

**Alternative Education workforce  
development in Aotearoa:  
Lessons from related sectors**



**Vodafone  
Aotearoa  
Foundation**

## Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to the research advisors of this study, Dr Adrian Schoone (AUT), Lloyd Martin (Praxis) and Jody Hohaia (University of Canterbury). Your valuable insights, wisdom and experience not only enhanced this study, but strengthen the sector. Thank you to the amazing participants in this study who gave generously of their time. The findings are very significant in informing the field of AE. AE continues to be supported by the philanthropic sector, and this report is the outcome of such support. For rangatahi who have taught us the most, tēnā koutou katoa.

Report commissioned by Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Vodafone Aotearoa Foundation.

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Table of Contents	3
Executive summary	4
Key findings: Understanding context	4
Key findings: Lessons from related sectors	5
Recommendations and considerations	5
Introduction	7
Phase 1: An overview of PLD in AE	8
AE Context	8
The need for PLD	12
PLD content knowledge	14
PLD that is offered	16
Factors impacting on PLD	17
Barriers to PLD	17
Operational matters	18
Workforce planning and next steps	20
Phase 2: Professionalism in youth work and ECE sectors	22
Research methodology	23
Findings	23
The journey toward professionalism: Contributing factors	24
Youth work context	24
ECE context	27
Challenges to professionalism	30
Youth work context	30
ECE context	32
Effective professional learning and development	34
Youth work context	34
ECE context	36
Considerations for AE	38
Summary	39
Overall recommendations: Implications for AE	43
References	48

## Executive summary

With culturally responsive relationships at the centre, Alternative Education (AE) is a high support and high challenge learning environment, led by skilled educators enabling choice for rangatahi during a crucial time of development and learning (Bruce, et al, 2020). There are many challenges for educators working in AE and unique and specialised skills are required to work effectively in the sector. The aim of this research was two-fold: (1) to investigate the factors impacting on professional learning and development (PLD) and workforce development; and (2) to explore the growth and challenges to professionalism in different but related fields: youth work and early childhood education (ECE). The aim of the study is to inform future steps toward PLD and workforce development in AE. The report concludes with implications for the AE sector workforce and recommendations for possible next steps in research. Two questions guide the direction of this research:

1. What are the historical and current factors impacting on AE educator professional learning and development?
2. What lessons can be learned regarding the formation and development of professional learning and development from related sectors, including future trends and predicted directions?

### ***Key findings: Understanding context***

- Little is known about the demographics of educators working in AE.
- There is currently no information available from MOE on PLD that AE services access.
- PLD content knowledge areas may be categorised as curriculum and pedagogy, youth development, cultural capability, operations (leadership and management), and psychology
- Probable barriers to accessing AE are resourcing (time and funding), irrelevant or lack of PLD opportunities, isolation, operational complexities (with managing and enrolling school responsibilities)

### ***Key findings: Lessons from related sectors***

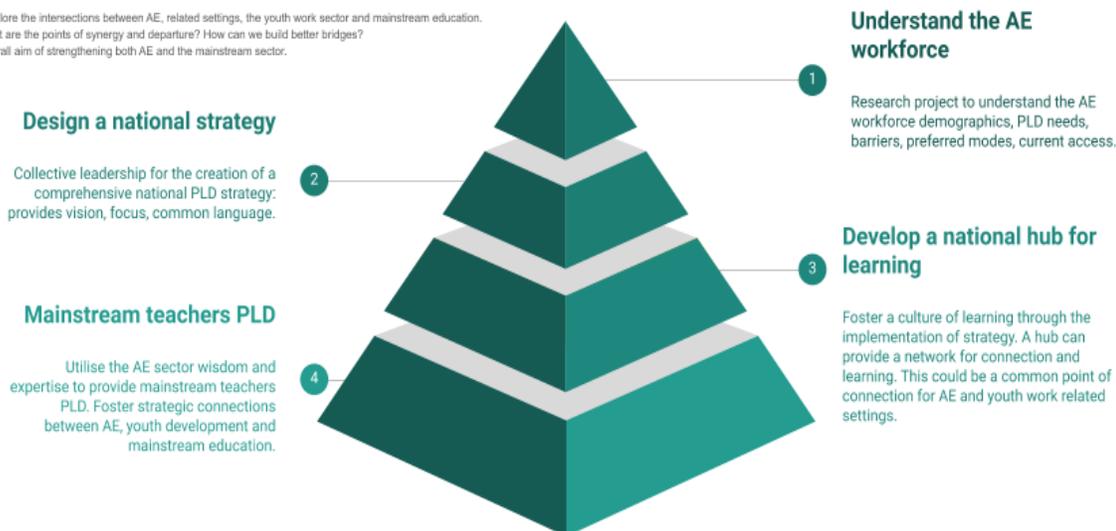
- Factors that contributed to a growth in professionalism were interrelated, and included collective leadership, key guiding documents, a culture of unity, professional identity formation, a culture of learning, funding, longevity, and advocacy. These factors were the same for both ECE and youth work.
- Challenges to professionalism differed between sectors, except for funding uncertainties. For ECE other challenges included staff attrition, a lack of national PLD strategy, and changes to government policy. For youth work, challenges included a lack of clarity for the sector regarding the need for a growth in professionalism, equitable access for all to PLD and association membership, and the challenge of establishing credibility and professional identity.
- Both sectors reported a strong culture of learning and engagement in PLD. They attribute this to supportive employers, the innate value of learning as *educative* professions, and regulatory requirements.
- Both sectors highly value training that is relational, face to face, biculturally integrated, and diverse enough to cater to all.
- Lessons and recommendations for workforce development and PLD included ensuring work is sector led, is bicultural and is cognisant of the complexities and importance of language. It was recommended that the intersections of youth development and education are explored further.

### ***Recommendations and considerations***

- The success of AE rests on the strengths and practices of educators, and this is the sector's most valuable resource.
- Sector led development supported by the government will lead to sustainable change.
- Consideration needs to be given to the intersections between AE, related settings, the youth work sector and mainstream education. What are the points of synergy and departure? How can we build better bridges? Overall consideration can be given to strengthening both AE and the mainstream sector.

## Next steps for AE and related settings

\*Explore the intersections between AE, related settings, the youth work sector and mainstream education. What are the points of synergy and departure? How can we build better bridges? Overall aim of strengthening both AE and the mainstream sector.



Bruce, J. (2020). *Alternative education workforce development in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Lessons from related sectors*. Report commissioned by the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Vodafone New Zealand Foundation.

- Further research is needed to understand the workforce demographics, and the gaps and needs related to PLD.
- A comprehensive national PLD strategy for workforce development is likely to strengthen the sector—providing vision, focus and a common language for developing a greater learning culture.
- The establishment of a central PLD hub for AE and related settings including youth development could provide a common point for knowledge and access, and assist in the creation of a community of learning.
- Strategic connections for mainstream teachers PLD development could assist disenfranchised rangatahi in schools.

Bruce, J. (2020). *Alternative Education workforce development in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Lessons from related sectors*. Report commissioned by the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Vodafone Aotearoa Foundation.

## Introduction

The aim of this research project is to provide an overview of historic and current factors impacting on professional learning and development (PLD) and workforce development in Alternative Education (AE). It is hoped that this research may create a forum of informed discussion and ultimately influence policy and practice to activate sector wide PLD that is accessible, meaningful and results driven. Two questions guide the direction of this research:

1. What are the historical and current factors impacting on AE educator professional learning and development?
2. What lessons can be learned regarding the formation and development of professional learning and development from related sectors, including future trends and predicted directions?

A literature review is provided as part of phase one of this study. The review includes an investigation of the nature of AE and AE educators<sup>1</sup>, possible PLD content needs, learning and development pedagogical preferences, barriers to PLD, as well as operational and broader contextual issues. To inform future possibilities for growth in AE PLD and workforce development, phase two of this study explores the growth and challenges to professionalism in two different but related fields: youth work and early childhood education (ECE). These fields were chosen as they are somewhat related as *educative* professions, and are similar in terms of diversity of structure. Phase two is a qualitative study, and it is hoped that findings from this phase can help to inform future steps toward PLD and workforce development in AE. The report concludes with implications for the AE sector workforce and recommendations for possible next steps in research.

