independent schoolteachers.

## **10.5 Summary and Conclusions**

A wide range of suggestions characterised teachers' and childcare workers' responses on how best to raise awareness of the Guidelines. Provision of in-service seminars or workshops and facilitation of networking with peers were the two most prominent suggestions.

Suggestions for encouraging teachers and childcare workers to use the Guidelines were generally similar to the suggestions for raising awareness. Less emphasis was placed on seminars or workshops, and more emphasis on improving the Guidelines document itself.

The strategies employed in the initial promotion of the Guidelines seemed to be in line with those suggested by the teachers and childcare workers, except for facilitation of networking. It seems however, that the initial activity has not been followed through, so that teachers assigned to preschool in the last couple of years may not have been exposed to any structured in-service or pre-service education on the Guidelines.

The available in-service may be seen as too costly by some Community Kindergarten and Independent schoolteachers.

The results seem to indicate that professional development workshops have been very effective in promoting familiarity with the Guidelines, but that familiarity with the Guidelines is higher where influence on the preschool program is higher. That is, where there is uptake there will be familiarity.

In the Catholic and Education Queensland schools, there was an expectation that the Guidelines would form the basis of the preschool program. This expectation was backed up by the provision of workshops and support through consultants. As a result, uptake and familiarity were high in those schools. The situation was different however for the independent schools and childcare centres, where the decision to accept the Guidelines was more likely to have been made at the site. Some sites chose not to take up the Guidelines.

Cost of workshops is a major factor. The cost associated with the provision of workshops seems to have presented obstacles to access for some independent schoolteachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers. Cost is also likely to be a reason why the initial in-service courses are no longer available for state and Catholic school staff. The result is that teachers recently appointed to preschool missed the opportunity to access workshops related to the Guidelines.

The initial workshops gave a strong impetus at the start but were not followed through. The Guidelines have not featured prominently in subsequent professional development attended by teachers and childcare workers.

Networking was suggested by many of the teachers and childcare workers as the best way to raise awareness and uptake. Over the longer term, facilitation of networking would seem to be potentially more efficient than workshops.

Interviewers noted that while teachers often said they would like to be able to discuss and share ideas with peers in other preschools, kindergartens or childcare centres, there was little opportunity for it. The provision of updates or newsletters, suggested by many of the teachers and childcare workers, appears to offer a very cost-effective way of maintaining and developing awareness and uptake.

Another suggestion that would appear to be quite efficient is the development of alternative formats for sections of the Guidelines, such as posters setting out key aspects or practical suggestions for applying the Guidelines in planning, teaching and evaluation. Curriculum documents written in general terms have to be translated into planning and action.

Teachers and childcare workers are busy people and need to have access to material that helps them in that translation process. Practical examples help greatly in the process of explaining the meaning of curriculum documents.

The potentially highly efficient opportunities presented by the Internet were rarely mentioned by the teachers and childcare workers.

### **We conclude that:**

Professional development workshops on the Guidelines have been very effective in promoting familiarity with the Guidelines, but the cost of such workshops may be too high initially for some childcare centres, community kindergartens and independent schools, and too high to maintain at system level for Catholic or state schools.

Efficient processes for promoting familiarity with and the uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* appear to be:

- facilitation of networking for preschool and kindergarten teachers and childcare workers to discuss and share ideas on the application of the Guidelines
- development of sections of the Guidelines in alternative formats
- provision of updates and newsletters, including practical suggestions on applying the Guidelines to planning, teaching and evaluation.

## **11. Enhancing Awareness and Uptake**

### **Focus Question 10**

In light of the above, what action should the Authority take in relation to enhancing the levels of awareness of, influence of and uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, or in relation to preschool education in general?

### **11.1 Discussion**

The recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education means that the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* will need to be redrafted. The findings from Section 10 will, however, apply to the development of awareness, influence and uptake of a revised Guidelines document. It is important also to recognise that decisions related to the implementation of curriculum, including the provision of in-service and support, are the province of the schools and school authorities.

With the introduction of new guidelines for a full-time pre-Year 1 program, a new round of workshops would probably be undertaken by the key organisations, especially the Catholic and state systems. There would also be the need for induction of the new or re-assigned staff. QSA could consider developing a framework and other materials to support the planning for such workshops. This would be of particular assistance to independent schools.

The cost of arranging or attending such workshops might be an inhibiting factor for some independent schools, kindergartens and childcare centres. Negotiation may need to be undertaken with C&K and the Department of Families to consider how the QSA might contribute to development of forms of in-service that are more readily accessible or affordable for kindergarten teachers and childcare workers.

A major issue for teachers is the need for assistance in translating the Guidelines into action. QSA could encourage uptake by developing modules that give examples of ways the Guidelines can be applied in the planning and teaching processes. The materials that accompany the Years 1 to 10 syllabuses provide a pattern by providing teaching suggestions without necessarily limiting the professionalism of the teacher or infringing upon the authority of the school or school system.

Some teachers and childcare workers mentioned that any activities to promote familiarity or uptake should include school or centre administration, staff in Years 1 to 7 and parents.

Providing materials that can be used for this purpose would be worthwhile. The CD-ROM provides brochures for parents and these could be made more readily available via the Internet for use by schools or for direct access by parents.

