

Chapter 8

A Story of Changing State Priorities: Early Childhood Care and Education Policies in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract During the last 30 years, the early childhood care and education (ECCE) system in Aotearoa New Zealand has undergone a significant change, starting with centralising ECCE policy-making and administration into the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1986. The influential *Before Five* (Department of Education 1988b) policies, with a ‘children’s rights’ framework, aimed to ensure equitable access to affordable and good-quality ECCE for young children. In 1996, the internationally acclaimed values-based, bicultural ECCE curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 1996), which was developed in partnership with the indigenous Māori people, was released. Market-driven policy approaches underpin the government’s mostly hands-off approach to the supply and management of early childhood education services (ECES). Analysis of recent Ministry of Education data indicates (1) steady growth in ECCE participation, with growing numbers of children under 2 years attending for longer hours, (2) a change from mostly community-based ECCE provision to the majority of ECES being provided by private for-profit organisations, (3) that children living in poverty are less likely to attend licensed ECCE services and (4) growing population diversity. Lately the government has focussed on participation/enrolment targets often at the expense of ‘quality’ initiatives, particularly in relation to teaching qualifications.

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List of Acronyms

ECE	Early childhood education
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECES	Early childhood education services
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NGOs	Non-government organisations
NZD	New Zealand dollar
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

The Aotearoa New Zealand Context

New Zealand Context

New Zealand is an island nation in the South Pacific. The main population groups are European, Māori, Pacific peoples, Chinese and Southeast Asian and South Asian.

Participation in the paid workforce is high for men and relatively high for women – 58% of sole mothers and 70% of partnered mothers are employed (Flynn and Harris 2015). Many women with young children work part-time. The trend in the last decade is for mothers of young children to resume paid work earlier. Parental leave paid by the government is 16 weeks (up from 14 weeks prior to 2015).

The Education Context

Full-time attendance at school is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16 years, and children can receive a free education from their 5th birthday. Most children start school on or near their 5th birthday. This has a significant impact on transition processes between early childhood education services (ECES) and schools.

Table 8.1 Categories of licensed ECE services and percentages of enrolments (June 2014)

Category	Percentage
Education and care centres	63.4
Kindergartens	15.9
Home-based care schemes	9.6
Playcentres	6.4
Ngā kōhanga reo	4.5

Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2015

The Early Childhood Education Sector

Categories of Early Childhood Education Services

Until recently, the majority of ECES have been provided by community groups (NGOs), with a minority owned by a workplace, a family or ECE-specific commercial organisations. Only Te Kura (the Correspondence School) and early education classes in hospitals were – and still are – owned and fully funded by the central government. The community groups include kindergartens, playcentres, playgroups, community-based education and care services (e.g. Pacific language ECES), some home-based services (e.g. coordinated nanny services) and ngā kōhanga reo (Māori immersion services for children and their families/whānau).

In this century, education and care services (aka childcare services) have become the biggest category in terms of numbers. Moreover, there has been a rapid increase in corporate ownership of education and care services (through the building of new centres or buyout of existing ECES that had been owned by community cooperatives).

The latest enrolment data as at June 2014 show that there were 200,002 child enrolments in 4,300 licensed ECES (Ministry of Education 2015a, b). Some children are enrolled in two types of service; for example, they attend a home-based service for 8–9 h per day where the nanny takes the children to a licensed centre for a few hours each day or week. The percentages in different categories of ECES are set out in Table 8.1. In addition, there are 857 children enrolled in a variety of unlicensed services, generally called playgroups, which meet in community venues such as church buildings.

The last two categories of licensed services are described as parent-led services where family/whānau members play a significant role in running and leading the educational programme in the settings. Unlicensed playgroups are also parent-led.

A Brief History

The 1980s was a ‘watershed’ decade for early childhood education in New Zealand.

By the mid-1980s, the wider roles of care and education (Bronfenbrenner 1979) had become accepted. For example, the Social Advisory Council wrote that childcare benefits society by ‘the enhancement of children’s development, including the promotion of cultural identity, and the social integration of children with disabilities; the support of families [in bringing up children]; the facilitation of participation in society’ (Social Advisory Council 1985, p. 30).

Most of those benefits continue to underlie strategic goals for the early childhood care and education (ECCE) sector across the decades.

In the early 1980s, responsibility for the administration of early childhood care and education (ECCE) was carried by three government departments (Education, Social Welfare and Māori Affairs). Local government entities did not have a role in the provision or administration of ECES in New Zealand; nor do they today.

In 1986, childcare administration was transferred from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education. Government ministers voted funds for childcare staff, training and advisory/support.

The rationale for the integration of ECCE administration shifted over the years. The reasons included women’s workforce participation, support for children and their families, improvements to the quality of childcare services and human rights. In the mid-1980s, there was a convergence of advocacy from diverse interested parties, and government ministers made a decision to integrate the administration of ECCE under Education.

In 1987, integration of training courses for childcare and kindergarten teachers was set in motion. Three-year teacher education programmes were implemented across all colleges of education/universities by 1989. New graduates were to have equal status as teachers regardless of the type of ECES employing them.

After 1986–1987, the focus of advocacy for ECES was shifted to equitable resources for childcare. In 1988, government ministers set up an ECCE working group – one of three such working groups for education. The tasks for the ECCE group included advising on more equitable access to ECES and more equitable funding and funding processes. Why was equity important? At that time, government grants and regulations, and teacher education provision, varied by ECES type, because government ministers had been reacting to separate lobbying from the different ECES organisations in previous decades.

The working group report argued for government to be involved in three elements in relation to early childhood education:

- ‘Features in the interests of the child’ – good-quality services that meets the rights of the child
- ‘Features in the interests of the caregivers’ – accessibility to affordable services
- ‘Features in the interests of cultural survival and transmission to succeeding generations’ – opportunities for young children and parents to learn their language and culture

‘It is essential for all three elements to be present in every early childhood care and education arrangement’ (Department of Education 1988a p. 6).