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<sup>1</sup> The term AE educator is used to denote all staff in AE. Where appropriate the report distinguishes between teachers as those who have a teaching qualification, and tutors (those who do not). All staff in AE fulfil an educative role as they journey with rangatahi.

## Phase 1: An overview of PLD in AE

This literature review examines all research and reports that relate to PLD for educators working in AE in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The aim of this review is to provide a critical overview of the field including historical, current and future needs. Consideration is given specifically to the nature of AE and educators, consequential PLD content needs, learning and development pedagogical preferences, barriers to PLD, as well as operational and broader contextual issues. The review concludes with thoughts on future workforce planning and next steps in this broader research project.

### AE Context

Since its inception in the late 1990s, AE has been exceptional in national education policy, structure and practice. Part of this uniqueness evolved from the ad hoc beginnings. AE began as a pragmatic grass roots response to increased complex needs for a small but growing number of rangatahi<sup>2</sup> in NZ who were alienated from mainstream schooling. The ad hoc development grew quickly as a national movement and both a sector's strengths and challenges have derived from the community/state partnership, supported by philanthropic and government funding. On the one hand the grass roots community partnership has allowed for a more dynamic, adaptable culture to evolve which met many of the needs for rangatahi development and learning; on the other hand the limited resourcing and support created extreme pressures on a high demand context, particularly for educators working in the field (Bruce, 2015). Over a 30 year period of evolution, there has been a small number of PLD initiatives offered for educators working in the field.

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<sup>2</sup> Rangatahi is used to refer to all young people who attend AE; the majority of whom are Māori. While 'ākonga' is used to mean the student who is a learner, 'rangatahi' is used to infer that holistic development of the young person is critical in this space - not just their learning.

Within a school year approximately 3500 rangatahi attend AE programmes (Schoone, 2017), typically referred by schools after multiple suspensions or chronic truancy (Ministry of Education, 2019). The average length of time a young person will stay in AE is estimated to be around one year. As of July 2019, 1404 rangatahi were attending AE programmes; 902 (64%) of whom were male and 924 (66%) identifying as Māori. Rangatahi were aged 13 - 17, with the majority (81%) aged 14 - 15 years<sup>3</sup>. This snapshot is indicative of the sector which has historically had over representation of Māori male rangatahi aged 14-15 years (ERO, 2012).

The Ministry of Education (2019) defines AE as a programme which, provides educational and pastoral support for students who have disengaged from mainstream schooling. As a short term intervention, alternative education aims to re-engage students in a meaningful learning programme targeted to their individual needs and supports them to transition back to mainstream school, further education, training or employment. (p.4)

In a critique of AE programmes, researchers suggest that this ideological framing of AE situates the problem with the student: it is the student who has “disengaged” (Granite & Graham, 2012; te Riele & Gorur, 2015). Martin (2020) explains that the ‘remove, rehabilitate and return’ approach pathologises rangatahi as the one who needs to be reformed and argues that any “focus that pathologises some groups of students also allows school systems to engage in practice that further marginalise them” (p.6); thus compounding upon a system that is failing some of our most vulnerable rangatahi. The Ministry of Education (2019b) does however recognise and acknowledge the need for mainstream schools to adjust their practice in order to better meet the needs of all rangatahi through suggesting the need for foundations that include whānaungatanga, inclusive practices, whānau centred and ākongā centred approaches and culturally responsive practices. Significant shifts in mainstream practices require multisystemic

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<sup>3</sup> Data provided by *Education Counts*, 3 March, 2020.

and complex approaches, particularly for the disruption of those that are historically and culturally embedded.

Seeking to capture the essence of AE, Bruce et al (2020) provide the following strengths based definition,<sup>4</sup>

With culturally responsive relationships at the centre, AE is a high support and high challenge learning environment, led by skilled educators enabling choice for rangatahi during a crucial time of development and learning.

Further to this, Lavea-Timo (in Bruce et al, 2020) describes AE thus,

AE is another option, or another opportunity for education, because mainstream education, is not for everyone. AE is a different learning environment which is small and agile enough for rangatahi to belong and be seen. It is a place where rangatahi can come with all of their needs and know that their needs will be met here. (p.5)

Not only do these definitions reframe AE from a deficit to strengths based approach to education, it also provides a vision of AE and hopefully, inspiration for other educators outside of the sector.

One of the unique emergent and persistent features of AE has been the employment of “tutors as the key protagonists charged with providing pastoral care and academic guidance in the spirit of the ‘nonprofessional ministration of a neighbour’” (Illich as cited in Schoone, 2017, p.810). Tutors are in many ways the very backbone to any AE programme because of their unique skills and strengths. In an ERO review of good practice in AE (2011) it was noted that,

Despite the complex educational and social issues that arise in connection with Alternative Education students, these passionate tutors often have

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<sup>4</sup> This definition has been shaped by the characteristics of AE in Martin (2020), and by Pacific AE educators in Lavea-Timo’s contribution (Bruce et al, 2020).

greater successes than teachers in the mainstream who have previously been unable to support these students. (p. 62)

The employment of tutors rather than teachers was initially a pragmatic decision. AE providers could not afford to employ trained teachers, unless the teachers were prepared to take a salary drop and step away from professional body benefits (Bruce, 2015; ERO, 2011). Tutors on the other hand were affordable, and most importantly had a unique pedagogical ability that many teachers in mainstream schools were missing.

This uniqueness led Schoone (2016) to articulate a *tutor pedagogy*, that included essences of a tutor such as joy, grace and transformation (2017). It is this tutor pedagogy that may offer a way forward for thinking about PLD, not just for educators employed in AE, but just as importantly teachers in mainstream schools. As Schoone (2016) notes, “an arrow in the quiver is a tutor-trained teacher” (p.153). This approach could invert the pedagogical leadership model used in AE, which employs qualified teachers to upskill tutors. One interesting project could be the employment of tutors to train teachers in a tutor pedagogy. Regarding the strength and promise of a tutor pedagogy, Schoone (2017) observed,

Tutors [enacting] teaching as a deeply human encounter. As a teacher, I was challenged by tutors to relate more authentically with students: inviting joy into my teaching, operating with grace and looking holistically at achievement. (p. 818)

Interestingly and of relevance to this research, is the way in which the tutor’s role aligns with social pedagogues - a significant professional body in Europe and the UK. Social pedagogues are qualified through a social pedagogy qualification and practice with a focus on ‘*educating with care*’. Like tutors, pedagogues approach their work with passionate care and concern for those in their charge and an understanding of development as holistic and fully human; juxtaposed with the traditional view of the mainstream teacher as one who is focused on learning and the impartation of knowledge. Within the education sector, *as well as mainstream settings*, there are a number of special character contexts that may well benefit from a tutor and social

pedagogy. For example, Activity Centres, Youth Justice Education Facilities, Teen Parent Units and Te Kura At Risk Gateways (Ministry of Education, 2019b).

## The need for PLD

Just three years after the Ministry began funding AE, a detailed research report was published providing an overview of good practice in the sector (O'Brien et al, 2001). A primary need outlined in the report was that of PLD and specifically PLD that was creative and flexible—recognising these attributes within AE. The report recognised that,

There is evidence to suggest that initial recruitment for the role is often based on personal attributes that need to be promptly supported by appropriate training in behaviour management, counselling and special needs. The importance of having trained teachers who have a professional approach to education must be emphasised. However, it is recommended that pre-service teacher training is supplemented by specialist courses. (p. iii.)

A decade later, ERO research reports (2011; 2012) also recommended that unique PLD be provided, recognising the way in which “the complex nature of AE affects PD for staff. The context of AE means there are a variety of social, academic and logistical issues that can complicate the professional development of tutors” (ERO, 2012, p.15). Recommendations for a specialised training was also suggested in an earlier study (Brooking, Gardiner & Calvert, 2009). Given these situational complexities, concerns have been raised about the lack of training provided for educators working in AE (Bruce, 2015; ERO, 2011; Langley, 2009). To redress this inadequacy, Langley (2009) recommended that “clearly identified training and supervision standards must be identified and introduced” (p. 7).