The maintenance of strong networking among early childhood teachers is a priority issue. Data presented in previous sections of this report suggest that networking among preschool teachers needs to be rejuvenated. Preschool teachers often find themselves isolated professionally as the only preschool teacher in a centre or school without the benefit of professional discussion with colleagues. QSA could consider developing partnership with the Early Childhood Teachers Association to encourage networking by providing information flow in forms such as updates and newsletters, or by providing speakers, slideshows or other resources for network meetings.

## 11.2 Summary and Conclusions

The recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education means that the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* will need to be redrafted. QSA could consider developing a framework and other materials to support the planning for a new round of in-service workshops by the key organisations, especially the Catholic and state systems.

Negotiation may need to be undertaken with C&K and the Department of Families to consider how the QSA might contribute to development of forms of in-service that are more readily accessible or affordable for kindergarten teachers and childcare workers.

QSA could encourage influence and uptake by developing modules that provide examples of ways the Guidelines can be applied in the planning and teaching processes.

Activities to promote familiarity or uptake should include school or centre administration, teaching staff in Years 1 to 7 and the children's parents.

Data presented in previous sections suggest that networking of preschool teachers needs to be rejuvenated as an important priority.

### **We conclude that:**

The Queensland Studies Authority should consider enhancing awareness, influence and uptake of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* or subsequent curriculum documents for pre-Year 1 education by:

- developing a framework and other materials to support the planning for a new round of workshops by the key organisations
- negotiating with C&K and the Department of Families on how the QSA might contribute to development of forms of in-service that are more readily accessible or affordable for kindergarten teachers and childcare workers
- developing modules that provide examples of ways the Guidelines can be applied in the planning and teaching processes
- including provision for school or centre administration, teaching staff in Years 1 to 7 and the children's parents in any information or in-service materials
- strengthening its partnership with the Early Childhood Teachers Association to encourage networking among early childhood teachers by providing information flow in forms such as updates and newsletters, and by providing speakers and other resources for network meetings.

## 12. Implications for Council Policy and Practice on Preschool Education

### Focus Question 11

In the light of answers to the above, what policies and practices should the Council undertake in relation to the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, and more broadly, to preschool education?

### 12.1 Discussion

The main factor currently influencing preschool education is the Government's recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education. This raises the questions of how the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* can be adapted to a full-time year and what should constitute preparatory education.

Depending on the results of the trial, new guidelines for pre-Year 1 will probably be required. It will be up to the Queensland Studies Authority, to develop the new guidelines, which will need to be applicable to whatever range of pre-Year 1 options are available following the trial. The new guidelines will also need to provide specific guidance in relation to the nature of preparatory education.

The development process for the new guidelines will have to be carefully designed to capture and interpret the experiences of the trial schools and the emerging needs of preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres across Queensland. In addition, the experiences of other States with pre-Year 1 education will need to be documented and analysed to determine implications for the Queensland setting.

The investment in the current *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* has been large and there is evidence that the result has been wide acceptance of a fundamentally sound document, especially in state schools, Catholic schools and community kindergartens. A sound basis for preschool education has been set down in the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, and the new guidelines should be expected to move forward from this base.

The new guidelines should be accompanied by materials that show, through practical examples, how to apply the guidelines in real settings.

It will not be sufficient for the QSA to develop a draft set of guidelines for the trial. That should be the beginning of a longer-term process to develop and refine new guidelines with the aim of providing workable, high quality curriculum documents for the post-trial phase. That process will need input from systematic monitoring and evaluation of the trial schools' experiences. The results of the evaluation of the trial will be essential to the development process, and high levels of cooperation with Education Queensland will be needed to ensure that the appropriate kinds of information are available to the development team.

The commencement of the trial will present a great opportunity for the QSA to strengthen networking among early childhood educators across all sectors. Interest will be keen and the need for information high. Developing and contributing to partnerships with other key organisations to meet these information needs would seem to be not only a valid function for QSA but also a very important one for the success of the new guidelines. The relevant key organisations would include the Early Childhood Teachers Association as well as AISQ, C&K, the Department of Families, Education Queensland and QCEC.



The role of the QSA in the development of networking would move through three phases:

- The initial phase would focus on firstly, information and discussion about the progress of the trial and secondly, stimulation of discussion about the emerging needs of schools, kindergartens, childcare centres and the key organisations.
- Over time the focus should move towards the provision of information and stimulation of discussion about the developing guidelines and associated materials.
- Once the new guidelines are in place, the focus would shift again towards support for the maintenance of the networks in various ways, such as the provision of articles, updates, newsletters, slideshows, speakers and discussion forums.

The choice of media for such purposes should be based on current experience on which formats prove to be most successful in maintaining interest and encouraging wide participation. The evidence from the present evaluation would indicate that at present, face-to-face communication and brief printed materials are most likely to be successful, especially if they include opportunities for sharing of ideas and experiences related to the application of guidelines in real settings.

## 12.2 Summary and Conclusions

New guidelines for pre-Year 1 programs will be needed, building upon the sound basis provided by the present *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*. The development process will need to capture and interpret the experiences of people involved in the pre-Year 1 trial as well as the emerging needs of preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres.

