



New Zealand's bold strategy for professionalising early education and care

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Background

- In NZ, ECEC ownership is community-based or private (growing corporate)
- Government develops and administers policy, gives grants in aid, regulates, reviews (inspects), provides information and support, and approves and helps fund teacher education providers
- Until the late 1980s, three departments administered ECEC services

Integrating childcare in education

- Integration took time
- It involved a wide constituency and several working groups
- It was evidence-based vis-a-vis children
- There were agreed principles:
 - Care and education cannot be separated
 - All young children have a right to care that is educational and by qualified staff regardless of parental income and/or choice of type of service
- The transfer of administration happened in 1985. Integrating activities continue.

1989 education reforms

- The transfer into Education in 1985 was followed in 1987 by the integration of training for all ECEC teachers
- Major education reforms in 1989 (*Tomorrows Schools, and Before Five*)
- The *Before Five* reforms were based on principles:
 - Child rights;
 - Equity; and
 - ECEC being in the interests of children, parents and NZ society, with no one of these parties being championed ahead of the others.

Education reforms 1989

- Establishment of:
 - Ministry of Education, and
 - Education Review Office
 - Early Childhood Development Unit – to focus on capacity building
 - NZ Teachers' Council

It determined that 'a teacher is a teacher' (regardless of the sector s/he teaches in).

1990: big changes in grants and structures for childcare services

- *Before Five* policies meant childcare became more like kindergarten:
 - More equitable funding
 - More equitable access for families
 - Funding became more like schools'
 - Common support and ERO review systems
 - A common core of training to raise standards.
- Childcare became integral to everyday life as more mothers took paid jobs

Key dates after integration

1990 – government announced a staged- plan for a majority of childcare workers in each setting to become qualified EC teachers

1991 – new government did a U-turn re qualifications requirements

1996 – early childhood curriculum finalised

1996 – incentive grants offered to increase qualified EC teachers

2000 – work on a 10-year plan for ECE began

Professionalising the workforce

- **2002** – *Pathways to the Future*, 10 year plan for ECE
 - Shift in the role of government
 - Completion of the integration of childcare by setting a bold strategic goal to have all education and care settings staffed 100% by qualified teachers by 2012
 - To achieve this goal, the mechanisms were:
 - Regulations re % of qualifications changing 2007, 2010, and 2012;
 - Increased capacity in teacher education;
 - Scholarships;
 - Pay parity; and
 - A cost-driver funding model.

What has happened?

- Education and care centres met the 50% qualified-teacher target by 2005
- The 80% target date has been delayed to 12/2012
- The new government dropped the 100% target (and cost-driver funding for them)
- Many centres with 100% qualified teachers endeavour to maintain this profile on lower grants
- After funding was reduced, feasibility of 100% qualified teachers more dependent on high-income families. Diminished equity?

The vision and key policies have survived

- Why is NZ a leader in childcare policy ?
 - Long-term vision and goals
 - Strategic planning by government/s
 - A broad, supportive constituency
 - An innovative curriculum for 0 to 5 year olds
 - A group of academics that have maintained the vision & articulated key principles for decades
 - Staunch Ministers arguing for adequate funding (albeit just under the OECD GDP benchmark)