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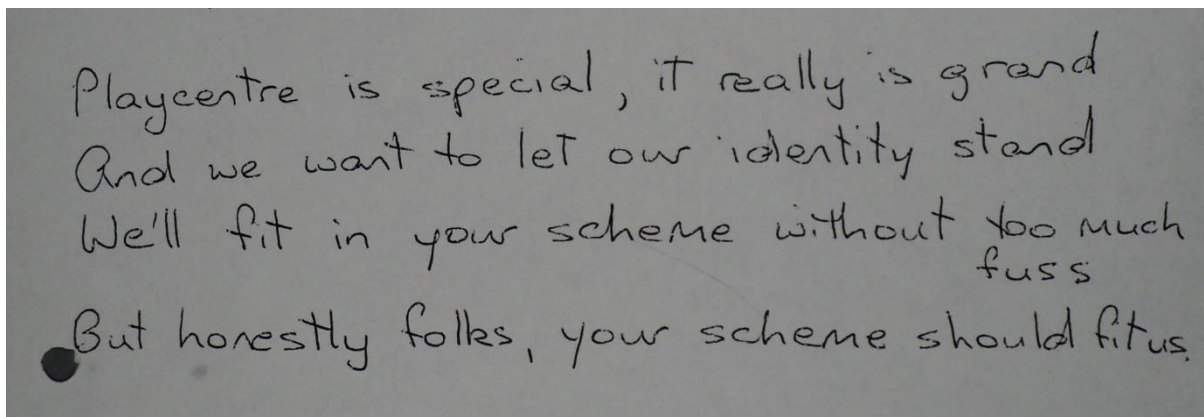
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“Playcentre is special”

Playcentre, parenting and policy

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Abstract

“We’ll fit in your scheme without too much fuss/But honestly folks, your scheme should fit us.” These lines from a 1989 poem by an anonymous Playcentre writer expressed frustration at fitting into changing early childhood educational policy that was designed around services that employed teachers. In contrast, Playcentres have always operated as parent-cooperative early childhood and adult education services, where trained parents are the educators in the service. This study adds to the scholarly literature on the history of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Aotearoa New Zealand by examining the effects of government policy on Playcentres in particular, primarily between the years of 1988 and 2011.

The approach to policy analysis developed by Carol Bacchi, called *What’s the Problem Represented to Be?*, is used as the methodological framework. This approach is based on the premise that all policies contain a constructed representation of the problem that the policy seeks to solve. These problem representations result in particular lived, discursive and subjectification effects, which will benefit some groups more than others.

The study takes the Early Childhood Education Taskforce report of 2011 as its starting point. The two main problem representations identified are a lack of participation in ECEC services, and an overall lack of baseline quality in those services. The development of these problem representations over three decades is related to the political shift to neoliberalism, and an association of ECEC services with human capital development. Effects of these problem representations have created issues of sustainability for Playcentres, and discouraged the subject position of parents as capable educators, a central concept in Playcentre philosophy. This thesis makes two policy recommendations: one is to establish integrated service hubs based around ECEC services, and the other is to reinstate ECEC charters negotiated between parents, the service and the government. These structures would allow for parents-as-educators in ECEC services and for democratic input into the aims and evaluation of ECEC services.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Steve and Joan Davies, who taught me the value of education and the importance of parenting with love.

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Although I take full responsibility for the views expressed in this thesis, I cannot claim that it has been an individual effort. To all those who have supported me, from those who discussed ideas with me, to those who know my coffee order and allowed me to use their café as my “office,” I offer my heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

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This thesis has been edited by Hilary van Uden in accordance with the University of Auckland’s guidelines. Thank you, Hilary, for saving me from imposing on my friends.

The archival work in this thesis was made much easier by the foresight of Helen May and Anne Meade, who archived a treasure trove of papers at the Alexander Turnbull Library. Thank you, Helen and Anne, I have appreciated it immensely. My thanks also to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation, who granted me access to their archives.

To the Playcentre community, you are a wonderful group of people. Being a part of the Playcentre movement has transformed me, produced a network of friends and connections throughout the country and over generations. I hope that this thesis in some small way benefits Playcentre as a koha in return for what I have received.