Systematic monitoring and evaluation of experiences with the pre-Year 1 trial will be essential, feeding into development and refinement of the new post-trial guidelines.

The commencement of the trial will present a great opportunity for the QSA to strengthen networking among early childhood educators in a three-phase process:

- initial focus on information and discussion about the trial and identification of emerging needs of key organisations, schools, kindergartens and childcare centres
- subsequent attention to provision of information and stimulation of discussion about the developing guidelines and associated materials
- once the new guidelines are in place, support for the maintenance of the networks in various ways, such as the provision of articles, updates, newsletters, slideshows, speakers and forums for sharing ideas and experiences.

### We conclude that:

The main factor currently influencing preschool education is the Government's recent announcement of the trial of a year of full-time pre-Year 1 education. This event gives rise to the need for new guidelines for pre-Year 1 education in Queensland. In response to the need, the Queensland Studies Authority should:

- seek the cooperation of Education Queensland to establish systematic processes to capture and interpret the experiences of schools participating in the trial
- identify the emerging needs of preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres across Queensland in relation to curriculum for pre-Year 1
- apply the information from these processes to the development of new guidelines for a full-time year of pre-Year 1 education
- work with the relevant key organisations to strengthen and maintain networking among early childhood educators in Queensland in order to maximise the success of the new guidelines.

## 13. Implications for Curriculum Change Processes

### Focus Question 12

In the light of the above, what lessons can the Council learn in relation to the process of introducing a curriculum change such as that represented by the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*?

### 13.1 Discussion

The evaluation findings allow the following lessons for the process of introducing a curriculum change like the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*.

The results indicate that classroom practitioners need more than the statements of the key aspects of a curriculum and the expected outcomes. They need assistance to understand the concepts well and to translate the statements into practice. Practitioners also need information to supplement the defining curriculum document. The supplementary information would, without restricting teacher professionalism or school autonomy, give examples of classroom planning, learning activities and assessment processes that are in line with the defining document.

The lesson is that new curriculum documents should be supplemented by material that gives practical examples of how the document can be applied in various situations.

Many of the interviewees called for alternative formats for the Guidelines. Suggestions seem to indicate the need for short documents, such as:

- excerpts explaining single aspects of the Guidelines or
- single-sheet summaries, posters or charts that illustrate at a glance the connections between parts.

The CD-ROM format of the Guidelines included a brochure for parents that was utilised successfully in some schools, kindergartens and childcare centres.

The lesson is that curriculum documents need to be published in various formats that can assist with the processes of conceptualisation and integration.

The comments from teachers, childcare workers and administrators indicate that the impetus from the initial round of professional development had fallen away. One effect of this was that staff newly appointed to the preschool did not have access to formal induction. Another effect that was apparent to the interviewers was that the impetus for change and development had been lost in many cases.

The lesson is that it is not sufficient to publish the document, promote it and then leave it. Ongoing processes are needed to maintain development and provide for newly assigned staff.

The survey results showed that many practitioners saw networking with colleagues as effective in raising awareness and uptake of the Guidelines. Interviewers became aware that in many places, opportunities for networking among preschool teachers and childcare workers were not readily available. Preschool and kindergarten teachers are in many cases somewhat isolated professionally. The kindergarten may have only one or two staff and little access to money to fund meetings with colleagues in other schools or kindergartens. Preschools are usually set apart from the primary school, sometimes quite a distance away. There are usually few other preschool teachers to interact with, especially compared with the primary school. In some schools, the preschool teachers seemed to have lower status and lower priority than the other teachers in the school.

The lesson is that the value of networking should not be underestimated. The introduction of curriculum change should include processes to cultivate and maintain networking among colleagues.

In their suggestions for ways to increase familiarity and uptake of the Guidelines, very few of the teachers and childcare workers mentioned the Internet. The interviewers found that the practitioners seldom mentioned the CD-ROM. We saw some evidence of computers on teachers' and childcare workers' desks but few spoke about using them. We believe that the use of computers and the Internet for purposes such as networking, access to materials or planning was not yet widespread or routine.

The lesson is that it is still too soon to rely on the Internet for professional development associated with a curriculum change. Of course access to the Internet and skills in utilising its capabilities are currently changing and the situation could become very different in the near future.

The evaluation results indicate that levels of familiarity with and influence of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* were lowest in independent schools and childcare centres. The interviewers found that preschool age children in childcare centres often went to the nearby state preschool on the days or half-days when it was available to them. Some of the centres did not provide a program based on the Guidelines at the other times. Some of the independent schools had chosen not to base their preschool program provision on the Guidelines. Some focused strongly on preparing children for Year 1. In the current situation, independent schools and childcare centres may choose not to follow the Guidelines – that is their prerogative. Exercising that choice implies, however, that the Guidelines did not meet their needs.

The lesson is that some form of dialogue, through bodies such as the AISQ or the Department of Families, may be required to identify whether some independent schools or centres have needs that are not met by the current document and whether amendments are required.

The interviews with parents showed that knowledge of the Guidelines was very limited. Interviews with teachers and administrators indicated that efforts to inform parents about the Guidelines usually had limited success. Parents said that other parents were often too busy to have the time to learn about the preschool program. Administrators and staff in education cannot be expected to be skilled in public information processes. If parents' understanding and support are essential, then professional assistance may be needed to help the schools or centres to achieve that.