In 1988, sweeping new policies spawned by the three working groups for education were announced. The *Before Five* (Department of Education 1988b) ECCE policies relating to new structures were aligned with those announced for the school and tertiary sectors. The new structures were a Ministry of Education, an Education Review Office, a Teachers Council and Crown entities for administering qualifications, providing careers advice, special education services and support for ECES. Years later, the special education service and early childhood development unit were absorbed back into the Ministry of Education.

The *Before Five* reforms ‘proved to be an important opportunity for improving the status and resources for childcare as most of the new [operational] policies made no distinction between different types of ECCE services. For example, the 1989 Budget announced that all ECCE services would receive the same per child, per hour grant. ... The 1989 Budget also announced that the Department of Social Welfare would continue to pay a means-tested fees subsidy to reduce the cost of early education to low-income families’ (Meade and Podmore 2010, pp. 21–22). Attendance at ECES became much more affordable.

During 1987 and 1988, a separate government review team developed recommendations for the ngā kōhanga reo organisation. Subsequently, government ministers decided to integrate its administration under Education in 1990. As a consequence, ngā kōhanga reo came to receive the same per child, per hour grant announced in 1989 for ECES.

In 1987, government ministers decided on a staged plan for increasing the proportion of 3-year qualified teachers in teacher-led services. A change of government halted the implementation of this policy.

In 2002, a 10-year strategic plan for ECCE (Ministry of Education 2002) reinstated or revised the policies for equity for childcare services that were dropped in the 1990s.

In 2010, an independent advisory Early Childhood Education Taskforce was set up by the government. The recommendations in its report (2011) included improved quality by supporting professionalism in ECES, a better funding system, support for parents (for productivity purposes) and improved accountability. Since then, the global economic crisis has meant minimal expenditure on policy changes other than working towards a better funding system.

The Role of Government Departments

The old Department of Education was transformed into the Ministry of Education in 1989. Nowadays, the Ministry of Education develops policy and resources for education providers’ use, allocates grants-in-aid to ECES and for some professional development, supports some research and monitors regulatory compliance by ECES. It does not administer ECES themselves – committees, boards or owners do that. Another department, the Education Review Office, evaluates standards of children’s care and education.

NZ Teachers Council and Its Successor, the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

The 1989 education reforms included establishing an NZ Teachers Council. Its main functions were to:

- Create graduating teacher standards and a code of ethics
- Approve tertiary programmes for initial teacher education whose students would reach the graduating teaching standards
- Register teachers against registered teacher criteria and discipline those who were in breach of the criteria or who were convicted of a crime

In 2015, an amendment to the Education Act disestablished the Teachers Council and established the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand in its place. Additional functions include education leadership.

The Regulatory Framework for Early Childhood Education

The rules that govern ECES are divided into three tiers:

- First tier – the Education Act 1989.
- Second tier – regulations for ECES and playgroups.
- Third tier – criteria which are the standards that services must comply with.
- There are different criteria for centre-based services, home-based services, hospital-based services and playgroups.
- The early childhood education curriculum framework is also part of the regulatory framework.

Teaching and Learning: Policy and Resources

Te Whāriki, Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education 1996)

Statements foreshadowing the development of a national ECCE curriculum were included in *Education to Be More* (Department of Education 1988a). Draft curriculum guidelines were developed by ECCE experts under contract to the Ministry of Education, and specialist working groups made suggestions for the curriculum for Māori language, Pacific language and home-based settings and children with special needs.

All agreed on a bicultural curriculum. ‘The framework begins with two sets of parallel aims. The English words are not translations of the Māori, but the ideas and concepts interconnect’ (Carr and May 1993, p. 43).

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education 1996; hereafter referred to as *Te Whāriki*) was a radical departure from school curriculum models at that date: first and foremost because it is not subject based. It is a curriculum framework for the education of children from birth to starting school age that allows each ECES to develop a curriculum that is appropriate for its unique learning community. Second, *Te Whāriki* is a bilingual and bicultural document. Its focus on children's *mana* (prestige, status) and empowerment means adults are to focus on children's strengths, not deficits.

Soon the ECCE curriculum will be 20 years old. In 2011, the ECE Taskforce recommended that the implementation of *Te Whāriki* be examined. In 2015, an advisory group on early learning (AGEL) was charged, inter alia, with examining its implementation.

Kei Tua o te Pae, *Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*

A significant investment in a published resource focused on assessment for learning was made in the first decade after the publication of *Te Whāriki*. There was a staged release of 20 books of commentary and exemplars to inform assessment practice in early childhood education (Ministry of Education 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2009). The framework for *Te Whāriki* shaped the development of the content of the books. Developers wanted assessment to be 'a powerful force *for* learning' (our emphasis). 'They introduce principles that will help learning communities to develop their own assessments of children's learning' (Ministry of Education 2004, Book 1, p. 2). The process for assessment *for* learning advocated in the books is for ECE teachers to be 'noticing, recognising and responding' to indications of learning (op. cite, p. 6).

Exemplars make visible the learning that is valued.

Participation

Supply and Demand Context

Since 1990, universal participation goals, incorporating accessibility and affordability criteria, have been important for successive governments. Prior to this time, the government took a targeted approach to its ECCE provision and prioritised support for services it classified as providing education, as opposed to care, such as sessional kindergartens and playcentres. It also had an ownership interest in these services. The *Before Five* (Department of Education 1988b) policy framework changed this focus by making it a 'right' for all children from age 0 to 6 years to have access to a choice of services meeting equivalent and approved quality standards. At the same time, the government preference for market-driven policy

approaches dictated that it take a mostly non-interventionist and facilitative, rather than directive approach, to ECCE supply and demand.