There is clear evidence to support the need for PLD across the sector, and researchers and practitioners recognise that this is an important way in which the outcomes for rangatahi may be improved (ERO, 2011; 2012). When reflecting on PLD needs in AE,

specific consideration needs to be given to what is important for *both* teachers and tutors, for teachers only, and for tutors only. Furthermore, some teachers are trained primary and others trained secondary. As Bruce (2015) noted, where primary trained teachers have skills in integrating curriculum and foundational literacy and numeracy knowledge, secondary teachers understand NCEA requirements and processes. So even within trained teachers, there is variation in terms of skills and knowledge. The 2012 ERO report further articulated this complexity when reflecting on PLD support given to educators by pedagogical leaders,<sup>5</sup>

The variety of backgrounds of staff and students, including the high level of social need of some learners, also means that innovative or novel approaches may be required. ERO observed pedagogical leaders who were facilitating professional development and support for tutors, some of whom were trained teachers, while others were experienced AE tutors without a teaching qualification. The diverse capabilities of these tutors required quite different approaches...(p. 15)

It is unclear now, nearly a decade later, what form of PLD will be provided for educators working in the sector. In 2019, significant Ministry consultation was undertaken with educators, but the Cabinet report (Ministry of Education, 2019b) does not specifically indicate any PLD strategy moving forward. The report does propose however, that AE become part of the *Learning Support Action Plan, 2019 - 2025* (Ministry of Education, 2019c). This plan includes some PLD for teachers and teacher aides (albeit in mainstream schools) to better meet the needs of learners with additional learning needs, and it may be assumed that this will therefore be extended to AE educators. At present the Ministry of Education (personal communication, 22 June, 2020) explained that currently,

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<sup>5</sup> Pedagogical leaders are employed by managing schools to provide PLD support for educators in AE.

*AE providers decide on what specific PLD they need. The AE managing schools also provide pedagogical leadership to the AE tutors. [MOE doesn't] have specific information of the PLD they access.*

There has been no sector wide analysis of PLD in AE. Martin (2019) facilitated focus group discussions with a range of AE educators and found that the majority of educators would like to be able to access meaningful PLD that was flexible, recognised prior learning and was bicultural in learning and delivery. He recommended that further research be undertaken to understand current PLD needs and access. Martin (2019) estimates from focus group feedback that 8% had a postgraduate qualification, 32% had a degree, 39% had a Certificate or Diploma, and 21% had no tertiary qualification. It was unclear about the exact nature of the qualifications, but it is estimated that while many have qualifications, few are specifically related to this sector.

### **PLD content knowledge**

Given the high level of complexity within AE it is not surprising that ERO (2011) concluded, “the skills required in leading and developing the culture and operations of an effective AE programme are [equally] multi-faceted and diverse” (p. 62). For example, aside from the curriculum, pedagogy, rangatahi, youth development, and cultural competency needs, there are advanced leadership and team work skills (operational) required including but not limited to team collaborative practices, relationships with schools, relationships with whānau, problem solving and crisis management skills, logistical and administrative organisation, staff management skills, budgeting, fundraising and reporting, networking and relating to funders and supporters, and interagency collaboration (ERO, 2011). It is perhaps not surprising that educators have found it difficult to give detailed attention to curriculum and pedagogical development as well as rangatahi needs when the vast array of operational matters can make undertaking the core business of teaching and learning challenging (Bruce, 2015).

The PLD needs expressed by ERO reports and others may provide an indication of the types of PLD that apply to the sector (ERO, 2011; ERO 2012; Martin, 2020; O'Brien, et

al, 2001; Schoone, 2017). While the findings are by no means exhaustive, they may be indicative of the kinds of PLD content knowledge that has been suggested in recent years for AE educators.

Curriculum knowledge and pedagogical practices are of course vital knowledge needed for all educators working in AE. Examples may include relational based pedagogy; a tutor pedagogy; trauma informed pedagogy; integrating curriculum; individual learning plans and universal design for learning; culturally responsive pedagogical practice (capability); planning and assessment; transition programmes; and restorative practice, etc. Specifically, cultural capability could include cultural competence in terms of use of basic te reo and tikanga; understanding pasifika and other cultural minority groups accessing AE; and cultural competence in humility and reflexivity of one's own attitudes, beliefs and knowledges.

Leadership and management training is vast in this sector and may include such knowledge as team collaboration; relationships with schools, whānau, interagencies, and funders; problem solving; crisis management; logistical organisation and administration; staff management; budgeting; fundraising; and reporting, etc.

Not included in the aforementioned research studies, youth development and youth work practice could also be a critical PLD content knowledge stream. Examples could include the youth development strategy (and Mana Taiohi); Code of Ethics; an exploration of the core competencies of youth work practice, with a particular focus on strengths based practice and youth participation.

Finally, some psychology topics could present useful content knowledge such as, understanding social and emotional needs; counselling skills; pastoral care skills; neuro-diverse needs of rangatahi e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia,

dysgraphia, autism spectrum disorder, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, trauma related disorders, and auditory or visual processing disorders; and understanding trauma, stress and developmental effects.

## PLD that is offered

Since the inception of AE in the mid-1990s there have been a range of PLD opportunities—the highlight of which is arguably the annual AE National Hui. Each year many educators gather together for the national hui to share ideas about best practice and experience a form of unique solidarity as predominantly tutor practitioners. The hui provides a forum that recognises and validates tutors particularly, in ways that have not been realised in mainstream education PLD settings (A. Schoone, personal communication, 4 March, 2020). The limitation is that this is an annual event and more regular forms of PLD are important for all educators, regardless of setting. Recognising this need the Ministry of Education has been funding pedagogical leaders since 2011. This initiative was a result of the ERO report recommendation (2010) and aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning in AE. In particular, the role of a pedagogical leader is to,

ensure that the provision of AE [has]:

- tutors with cultural competence in working with diverse students
- programmes that address the identity, language and cultural needs of Māori students
- quality curriculum planning and assessment
- strategies to build engaging learning activities
- suitable self-review processes. (ERO, 2012, p.1)

The pedagogical leadership model has resulted in some good outcomes where the operational principles of the programme are well developed with the managing school<sup>6</sup> and providers, and where the appointment of the leader is suitable for the sector.

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<sup>6</sup> In AE policy, there are managing schools and enrolling schools. While managing schools provide pedagogical leadership (and a level of governance for providers), the enrolling schools (where rangatahi originate from) are charged with maintaining educational and pastoral responsibility.

Pedagogical leaders (and it may be argued, any PLD facilitator) are most effective in helping educators improve practice when they have credibility and expertise; are ethical, creative, strategic, and focused on improvement; use effective PLD processes; and are part of an effective network (ERO, 2012).

Managing schools are also expected to ensure educators are able to access relevant PLD opportunities that are taking place in mainstream school contexts. Furthermore, the Ministry has a small amount of PLD funding for local access of PLD, accessed through direct request (Ministry of Education, 2019b). Managing schools vary in their provision and engagement with PLD for educators (A Schoone, personal communication, 4 March, 2020). While there have been useful and comprehensive PLD offered historically for many, some educators have not been afforded the opportunity to access regular PLD (ERO, 2012). One Ministry initiative attempt in response to the need for educators to access PLD was the offer of an online programme to complete a Certificate of Adult Learning. While it was noted that this “helped improve staff confidence and also contributed to their ability to support student learning” (ERO, 2011, p.50), only a very small number of educators took this opportunity. The limited uptake of this offer was attributed to barriers that exist in the sector when it comes to being able to participate in PLD, including the ad hoc nature, rather than a strategically coordinated approach (personal communication, A Schoone, 4 March, 2020).

## Factors impacting on PLD

There are of course a number of significant factors that impact upon PLD for AE educators. Barriers to accessing and benefitting from PLD and complicated operational matters including Ministry, schools and provider priorities are discussed further here.

### Barriers to PLD

Little is known about the barriers and accessibility of PLD in the sector currently. However, an examination of a small number of research reports do provide some insight. The unique context of AE also means that PLD barriers are uniquely

exceptional. The pressures often felt by staff in day to day operations have meant that being able to take the time to access PLD can be very difficult. ERO (2012) recommended that release time be given for educators to receive PLD, and that this time and resource be planned and budgeted for. This may be possible for larger providers who have a team of educators available, but for small providers this is unlikely to be viable. Relational pedagogies are critical for safe spaces and this means that day to day function is likely to be impaired, and safety may be compromised when educators are not present for rangatahi. AE is not like mainstream schools, where cover or a reliever is always available.