The lesson is that, within the limitations of QSA's mandate, professional campaigns to inform parents and achieve their support should be included in the process of introducing curriculum change.

During interviews, many teachers and childcare workers said that the Guidelines had not changed their programs or processes to high extents because it merely reinforced what they were doing already. This may have been valid in some cases, but the interviewers observed that in many instances, the preschool program did not, in reality, reflect the Guidelines to any great extent. The teachers and childcare workers seemed to have assimilated the Guidelines into their current practice without making any real change.

The lesson is that when introducing curriculum change, there is a need to highlight the nature of the differences from the previous situation, and to encourage discussion of the main concepts over time, stressing that the desired changes represent a direction to be followed, rather than an event that happens in an instant. This needs to be done without implying that what the practitioner has been doing up to that point is wrong.

## 13.2 Summary and Conclusions

Classroom practitioners need more than the statements of the key aspects of a curriculum and the expected outcomes. They need assistance to understand the concepts well and to translate the statements into practice. New curriculum documents need to be supplemented by material that gives practical examples of how the document can be applied in various situations.

Curriculum documents need to be published in various formats that can assist with the processes of conceptualisation and integration, such as excerpts explaining single aspects of the Guidelines or single-sheet summaries, posters or charts that illustrate at a glance the connections between parts.

After initial activity on introduction of the Guidelines, professional development fell away. The impetus for change and development attenuated and staff later appointed to the preschool year did not have access to formal induction. Ongoing processes are needed to maintain the influence of curriculum change and provide for newly assigned staff.

Many practitioners see networking with colleagues as effective in raising awareness and uptake of the Guidelines. The introduction of curriculum change should include processes to cultivate and maintain networking among colleagues. It is probably still too soon for heavy reliance on the Internet for professional development or networking activities, but the situation could change.

The evaluation results indicate that levels of familiarity with and influence of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* were lowest in independent schools and childcare centres, implying that the document does not meet their needs. Some form of dialogue may be required to identify the needs that are not met by the current document in particular settings and whether amendments should be made to allow for those needs.

Administrators and staff in education cannot be expected to be skilled in public information processes. If parents' understanding and support are essential, then professional assistance may be necessary to help the schools or centres to achieve that. Professional campaigns to inform parents and achieve their support should be considered in the process of introducing curriculum change.

Some practitioners seemed to have assimilated the Guidelines into their current practice without making any real change. The introduction of curriculum change needs to highlight the nature of the differences from the previous situation and to encourage discussion of the main concepts over time. The strategy should present the desired changes as a direction or path to be followed, rather than an event that happens in an instant, but avoiding the implication that what the practitioner has been doing up to that point is wrong.

### **We conclude that:**

The evaluation findings indicate the following lessons for the introduction of a curriculum change such as that represented by the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*:

- New curriculum documents need to be supplemented by material that gives practical examples of how the document can be applied in various situations.
- Curriculum documents need to be published in various formats, such as single-topic excerpts or schematic charts, to assist with the processes of conceptualisation and integration.
- It is not sufficient to publish a new curriculum document, promote it and then leave it. Ongoing processes are needed to maintain development and provide for newly assigned staff.

- The value of networking should not be underestimated: The introduction of curriculum change should include processes to cultivate and maintain networking among practitioners.
- It seems too soon yet for heavy reliance on the Internet for professional development or networking activities associated with a curriculum change although the situation could soon change.
- Some form of dialogue may be required to identify whether particular independent schools or childcare centres have needs that are not met by a proposed curriculum document and whether amendments should be undertaken to allow for those needs.
- Within the limitations of QSA's mandate, professional campaigns to inform parents and achieve their support should be considered in the process of introducing curriculum change.
- During introduction of curriculum change, there is a need to highlight the nature of the differences from the previous situation, and to encourage discussion of the main concepts over time, stressing that the desired changes represent a direction or path to be followed, rather than an event that happens in an instant. This needs to be done with care to avoid the implication that what the practitioner has been doing up to that point is wrong.

## **Appendixes**

**Appendix 1 Survey Form**

**Appendix 2 Survey Sample**

**Appendix 3 Interview Schedules**

**Appendix 4 Survey Results Summary**

**Appendix 5 Special Needs Encountered**

## **Appendix 1: Survey Form**

The survey form was printed in three versions, one for preschools, one for kindergartens and one for childcare centres. The wording differed only in references to the different site types.

The preschool version is provided in this Appendix.

## External Evaluation of the Extent and Nature of Use of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines



This survey is for preschool teachers in Queensland. You are asked to participate as part of a Statewide sample.

The results will form a significant part of the independent external evaluation of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines that were published in 1998 by the Queensland School Curriculum Council. The findings will appear in a formal report to the QSCC and are expected to influence future Statewide curriculum development activities in relation to education for preschool aged children.

The survey will be administered by telephone in some Preschools and during a visit to others. We ask that you have your survey ready when a member of the research team visits or phones.

- Every preschool teacher's response is important.
- Anonymity will be preserved: data will be reported without identifying persons or places.
- A copy of the results will be sent to your Preschool.