As a result of the new policies, the government divested itself of its previous ownership and employment responsibilities for kindergartens and playcentres and instead relied on competition within the market to determine the nature of ECCE provision including the location of services, opening hours, cost and the age range of the children who attend. A mix of universal and targeted funding subsidies were paid to licensed services, regardless of ECES type, to supplement the cost of providing ECCE and to incentivise ECCE attendance. As a result, over the last 20 years, there has been significant growth in the number of children accessing early childhood services and the hours they attend with the distribution of services becoming increasingly skewed towards wealthier families, with for-profit providers now dominating the network (Start Strong 2014).

Enrolment/Attendance Trends

In 2014, there were 200,002 child enrolments/attendances¹ in 4,299 licensed ECCE services (35.3% growth in services since 2004), with growth focused in all-day education and care services, which now form 88.8% of the total ECCE network, and home-based services (Ministry of Education 2015a, b). In contrast, enrolments have tended to fall for parent-led playcentres, Māori immersion kōhanga reo and sessional kindergartens, with these declines largely driven by the increased workforce participation of women and the need for more children to attend ECCE services and for longer hours (Ministry of Education 2014) (Fig. 8.1).

Time Children Spend in ECES

Enrolment/attendance rates tend to rise with the age of the child (Ministry of Education 2015a, b). Figure 8.2 shows that in 2014 these rates ranged from 15.9% for under 1-year-olds to 97.3% for 4-year-olds (Ministry of Education 2015a). A larger proportion of younger children (0–2-year-olds) use play centre (63% of under 2-year-olds) and home-based (58% of under 2-year-olds) services and ngā kōhanga reo (48%), while a greater percentage of older children use kindergartens and education and care services. This trend is consistent with the findings of a number of studies on parent choice of ECES which suggest that parents who prioritise the importance of a younger child's relationship with their caregiver are more likely to choose home-based care for infants and toddlers, while for older children, parents

¹The term enrolments/attendances refers to 2014 data, whereas the term enrolment refers to data up to and including 2013. This is due to a new data collection being utilised by the Ministry of Education for some services.

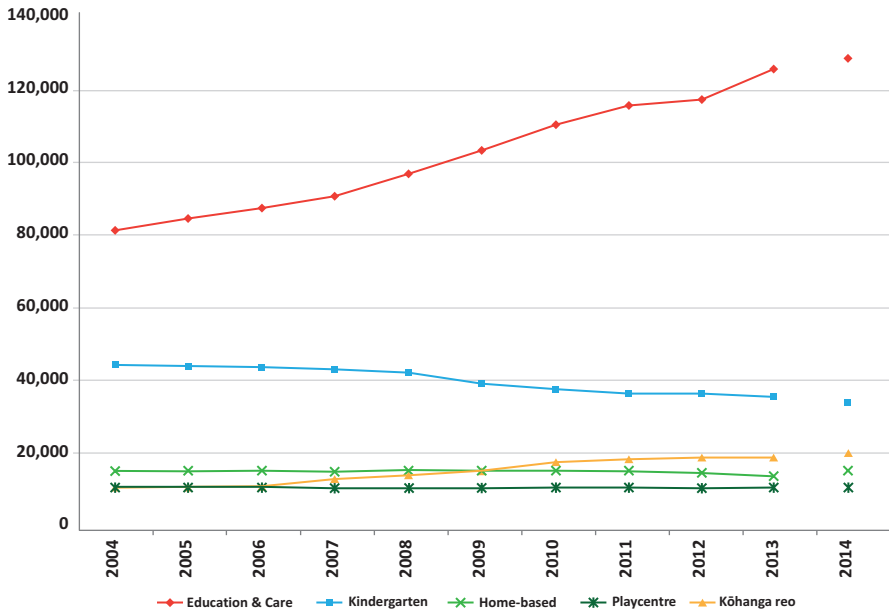


Fig. 8.1 Number of enrolment/attendances in licensed services, by service type, 2004–2014. Some double counting occurs because children who are enrolled/attending more than one service are counted more than once. This will change with the new counting system the Ministry of Education started implementing in 2014 (Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2015)

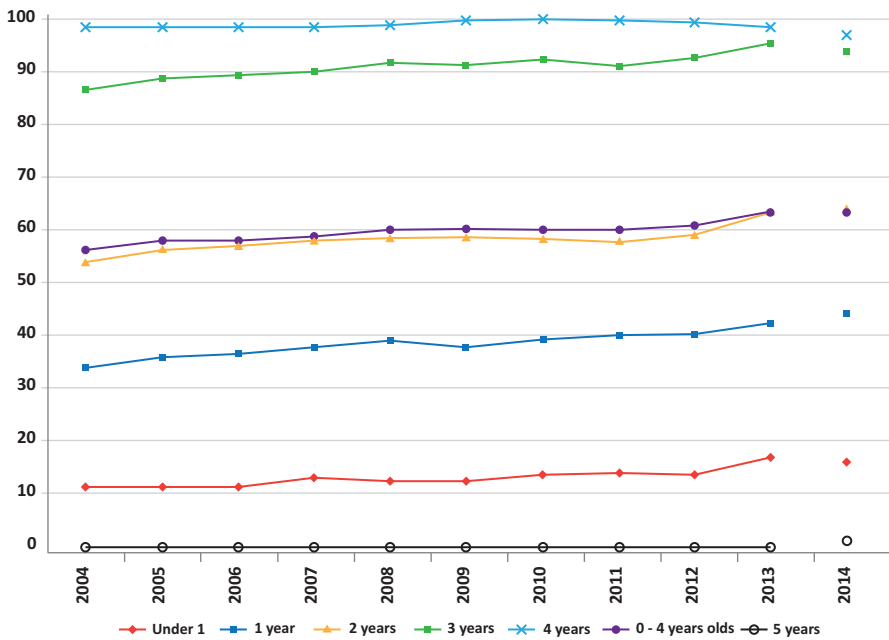


Fig. 8.2 Enrolment/attendance patterns in licensed services, by age of child, 2004–2014 (Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2014)

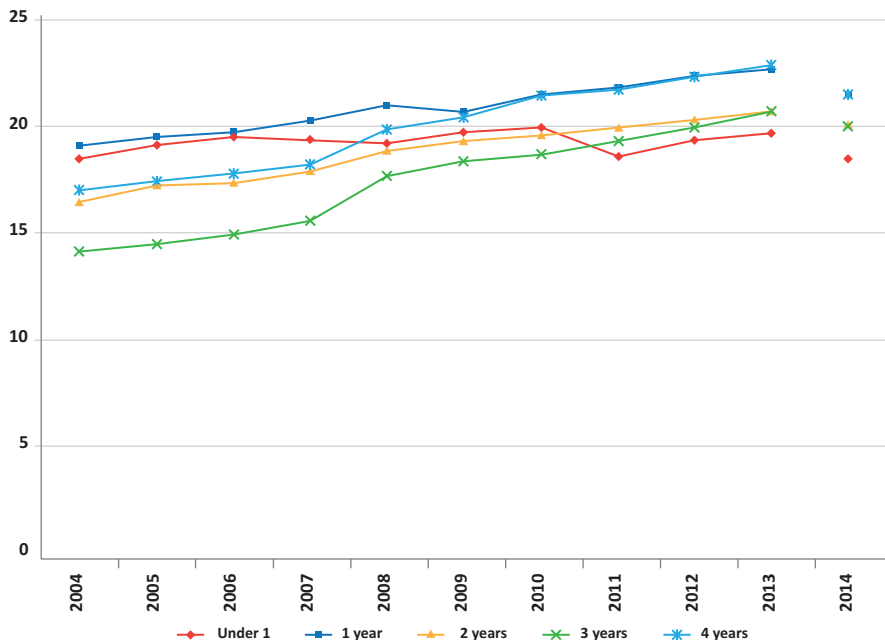


Fig. 8.3 Average number of hours per week of child attendance, by age, 2004–2014 (Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2014)

were more likely to choose centre-based settings which they perceive to emphasise developmental and educational outcomes (Everiss 2010).

Children spend the longest number of hours each week in education and care services (average of 23.3 h in 2014) and home-based services (an average of 22.6 h a week in 2014), with just over half this number (56 %) attending for more than 6 h a day (Ministry of Education 2015a). Kindergartens are lower at 15.4 h, with the sessional nature of many kindergartens mediating this result. The Ministry of Education (2015a) describes the average hours a child attends an ECES as being age dependent, with under 1-year-olds attending for the least amount of time at 18.6 h a week and 4-year-olds for the longest time at 21.5 h a week. In the case of 3–4-year-olds, there was a significant jump in average hours of attendance in 2008 following the introduction of ‘20 Hours ECCE’ policy, which significantly reduced attendance fees for 3–4-year-old children (Ministry of Education 2015a) (Fig. 8.3).

The Ministry of Education data for the year ending June 2012 shows that 95 % of the 60,413 children starting school that year participated in ECCE and that those who attended ECES more regularly and for a longer time were likely to be from socio-economically advantaged backgrounds. It is a bleaker picture for the 5 % (2,816) of non-attendees who are more likely to be from impoverished backgrounds and/or experiencing forms of disadvantage (Dale et al. 2014). In the same year, government ministers announced Better Public Services targets to be achieved by 2017, which include a 98 % participation rate by children in licensed ECES prior to

starting school. This policy focuses on progressing education outcomes for children from low socio-economic backgrounds, Māori and Pacific learners and children with special educational needs (Ministry of Education 2014) and is accompanied by targeted initiatives designed to address barriers to participation in selected communities with relatively low child participation. These initiatives reflect the intensified government discourse of vulnerability where ECCE is positioned as a means of countering long-term welfare dependency and, thereby, reducing costs to the state (Alcock and Haggerty 2013).

Qualified Staff

In recent years, there has been a clear focus by the government on increasing children's participation in licensed ECCE services with only limited attention to policies designed to improve the quality of ECCE provision, particularly in the area of qualified staffing where there has been significant retrenchment. In 2010, government ministers abandoned the target of having 100% qualified teachers in teacher-led ECES by 2012, despite the strong body of international literature on quality in which higher staff qualifications are generally regarded as being the best predictor of good educational and social outcomes for children (Start Strong 2014).

While there has been growth in the number of qualified teachers, the proportion falls well short of the 100% qualified teacher target. In 2014, teacher-led services had a total of 25,284 teaching staff with 74.6% (18,862) of this number holding recognised early childhood teaching qualifications at either diploma or degree level (Ministry of Education 2015a).

Almost all kindergarten staff (95%) and home-based coordinators (99.3%) are qualified² with 77.5% of all qualified teachers working in mostly full-day education and care services which comprise the majority of the ECES. Māori staff comprise 9% of teachers (2,267) working in teacher-led services (Ministry of Education 2015a). It is important to note that the Ministry data on staff/child ratios do not differentiate between qualified staff who have a diploma or bachelor's degree of teaching (ECE) and are registered teachers and adults without qualifications who are counted in staff/child ratios for regulatory purposes. On this basis, kindergartens (with almost 100% qualified staff) and full-day education and care services (where 77.5% of staff are qualified) are shown to have an average of one adult to six children over 2 years old. Education and care services catering for under 2-year-old children have an average of one adult to three children which, although better than the legal requirement of 1:5, does not in itself guarantee that all staff in this ratio are qualified.