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Glossary of Māori words

Aotearoa	The Māori name for New Zealand. Literally “the land of the long white cloud”
Iwi	Tribe
Kaiako	Teacher
Kaupapa	Purpose/agenda/programme
Kōhanga Reo	Māori language immersion ECEC centres, affiliated to Te Kōhanga Reo Trust (singular: Te Kōhanga Reo; plural: Ngā Kōhanga Reo)
Māori	The collective name for the indigenous people of Aotearoa
Mauri	Life force/spirit
Pākehā	A “white” New Zealander; a New Zealander of European settler descent
Rangatiratanga	Autonomy, self-determination
Tamariki	Children
Taonga	Treasure
Te Ao Māori	The Māori world, or worldview
Te Reo (Māori)	The Māori language
<i>Te Tiriti o Waitangi</i>	The Treaty of Waitangi in general, and the Māori language version in particular
Tikanga Māori	Māori culture, protocols and rituals
Tohu Whakapakari	The Kōhanga Reo-specific teaching qualification
Tūpuna	Ancestors
Wānanga	Tertiary/adult education institution, particularly one based on kaupapa Māori
Whānau	Family, often termed “extended family” by Pākehā

Acronyms

BPS	Better Public Services
DELSA	Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs
ECE	Early childhood education
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
ERO	Education Review Office
HCT	Human capital theory
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional (voting system)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NZCER	New Zealand Council for Educational Research
NZPF	New Zealand Playcentre Federation
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLD	Professional learning and development
PTE	Private training establishment
PS&D	Parent Support and Development project
SES	Socioeconomic status
SPECE	Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education
TKRNT	Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust
TLIF	Teacher-Led Innovation Fund
TLRI	Teaching and Learning Research Initiative
UK	United Kingdom

UNCROC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

WPR What's the Problem Represented to Be? (Carol Bacchi's methodological approach to policy analysis).

Prologue: Playcentre in my life

When I took my toddler to the local park that day in 1994, I didn't realise that my life was about to change. Another parent at the park struck up a conversation with me about Playcentre, a parent-cooperative early childhood education and care (ECEC) service that had been operating in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) since the 1940s. She invited me to join the local Playcentre, which happened to be conveniently located within walking distance of my house. I took up her offer and my three children all attended that local Playcentre until they transitioned to school, and are still friends with many of the children and the adults they met there. Making contact with that Playcentre began an association with the Playcentre movement that transformed my life, and continues to influence my life choices today. Through Playcentre I learnt about the value of play, child learning and development, and ECEC regulations and practices. I became an experienced supervisor and worked at other Playcentres when my children went to school. I was an office holder at my centre, at the local Playcentre Association, and with the New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF), mostly working with the Playcentre adult education programme.

Participating in Playcentre provided me with intellectual stimulation and social connections, opportunities for personal development, and importantly, provided support for me in my parenting role. I had a network of babysitters and car-poolers and sympathetic advisors. I was part of a local community of parents concerned with those issues that affected our children and our families, and this embeddedness in the community continued long after my children had finished attending Playcentre. The choice my partner and I made for me to be the "hands-on" educator and carer of our young children was affirmed and valued, which was important for my wellbeing and self-esteem.

There are many other Playcentre parents with similar transformation stories to my own. I have often heard experienced parents reflecting that "you come to Playcentre for your children; you stay for yourself." For some people transformation is about gaining confidence working in groups. I know of initially

unconfident people who have found themselves as a centre president after a few years of participation in Playcentre, or who have found themselves speaking to a room of people on a subject dear to their heart. For other people it is about second-chance education; for example, for two students I tutored, their Playcentre Diploma was the first official qualification they had gained. For others, participation in Playcentre transformed their parenting when they were introduced to new ways of child-rearing that they had not experienced in their own childhood.