Please start with the background questions below:

1. Your professional training:

- Degree
- Diploma
- Certificate
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Years of experience as a preschool teacher:

- Less than 2 years
- 2-5 years
- More than 5 years

3. Your familiarity with the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines?

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

**Please Continue on the Other side**



**Page2 (START ON THE OTHER SIDE)**

Please answer each of Questions 4 to 20 by ticking the appropriate box to the right. Each question begins with the phrase at the top of the left hand column.

| <b>To what extent has the <i>Preschool Curriculum Guidelines</i>:</b>                                    | <b>Very Low</b>          | <b>Low</b>               | <b>Moderate</b>          | <b>High</b>              | <b>Very High</b>         |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4. Been influential in the development of the preschool program in your Preschool?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Met your needs as a preschool teacher?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Met the needs of Queensland children of preschool age?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Helped to make the curriculum for preschool aged children in your Preschool more effective?           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Improved the efficiency of developing your Preschool's curriculum for preschool aged children?        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Helped your Preschool to provide experiences that lay sound foundations for later learning in school? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Enhanced connections between preschool education and the first year of school?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Helped you in communicating with parents about their children's development?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Effectively served the diverse needs of all students?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Changed the way you work as a preschool teacher?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Helped you to improve the quality of your work as a preschool teacher?                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Improved your satisfaction with your work as a preschool teacher?                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Complicated your work as a preschool teacher?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Clarified your role as a preschool teacher?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Been prominent in professional development you have attended since 1998?                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Been valuable in professional development you have attended since 1998?                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. Helped make professional development on preschool education more efficient?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Reflected current and emerging views on early childhood education?                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please write your answers to questions 22 and 23 in the spaces to the right.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 22. What would be the best way to raise preschool teachers' awareness of the Guidelines?   |  |
| 23. What would be the best way to encourage more preschool teachers to use the Guidelines? |  |

Please accept our sincere thanks for participating in this survey.

## Appendix 2: Survey Sample

Table A1 shows the survey sample frame, with target and actual frequencies. A good balance across urban, regional and rural areas was achieved, with adequate sample sizes for each system, although the sample cell for childcare centres in rural areas was 4 cases (13%) short of the target.

**Table A1: Survey Sample – Distribution by System and Location**

| System              | Brisbane Area |        | Regional Cities |        | Rural Areas |        | Totals |        |
|---------------------|---------------|--------|-----------------|--------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|
|                     | Target        | Actual | Target          | Actual | Target      | Actual | Target | Actual |
| Catholic Schools    | 15            | 15     | 10              | 9      | 5           | 6      | 30     | 30     |
| Childcare Centres   | 10            | 10     | 10              | 10     | 10          | 6      | 30     | 26     |
| Independent Schools | 15            | 15     | 15              | 11     | 0           | 2      | 30     | 28     |
| Kindergartens       | 10            | 11     | 10              | 10     | 10          | 8      | 30     | 29     |
| State Schools       | 20            | 18     | 15              | 13     | 15          | 16     | 50     | 47     |
| Totals              | 70            | 69     | 60              | 53     | 40          | 38     | 170    | 160    |

Table A2 shows the composition of the sample in terms of professional training. Most of those who took part in the survey indicated Degree or Diploma training.

**Table A2: Survey Sample – Distribution by System and Professional Training**

| System              | Professional Training |         |             | Totals |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------|-------------|--------|
|                     | Degree                | Diploma | Certificate |        |
| Catholic Schools    | 22                    | 8       | 0           | 30     |
| Childcare Centres   | 12                    | 13      | 1           | 26     |
| Independent Schools | 17                    | 7       | 1           | 25     |
| Kindergartens       | 17                    | 11      | 1           | 29     |
| State Schools       | 29                    | 17      | 0           | 46     |
| Totals              | 97                    | 56      | 3           | 156    |

[Missing=4]

Table A3 shows the composition of the sample in terms of familiarity with the Guidelines. Familiarity was relatively low in the childcare centres and the independent schools.

In much of the analysis reported in the body of the report, cases showing Very Low and Low familiarity were omitted. Table A3 shows that such cases numbered 1 person from the Catholic schools, 8 from the childcare centres, 7 from the independent schools, 3 from the kindergartens and 6 from the State schools. We note that the number of childcare workers with at least moderate familiarity with the Guidelines was only 18. For the childcare centres therefore, means where Low or Very Low familiarity cases are excluded should be interpreted with care.

**Table A3: Survey Sample – Distribution by System and Professional Training**

| System              |   | Familiarity Rating |       |          |       |           | Totals |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|--------|
|                     |   | Very Low           | Low   | Moderate | High  | Very High |        |
| Catholic Schools    | f | 0                  | 1     | 12       | 12    | 5         | 30     |
|                     | % | 0.0%               | 3.3%  | 40.0%    | 40.0% | 16.7%     | 100%   |
| Childcare Centres   | f | 4                  | 4     | 11       | 5     | 2         | 26     |
|                     | % | 15.4%              | 15.4% | 42.3%    | 19.2% | 7.7%      | 100%   |
| Independent Schools | f | 5                  | 2     | 13       | 4     | 4         | 28     |
|                     | % | 17.9%              | 7.1%  | 46.4%    | 14.3% | 14.3%     | 100%   |
| Kindergartens       | f | 2                  | 1     | 12       | 9     | 5         | 29     |
|                     | % | 6.9%               | 3.4%  | 41.4%    | 31.0% | 17.2%     | 100%   |
| State Schools       | f | 1                  | 5     | 14       | 23    | 4         | 47     |
|                     | % | 2.1%               | 10.6% | 29.8%    | 48.9% | 8.5%      | 100%   |
| Totals              | f | 12                 | 13    | 62       | 53    | 20        | 160    |