²Note that home-based coordinators are qualified ECCE staff who work directly with educators, rather than children, in home-based services. The majority of home-based educators do not have recognised early childhood qualifications.

Affordability

Funding Policy Framework

Funding for ECES in Aotearoa New Zealand comprises a mix of government funding, which utilises a range of universal and targeted funding strategies, and private sources such as parent fees and ‘payment in kind’ via voluntary input. A significant change of funding approach occurred in 1990 when the government moved from being a provider of education services to a competitive model where it became a purchaser of a quantum of education based on the number of children attending an ECES. This new approach was effected via the use of a universal funding formula where ECES meeting similar quality levels, as specified by government-prescribed regulations, received equivalent levels of funding per child per hour. The formula was based primarily on numbers of children attending (Mitchell 2005).

Just over a decade later, in 2004, the government moved to a cost-driver approach where funding became differentiated on the basis of cost, usually relating to service, community population profiles or programme features. The cost-driver approach was introduced to reduce the likelihood of services with higher operating costs making savings that lowered quality or alternatively raising fees and as a consequence inhibiting the accessibility of licensed ECES for lower-income groups (Mitchell 2005). Cost-driver funding is currently provided to all licensed ECES for up to 30 h per child per week, with the rates of the subsidy dependent on the ages of children being catered for (children aged under-2 or children aged over-2). Another cost-driver subsidy applies in relation to qualified teachers, wherein the government meets a percentage of costs for relevant staff. It is designed to incentivise the employment of up to 80% qualified teachers in ECES. All subsidies, including those related to fees, are paid directly to ECES providers.

Increasing Focus on Vulnerability

Recent information released by the government reveals that child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand is worse than previously acknowledged with 285,000 children living below the poverty line and high levels of hardship amongst Māori and Pacific families and families on benefits (Ritchie et al. 2014). During the last two decades, base funding has been supplemented with targeted subsidies aimed at incentivising participation in ECCE by disadvantaged populations. As a result, noticeable gains were evident in child participation in ECCE during the period 2001–2004, although increases in participation were more evident for wealthier children (Ministry of Education 2014). The policy approaches that were used include increasing the level of the childcare subsidy which supplements fees for low-income families, and grants known as equity funding, which provide additional funding support for ECES with a bigger percentage of Māori children, low-income

and special needs children and those attending rural services. Participation also increased significantly between the years 2007 and 2011, when growth in the 0–4-year-old enrolments coincided with the introduction of the universal ‘20 hours ECE’ policy designed to offset fees paid by parents of children aged 3–4 years. More recently, it has become mandatory for parents being supported by government benefits to ensure their 3–5-year-old children are enrolled in and regularly attend a licensed ECES or for the parents to participate in a government-approved early parenting programme. Beneficiaries can lose up to 50% of their benefit income if they do not participate. Compulsory attendance in ECES applies only to children of beneficiaries.

State Investment in ECCE

A 2011 survey of income and expenditure and fees of ECCE providers showed estimates of fees, which apply in addition to the government subsidies, varied between service types (Arnold and Scott 2012). Playcentres which tend to rely on volunteer parent input were shown on average to charge less than \$1 an hour (NZD); the majority of kindergartens, with state-funded salaries and access to the 20 h ECE higher level of government funding for 3–4-year-olds, tended to charge an average of NZD2–4 an hour, while 68% of education and care services charged fees between NZD 4 and 7 an hour. The fees for attending home-based services at NZD5–6 an hour were said to be on a par with education and care centres (Ritchie et al. 2014).

According to the OECD Family Database Aotearoa (OECD 2014), the New Zealand government invested just over 1% of its GDP in ECCE in 2009. While lower than that for Scandinavian countries, at the 1% of GDP rate New Zealand achieves the internationally accepted benchmark for the level of investment in ECCE necessary to run a high-quality system (Start Strong 2014). A report from the Ministry of Education, Education Counts (2013) database shows also that public expenditure on ECCE increased significantly between 2002 with total expenditure of NZD532 million³ and 2012 with spending of NZD1562 million (a 190% increase over 10 years). For each full-time-equivalent child, this equated to NZD4570 in 2002 and NZD9600 in 2012 (Education Counts 2013). In 2014, the government announced a government expenditure on ECCE increase of NZD155.7 million. Nearly NZD54 million of it was for an immediate increase to subsidy rates to help keep fees affordable for parents. The remainder was to be allocated over the next 4 years to help meet the forecast extra demand. Despite the promise of incremental funding over 4 years, government subsidy levels at this point in time remain below those that applied before cuts to subsidies for ECES made in 2011. Lack of access to high-quality ECCE services in poorer areas remains an issue as a consequence (Ritchie et al. 2014).

³All expenditure cited in New Zealand dollars (NZD)

Accountability

Recurring goals in policy development in recent decades in Aotearoa New Zealand have been:

- Improving the quality of ECES
- Equitable access for children and families.

There has been considerable policy emphasis in the last two decades on structural quality, in particular on achieving increased numbers of qualified and registered teachers in the system and increased proportions in individual ECES. Much of the government's investment in quality ECCE has been at the 'front-end', although there have been smaller investments in incentivising improvements to quality via professional development.

There are multiple layers of accountability in the education system, some of them related to maintaining quality ECCE and increasing enrolments and some of them focused on checking on the proper use of taxpayers' money.

Ministry of Education Accountability

The present government has a set of 'better public service targets' and has chosen to target access to ECES by setting enrolment targets to be met by 2017. The Ministry of Education reports to government ministers at least twice each year on changes in enrolments, including data about Māori and Pacific population groups that have been under-represented as users of ECES.

Accountability for Initial Teacher Education Providers

The NZ Teachers Council and NZ Qualifications Authority have developed two types of standards for teacher education: graduating teacher standards and standards for approval of initial teacher education programmes. Both these agencies are directly involved in approving tertiary institutions that apply to be teacher education providers and teacher education programmes, as well as re-approval of those programmes every 3 years.