Other barriers that exist are funding and for some educators, isolation; and this does mean that PLD is not prioritised or even possible in many contexts (Bruce, 2015; ERO 2011). While it is stated that managing and enrolling schools can assist AE educators to access mainstream PLD opportunities, the ERO report found that when this did happen it was often considered irrelevant. In fact, “almost all of the clusters expressed doubts about the usefulness and/or quality of the [PLD] courses on offer” (ERO, 2012, p.16). This was largely because of the incongruence between practices and issues between mainstream and AE settings, and not having the right kind of PLD opportunities available at the right time. All of these barriers are likely to have affected educators’ views of PLD and inhibited the development of a professional learning culture (ERO, 2012).

## **Operational matters**

Operational principles have found to be significant in impacting on PLD according to research relating to the effectiveness of pedagogical leadership (ERO, 2012).

Operational matters are affected by the historical origins and policies of AE, and refer to the structure of AE programmes, including the way they are situated and complicated by schools relationships with AE: described as either ‘enrolling’ or ‘managing’ (discussed below).

Increased numbers of rangatahi alienated from mainstream schooling during the mid-1990s sparked an ad hoc grass roots, community response. AE emerged as a pragmatic need to provide alternative schooling, and programmes were all local initiatives funded by the philanthropic sector with small local schools funding provision. In 1998 the Ministry of Education funded a pilot AE programme in Christchurch<sup>7</sup>, and in 2000 national funding was made available; however, this was insufficient to provide for the employment of trained skilled staff and adequate operating costs (Bruce, 2015). Consequently, a state-philanthropic partnership emerged that was—and continues to be—fraught with resourcing and operational challenges (Bruce, 2015; Higgins and Nairn, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2019; Schoone, 2010).

At the time of writing this report, AE is undergoing significant review that is likely to impact upon operational matters (Ministry of Education, 2019b). Currently both enrolling and managing schools (where the AE Consortium is situated) have responsibilities, as well as AE providers and the MOE (Ministry of Education, 2019). While managing schools provide pedagogical leadership, the enrolling schools are charged with maintaining educational and pastoral responsibility. This has led to confusion but also a sense of disconnection from enrolling schools as providers in reality have reported feeling frustrated and isolated—labelling their programmes “dumping grounds” (Bruce, 2015, p. 22). The new proposed model of AE (Ministry of Education, 2019) indicates that enrolling schools ought to provide a range of resources and support to providers and this is also stated in current practice guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2019). In reality the practice of accessing support from enrolling schools is complicated by a range of factors including time and resourcing limitations; and for many providers, the actual reality that they could have rangatahi attending from multiple schools (Bruce, 2015). Nevertheless, if the proposed model does result in a strengthening of resource

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<sup>7</sup> Following the successful pilot programme: Te Kaupapa Whakaora. This was a community-school partnership, modelled from the Alt Ed School in Porirua.

provision for providers, this ought to positively impact on PLD access and provision for AE educators.

## Workforce planning and next steps

It has been suggested that given the growing “professionalism of many AE staff” (ERO, 2012, p. 17) there is potential for more formal recognition through achievement of relevant qualifications, and workplace assessment processes, as well as possibilities for networking for learning with related PLD groups, such as those working within the *Learning Support* areas of the Ministry of Education. This is especially relevant given that AE is likely to be further integrated into the *Learning Support Delivery Model* (LSDM) as an intensive provision service (Ministry of Education, 2019b). The LSDM also proposes that greater support for rangatahi will be given prior to referral to AE. AE educators have recommended that PLD be provided for mainstream teachers, so that they are better equipped to attend to the needs of rangatahi. They noted that,

More needs to be done to build the capacity of the education workforce in schools to provide pastoral care and trauma responses. This would help mainstream staff to engage and support akonga who may then not need to be referred to intensive provision [AE]. (Ministry of Education, 2019d, p. 3)

*Learning Support* workforce planning that delivers PLD not just for AE educators but mainstream teachers could lead to real improvements in meeting the needs of rangatahi previously excluded (Morgan et al, 2015). Perhaps one way forward could be to invert the current practice of using teachers to train tutors; instead what would it look like to have a programme of tutors training teachers in mainstream schools? For example, such a PLD opportunity could focus on the value of social pedagogy (using a tutor pedagogy) which humanises teaching and learning to create a truly inclusive space for learning and development through joy, grace and transformation (Schoone, 2017).

As previously mentioned in this report, there are a range of related education and social education/youth work related settings, such as youth justice facilities, activity settings, teen parent centres, etc. These diverse settings are also related as the rangatahi they serve have similar needs. It could be that a model of PLD for AE may also intersect/overlap with a model of PLD for related sectors and settings.

Given the overwhelming need for PLD—not just in AE but across mainstream settings too—there is clearly the need to explore further a range of related issues. The following section of this report (phase 2) explores the growth and challenges of professionalism in two different but related fields: youth work and early childhood education (ECE). By examining these fields, it is hoped that insights may be gained for the AE sector and help to inform future steps.

## Phase 2: Professionalism in youth work and ECE sectors

The purpose of this phase of the study is to examine the factors related to a journey toward professionalism in two different but related fields: youth work and early childhood education (ECE). These fields were chosen as they are somewhat related as *educative* professions, and have journeyed for a long time toward increased professionalism, including professional identity, and workforce development. Additionally, they have diversity of service provision and funding avenues, which are similar characteristics in many ways to AE.

ECE for example, is both private and community based with some government funding. While the majority of services are within the education and care sectors, there are also home based, and special character services such as Montessori, Steiner and language immersion (Cherrington, 2017). Additionally, all sectors have a wide range of different staff employed, including volunteers. Some have formal qualifications, and others are untrained. All have access and are encouraged to access PLD in some variation (Thornton & Cherrington, 2019) .

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, the youth work sector was selected for this study as there are many philosophical synergies with the AE sector. Many youth workers are involved in AE and both sectors are first and foremost relational and strengths based, recognising and valuing the unique cultural and familial context that young people are embedded within. Similar to AE, the youth work sector was formed as a community movement, arising from perceived needs to support and guide young people through a time of transition.

## Research methodology

This qualitative research study seeks to address the research question: What lessons can be learned regarding the formation and development of professional learning and development from related sectors, including future trends and predicted directions? The aim of this study is to inform the AE sector regarding professionalism, and potential workforce development strategies and approaches. Ethical approval for this study was gained from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee (Education). In this study eight participants from youth work and ECE sectors were interviewed using an unstructured interview format. Participants included three very experienced career ECE educators, who are all leading PLD in a variety of contexts. Additionally, five youth work practitioners were interviewed. All participants from the youth work sector have leadership roles in youth work and youth development. All eight participants bring a wealth of knowledge, and have been engaged in various sector roles for a minimum of ten years.

The interviews took place online (using Zoom) and ranged from 1 - 1.5 hours. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, and given to participants for member checking. A small number of changes were made based on participant feedback. Thematic analysis using constant comparison for coding and category generation was employed. Firstly, sector-based analysis was undertaken, and then cross sector analysis was completed to further help with theme identification.

## Findings

In this section findings are presented across four interrelated topics: (1) factors that contribute to growth in professionalism; (2) challenges to professionalism; (3) effective PLD; and (4) further considerations for AE. For each of the topics, youth work sector then ECE sector findings are presented. In the summary section, intersections between both sectors are presented which helps to inform the AE sector and possible next steps in this area of workforce development.

## The journey toward professionalism: Contributing factors

### *Youth work context*

A number of factors contributed to the rationale for a journey toward increased professionalism in youth work. The *Code of Ethics*<sup>8</sup> is acknowledged as a significant landmark in this area, and one that arose out of a need to ensure the safety of young people and youth workers. As one participant notes,

*[one] didn't have qualifications or have to have training to become a youth worker. When we created the code of ethics it sort of defined our practice in a way.*

Initially implemented as a regional initiative, it soon became clear that a national body was needed to develop ethical policy, processes and practices. Additionally, a national body could provide a vehicle for lobbying and advocacy. Another participant explains professionalism in youth work would provide, '*clarity, community, solidarity and security*'. The sense of community and solidarity is particularly relevant to youth workers in geographically or organisational isolation.

