

Becoming a profession: A New Zealand story of advocacy, strategy and challenge

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Crèche originally was not for us to be educators- though I know we are now. We were just childminders; but we are more than that. It was originally to give mum a break, but now we're definitely into programme planning and observing children and planning the programme on their needs.

Sarah, early childhood teacher, interviewed 1993

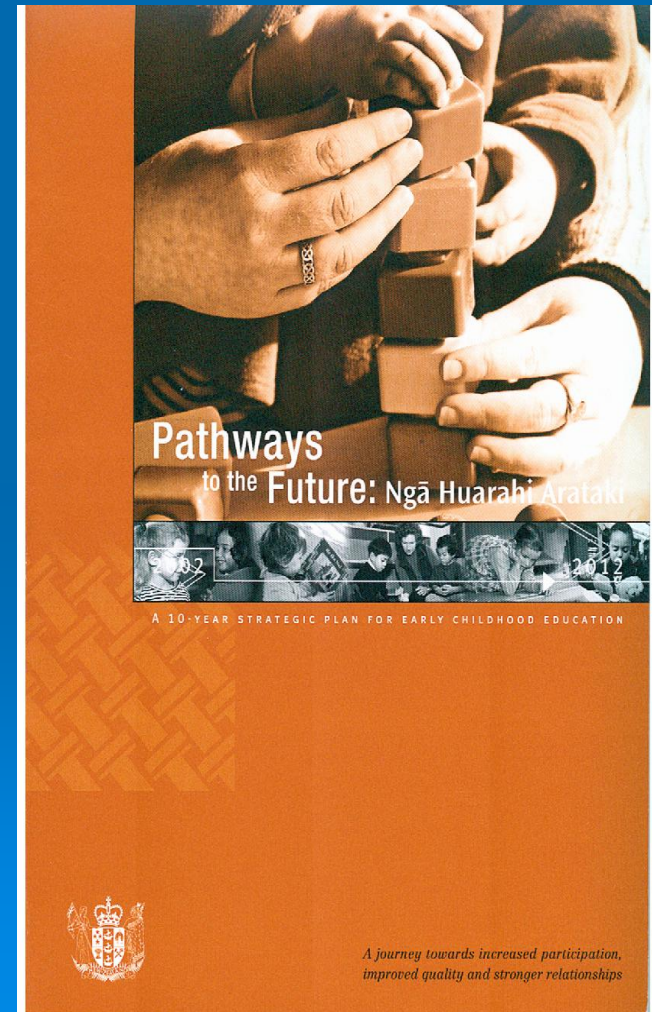
Ten-year strategic plan 2002

Ngā Huarahi Arataki: Pathways to the Future

Early childhood education “the cornerstone of our education system” (p. 1)

Core goals:

1. increasing participation in quality ECE services;
2. improving quality of ECE services; and
3. promoting collaborative relationships (MoE, 2002, p.2)



Policy directions in Strategic Plan

1. New funding and regulatory systems
2. Support for community-based ECE services
3. Professional registration for early childhood teachers



4. Collaboration between ECE services, parent support, health and social services
5. Increased government involvement in ECE especially in low participation areas

2 key staffing policies

1. Staff to be qualified at degree or diploma level by 2012

2. Early childhood teachers must be registered through the New Zealand Teachers' Council



Early childhood:
a "teacher-led"
profession

...when I went to Teachers' College... we had a six week block where we talked about becoming a professional and [about] international concepts of professionalism and codes of ethics ... I wouldn't imagine anybody who graduated from that class would see themselves as anything less than professional....your training contributes to it and then you have to personally take ownership of it and accept that you are in that role.



(Kindergarten teacher, interviewed July 2007)

Sector advocacy and strategy 1980s

1986: Childcare services
transfer to Education

1988: 3 year integrated
training starts

1988: *Before Five* Policy

Early childhood a
social policy priority

“....when women
and children gained
a foot in the door”

Anne Meade, Chair of the
working party that
recommended *Before Five*
policy

1990s: Advocacy at the industrial level

“Hands-off”
neo-liberal
politics
dismantles
Before Five
policies

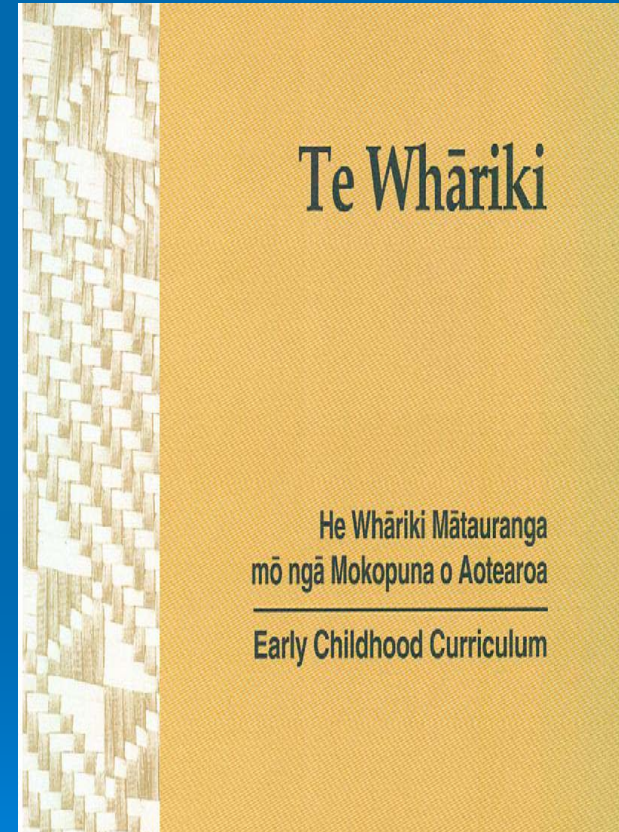
1990: 2 major early
childhood unions,
combine

1993: Combined early
childhood union
joins the primary
teachers' union

Advocacy in pedagogy

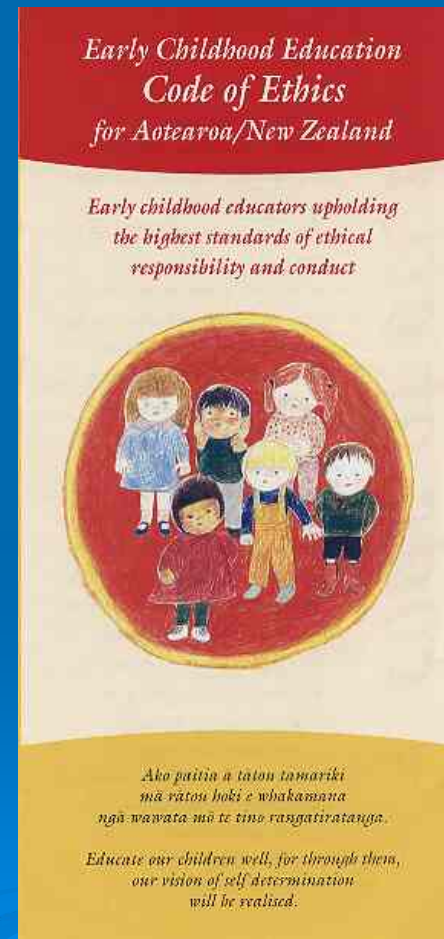
Development of *Te Whāriki*

- “Seamless education” policy
- National curricula for schools
- Fears of a “trickle-down” effect
- A curriculum of dialogue: responsive, reciprocal relationships
- Pedagogical impact: planning and assessment using Learning and teaching stories



Advocacy for a Profession: The early childhood Code of Ethics

- Low sector morale
- National working group to develop a code of ethics
- Action research model of development
- Deliberate attempt to claim professional status for ece
- Code launched 1995



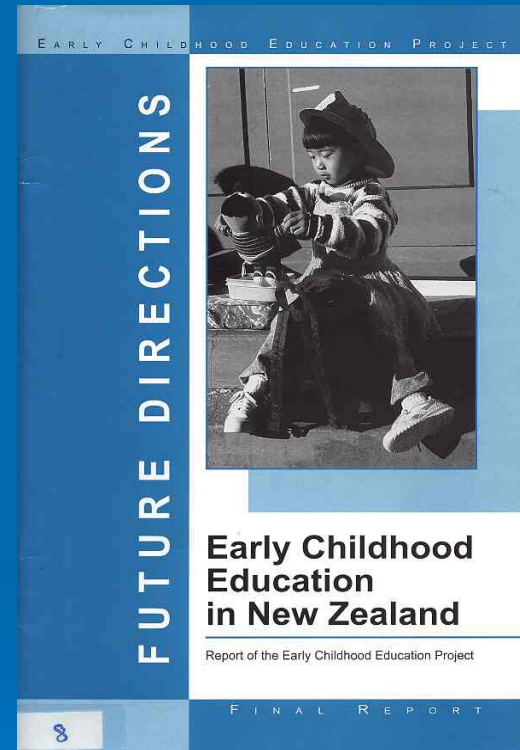
Advocacy for policy

Future Directions

Issues:

