

'The hare and the black rabbit': Spotlight on Male Recruitment in Early Childcare and Education Teaching

A presentation to the 4th Men in Early Childhood Summit, 13 – 14 February 2010, Auckland

Sarah Farquhar

www.childforum.com

email: Sarah@childforum.com

Rarity

A story

Jogging up the narrow rural road I live on, a hare sped across the road just in front of me as a car came around the corner. "Did you see that?" asked the driver stopping to have a chat. "Yes. Amazing. I've never seen a hare up here before. Oh and have you seen the black rabbit down the other end of the road?" I said. "Yep it's been there for a while. Did you know that only about 1 in 1,000 rabbits are black?" he replied. "That's rare", I said. "They are so rare that hunters, when they kill one, will cut an ear off and keep it to show" he added.

In the teacher-led early childhood sector, the part of the sector where the Ministry of Education through TeachNZ and teacher education providers determine the types of people who become qualified, men are rare. Not as rare as black rabbits mind you. But certainly there are few of them.

Men working in early childhood services typically face reactions of surprise and wonderment from visiting parents. (Just as I was astonished to see the hare!). Men can even be held up by some employers and centre managers as trophies: "we've got a male teacher" and will be shown off (thankfully not by their ear!).

While attention and a bit of fuss can be nice when you are the receiver, rarity also has its negative side. For male teachers we see this taking the form of:

- a. isolation in not having work colleagues who are male;
- b. subtle messages to prove one-self as a teacher because of a perception that men are not as good as/natural as women in caring for young children;
- c. increased anxiety around being more careful about how one works – particularly in physical interactions with children; and,
- d. being singled out for attention/being made to feel uncomfortable/different/or out of place.

Now ordinarily when giving a presentation on men in early childhood I would include pictures of male teachers. Many people have not had contact with a male early childhood teacher and have not seen a man working in an early childhood centre. But today here for you guys at this Summit there's no need to do this – I would not be showing you anything new – or challenging your views and stereotypes.

What We Know About the Men Who Enter the Sector

✓ High commitment levels

The majority of male early childhood teachers stay in the sector until retirement. Employers are often quick to realise that whereas female staff are more likely to resign or take leave on having a baby or follow their partners' career choices to other cities or countries, male staff are less likely to take leave.

✓ Likely to have other work/career options

Men are more likely on average than women to have entered early childhood teaching after working in another career and therefore to have made a considered personal choice.

✓ Unlikely to enter straight from school as a 17, 18, or 19-year-old

Men are more likely to have been in the workforce for some years and thereby bring different occupational skills and knowledge into their work with children and families.

Men have what women haven't and vice versa. There is no denying that socialisation is a powerful influence on boys and girls, and on the behaviours, attitudes, values, and skills of men and women. Having both men and women on a teaching staff would bring balance, equity, greater potential to meet the needs of individual children, allow for sex-role stereotypes to be challenged, and reflect the gender make-up of NZ society.

A Quick review of the Past two Decades

Key happenings and turning points over the past two decades have been as follows:

- Early 1990s ChCh Civic Centre and Wellington Hospital sex abuse cases.
- 1997 A Few Good Men or a Few Too Many research report – made national headlines. This report showed that male teachers were facing discrimination and that representation in the sector was plummeting.
- 2006 Men at Work: Sexism report – showing that since 1997 nothing much had changed and representation continued to be low. Publication of this report resulted in:
- 2006 TVNZ documentary on the Sunday programme “A Few Good Men”
- 2007 The 1st Men in Early Childhood Summit was organised by ChildForum.
- 2006/7 The Education Minister (Hon Steve Maharey, Labour-led government) and opposition education spokesperson (Katherine Rich from National) both spoke in support of the need for more men in early childhood teaching.
- 2007 TeachNZ developed a promotional DVD and began to feature men in early childhood recruitment materials.
- 2008 November, the network for men formed following the first Summit is formally constituted and registered as an Incorporated Society. The committee and membership of Men in Early Childhood (NZ) Inc. continue organising an annual national summit. EC-MENz support regional groups, run a website, and in 2010 opened an online forum/chat-room. EC-MENz is a representative group and lobbies on behalf of men working in early childhood services.

Male Teacher Numbers

The table below shows that male teachers, that is, men working in teacher-led early childhood services, are clustered in the kindergarten and regular childcare services.

	1992	1998	2001	2005	2009
Kindergarten	0.8% men 12 men 1,577 women	1.2% men 20 men 1,658 women	1.2% men 21 men 1,722 women	1.5% men 26 men 1,756 women	1.9% men 41 men 2,172 women
Regular Childcare	2.9% men 142 men 4,703 women	1.6% men 124 men 7,994 women	1.2% men 110 men 9,410 women	0.9% men 104 men 11,400 women	1.5% men 241 men 15,367 women
Casual Childcare	Casual & regular child- care numbers combined in 1992	1 man 184 women	1 man 127 women	2 men 129 women	1 man 128 women
Homebased Co-ordinators	0 men 134 women	0 men 280 women	0 men 283 women	0 men 324 women	2 men 427 women
Correspondence School	-	0 men 27 women	0 27 women	0 29 women	0 men 18 women

Interestingly there was a drop in the representation of men in childcare services in 2005 while kindergarten rose slightly. Because the numbers are so small, one explanation could be that a small number of men working in childcare changed to kindergarten thereby boosting the number of men working in kindergarten by a similar amount.

Before the Peter Ellis Civic Centre case men were more likely to find employment in childcare services than in kindergarten (as shown in the 1992 statistics). This changed after the early 1990s. One explanation for this change was that following the high profile case, male teachers tended to view working in kindergartens with older preschoolers as perhaps a bit more personally safer than working in childcare services where more daily physical contact with children was necessary (see research by Farquhar, 1997 and papers).

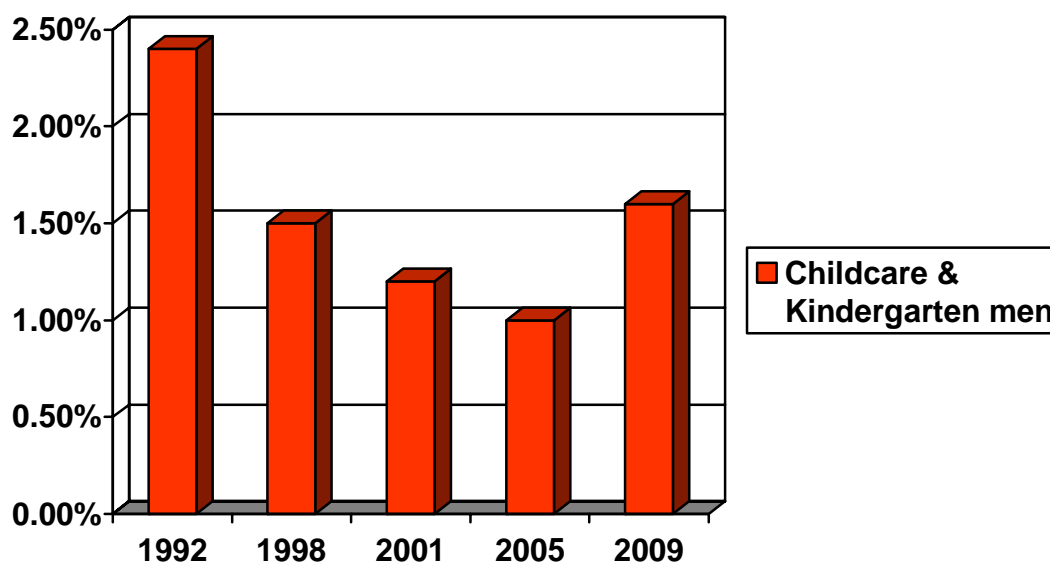
Between 2005 and 2009 the actual number of male kindergarten and childcare teachers increased markedly. A key reason for this no doubt was the introduction of the 20 Hours Free ECE funding policy aimed at increasing the hours of children's participation in teacher-led services; resulting in a need for more teachers to be employed and an acute shortage of teachers holding a recognized early childhood qualification for teacher registration.

The percentage of male teachers to female teachers could have stayed similar or decreased as early childhood teaching is such a good source of employment for women; but the news is that there has been an increase. From 2007 the public promotion of the importance of men working in childcare through the media could well have made a difference. Also perhaps the impact of the formation of Men in Early Childhood (NZ) Inc and the public and personal support this group offers to male teachers is beginning to show up in the data on teacher numbers and gender.

The graph on page 4 shows changes in the percentage of male kindergarten and childcare teachers from the height of 2.4% in 1992 (after which the Peter Ellis Civic Centre Childcare abuse case in particular had an impact on male teacher employment rates) to July 2009. The data indicate that

the downward trend in men's participation in childcare and kindergarten teaching relative to women's is now beginning to reverse.

The percentage of male teachers in kindergartens and regular childcare centres has increased from a record low of 1% in 2005 to 1.6% in 2009. However, the percentage is very small at 1.6% and would be lower if casual childcare services and other teacher-led services were included in the analysis.



As at 1 July 2009 there were 282 men out of a total of 17,821 teachers in kindergartens and regular childcare centres (1.6%). There were 285 men out of a total of 18,397 teachers across all the teacher-led early childhood services (1.5%).

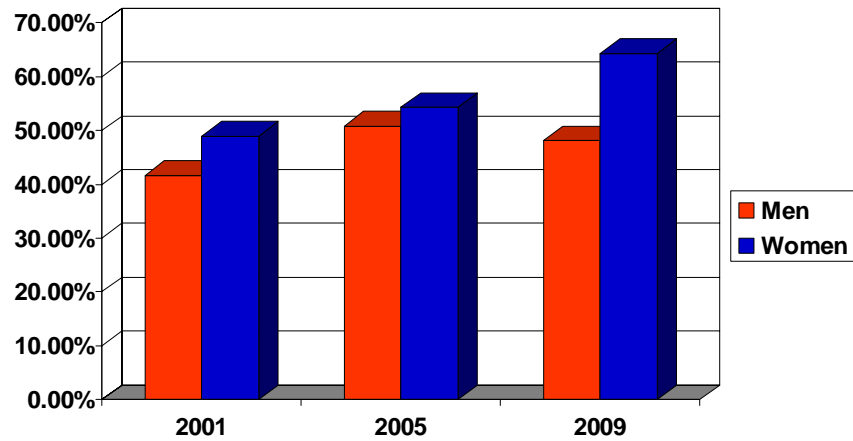
Qualification Status

The graph at the top of page 5 shows that over recent years there has been a shift toward women being more likely than men to have an early childhood qualification recognised for teacher registration in teacher led services.¹ In 2009, 64.3% women were qualified and 48.1% men; a 16.2% difference.

What are the reasons for this difference? One reason could be the teacher shortage and an increasing demand for staff by employers combined with a willingness to employ men who are not qualified or who are undergoing training. Another reason could be that the costs and time required to become qualified are increasing, with some training providers increasing the amount of time that field-based students are required to be in the classroom instead of working in a centre, and/or changing from offering shortened and 3-year courses to 4-year courses. For men in particular who may be supporting their family financially and who cannot easily access a

¹ These Ministry of Education sourced statistics cover all teacher-led services including home-based and the correspondence school.

scholarship because of their income level before entering teacher training such changes impact on qualification access.



Differences between Education Regions in Male Teacher Representation

There are four regions created by the Ministry of Education for statistical purposes corresponding with the Ministry’s regional offices.

The data suggests that if you are male you are more likely to find employment in an early childhood service within the Central South education region; 1.9% of early childhood teachers were male in 2009 in the Central South region².

Northern	1.4% teachers male
Central Northern	1.6% teachers male
Central South	1.9% teachers male
Southern	1.5% teachers male

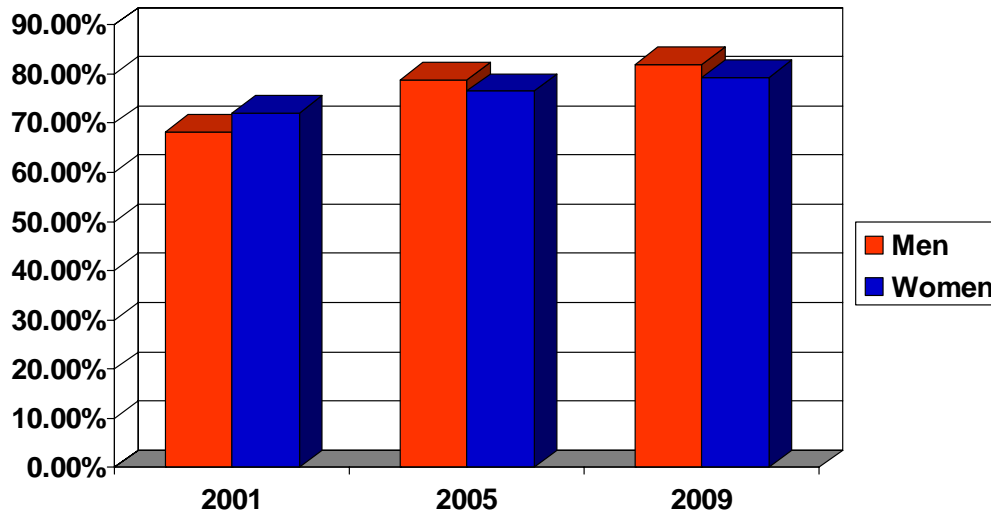
Herein lies a challenge for other regions next year; can other regions do better than the Central South region in their percentage of male early childhood teachers?

² These Ministry of Education sourced statistics cover all teacher-led services including home-based and the correspondence school.

Hours of Work

Full-time is defined by the Ministry of Education as 25 hours per week or more child contact time.

The graph below shows that over the past decade male and female early childhood teachers have not differed much in full-time status and there has been a trend toward an increase in the percentages of both genders working full-time³.



Twenty-five hours a week fits into the school day and therefore suits teachers with school-aged children who want to work short hours. Should the Ministry of Education redefine full-time as 30 hours or more, or as 40 hours, we would get a better picture of whether there is a gender difference or not in teacher working hours. The question we need to ask is if men or women, or both are just as likely to work longer hours? This is information that would be useful to have when pitching early childhood teaching as a career for men.

The Operating Structure of Services Most Likely to Employ Male Teachers

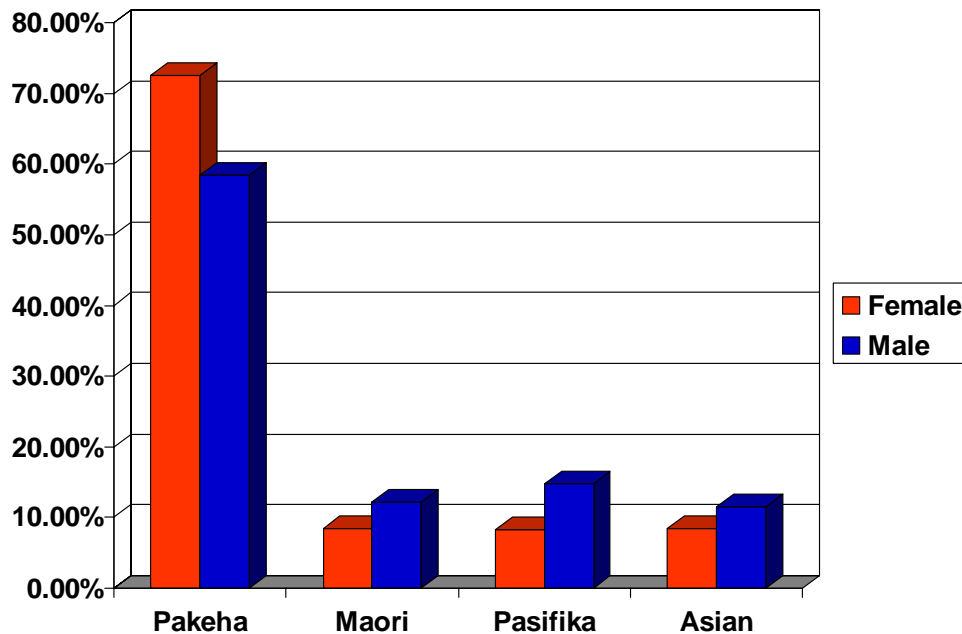
We do not know if men are more, or less, likely to be employed in private or in community-based early childhood services. This is something that the Ministry statisticians could be asked to report on. For developing policy and challenging current employment practices to increase the representation of men in early childhood teaching it would be helpful to know.

³ Ibid.

The Ethnicity of Male and Female Teachers

The graph below shows that striking differences exist between men and women early childhood teachers in ethnic representation⁴.

In 2009, 72.5% of female teachers were Pakeha/European compared to 58.4% male teachers. Whereas for Maori, Pasifika and Asian groups the percentages of male teachers were higher than for female teachers.



This difference and the reasons for it should be examined. Some possible questions that research could investigate are:

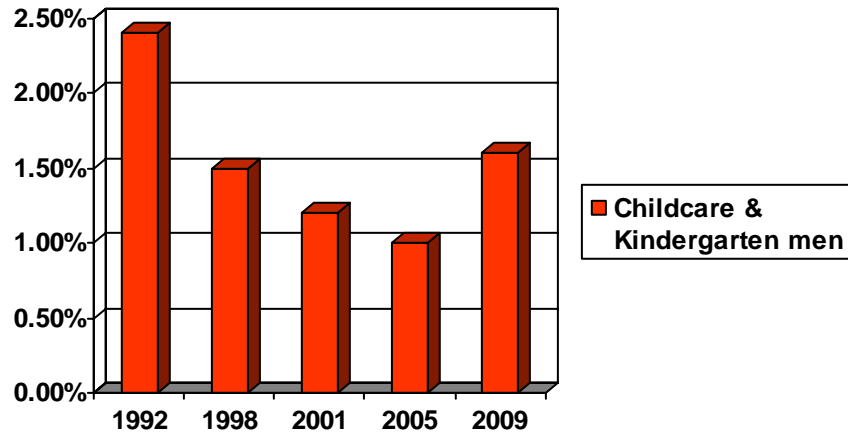
- Is NZ society more accepting of male early childhood teachers from non-European/Pakeha groups?
- Within Maori, Pasifika and Asian cultures is it more acceptable to be an early childhood teacher who is male?
- Are recruiters, student selectors, and employers favouring Pakeha/European women over Pakeha/European men?
- Are teacher education scholarships that target minority ethnic groups more likely to be picked up by non-European/Pakeha men compared to non-European/Pakeha women?

You may have some more thoughts on this.

⁴ These Ministry of Education sourced statistics cover all teacher-led services including home-based and the correspondence school.

A Time for Optimism?

As outlined earlier we are beginning to see a rise in the percentage of male to female teachers in kindergartens and regular childcare services.



The sex abuse argument, which grew strongly during the 1990s and started to decline in the late 2000's could now be considered to be passé. The view that *all* male early childhood teachers are potential child abusers is no longer a widely accepted justification within NZ society for not recruiting and employing men as teachers. All staff in licensed early childhood services must be police-checked. Furthermore a lot of time has passed; it has now nearly been two decades since the Civic Centre child abuse case.

Until now we have seen no evidence to the contrary that policies and practices of recruitment, training, and employment are anything but sexist, giving considerable favour to women over men. Within broader society a shift in parenting and childcare practices has been occurring for some years, with it becoming much more acceptable for dads to be primary caregivers and to be involved in the lives of their young children. Perhaps, now we may be seeing the early childhood field begin to catch up and support this social change.

However I must warn against getting too excited about the latest statistics: The increase from 1% in 2005 to 1.6% last year is still a long way off from pre-1993 levels (see the graph at the top of this page).

The first goal should be to get back to male representation of around 2 ½ percent. When this is achieved we might truly be on the road to obtaining gender equity in the early childhood workforce.

Children in every early childhood service setting need to be cared for by male and female teachers.

In a paper published in the UK's *Early Child Development and Care* journal⁵ I noted that New Zealand "has an international image as a trail-blazing 'social laboratory'" (p. 208). We were, after all, the first to grant women the right to vote, 33% of our parliamentarians were women in 2008,

⁵ Farquhar, S-E. (2008). New Zealand men's participation in early years work. *Early Child Development and Care*, 178 (7&8), 733 – 744.

women recently held all the key constitutional positions of Prime Minister, Governor General, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Chief Justice. Further, women made up around 46% of the country's labour force. I argued that the "success of our 'social laboratory' has been limited by focusing almost exclusively on women's disadvantage and largely ignoring areas of disadvantage for men ... and this has impacted not only on women and men, but on children also and the quality of family life" (p. 734).

Opportunities

1. The Recession

The economic recession and the increasing unemployment rate could have been embraced by those involved in teacher recruitment and selection to market this career more actively to men who were made redundant and to men feeling trapped in their current positions. Teach NZ now have brochures and materials showing men as early childhood teachers and this is an important start. However key messages about employer needs for staff and good wages are not reaching those men who might be interested in changing career or who are out-of-work.

2. The Teacher Shortage

The shortage of registered teachers has meant that those with a recognised early childhood qualification have been in hot demand. Because Ministry of Education funding is linked to the percentage of qualified and registered teachers centres have been financially incentivised to employ registered teachers. There has been a significant increase in the number of kindergartens changing from sessional to all-day hours and new services opening and needing staff. In this context, poaching of staff between services has become common practice and teachers know that if they are unhappy or seek higher pay there are many other employers potentially willing to take them on.

This has been an ideal time to get out and focus on recruiting men – telling them that pay levels have increased and as teachers, and as male teachers, they will be in hot demand by employers.

It's also been an ideal time for employers to consider the gender make-up of their staff. When a centre employs five staff and two go on maternity leave and another follows her partner to his new job in another city – the centre faces a staffing crisis. This can happen and has happened to centres.

When the 80% target for registered teachers in 2010 was reviewed by Cabinet's social policy committee last year, the decision to delay the target was made to relieve immediate pressure on teacher supply and to continue to boost child participation. A further reason could have been included and that is to allow time for more men to be recruited and trained. Once the early childhood workforce has reached 80% and more qualified and registered teachers it will become almost impossible to correct the gender imbalance.

3. Reporting and Auditing Documents and Policies.

In a cabinet paper on delaying the 80% registered teacher target released under the Official Information Act the only statement under the title of "Gender Implications" reads: "The proposals contained in this paper are likely to have a positive impact on mothers' ability to participate in the labour market". In taking the view that childcare is a women's responsibility only, the cabinet paper unfortunately failed to consider gender implications properly.

The Ministry of Education each July collects data on teacher gender as part of its survey of early childhood services. In reporting the data and discussing changes however, the Ministry of Education typically does not report on teacher gender. Therefore it appears that the Ministry

officials are not, or do not perceive themselves to be, accountable for informing policy-makers and the public on this. For example see the Education Report: Annual Report of ECE services July 2009 – it covers staff in study, staff ethnicity, NZ Teachers' Council registration status, staff qualifications and full/part time status but not teacher gender.

4. Funding

Could a case be developed for the Tertiary Education Commission to fund only those Tertiary Education Organisations that provide early childhood teacher education, if a minimum percentage of enrolled students are male?

Under the new Tertiary Education Strategy tertiary education providers need to show how they are achieving government priorities. From the middle of 2010 the Tertiary Education Commission says it will be publishing individual TEO's performance indicators, for example, course completion rates. Could the Tertiary Education Commission publish course completion rates for early childhood teacher education courses by gender? If TEC did this we would have evidence of which TEO's are failing to support male students to complete early childhood courses?

In an article in the Sunday Star Times, 20 July 2008, a reporter said that: "Under national and international human rights laws, temporary measures such as the scholarships are allowed to address inequality between the sexes and are deemed not discriminatory; but must be stopped when equality is achieved".

Dr Paul Callister from Victoria University asked the Human Rights Commission to clarify its position on women-only scholarships, saying that women now significantly outperform men in education and therefore there is no longer a justification for such scholarships to remain. The clarification received from the HRC was that scholarships for women, men and other groups offered by charitable trusts are exempt from the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1993.

What would happen if a charitable trust offered a scholarship for male early childhood teachers? We don't know because the waters are uncharted.

Given that in early childhood education and care there is obvious inequality and temporary measures to right this are needed, could the government not decide to allow some TeachNZ scholarships for early childhood teaching to be specifically provided for men? Also to help to address inequality, what would prevent teacher education providers from advertising and running male-only classes for early childhood students? Certainly, this would capture media and public attention and men would more likely be attracted to training if they knew they wouldn't be the only or one of a few males in their classes.

From Optimism for the Future to Indicators of Positive Change

In closing, may I say that I think the time for singing – for celebration will be here when:

- Men in early childhood teaching are allowed to be who they are (not judged on the basis of sexuality; whether they have children of their own; whether they look like 'real' men; or whether they are good at doing traditional male activities such as carpentry, or not).
- Men are not treated as a novelty – or as a trophy for an early childhood service – because of their gender.
- Men can achieve any position within the sector based on merit without claims that success is the result of gender or at the disadvantage of female colleagues.

References

Farquhar, S-E. (2008). New Zealand men's participation in early years work. *Early Child Development and Care*, 178 (7&8), 733 – 744.

Farquhar, S-E. (2007). (Ed.). *Proceedings of the first New Zealand Men in Early Child Care and Teaching Summit and a Record of Challenges, Changes and Thinking*. Wellington: ChildForum.

Ministry of Education (2009). *Education Report: Annual Census of Early Childhood Education Services: July 2009*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Mussen, D. (2008). Women-only scholarships under spotlight. *Sunday Star-Times*, 20 July 2008.