Increasing credibility of the role of youth work and strengthening professional identity were further reasons given for the need to increase professionalism. When working alongside related professionals such as social workers, the role of youth work has at times been misunderstood. As one participant notes,

*There was a sense of the mana of youth work, an awareness that when you see a group of professionals talking about a young person...the youth workers voice often has the least weight...and often youth workers would get whakamā in that space...Some of that is because other professionals don't really understand the practice of youth work, particularly because we are one of the few pure strengths based relational professions.*

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<sup>8</sup> Ara Taiohi (2011). *Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand 2nd Edition*. Wellington, New Zealand.

Regarding the need to strengthen professional identity, participants in this study consider this critical in the face of the current risk of being colonised by the social work sector<sup>9</sup>. When describing the professional identity of youth workers one participant notes,

*The core of being professional is about what we profess and to whom, because if you look at the root of the question, it's about profess. So we profess to young people and their whānau and the community that we're going to form genuine, authentic relationships that support their development and we choose to associate with others who do the same.*

A sector owned and developed understanding of professionalism in youth work has been a critical component of growth; and a key guiding question continues to be,

*How do we make sure that professional youth work is owned by the sector, not imposed top down and not imposed by people who don't understand our sector?*

*If we're going to set up a national body we need to be really careful how we do it. We need to take our time and we need to get the sector onboard first.*

Through a long journey of continual sector led development and consultation over a number of years, a simple professional membership framework has been developed which responds to a very complex body of youth workers. It is “inclusive of both voluntary and paid youth workers, formal qualifications, informal training, and values experience in the field”<sup>10</sup>. The sector engagement included road shows, hui, workshops, surveys and research<sup>11</sup>, and was steered by a very committed and experienced

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<sup>9</sup> This issue is discussed later in this report.

<sup>10</sup> Korowai Tupu, retrieved from <https://arataiohi.org.nz/korowai-tupu/>, June 11, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Key research documents are available online at <https://arataiohi.org.nz/korowai-tupu/about-korowai-tupu/>

leadership group. Additionally, a number of key organisations assisted the mahi by supporting their staff to attend and engage in various aspects of the process. As funding became available the sector was able to increase the journey to professionalism, in particular the establishment of *Korowai Tupu* (the Professional Association for Youth Work in Aotearoa). Funding support from all participants in this study was mentioned as critical to the growth of professionalism in the field.

Another contributing factor to the journey toward professionalism is the significant long term and committed leadership from key personnel who have provided guidance and direction in the sector over many years. For example, it's not unusual for key leaders to have been engaged in the sector as strong advocates for 30 plus years. Their experience has contributed to the effective fostering of relationships with government and key stakeholders, including strong advocacy for the sector.

Relatedly, all participants commented on the length of time it's taken to grow professionalism in the sector, and as one participant recalls, '*sector readiness*' has been a key factor. Another participant notes, '*it's taken a really long time and it has sort of, it's struggled; I think it's been a tough ride*'. Requiring a long term commitment, one participant observes the links to increased credibility,

*And so that's why over the last nearly 20 years you know youth work trainings become a lot more focused and qualifications have helped that obviously, we've got a framework now and we've got core competencies, so we've got things in place that we can hold up and say hey we sit alongside [other professionals].*

A long term committed leadership has helped to create a culture of cohesiveness and depth of community connectedness. One participant provides the following examples,

*You know our Involve Conference had a thousand last time you know. We actually have a strong...community here; I think we're incredibly unified and...we practice what we preach around our strengths based kaupapa*

*and the principles of Mana Taiohi...It's such a cliché but it does come down to relationship. Relationship is the point of youth work...and we are pretty good at practising with each other.*

Cohesiveness and unity of voice has been seen to be significant in activating change in youth work as well as in the ECE sector. The following section explores this, as well other factors that contributed to professional growth.

### ***ECE context***

Similar to the youth work sector, the ECE Code of Ethics has been attributed to early professional growth of the sector, and also like youth work, this was in part developed in response to very rare cases of unethical behaviour. Additionally, ECE emerged as a formal sector during the Lange era when, *'he changed it and brought it from...social services to the department of education'*. This shift realised the vision of ECE as educative rather than a social service, *'so that had a massive flow on shift in attitudes and in funding and the reality of who we are and what we're doing'*. This significant professional shift in the sector was a result of a government champion, and as one participant reflects,

*I feel like you do need a champion, you know, you need somebody in there in the thick of the politics who really cares about your sector, who really cares about the people in it and what it does for society and how it helps. Until then it's...very tenuous.*

Reflecting on the increasingly professional field of ECE especially under a Labour government one participant recalls,

*The biggest leap was [when Mallard] instigated a ten year strategic plan which really professionalised the workforce and put a whole lot of money behind that.*

As with youth work, ECE has also experienced professional growth, as funding has become available to support workforce development.

Relatedly, another factor contributed to growth in the sector one participant notes is,

Bruce, J. (2020). *Alternative Education workforce development in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Lessons from related sectors*. Report commissioned by the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Vodafone Aotearoa Foundation.

*definitely the qualification. It's only been since we've had qualification, certification, that we've been in the running for...pay equity, pay parity [this has been a] big aspect that did professionalise our workforce.*

*Everyone who was newly qualified for a two year period they received like about \$2000 a year to specifically help that teacher and that service with their professional development. So the sector was awash with professional development funds.*

Part of this emphasis on qualification may be motivated by the, '[legal] requirement to open and close every service with a fully qualified teacher which means the Diploma of Teaching'. And many service providers have supported staff to gain a qualification while being employed as a type of,

*apprenticeship model in the sense of working in the centre of the service four days a week and coming into classes one day a week. It's work towards a formal qualification.*

This policy move toward increased qualification support for staff further contributes to the strong culture of learning and development. Recent government funding to enable more staff to become qualified (at a base Diploma level), was announced in the 2020 budget release. The announcement states,

This reflects the Government's commitment to quality early learning, and will:

- Encourage more centres to operate with fully qualified and certificated teachers, and improve the quality of teacher-child interactions in ECE.
- Benefit more children, as teacher-led centres comprise 82% of all enrolments.
- Help maintain employment opportunities for qualified and certificated teachers in a COVID-19 environment.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Education, (2020). *Budget 2020: 100% funding band restored for early learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.govt.nz/news/budget-2020-100-funding-band-restored/>, June 18, 2020.

Retention of staff has also contributed to the growth of professionalism in the sector. There are a number of reasons that participants attribute to this, and like the youth work sector relationships is considered to be a key factor, *'it's all about relationships, that really see people staying in a place for a long time'*. Other retention factors relate to mostly to PLD and include,

*good employers; having opportunities to develop and progress in their career and in the field. But having good opportunities for professional development as well really keeps people in tune and also having flexibility in their work [work four days a week].*

Additionally, it is noted that engaging with politicians, key stakeholders and families around particular issues, and framing needs in terms of what's best for children are all noted as effective strategic approaches to activating change. Strong advocacy work has helped to create a lot of gains, led largely by active professional bodies. Reflecting on this time one participant notes, while newer ECE staff are aware of the historical advocacy work that was engaged in, *'they really didn't have a sense of how long and how hard the struggle had been'*. She attributes some of the progress to the ability of the sector to *'working as a collective'*. When an initial strategic plan was being developed a large advisory group representing different parts of the sector worked together and not surprisingly it took, *'a long time - it was actually quite hard to get that agreement on some real priorities to speak with a unified voice.'* But participants agree, it was well worth the struggle for the gains sustained over time.

Another unifying factor which further strengthened the sector was *Te Whariki* (discussed later in the report), and more recently the complementary documents *Tapa Wha* and *Tataiako* (cultural competency programmes for Pacific and Maori respectively).