## **Appendix 3: Interview Schedules**

This appendix contains the interview schedules for:

- preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers
- site administrators (childcare centre version)
- preservice educators
- representatives of key organisations

The interview for site administrators had three versions, one for principals of schools, one for directors of kindergartens and one for directors of childcare centres. The versions differed from each other only in the references to the different site types. The childcare centre version is presented here.

## Interview for preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers and childcare workers

### External Evaluation of the Extent and Nature of Use of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines

This interview is part of the External Evaluation of the Extent and Nature of Use of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines. The Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) developed and published the Guidelines in 1998. The evaluation is being carried out by EdData, a private research organisation contracted by the QSCC.

The interview accompanies and builds on the survey you have just completed. Interviews are being held with around one in four of those who take part in the survey.

We are grateful for your willingness to provide the time for this interview. It should take no more than 10 to 15 minutes.

#### Part A : Your general responses to the survey.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Which questions were difficult to understand or difficult to answer?       |
| 2 | Would you like to add comments to your responses for any of the questions? |

#### Part B: Detail about your responses to selected survey questions

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | <i>Item 7: Guidelines helped make curriculum for preschool aged children more effective</i><br>What have been the effects on the curriculum?  |
| 4 | <i>Item 8: Guidelines made curriculum development more efficient</i><br>In what ways (if any) was curriculum development made more efficient? |
| 5 | <i>Item 12: Guidelines served the diverse needs of all students</i><br>What kinds of special needs have been encountered in your setting?     |
| 6 | <i>Item 13: Guidelines changed the way you work</i><br>In what ways (if any) has your work changed?   |
| 7 | <i>Items 23 &amp; 24: Raising awareness and uptake of the Guidelines</i><br>What works and what doesn't work in raising awareness and uptake? |

#### Part C: What uses are made of the Guidelines:

|                               |  |                        |  |              |  |                               |  |      |  |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|--------------|--|-------------------------------|--|------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| 8                             | How do people use the Guidelines in your setting?  |                        |  |              |  |                               |  |      |  |                               |  |
| 9                             | How does your program for preschool aged children address the Guidelines in terms of these key components?<br><table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">Understanding Children</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Partnerships</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Flexible Learning Environment</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Play</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">The Foundation Learning Areas</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | Understanding Children |  | Partnerships |  | Flexible Learning Environment |  | Play |  | The Foundation Learning Areas |  |
| Understanding Children        |  |                        |  |              |  |                               |  |      |  |                               |  |
| Partnerships                  |  |                        |  |              |  |                               |  |      |  |                               |  |
| Flexible Learning Environment |  |                        |  |              |  |                               |  |      |  |                               |  |
| Play                          |  |                        |  |              |  |                               |  |      |  |                               |  |
| The Foundation Learning Areas |  |                        |  |              |  |                               |  |      |  |                               |  |

#### Part D: For recent graduates of preservice programs (degree, diploma, certificate):

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 10 | What did you learn about the Guidelines in your preservice education? |
|----|---|

#### Part E: Other Comments

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 11 | Do you wish to make any other comments about the use of the Guidelines? |
|----|---|

## Interview for site administrators (childcare centre version)

### External Evaluation of the Extent and Nature of Use of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines

This interview is part of the External Evaluation of the Extent and Nature of Use of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines. The Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) developed and published the Guidelines in 1998. This evaluation is being carried out by EdData, a private research organisation contracted by the QSCC.

We are grateful for your willingness to provide the time for this interview. It should take no more than 5 to 10 minutes.

Items 1 to 9 require a rating and a comment. The Rating Scale is:

|          |     |          |      |           |
|----------|-----|----------|------|-----------|
| Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High |
|----------|-----|----------|------|-----------|

#### Part A: Your Ratings of Various Aspects of the Guidelines Please rate

##### Please Rate:

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | Your familiarity with the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]  |
| 2. | The degree to which current and emerging views on early childhood education are reflected in the Guidelines.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]                        |
| 3. | The influence of the Guidelines in the development of the preschool program in your childcare centre.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]                               |
| 4. | The utility of the Guidelines in making the curriculum for preschool aged children in your childcare centre more effective?<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]         |
| 5. | The value of the Guidelines in raising the efficiency of developing your childcare centre's curriculum for preschool aged children.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH] |
| 6. | The value of the Guidelines in enhancing connections between preschool education and the first year of school.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]                      |
| 7. | The extent to which the Guidelines help in communicating with parents about their children's development.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]                           |
| 8. | The effectiveness of the Guidelines in serving the interests of students with special educational needs.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]                            |
| 9. | The value of the Guidelines in making professional development on preschool education more efficient.<br>[VL—L—M—H—VH]                               |

#### Part B: Use and Awareness of the Guidelines:

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 10. | How do people use the Guidelines in your childcare centre?                            |
| 11. | What would be the best way to raise childcare workers' awareness of the Guidelines?   |
| 12. | What would be the best way to encourage more childcare workers to use the Guidelines? |



**The External Evaluation of the Extent and Nature of Use of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines Preservice Educators Interview**

This interview is for tertiary educators involved in preservice courses for early childhood teachers and carers.

There are seven questions in total in the interview. With some of the questions we will ask you to give a rating to your response. The rating scale is given below. Your comments on each question will be valuable to the evaluation.

|                 |            |                 |             |                  |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| <b>Very Low</b> | <b>Low</b> | <b>Moderate</b> | <b>High</b> | <b>Very High</b> |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|

| Questions   |
|---|
| <p>1. To what extent does the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines document reflect current and emerging views of early childhood education?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VL   L   M   H   VH</p>            |
| <p>2. To what extent does the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines document reflect current and emerging views of curriculum development?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VL   L   M   H   VH</p>               |
| <p>3. To what extent do the guidelines facilitate transition of children into Year One?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VL   L   M   H   VH</p>  |
| <p>4. Have you observed any changes in preschools, kindergartens or childcare centres since the implementation of the guidelines?</p>   |
| <p>5. To what extent does the <i>Preschool Curriculum Guidelines</i> effectively serve the interests of students with Special Education needs?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VL   L   M   H   VH</p>     |
| <p>6. To what extent has the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines served the needs of your organisation in the provision of quality preschool programs?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VL   L   M   H   VH</p> |
| <p>7. What actions could the QSCC take to enhance the impact of the guidelines on preschool education?</p>  |

## Interview for representatives of key organisations

### The External Evaluation of the Extent and Nature of Use of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* Key Organisation Interview

This interview is for key organisations with a stake in preschool education. There are seven questions in total in the interview. With some of the questions we will ask you to give a rating to your response. The rating scale is given below. Your comments on each question will be valuable to the evaluation.

|          |     |          |      |           |
|----------|-----|----------|------|-----------|
| Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High |
|----------|-----|----------|------|-----------|

#### Questions

1. What are the expectations of your organisation on the use of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines document in preschools/kindergartens/ childcare centres?

2. To what extent does the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines document reflect current and emerging views of early childhood education?

[VL    L    M    H    VH]

3. This question asks about the promotion of the use of the Guidelines in preschools/kindergartens/ childcare centres.

- (a) What processes did your organisation use to promote the use of the Guidelines?
- (b) What worked well and what was ineffective?
- (c) What advice would you give to the Queensland School Curriculum Council to enhance the implementation of the Guidelines?

4. To what extent do the guidelines help to facilitate transition of children into Year One?

[VL    L    M    H    VH]

In what ways?

5. (a) To what extent have the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines led to greater efficiencies (in areas such as curriculum development or professional development) in the Preschool year in Preschools/ child care centres/ community kindergartens?

[VL    L    M    H    VH]

(b) In what ways have greater efficiencies been achieved?

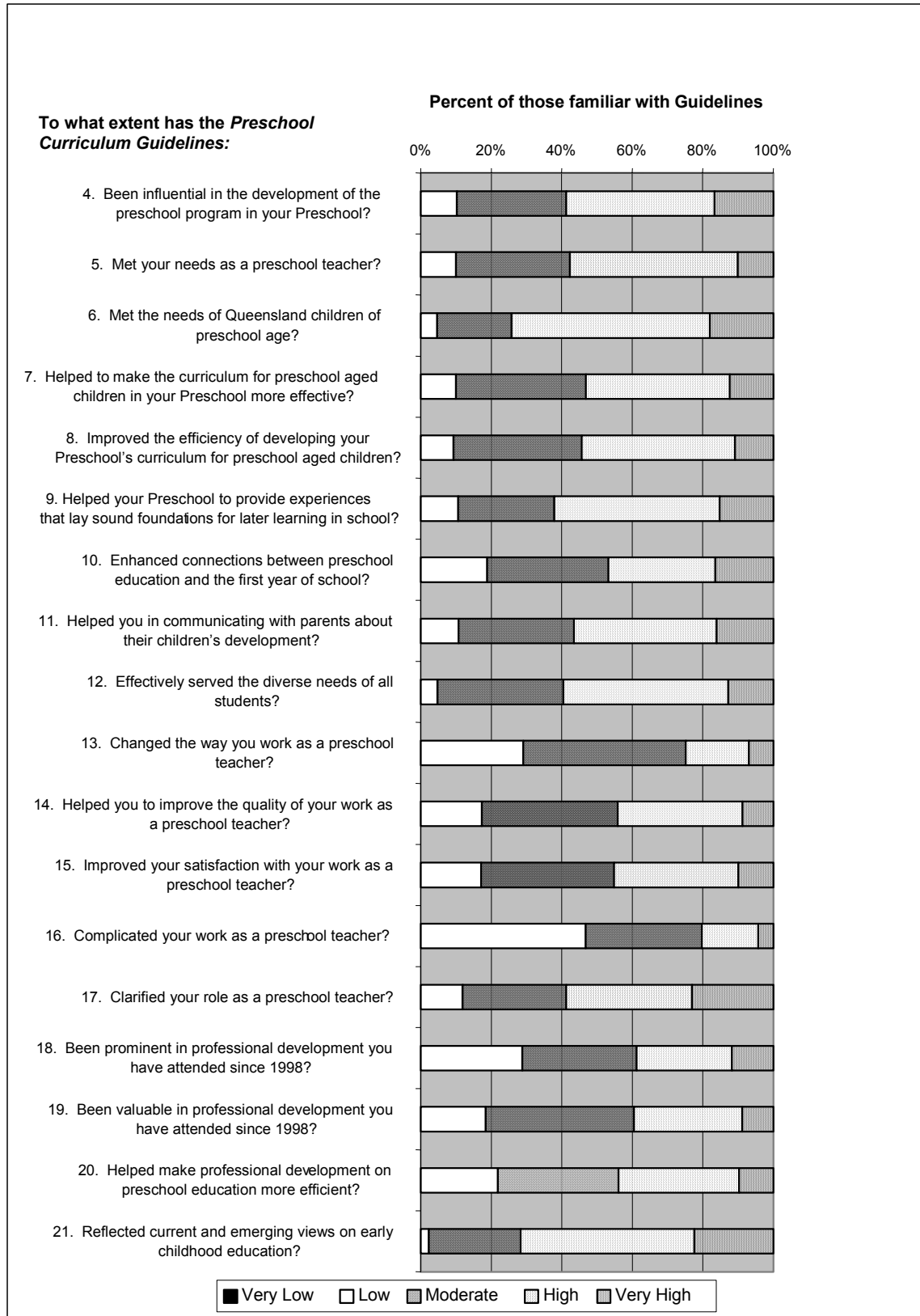
6. Have any changes in preschools, kindergartens or childcare centres been observed since the implementation of the guidelines?

7. To what extent does the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* effectively serve the interests of students with Special Education needs?

[VL    L    M    H    VH]



## Appendix 4: Survey Results Summary



## Appendix 5: Special Needs Encountered

| Description        | Rating Item 12 | Special Needs Encountered in Setting  |
|--------------------|----------------|---|
| State school       | Very Low       | Geographical isolation. The fact that home tutors are teaching the children—sometimes more than one child—means they need access to materials and support. We're experienced teachers and use our background.   |
| Catholic school    | Low            | We have quite a number of ESL and Asian children and a very small percentage of emotional or LD children.   |
| Independent school | Low            | I've had children with cerebral palsy, autistic, ADHD, language delayed, global developmental delay. I have to work to an IEP for these children from the Special Education Unit.   |
| Kindergarten       | Low            | Indigenous children, hearing impaired.  |
| Childcare          | Moderate       | Some Indigenous, Asian. The Guidelines say to look for help - I get the Special Needs advisers to help.   |
| Childcare          | Moderate       | A lot of children with autism, cerebral palsy, debilitating diseases, poor communication skills etc. We don't encounter wheelchair children.  |
| Independent school | Moderate       | Physical disability, hearing impairment, Aspergers, language delayed.   |
| Kindergarten       | Moderate       | Last year a boy with autistic spectrum disorder. Some parents voiced opposition to his presence and the guidelines helped provide a justification for me.   |
| State school       | Moderate       | Some Indigenous children and Level 6 special needs.   |
| Catholic school    | High           | We don't have a lot. Maybe some ADD children.   |
| Catholic school    | High           | Behaviour, special needs, speech, ESL, emotional distress, cultural diversity.  |
| Catholic school    | High           | ADHD children, autistic spectrum disorder, sight impaired.  |
| Independent school | High           | I have an autistic child. Another child has very poor muscle tone.  |
| Kindergarten       | High           | We don't this year but in other years we have had many types of special needs. The guidelines give you a way to create a developmental profile for each child and this helps us to know when to refer a child to a specialist. We develop an understanding that each child is unique. |
| Kindergarten       | High           | Only cultural diversity here. It works well in this situation.  |
| Kindergarten       | High           | 70% of our children are Indigenous children. The emphasis of the document is on diversity and social context and family are addressed.  |
| State school       | High           | We get a lot of special children as well as ethnic and cultural differences. We now focus a lot more on the ethnic and cultural and we get a lot more children from a variety of such backgrounds.  |
| State school       | High           | Children with physical impairment, 60% NESB. I found the Guidelines really did help me focus on these children and value the uniqueness of the individual.  |
| State school       | High           | Enrichment is next door and we have physically disabled, mentally disabled, behaviour problems, Downs syndrome and so on.   |
| State school       | High           | Severe disability of most kinds - this is a special school. The bottom line is how teachers take this and use it with their children.   |

| Description        | Rating Item 12 | Special Needs Encountered in Setting  |
|--------------------|----------------|---|
| Independent school | Very High      | The children are not too diverse culturally. Children still come from families with different expectations of children. We have some children with special needs. |
| Kindergarten       | Very High      | Language and emotional needs. Every year there will be a special needs child.   |
| State school       | Very High      | There are always - all types. It works very well for all - it copes with everyone.  |
| State school       | Very High      | Some Indigenous children and Level 6 special needs.   |
| State school       | Very High      | All our children are Indigenous students, so we don't have to cater for a diverse group. You need local knowledge as well as what is in the Guidelines.           |