Accountability for Early Childhood Education Services

Ministry of Education Systems

Standards for ECES are a more recent phenomenon, associated with the introduction of licensing criteria by the Ministry of Education in 2008.

Licensing criteria are standards that services must comply with. These have been designed to be applied at the ‘front-end’ when a new service applies for a license to open (or a certificate in the case of playgroups). After the criteria were mandated in 2008, the Ministry relicensed existing ECES to ensure uniform compliance with the criteria/standards across the country. All licensed services were on the 2008 regulatory framework by the time the authors wrote this chapter.

The other time when ECES are mostly likely to attend to the criteria is when something goes wrong, i.e. when someone notices an ECES is non-compliant with criteria/standards. Reports about non-compliance can be supplied to the Ministry of Education by the service itself, parents, health or child protection agencies, fire departments, the Education Review Office or a member of the public. The person who is legally responsible in the service is required to furnish a report to the Ministry of Education about their non-compliance and state how the situation will be rectified; it will be within a tight timeframe.

The Ministry of Education also administers accountability systems in relation to government funding. Audited accounts must be provided annually by ECES. More onerous for ECES are the forms that must be submitted to the Ministry three times a year if the ECES is to receive government subsidies. Staff-hour counts have to be completed every half-day.

They record the qualified teachers and unqualified staff as well as the children in attendance that day. These are aggregated on the funding claim forms submitted three times a year. Each year, the Ministry of Education’s financial auditors visit a random selection of ECES, or ECES with known anomalies in their records, to examine child attendance, financial and payroll records held by the ECES.

Education Review Office Systems

The Education Review Office (ERO) undertakes reviews of individual ECES (and schools) on a rolling basis. The interval between reviews varies from 1 to 4 years, depending on ERO’s rating of how well placed the ECES is to promote positive learning outcomes for all children. Each review report is published online for any interested party to read. ERO’s ratings draw on ECES internal self-review reports and ERO external reviewers’ findings during site visits based on ERO indicators.

ERO also publishes national evaluation reports on topical educational practices. In 2015, the reports include one on *Continuity of Learning*, focused on transitions from ECES to schools, and one on *Infants and Toddlers*. These are based on collated data from a few hundred review visits.

Professional Accountability for Individual Teachers

When teachers graduate with their degree in education or teaching in early childhood education, they apply to the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (formerly NZ Teachers Council) to become a registered teacher. Then a fully registered teacher takes on the role of mentor to guide the provisionally registered teacher through a 2-year programme of on-job professional learning. The provisionally registered teacher gathers evidence to demonstrate that he or she satisfies the 12 registered teacher criteria and adheres to the teachers' code of ethics in their practice. School teachers go through an identical process to become registered teachers. All teachers must continue their professional learning and keep a portfolio of evidence related to the 12 registered teacher criteria in order to renew their practicing certificate every 3 years. A criminal conviction or serious breach in ethical/professional behaviour may result in the Education Council's disciplinary committee withdrawing a practicing certificate and/or registration.

Sustainability of the Policy Framework

Maintaining an Integrated System

To understand present times and to plan for a sustainable future, it is important to make sense of the past. Helen May (2009), a key researcher and writer on ECCE in Aotearoa New Zealand, describes the development of ECCE as a story of volunteering, advocacy, shifting state interest and increasing government investment which reflects not only changing social and political attitudes to children but also to the role of women in society (May 2009). May (2002) also argues that significant change for children and their families is only possible when there is sufficient agreement between those working with young children and government power brokers who make policies and fund ECCE services. She identifies the 1940s and 1980s as two such periods that resulted in big shifts in ECCE.

As described earlier in this chapter, New Zealand was the first country in the English-speaking world to recognise that care and education are intertwined and to work towards an integrated policy and administrative framework. The transfer of state responsibility for the administration of childcare services to Education in 1986 was a significant change and established the foundation for future coherent policy development. Many years later, in 2001, the OECD identified integration as a core international ECCE policy issue. The benefits of a unified approach include an enhanced ability to address inequalities and facilitate policy cohesion in relation to meeting social and pedagogical objectives, budgets, regulation, funding and parental costs (Mitchell 2005).

The effect of the integration of administrative responsibility by government for ECCE services was not fully addressed until 1990 following the release of

government's subsequent *Before Five* policies (Department of Education 1988b) which included an integrated framework for ECCE funding, staffing and regulation. Later, in 1996, Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum framework *Te Whāriki* was published and continues to apply to all ECES. The curriculum is notable as the world's first bicultural curriculum and for its inclusion of infants and toddlers as well as young children.

In 2002, the government released a comprehensive 10-year strategic plan for ECCE *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education 2002). The plan mapped a pathway for ECCE to 2012 and was underpinned by policy goals to improve the quality of services, to increase participation in quality ECCE and to promote collaborative relationships. Initially the plan resulted in gains for ECCE through multiple initiatives which included a new valuing of the role of teachers and qualifications, a review of regulations, increased research activity, funding for professional learning and development and a focus on improving connectedness across children's services, including government departments.

However, in 2008, with a change of government to one with more limited commitment to ECCE, a number of influential initiatives were discontinued such as the Centre of Innovation research programme where ECCE services partnered with researchers to explore elements of 'good' teaching practice to inform the teaching profession. The strategic plan ended in 2012 without a replacement one, leaving a policy vacuum that in the authors' view has resulted in a lack of a clear future vision for ECCE and ad hoc policy-making.

Links to the Schooling Curriculum

The bicultural early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* was developed in the early '1990s' at a time that the school curriculum was being reviewed and national curriculum documents written for subject areas, by level and with achievement-based assessments. While this created interest in curriculum in the ECCE sector, the development of a new curriculum for schooling was accompanied by concern that a similar model may be imposed on ECCE services (Carr and May 1994). In response, when the opportunity arose, the ECCE sector united in supporting the development of an ECCE curriculum which defined, protected and promoted early childhood philosophies. Those developing the curriculum for ECES based it on the premise that young children, indeed infants and toddlers, are active and capable learners who seek to make sense of their world. The broad learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* are about children's thinking ('working theories', when knowledge, skills and attitudes combine together) and positive dispositions towards learning. The strands in the ECCE curriculum mesh well with the competencies set out in the *New Zealand Curriculum* for schools (Ministry of Education 2007).

Despite the forward-looking initiatives of recent decades, with their focus on ECCE as an important contributor to a healthy and just society, there are currently signs that global and economic trends characterised by an emphasis on marketisation

and privatisation are dominating education policy in Aotearoa New Zealand (Alcock and Haggerty 2013) and that there is increasing state control over curriculum (Mitchell 2014). Alcock and Haggerty (2013) borrow the term ‘schoolification’ to describe the increasingly narrow emphasis the government is placing on ECCE as a site to prepare young children for academic success at school and subsequently for the workplace. Government communications often focus on academic outcomes. Early childhood educators believe there is a risk that the holistic, embodied and interactive ways in which young children learn, grow and develop would become lost in the dominant schooling agenda (Mitchell 2014).

Social Justice

Human Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came into force in 1990; Aotearoa New Zealand government signed/ratified the Convention on the 6th April 1993. The UNCRC was developed by the United Nations to strengthen the position of children as holders of human rights and applies to everyone under the age of 18. The Convention has 54 articles about how governments and organisations will work to support children’s rights.

New Zealand also has a Bill of Rights (1990) and the Human Rights Act (1993) which is informed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); both of these sit alongside the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) to guide the citizens and residents of Aotearoa New Zealand to act as duty bearers or guardians of human rights.

The Human Rights Commission, funded by the government, operates as an independent government entity to promote and protect human rights for all. The Office of the Commissioner for Children, also an independent government-funded entity, has a statutory function to monitor the social services our government provides to children and youth, and the Commissioner advocates for and promotes the implementation of UNCRC.

The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for administering the UNCRC and its protocols and reports directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child every 5 years on how it is fulfilling its human rights obligations to children and youth in Aotearoa New Zealand. For the ECCE sector and for non-government organisations (NGOs), more broad-based groups with a childhood interest such as UNICEF, the Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa, collates responses from diverse NGOs in New Zealand and takes responsibility for sending the report to the United Nations. The United Nations Committee reviews both the Government Periodic Report and the NGO Alternative Periodic Report and draws up a list of issues for the New Zealand government to address. Through these actions, the country pledges certain rights to its children to ensure they are cared for and protected; have food, shelter and education; and are treated with respect (Ritchie et al. 2014).

The main points on how well the government is responding to issues of social justice in relation to ECCE in Aotearoa New Zealand in the most recent alternative periodic report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2010) include noting:

- That inequalities and disadvantage continue to exist for a disproportionate number of indigenous children (tamariki Māori), children of Pacific Island heritage and children from other minority ethnic groups
- That increasing numbers of children under the age of two are attending early childhood care and education services while their parents work
- That it is a concern to have the target for registered early childhood teachers in early childhood services reduced in 2010 from the 100 % for 2012 to 80 %, with no timeline for achieving this

Codes of Ethics

The development of *Te Whāriki* during the 1990s, a curriculum that would be common to all ECES, has been described as a process that united the early childhood sector (Dalli and Cherrington 2009). The release of draft curriculum was the trigger for a group of early childhood professionals from a range of organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand to work together to create a code of ethics for early childhood educators. The Early Childhood Code of Ethics Working Group used a questionnaire from NAEYC that was adapted by Australian academics and adapted again for Aotearoa New Zealand. The consultation part of the working group process created a discourse about early childhood teaching as a profession. The resulting code of ethics (Early Childhood Code of Ethics National Working Group 2001) and accompanying kits with scenarios of ethical difficulty that can face early educators and possible solutions were welcomed and used in ECCE for several years. In 2004, the New Zealand Teachers Council (now known as the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand) released a code of ethics for use by all qualified and registered teachers in the early childhood and compulsory school sectors (New Zealand Teachers Council 2004). The necessity to comply with this code of ethics has meant it has overtaken the voluntary code of ethics (2001) that was specifically designed for ECCE.

Accommodating Diversity

Aotearoa New Zealand, a country with a history of colonisation dating back to the eighteenth century, established a national commitment to the indigenous Māori people, the *tangata whenua*, under the 1840 *Tiriti o Waitangi* (Treaty of Waitangi), and *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) is one of three official languages, alongside

English and New Zealand Sign Language. Relative to the overall population of 4.4 million people, there is a high immigrant population in Aotearoa New Zealand. While this history of immigration began in the eighteenth century with the arrival of British subjects, the Pacific Island, European and Asian immigrant populations are now also well established, alongside a diversity of peoples from African and Middle Eastern nations. Early migrant families extend over more than four or five generations.

With New Zealand's annual immigrant population and an official United Nations-agreed refugee intake, a diversity of ethnic groups are – year by year – contributing to Aotearoa New Zealand's rich and vibrant multicultural population. Each new intake of migrants and refugees is introduced to the Treaty partnership and bicultural nature of life as partners with *tangata whenua* in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Treaty Relationships

Debates about the Treaty relationship and multiculturalism are now firmly embedded within the ECCE discourse of race relations, and while the Treaty guaranteed Māori their right to *rangatiratanga* (self-determination), it is also about inclusion for all citizens and generally implies that Māori and other cultures should have equal status and opportunities and work together towards a more equitable society (Ritchie, cited in Forsyth and Leaf 2010). The fact that Māori identity, language and culture originate only in Aotearoa New Zealand and will be lost to the world if they are not preserved adds significant weight to the right of Māori language and culture to state protection (May 2004). Defining multiculturalism from an indigenous point of view is something that is an ongoing social justice challenge for all nonindigenous people living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This concern is clearly reflected in the conceptualisation of *Te Whāriki*, as a values-based, bilingual and bicultural document grounded in Māori pedagogy and principles that underpin an education for 'life'. Tilly Reedy, one of the Māori writers of *Te Whāriki*, describes it as 'offering a theoretical framework that is appropriate for all; common yet individual; for everyone but only for one; a *whāriki* (mat) woven by loving hands that can cross cultures with respect, and can weave people and nations together' (Reedy, cited in Nuttall 2013, p. 49). In recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand requires all registered teachers with a practicing certificate to work 'cross-culturally' and to have a 'good' understanding of Māori language and protocols so as to be able to engage effectively with Māori children and families in the education context and beyond (Education Council 2015). Despite this focus, inequitable delivery of culturally appropriate ECCE services to Māori and Pacific Island children and families remains an issue and a focus for government agencies and ECES (Education Review Office 2013).

Reducing Poverty

Even though New Zealand is supposedly a ‘first-world’ country, poverty is relatively high amongst families with young children when compared with other countries in the OECD. There has been a widening gap between the rich and the poor in Aotearoa New Zealand since monetarist economic policies became dominant in the 1980s. In 2015, this gap is one of the widest in the world with 18.4% of children, mostly comprising Māori and Pacific groups, being strongly represented at the lower socio-economic end of this continuum and more likely than other children to live in poverty. These children are also unlikely to participate in quality ECCE (Ritchie et al. 2014). This trend behoves the Ministry of Education and Education Review Office to act on the ten recommendations of the Child Poverty Action Group Report (2014) to ensure an equitable delivery of services and urges the government ‘to ensure that the children’s rights we have already committed to deliver will be applied, monitored and evaluated’ and to consider UNCRC as a guide to ending discriminatory policy ... putting the needs of children before the needs of the economy...’ (Ritchie et al. 2014, pp. 14–15).

These recommendations also challenge the government to ensure the provision of high-quality, age-appropriate and culturally and linguistically responsive ECES that are affordable to children in families living in poverty (Ritchie et al. 2014). The targeted funding approach of government, especially in relation to ‘vulnerable’ children through grants, fees subsidies and building grants paid to ECES services, appears to be falling short in its aim of incentivising participation in ECCE by those children living in poverty who are not yet accessing it.

Conclusions

Our account of early childhood policy development in Aotearoa New Zealand reveals that successive governments drew on a strong history of a partnership with the ECCE sector to provide ECES for all. In the last 30 years, ECCE has been prioritised by the government as a direct result of education reforms in the late 1980s and, specifically, the *Before Five* report (Department of Education 1988a).

Overall, the achievement of goals for ECCE provision has been pursued via a mix of market-driven policy approaches (mostly neutral in terms of category of service) and the utilisation by all ECES of the holistic, bicultural and values-based, national early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*.

With just over 95% of young children now attending an ECES prior to starting school, the government can be deemed successful in addressing *accessibility* and increasing participation rates, especially those for children under 2 years of age. These children are now attending for longer hours. However, there are challenges ahead, particularly in respect to ensuring that staff in ECES are suitably qualified to provide appropriate learning opportunities alongside care for infants and toddlers.

The government's focus on initiatives to increase the participation of children in ECES, and especially the diversion of some funding from qualified teachers to meet participation targets, has given rise to concerns that there is slippage in the quality of services. Another challenge is the fact that the 5% of children not attending ECES are disproportionately those living in poverty who would benefit most from ECCE. Finding these children and requiring their attendance at ECCE are a current policy priority.

During the last 30 years, the state in Aotearoa New Zealand has addressed *affordability* through regulating and funding for quality ECCE in diverse ECES to meet a range of family, community and ethnic needs. Over the past decade, there has been a significant change in the 'balance of power' within the early childhood sector, with a majority of young children now enrolled in private, for-profit, full-day ECES, including home-based services. Many of these services are part of corporate for-profit chains. Increased policy-making targeted at areas of 'need' has necessitated the provision of targeted funding incentives to attract ECES to extend their ECES provision to lower socio-economic areas.

Marketisation, the funding model and the recent regulations that allow 150-place ECES, in combination, have attracted corporate providers and undermined the sustainability of smaller community-based ECES. With educational principles and goals underscored by the Treaty of Waitangi since the reforms of the 1980s, there has been a renewed focus over the past three decades on *accountability* to the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and to the significance of the Treaty as it pertains to education. The foregrounding of indigenous knowledge in *Te Whāriki* has occasioned a shift, from an educational approach that was largely monocultural to one that is bicultural, yet open to multicultural considerations. The government says it gives priority to fostering educational and life achievements for Māori people, but accountability is still weak in this area.

At the time of writing, the Minister of Education issued a press release identifying key policy priority areas for the future arising from the report of the Advisory Group for Early Learning (Ministry of Education 2015b). It suggests that the government intends to continue focusing on *sustainability* as a priority area, by developing a seamless education system to ensure continuity of teaching and learning across the non-compulsory early childhood and compulsory schooling sectors. A renewed focus on professional development is also suggested.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a signatory to UNCRC; this commits the government to *social justice* for children, through the adoption of a human rights framework to meet their objectives. Child-centred organisations that contributed to the NGO report to the United Nations in 2010 questioned the primary focus of government social policy on provision of ECES for parents to undertake paid work and reiterated previous requests for children's rights and needs to be placed at the centre of government policy (Action for Children and Youth in Aotearoa 2010).

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