One of the biggest transformations that I personally have experienced has been through the bicultural journey that the NZPF committed to in 1989. Being part of this bicultural journey has created a fundamental change in the way I see the world. When I have facilitated workshops on *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi), or participated in Tiriti-based discussions at a national level, I have witnessed many others having the same awakening of consciousness that I had had. Today Playcentre is still one of the few environments in which I participate where I am exposed to Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) as part of routine practice.

My educational experience in Playcentre qualified me for postgraduate study in education, far removed from my initial degree in biochemistry. While my master's thesis focused on adults in Playcentre, the initial topic for my PhD was non-Playcentre specific. I started the study with ideas of investigating sharing and fairness in early childhood centres through a social sciences approach of planning a practical empirical investigation, generating and analysing data, and writing up the study into a thesis. The topic was underpinned by ideas of social justice and poststructural questioning of teachers' practice. Initially my supervisors guided me towards literature on democracy, because of its relationship to "sharing" in a wider social context, and I found this fascinating. The year I started, 2011, I also presented at a history of education conference with a paper on Playcentre's bicultural journey from a democratic theory perspective,¹ an experience that really engaged me. I realised that I was continually being drawn to the humanities

¹ Suzanne Manning, "Democracy Meets Rangatiratanga: Playcentre's Bicultural Journey 1989-2011," *History of Education Review* 43, no. 1 (2014), doi:10.1108/HER-10-2012-0033.

disciplines of policy analysis, political studies and history, as well desiring to understand processes of social change. It now appeared that my interests in social justice would be better served by focusing on the political, social and economic contextual factors that influenced the ECEC sector in general, and Playcentre in particular.

Another event that year also influenced the direction that this thesis took. This was a political event that impacted on Playcentres: the government-appointed Early Childhood Education (ECE) Taskforce released its report.² The ECE Taskforce recommended that Playcentre funding be cut, because it was run as a parent cooperative and did not routinely employ teachers. This was a major shock to the NZPF, as governments had been supportive of Playcentres since their beginnings in the 1940s. This support had continued when administration of the ECEC sector was restructured in 1989, although under the new policy regime funding for Playcentres decreased through a significant drop in enrolments. From 2002, policy for the sector became divided into initiatives for “teacher-led” and “parent-led” services, with the majority of policy development work and funding being allocated to the “teacher-led” services. Despite these changes, Playcentres and other parent cooperatives had never been formally excluded from the mainstream ECEC sector. This had the potential to change if the government was to accept the Taskforce’s recommendations for minimising support to Playcentres.

The entire NZPF mobilised in protest,³ and I was part of that protest. In response, the government made a statement that Playcentre funding would not be cut.⁴ I remember well the feelings of anger at the Taskforce’s recommendations, and my interest in how the protest was able to influence political outcomes. At that point, investigating social justice in an early childhood centre seemed no longer enough for my study. I was now interested in how to apply social justice principles to help

² Early Childhood Education Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children* (Ministry of Education, 2011), accessed March 5, 2015, <http://www.taskforce.ece.govt.nz/>.

³ Kate Dowling, “Playcentre Protest Picnic at Parliament,” *Playcentre Journal* 142 (2011).

⁴ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, “Playcentre Delighted that Minister Says No to Funding Cuts,” news release, August 4, 2011, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO1108/S00065/playcentre-delighted-that-minister-says-no-to-funding-cuts.htm>.

those who are marginalised in society, which became, in this case, those who chose active parenting through Playcentre. I wanted to find ways of ensuring the sustainability of Playcentre so that in the future parents could find the same level of support that I had received if they needed it, and have the same opportunity for transformation. Such a project would need to be informed by historical developments in both Playcentre and the wider ECEC policy field.

In the years I have devoted to this study, much has changed in politics and in Playcentre itself. Yet much remains the same, and my commitment to supporting parents as active educators of their children has not diminished. The study has given me an opportunity to explore contradictions and tensions in some of my dearly held principles. These include promoting the benefits of higher levels of teacher education within ECEC and simultaneously advocating for parent cooperatives to continue to rely on parents-as-educators; my understanding of the way both feminism and maternalism is expressed in Playcentre discourse; and daring to question the twin goals of ECEC policy in Aotearoa NZ, that of increasing participation and increasing quality. There are no simplistic resolutions for any of these contradictions, but the exploration has been a worthwhile endeavour and a learning experience. Whether my ideas will influence the policy environment remains to be seen. That is the next, as yet unwritten, chapter.