- Low and variable pay
- Only 29% of staff held a teaching qualification
- Very high cost of childcare
- Patchy provision of ece
- Scandals with use of government money
- Bad media attention

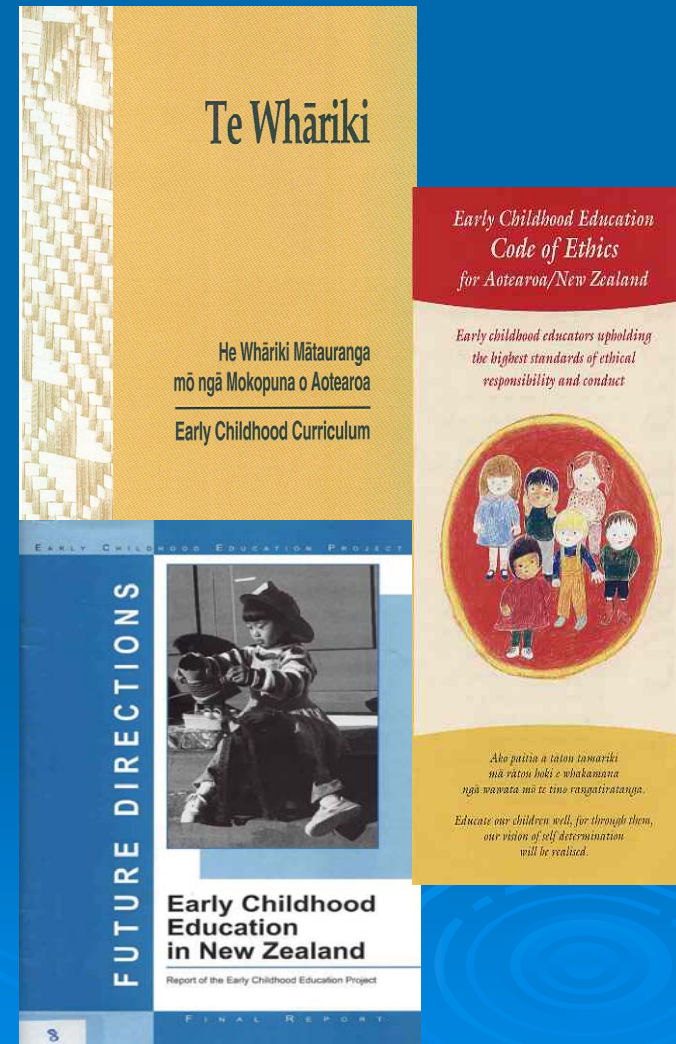
Linda Mitchell, key unionist



“...a pro-active stand – to work in partnership with major early childhood organisations to develop a blueprint ...”

Advocacy and strategy

- Occurred on multiple levels
- Brought people together
- Sharpened collective organisation
- Created an ecology of the profession that was prepared for change



Components of a supportive infrastructure for a quality early childhood sector

- personnel preparation
- technical assistance
- applied research and program evaluation
- communication
- demonstration
- data systems
- comprehensive planning
- coordination of support elements.

Components of a supportive infrastructure	NZ Strategic Plan provisions
personnel preparation	➤ Numbers of qualified and registered teachers increased through setting stepped targets and providing incentives
technical assistance	➤ MoE professional resources published; ➤ professional development funded
applied research and program evaluation	➤ Quality in parent-led services investigated 2006 ➤ Comprehensive programme of evaluation of SP policies in place
communication	➤ Advice and support for new services provided via MoE coordinators ➤ Networks for practitioners through professional development contractors (e.g., infants and toddlers teachers; supervisors' network)

Components of a supportive infrastructure	NZ Strategic Plan provisions
demonstration (of good practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Centres of Innovation (Cols) established to build the use of innovative approaches that improve ec teaching and learning using <i>Te Whāriki</i> and to share models of good practice with others.
data systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Statistical returns collected from services by MoE on 1 July each year

Components of a supportive infrastructure	NZ Strategic Plan provisions
Comprehensive planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Analysis to promote participation;➤ Land for ece services on new school sites; “Design and Build Scheme” to resource building design➤ Equity funding from 2002➤ New funding system and rates➤ Childcare subsidy eligibility widened➤ 20hrs free ece for 3 and 4 yrs olds in teacher-led services from 1 July 2007
Co-ordination of support elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ 18 pilot ECE centre-based parent-support and development projects

When it comes time to memorialize Labour's fifth spell in office, it may be remembered most lastingly for early childhood education....Making early childhood systematic...takes us deep into a zone of policy debate: on citizens' access to participation in our economy and society. This debate is no longer just about the absence of legal or administrative impediments. It is about what constitutes genuine capacity to participate....so early childhood education is investing in infrastructure, just like building roads. It is arguably Labour's most important initiative, its biggest idea.

(Colin James. Otago Daily Times 19 February, 2008).

Current challenges

- The “teacher-led” debate and 20 free hours;
- The home-based sector: forgotten yet again?
- Impact of policy requirements on diversity of provision
- The commercialisation of childcare.

The “teacher-led” debate and 20 hours free

- Are parent-led services education or not?
- Equity of access to 20 hours free



Have parent/ whānau-led services drawn the short straw?

The home-based sector: forgotten yet again?

- Qualification requirements apply only to network coordinators not the family day care educator
- Are children in family daycare not as important as those in centres?



“Nothing has changed as a direct result of the Strategic Plan”
Home-based network provider, March 2008

Service Type	2003	2007	Difference 2003 - 07	
			Number	%
Kindergarten	609	618	9	1.5
Playcentre	482	466	-16	-3.3
Education and care	1,673	1,932	259	15.5
Homebased network	190	227	37	19.5
Kōhanga reo	526	470	-56	-10.6
Correspondence School	1	1	N/C	N/C
Casual-education and care	42	36	-6	-14.3
Sub-total	3,523	3,750	227	6.4

Number of early childhood services by service type, 2000 and 2007.

Impact of policy requirements on diversity of provision

- Strategic plan uses discourse of diversity
- Funding policies impact strongly on how services organise themselves
- Rigid application of qualifications policy, in a context of short teacher supply, can undermine ability of specialist ec services to maintain their special character



If diversity and choice is valued, the whole early childhood sector, including the Ministry of Education, needs to do more than hope and talk. They must actively protect diversity.....

....this study has found that the effort to impose a structural “quality” measure can detrimentally impact diverse early childhood approaches. Rigorously applying “quality”, without allowing for differences, risks killing the vitality brought by differences, vitality that is essential for continued improvement. (p. 136)

Freeman,S. (2008). *Unintended consequences: The Montessori story of the early childhood education qualification requirement – 2000-2007*. Unpublished MEd thesis. Victoria. University of Wellington.

The commercialisation of childcare

- 58.3% of education and care centres are privately-owned
- Home-based (family day care) is also increasingly privately-owned

small owners
“made millionaires”
by
large corporates

NZ Herald, 29 Feb 2008

Corporatising of childcare

is resulting in:

“....professional habits, dispositions and competencies [which are] ‘authorised’ and authenticated by the company”.

Woodrow, C. (in press). Discourses of professional identity in early childhood: Movements in Australia. In C. Dalli & M. Urban (Eds). (in press). *Professionalism in early childhood education and care. Special edition of the European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*. 16(2), June.

Conclusion

What type of competencies do we need to face these challenges?

What notion of profession would suit us best to face these challenges?

The New Zealand context

- Total population = 4.2 million
- 15% indigenous Maori
- School is compulsory from 6 years but most start at 5 years
- In 2007, 94.7% of all new school entrants had participated in ece
- Most children attend ece part-time but full-time enrolment is increasing rapidly
- Biggest enrolment growth is for 0-2yr olds in education and care (childcare) centres and home-based services (family day care)
- Biggest group of ec services are education and care centres (52%)
- Home-based (Family day care) take up 6.5% of all enrolments



Aotearoa New Zealand policy and practice context

- Centralised policy processes
- An integrated care and education system with over 20 different types of ec services
- Integrated training for childcare and kindergarten
- Early childhood teacher education degrees in universities