## Challenges to professionalism

### *Youth work context*

A significant challenge to the growth of professionalism in a youth work context has been youth workers' perceptions and understandings of professionalism—some being 'quite allergic!'. One participant notes, there is a tension of language which is,

*creating a barrier for youth workers to embrace concepts...Lots of youth workers really object to the word professional.*

However participants are aware that youth workers,

*want to be upskilled, all of them are really keen to engage in ongoing learning, varying levels of wanting that to be a formal qualification, like they're all wanting to grow and learn and they all want to be accountable. And these of course are the core aspects of what it is to be professional.*

So while youth workers do have a desire to become more professional in their work, they may also be resistant. Sector resistance, including disagreement, is a related factor which has contributed to the challenge of increased professionalism and part of this has come from uncertainty, and issues of trust. As one participant recalls,

*The biggest fear was, 'Is this going to mean I'm going to have to practice like this? Does it mean we're going to be told how to practice as a youth worker?'*

Agency and ownership in terms of practice resonated strongly in the voices of resistance; but also clarity about purpose. A number of participants recall that there were (and to a point, continues to be) concerns related to understanding the purpose and value of membership.

A related complexity for the sector—and specifically regarding the formation of *Korowai Tupu*—has been creating pathways for membership and developing competency for youth workers beyond formal qualifications. A key challenge for the youth work sector is creating a form of professional identity that provides balance for all youth workers regardless of qualifications, income and experiences. Internationally there are examples

of a fragmented workforce where formally qualified career youth workers and grassroots volunteers have become segregated as hierarchical structures have emerged. This was a fear expressed by many youth workers during the professional association sector consultation. As one participant recalls, *'Is it just going to become an academic elite membership group or is it going to be for youth workers'*? Furthermore, another participant expressed the tension that exists between a high trust model and accountability measures. He notes this was especially true for those who,

*don't quite see themselves as a professional but a person who is passionate about youth work...with a massive heart.*

Consequently, Korowai Tupu aspires to create professional identity through values, accessible processes and systems that enable an equitable platform for all youth workers to feel connected and valued.

Linked to this, issues of professional identity and most pressing at this time is the social work scope of practice review which poses,

*the risk of youth work being colonised by a deficit centric profession...  
...it treats young people [as] problems to be fixed rather than citizens to be educated and empowered. [It's] creating a category of membership for youth workers, aka unqualified social workers who work with young people.*

Referencing the history of social work one participant articulates clearly the differences between social work and youth work practice, and how this contrasts too, with mana enhancing educative practices. He observes, *'the roots of social work are the opposite of the roots of youth work'*, and further explains the way in which social work is individual case based, poverty relief (social administration) and social action oriented (political seeking improved conditions); all of which are the opposite of what youth work does,

*Instead of individual, youth workers typically work in groups, we focus on belonging, we focus on community. Rather than relieving poverty, it's less*

*about relieving a problem and recognising strength capacity. [And] social action...youth workers do do that, we call it youth participation.*

Another challenge throughout the journey toward professionalism has been funding which either generates movement, or at times ceases progress altogether. All participants acknowledged this continual struggle,

*Youth work is dramatically grossly underfunded...so there's a workforce issue. And then there's a viability issue when you get to the qualifications level.*

Part of this challenge reflects the origins and continual practice of volunteerism, however even within a majority paid sector like ECE, there are also funding challenges, as indicated in the following section.

### ***ECE context***

Challenges to the growth of professionalism in ECE are varied and include significant directional changes in government funding and policy, as well as government funding inequities within the sector. As one participant notes,

*Even within the sector there's some real problems because you have the kindergarten association who are being funded higher so that they could pay their teachers more than the education and care sector for no rhyme or reason, just that the government plays favourites...for historical reasons.*

Another related challenge has been the lack of national strategy with regards to PLD. While ECE does have an *Early Learning Action Plan*<sup>13</sup> that includes a mention of PLD, yet participants agree this needs to be developed further,

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<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Education (2019). *Early Learning Action Plan*. Retrieved from <https://www.education.govt.nz/news/early-learning-action-plan-released/>, June 15, 2020.

*it's called an action plan, there's basically no action to it...[with] no timeframes and no monetary amounts. [And with a clear strategy] you get more buy-in and commitment.*

Nevertheless, it does open up possibilities for advancing professionalisation toward, *an integrated comprehensive professional development strategy. And I think that would be really useful. I think we need to say to them very clearly that engagement in professional development and learning is not only a responsibility that teachers and kaiako need to buy into and engage in, but it's also a responsibility at a service level to support and at a government level to support. So it's become you know the old three pronged legged stool thing that if you leave it all to one or the other it's not going to be as effective because of the different resources that people bring.*

PLD is vital for the development of staff, and for contributing to retention rates. High staff turnover and burnout is a concern within some areas of the ECE sector, as staff are required to fulfil multiple roles and responsibilities, sometimes ill equipped. One participant notes,

*sometimes [there is] a complete turnover of staff within a six months contract. Sometimes that's about the employment conditions, working conditions, and the other thing is burnout or people being in positions before they're ready.*

Ensuring staff are supported and equipped for their roles, especially in leadership requires a well planned strategy and effective PLD approaches. In the following section, findings are presented which explore what works in terms of PLD for both youth work and ECE sectors.

## Effective professional learning and development

### *Youth work context*

A culture of learning and development has been established and sustained within the youth work sector, contributing to and encouraged by national collaborative relationships and networks. As one participant reflects,

*The relationship stuff comes from workshops...youth workers are supported by their employers and actively encouraged to attend training...the dividend that investment pays is immense. Our employers pays for supervision, release time...*

The culture of learning and connectedness is further demonstrated by the significant numbers attending the bi-annual Involve Conference, contributing to a strong sense of community. Additionally, the Korowai Tupu membership requirement of engaging in *Transforming Practice*<sup>14</sup> encourages an ongoing commitment to learning and development. This includes a three pronged approach of supervision, engagement in PLD, and reflections on practice.

There are a number of pedagogical approaches to learning and development that youth workers readily engage with. Participants gave the following as examples:

- *Embedded bicultural practices*
- *multiple learning styles*
- *experiential learning*
- *sound knowledge and theory*
- *dynamic learning*
- *group/cluster-based learning*
- *learning communities*
- *Assessments through conversation (talanoa, kanohi ki te kanohi)*

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<sup>14</sup> The term given to the ongoing PLD practice expected as a Korwai Tupu member.

- *Sharing stories*
- *Regional networks and conferences/hui*

Ara Taiohi and Korowai Tupu do endorse training providers that meet youth work practice core competencies as outlined by Korowai Tupu<sup>15</sup>. Alongside other key sector leaders, they work as key industry partners with tertiary providers to advocate for formal qualifications that carry the unique kaupapa of youth work in Aotearoa. Industry partnerships in one region ensured that a formal qualification was codesigned and sector engagement was high. A participant recalls,

*We sat on the professional practice [group] where we interviewed students...we selected students...we were on the interview panel for the tutor as well. It's a really good model and that's probably why that course went so well.*

Industry partnership in the delivery of formal qualifications has been a key factor in sustainability and greater success. Participants commented on the work of Praxis<sup>16</sup> and how,

*they've stood the test of time and that's because it's youth work driven by youth workers guiding the process. That's what we're trying to get universities and polytechs to understand it won't work if they don't [partner with the industry].*

To further strengthen PLD opportunities, participants suggest online learning be given greater consideration (especially for those in isolated regions), and also that different pathways and pedagogies be developed to increase professionalism in the sector. All participants indicated the need for ongoing PLD and in particular the value of formal

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<sup>15</sup> Korowai Tupu Core Competencies. Retrieved from <https://arataiohi.org.nz/korowai-tupu/about-korowai-tupu/core-competencies/>, June 11, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Praxis is a Private Training Establishment which offers courses in youth and community work. The courses are recognised by NZQA. <https://www.praxis.org.nz/>

qualifications for advancing knowledge in the field and helping to *‘open different doors and create different conversations with different people’* thus strengthening practice.

### ***ECE context***

Similar to the youth work sector, ECE has established and sustained a positive culture of learning and development for educators. Among the majority of service providers and educators, PLD is highly valued. This is in part due to the aforementioned contributing growth factors, including the regulatory requirement that all service centres ensure that educators have access to PLD as employees. It is also noted, however, that there are no guidelines provided within the regulatory requirement, and there is a lot of variation of provision between different service providers. However, one requirement that is making a PLD impact is changes to teacher registration appraisals which now need to be linked to inquiry learning. So rather than being solely goals focussed as appraisals often are, registration is now linked to ongoing professional learning and development with an inquiry focus.

There are a number of distinguishing PLD factors within the ECE sector that stem from historical sector strengths developed out of the holistic Te Whariki curriculum<sup>17</sup>, which places high value on bicultural approaches woven throughout all practices, holistic wellbeing and meaningful relationships with whānau. Due to the nature of employment in ECE the majority of PLD—while paid for by the employers—needs to take place after service hours are closed. This is typically weekends and/or evenings as,

*employers can not readily afford to have their staff out of the [workplace]  
...and the sector doesn't get funded for teacher relief.*

Relatedly, face to face rather than online training is by far the more preferred delivery approach, although Covid may impact upon attitudes and practices related to an increased provision of online PLD. As one participant observes,

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<sup>17</sup> First published by the Ministry of Education in 1996, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa, Early childhood curriculum*.

*there's really no replacement for kanohi ki te kanohi...we're face to face learners, we're tactile, we're physical...I just don't see that working on zoom.*

Although another participant recognises the potential of future online learning opportunities, as it is, *'far more accessible to larger groups of New Zealand, small towns, [and] services who don't have funds for PD'*. Online PLD also affords opportunities for mentoring and coaching as an approach which has,

*in the last few years, become a really strong motive for professional development...especially leaders. Many of our leaders are isolated and it's long been said that people come into those positions very young and there's a high staff turnover.*

A range of PLD topics are offered by an equally diverse range of PLD providers with mixed pedagogical approaches to delivery. Some larger service providers organise their own in-house PLD, while others access existing PLD from various external providers. In addition to curriculum development, leadership has been a significant focus in recent years, and there are a vast range of other topics. Regarding learning communities and facilitation, some providers prefer to work with the whole service, or at least two from the same service so learning is collective. Another factor mentioned by participants was the vital role of PLD facilitators and ensuring,

*that we do develop that really strong base [of] skilled qualified, expert facilitators. And recognise how important the role is that they are playing.*

As mentioned earlier, a comprehensive national strategy is likely to further strengthen professionalism in the sector, and participants recommend that this recognises the different needs of staff and different entry points. While there are foundational PLD topics (e.g. curriculum knowledge) that all staff need, the strategy needs to be dynamic enough to be responsive and productive with variation in topics and pedagogy. Additionally, as previously discussed a national strategy will increase in effectiveness as key stakeholder buy-in is assured (including service leaders, staff and government).

## Considerations for AE

A key research question asked of participants was, ‘what recommendations would they give to the AE sector when considering growth in professionalism and workforce development?’ A collection of insights were offered by participants including thoughts on professional identity and sector ownership.

Regarding professional identity, one key idea raised by youth work sector participants was to give further consideration to the intersections of professional identity in youth work and AE settings. A significant number of youth workers are engaged in AE and AE educator practice is founded on the same relational, strengths based kaupapa that is at the heart of Aotearoa youth work. So a question worthy of consideration is, to what extent (if at all) could AE staff engage with Korowai Tupu and the professional body of youth work? What are the points of intersection and departure? What is unique to the AE setting, and to what extent does this overlap with youth work professionalism? However, and most importantly, as one participant noted, AE staff are *‘the only people who can determine that’*. Nevertheless, these points of intersection invoke ideas about the nature of youth work, youth development (including Māori youth development) and education. Participants in this study express an interest in investigating this further,

*Youth work is educative and I think we aren’t clear about that in our national discourse. Probably youth workers spend a lot of their time in the social services but are more comfortable within education. If we broadened our understanding of youth work and were clear about it particularly as an educative practice I think it would be easier.*

This broadening of understanding of youth work as educative would,

*require us to distance ourselves from social work to become more closely connected with education, speaking the language of education even more confidently and hav[ing] a positive relationship with...schools.*

As practices intersect, so too does professional identity and the naming of professional roles. For example, one ECE participant in this study reflects on the use of teacher/tutor terminology. In the ECE sector the term ‘kaiako’ has recently been adopted to refer to any ECE service professional. While she notes, the majority of the sector are comfortable with use of this term, she cautions against, *‘downplaying the status of teachers particularly when we’re looking at things like pay parity across the teaching profession’*. There are cautionary lessons here for the AE sector as there can be tension and confusion with professional identities, such teachers, tutors, youth workers, etc. This tension needs careful interrogation, and is discussed further in the implications section.

The growth of professionalism has taken many years for both sectors and is still evolving. Communication and sector ownership have been highlighted as significant factors in enabling or hindering growth, *‘whatever is created is something that’s created by the sector for the sector’*. Another key consideration is the way in which Treaty partnership is honored through tangata whenua led engagement in all journeys of professionalism including PLD and the development of the workforce. Youth work sector participants indicated this is an area of development, and something AE could learn from. All participants in this study recognised the length of time the journey of professionalism and sector workforce ownership takes,

*[we need] to find ways to create conversations that at least begin building that bridge together so that at least we can support people to cross that bridge.*

## Summary

There are many similarities between the ECE and youth work sectors, in terms of journeying toward increased levels of professionalism. A number of factors are consistent across both sectors and have relevance to AE settings and related professions, including:

**Figure 1: Professionalism growth factors for youth work and ECE**



There is a flow between these key themes of growth and they seem to have stemmed from sector wide adoptions of key ideas within guiding documents<sup>18</sup>. To generate living documents requires a strong collective leadership. The documents appear to act to inform collective processes and practices, and give a common language and unified culture, which in turn helps to shape a collective professional identity. This is further reinforced through a culture of learning, which both sectors highly value.

As well as the necessity of funding, another key growth factor has been the length of time taken to increase levels of professionalism; in fact, for both sectors it has taken decades of advocacy, consultation, sector ownership, and research and development. Both sectors acknowledge, *'how hard the struggle had been'*, and that it has, *'taken a really long time and it's struggled; I think it's been a tough ride'*.

ECE participants also emphasised the role of government champions advocating for change on behalf of the sector. Significant policy shifts resulted—not least the move from

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<sup>18</sup> For example, code of ethics, core competencies, curriculum, and key policy and/or research work.

social services to education. Another key ECE policy change has been the move to government funded and supported qualifications, especially for unqualified staff.

Interestingly, while almost all of the growth factors between the two sectors were similar, the challenges participants reported are different. In fact the only similar challenge related to funding uncertainties and inadequacies. Regarding ECE, other significant challenges include staff attrition, a lack of a national PLD strategy, and changes to government policy (including concerns for inequitable funding processes within the sector).

For the youth work sector the main challenges (aside from funding) were quite diverse in focus. Firstly, there was (and continues to be to some degree) a lack of clarity from youth workers' perspectives on the purpose of increasing professionalism in the sector. Secondly, there have been significant challenges regarding workforce development, specifically ensuring equitable access for all to PLD (and Korowai Tupu membership). And thirdly, the challenge of establishing credibility and professional identity has (and continues to be) of concern, especially at a time of threats from social work colonisation.

When reflecting upon effective PLD factors, participants from both sectors acknowledged that a strong culture of learning exists. This has brought about by a range of factors including supportive employers, the innate valuing of learning (perhaps as both sectors are by nature educative), as well as regulatory requirements. Both sectors highly value training that is relational (situated in learning communities), face to face (although online training is being considered more), and biculturally integrated. Furthermore, both sectors value PLD programmes that are diverse enough to cater to the wide ranging workforce.

The final theme from the findings relates to considerations for AE: 'lessons to be carried forward'. Four issues were highlighted by participants and these include:

1. Ensuring that development is led by the sector for the sector

2. Prioritising Treaty principles in all stages of development
3. Giving careful consideration to the importance of language, especially as it pertains to workforce roles
4. Exploring further the intersections of youth work, youth development, AE and education more broadly.

These issues are revisiting in the following section which includes ideas for 'next steps' for AE PLD and workforce development.

## Overall recommendations: Implications for AE

Key findings from this research indicate that growth in professionalism occurs through a range of interconnected factors that stem from collective leadership and the dissemination and adoption of key guiding documents. The documents provide a common direction and enable a common language which in turn generates a sense of connection and belonging, and contributes to a growth in professional identity. While there is no doubt that access to funding will contribute to PLD (and lack of funding will inhibit), these are nevertheless factors which can prevail and withstand funding variation to a point.

Examples of guiding documents from the youth work sector are the Korowai Tupu *Core Competencies*<sup>19</sup> developed from the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, and the *Transforming Practice*<sup>20</sup> framework for ongoing PLD. These guiding documents interweave together with best practice in PLD to create a cohesive sense of community with clear vision and direction. Similarly, ECE has guiding documents which have generated movement and cohesion toward increased professionalism. However, ECE have expressed the need for a comprehensive national PLD strategy to provide clear guidance, direction and ownership to all key stakeholders.

Developing a comprehensive national strategy for AE (and possibly related settings)<sup>21</sup> could provide a tremendous opportunity for growth as the document could provide clarity of vision and focus, and aim to increase collective ownership from key stakeholders. Prior to this however, it is recommended that further research is needed

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<sup>19</sup> Core Competencies. Retrieved from: <https://arataiohi.org.nz/korowai-tupu/about-korowai-tupu/core-competencies/>

<sup>20</sup> Transforming Practice. Retrieved from <https://arataiohi.org.nz/korowai-tupu/info-for-members/transforming-practice/>

<sup>21</sup> Such as youth justice education facilities, teen parenting units, activity centres, school based programmes providing additional support.

to understand the workforce demographics, the gaps and needs related to PLD, the work of pedagogical leaders and other existing PLD practices. This information is critical to ensuring that any strategy is collectively relevant and responsive to the sector needs.

Design of a national strategy would require a range of steps including but not limited to researching the current workforce demographics and roles; mapping current workforce needs; critiquing the value of existing PLD programmes; identifying gaps; and designing a way forward. A strategy can include key vision, values, goals, priorities and actions that take account of the diverse needs of the workforce, entry points and learning pathways, key content, providers, etc.

A national AE strategy could give a common language to the workforce and key stakeholders, and thus generate collective momentum for innovation and change. Language is often complicated in the sector by a diverse workforce including youth workers, tutors, teachers, support workers, etc—all of whom carry out critical roles. Additionally, there are intersections of youth development, youth work and education which do not fit neatly into one area. While the strength of the sector lies in the interdisciplinary way that it operates, this can create barriers for MOE, policy makers, mainstream educators and schools, who don't necessarily understand the mahi. Furthermore, even within the AE sector there is confusion related to different educator/staff terms, roles, and the nature of corresponding practice.

The names we give to educators/staff working in AE, and indeed the consequential way we frame and understand the very nature of AE are vital considerations for the sector. At the heart of these discussions is the need to explore further what it means to be a discipline that exists at the intersections of two other disciplines: youth work and education. Take for example the Code of Ethics. In a cross-disciplined sector, which Code of Ethics applies to whom and in what context, and what is the relationship between the two? Furthermore, in what ways can we strengthen the practice of all educators in AE? To what extent might the sector be enhanced by registered teachers

trained in youth development and youth work practice; and to what extent do we need youth workers trained with an understanding of education practices? Where are the points of intersection and departure? And for mainstream education, what lessons can be learned from a *'mergence'* of the two fields?

A shared online platform (learning and development hub) for creating a community of and culture of learning, and a point of connection for educators could be really helpful for developing the workforce (Plows and te Riele, 2016). This could be in conjunction with the youth development sector, related education sector services, or just for AE. Furthermore, a shared hub could provide an important platform for the implementation of elements of a national strategy.

Within a national strategy, or as a stand-alone concept, consideration could also be given to the extent to which AE works with related education settings and youth development/youth work organisations and movements. It could be that, like the ECE sector, further growth can be leveraged through working in a unified and strategic way with diverse but related services and organisations. As indicated earlier in this report, leaders from the youth work sector are interested in exploring further the ways in which AE and youth work can work together to strengthen the workforce, and impact upon education, specifically mainstream schools. Such strategic synergies could be mutually beneficial to both sectors.

Regarding mainstream schools, it has been suggested in this report that further consideration be given to the ways in which AE educators may be able to contribute to PLD within the mainstream education sector. This issue of mainstream teacher PLD was raised by attendees at the AE Hui (Ministry of Education, 2019d), and also in the Ministry of Education Cabinet Paper (2019b). There is a unique richness in the developmental and pedagogical practice that occurs within AE. The relational pedagogy practiced by tutors means that they have a great deal to offer to mainstream education (Morgan, et al., 2015). Schoone's (2016) idea of the "tutor-trained teacher" (p. 153) is

worthy of further consideration. In 2020 a national priority for teacher PLD is cultural capability. This is a timely opportunity for reframing traditional ideas of PLD within AE: instead of experienced teachers providing support to tutors, the sector could provide opportunities for experienced tutors to provide PLD for teachers.<sup>22</sup> Relatedly, Plows (2017) suggests cross-fertilisation of PLD between mainstream and AE educators, as a way to disrupt current default practices of exclusion; where rangatahi are excluded from mainstream schooling because the system is ill-equipped to provide for their needs.

There is no doubt that government champions are required to assist in activating policy shifts. Specifically, the sector would benefit greatly in a shift toward increased specialised qualifications (including further exploration of a tutor pedagogy), as ECE has seen. While sector led, any advances that occur need to be activated as a collaborative between government, schools and providers.

Overall, suggestions for next steps in strengthening the AE workforce, and related settings including mainstream teacher capability are depicted here in Fig. 2.

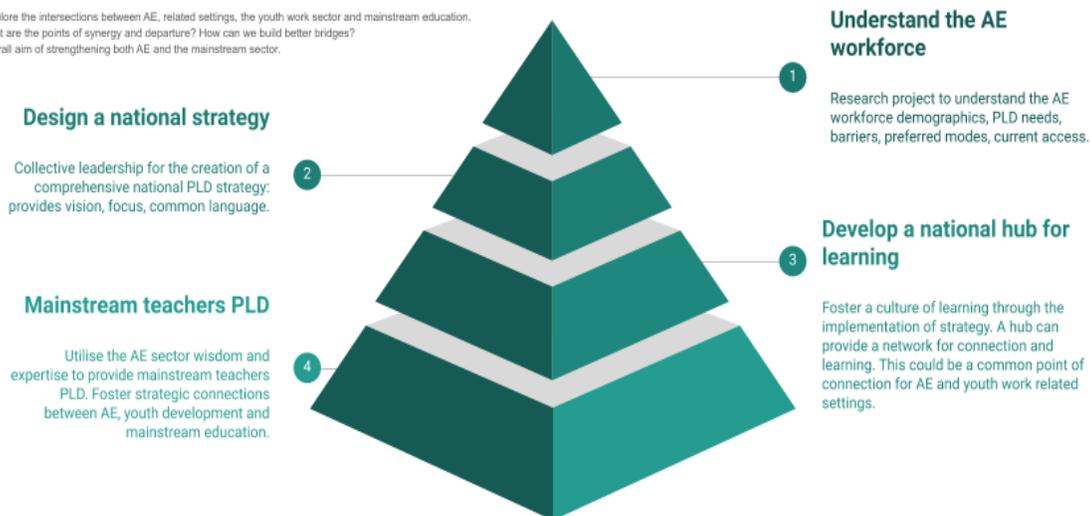
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<sup>22</sup> Through the Pedagogical Leadership Model.

**Figure 2: Next steps for AE and related settings**

## Next steps for AE and related settings

\*Explore the intersections between AE, related settings, the youth work sector and mainstream education. What are the points of synergy and departure? How can we build better bridges?  
Overall aim of strengthening both AE and the mainstream sector.



Bruce, J. (2020). *Alternative education workforce development in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Lessons from related sectors*. Report commissioned by the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Vodafone New Zealand Foundation.

High quality educators are the greatest asset that the sector has (Plows & te Riele, 2017), and “the success of [AE] settings, serving young people for whom mainstream schooling has not worked well, rests on the practices of their staff” (Plows, 2017, p. 72). Yet little is known about the demographics of the AE workforce including PLD access and needs. Further research is needed to understand the gaps and help to shape a clear strategy that is sector owned and driven for change. Strengthening of the AE workforce through collective leadership, the development of key guiding documents including a comprehensive national PLD strategy, the establishment of a central PLD hub for AE and related settings, and strategic connections with mainstream teacher PLD and the youth development sector are all factors worthy of future investigation for strengthening the sector.

Bruce, J. (2020). *Alternative Education workforce development in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Lessons from related sectors*. Report commissioned by the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Vodafone Aotearoa Foundation.

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