Chapter One: Playcentre and parents, history and policy

The twin foci for this thesis are Playcentre and parents; within Playcentre circles little attempt is made to separate them. In Playcentre discourse, what is considered beneficial for Playcentre is also considered beneficial for parents, and vice versa. Therefore, this study moves between focusing on policy effects on Playcentre and incorporating the effects on parents. The study also works with two interrelated methodological approaches, that of historical and policy analysis. The two approaches come together in Carol Bacchi's *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (WPR) methodological framework.¹ The core premise of Bacchi's methodology is that we are governed by the way policy problems are represented, and therefore, to create effective change, problem representations should be disrupted. Her framework guides the analysis through making the problem representations and their underlying discourses visible, tracing their history, and identifying those groups who benefit from the problem being represented in this way and those who are disadvantaged. The aim is to be able to suggest new policy based on different problem representations that will favour those currently disadvantaged. A commitment to social justice action therefore underlies both this framework and this study.

Playcentres are parent-cooperative early childhood education and care services that are based on the philosophy that parents are "the first and best educators of their children."² Much of current government social policy emphasises the role of parents as workers and providers for their families but does not emphasise their

¹ Carol Bacchi, *Women, Policy, and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999); Carol Bacchi, *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (Frenchs Forest, Australia: Pearson, 2009); Carol Bacchi and Susan Goodwin, *Poststructural Policy Analysis: A Guide to Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

² New Zealand Playcentre Federation, "Philosophy," accessed February 21, 2015, <http://www.playcentre.org.nz/philosophy.php>.

role as carers and educators. Yet the caring and educating roles of parents are both a privilege and a contribution to society. These roles are important for social cohesion and for the economy.³ However, even if support for families is seen as an important role for governments, the best way to do this a contested topic.

In recent decades, governments have taken increasing responsibility for the provision of ECEC in order to support families, predominantly because of a shift towards human capital theory (HCT) as a basis for policy making. According to HCT as it has been expressed since the 1990s, ECEC has the dual purposes of starting a child on the road to educational and economic success and of “freeing” parents from their childcare responsibilities in order to engage in paid employment. Government support has resulted in the increased availability of appropriate and affordable childcare, which has improved the quality and quantity of women’s life choices. Another consequence has been discursive pressure on parents not to prioritise caring for their children over paid employment, and less support for those who do choose the “hands-on” caring option. Playcentre is one institutional support for these parents, yet it is being progressively marginalised in the ECEC sector through the effects of changing policies that privilege non-parental care for young children.

This thesis explores ways of resisting this marginalisation. Both Helen May⁴ and Anne Meade⁵ offer similar analyses of the way advocacy for childcare has been successful: activism and resistance to make an issue visible as a problem, whilst simultaneously creating a message for change that can be accommodated within the current political discourses. Taking this approach, in this thesis I advocate for “hands-on” parenting and for Playcentre by making visible the issues that Playcentre has been facing, and by offering change messages based on alternative

³ OECD, *Doing Better for Families* (Paris: OECD, 2011).

⁴ Helen May, “‘Minding’, ‘Working’, ‘Teaching’: Childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1940s-2000s,” *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 8, no. 2 (2007), doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.2.133.

⁵ Anne Meade, “Women and Children Gain a Foot in the Door,” *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal* 6, no. 1/2 (1990).

problem representations which may be acceptable within the current political, economic and social context of ECEC.

The Playcentre story within the wider story of the history of the ECEC sector has not had much visibility. The decades of the 1990s and 2000s produced a large body of ECEC policy analysis in Aotearoa NZ, both contemporaneous⁶ and historical,⁷ mostly in response to the neoliberal restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s. Most of this literature discussed the impact of policy on the ECEC sector as a homogenous whole, although acknowledging the diversity of the sector. Yet from 2002, ECEC policy has been differentiated into “teacher-led” and “parent-led” categories, and this has meant the impact on Playcentres and other parent cooperatives has been different to other services in the sector. Further, whilst some historical analyses from the mid-twentieth century have dealt with Playcentre in detail,⁸ more recent policy literature has addressed the Playcentre experience briefly or not at all.⁹

⁶ E.g., Meade, “Foot in the Door”; Carmen Dalli, “Is Cinderella Back in the Cinders? A Review of Early Childhood Education in the Early 1990s,” *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 3 (1993); Carmen Dalli and Sarah Te One, “Early Childhood Education in 2002: Pathways to the Future,” *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 12 (2003); Brenda K. Bushouse, “The 20 Hours Free Early Childhood Education programme: A USA Perspective,” *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 18 (2009).

⁷ E.g., Helen May, “The Price of Partnership: The Before Five Decade,” *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 34, no. 1 (1999); Linda Mitchell, “Policy Shifts in Early Childhood Education: Past Lessons, New Directions,” in Codd, Sullivan, *Education Policy Directions in Aotearoa New Zealand*; Helen May, *Politics in the Playground: The World of Early Childhood in New Zealand*, Rev. ed (Dunedin, NZ: Otago University Press, 2009); Sandy Farquhar, “Early Childhood Care and Education: From Advocacy to Institution,” in *Ngā Kaupapa Here: Connections and Contradictions in Education*, ed. Vicki M. Carpenter (South Melbourne, Australia: Cengage Learning, 2008); Mere Skerrett, “Policy and Inhibitors of Bicultural/Bilingual Advancement,” in *Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, Pedagogy, and Liberation*, ed. Jenny Ritchie and Mere Skerrett (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Connect, 2013).

⁸ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Sue Stover, ed., *Good Clean Fun: New Zealand's Playcentre Movement* (Auckland, NZ: Playcentre Publications, 1998).

⁹ E.g., May, “Price of Partnership”; Dalli and Te One, “ECE in 2002”; Linda Mitchell, “Shifting Directions in ECEC Policy in New Zealand: From a Child Rights to an Interventionist Approach,” *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 2015, doi:10.1080/09669760.2015.1074557; Andrew Gibbons and Sandy Farquhar, “Mapping Policies and Pathways in Early Childhood Education: A Note from Aotearoa New Zealand,” *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education* 17 (2014).

Along with a focus on historical analysis, some authors have analysed ECEC policy using a specific lens such as children's rights¹⁰ or HCT.¹¹ In these analyses, the focus has not been on specific types of ECEC services, yet the discussion of the policy impacts has generally assumed a model of a "teacher-led" service as the norm. The absence of acknowledgement that the impacts might be different for other services, such as Playcentres or Ngā Kōhanga Reo (a Māori ECEC family cooperative service), assimilates the experience of these services into the ECEC sector as a whole and renders them invisible in the literature. This thesis counters this trend by detailing the unique impacts of ECEC policy on Playcentres in particular.

The aim of this study is to highlight and explain the historical shift in ECEC policies, from being supportive of Playcentres and the diversity of the ECEC sector in the late 1980s, to positioning Playcentres on the margins as "Other" in the ECE Taskforce report of 2011. This thesis therefore sits at the intersection of education, policy analysis and history. It is concerned with early childhood and adult education; with ECEC and social policy for supporting families. The thesis investigates the contemporary situation as well as recent history, and projects possible futures. The analysis identifies twin problem representations driving the direction of ECEC policy development, that of a lack of participation by families in ECEC and a lack of consistent quality in ECEC services. These problem representations are examined and critiqued, leading to policy suggestions that may sustain Playcentres as an option for supporting parents.

Summaries of how this thesis addresses these issues in each chapter are contained at the end of this chapter, and also in chapter 2 where the focus is on how each chapter fits within Bacchi's WPR framework. The next two sections, prior to outlining the structure, give some background information and context. First is an explanation of how and why specific words and terms have been used in this

¹⁰ Sarah Te One, "Children's Rights and Early Childhood Policy: Impacts and Influences," *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 14 (2005).

¹¹ Margaret Stuart, "A Trinity of Saviours - