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
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.
Sector advocacy and strategy
1980s

1986: Childcare services transfer to Education

1988: 3 year integrated training starts

1988: Before Five Policy

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

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

Early childhood a social policy priority
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
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

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

Linda Mitchell, key unionist
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of a supportive infrastructure</th>
<th>NZ Strategic Plan provisions</th>
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<tr>
<td>personnel preparation</td>
<td>Numbers of qualified and registered teachers increased through setting stepped targets and providing incentives</td>
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<tr>
<td>technical assistance</td>
<td>MoE professional resources published; professional development funded</td>
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<tr>
<td>applied research and program evaluation</td>
<td>Quality in parent-led services investigated 2006; Comprehensive programme of evaluation of SP policies in place</td>
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<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>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)</td>
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<td>NZ Strategic Plan provisions</td>
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<td>demonstration (of good practice)</td>
<td>➢ Centres of Innovation (Cols) established to build the use of innovative approaches that improve teaching and learning using Te Whāriki and to share models of good practice with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>data systems</td>
<td>➢ Statistical returns collected from services by MoE on 1 July each year</td>
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<td>NZ Strategic Plan provisions</td>
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<td>Comprehensive planning</td>
<td>- Analysis to promote participation;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Land for ece services on new school sites; “Design and Build Scheme” to resource building design</td>
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<td>- Equity funding from 2002</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- New funding system and rates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Childcare subsidy eligibility widened</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 20hrs free ece for 3 and 4 yrs olds in teacher-led services from 1 July 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordination of support elements</td>
<td>- 18 pilot ECE centre-based parent-support and development projects</td>
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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.

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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>Difference 2003 - 07</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playcentre</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education and care</td>
<td>1,673</td>
<td>1,932</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebased network</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kōhanga reo</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>-56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correspondence School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual-education and care</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>3,523</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
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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)

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”.

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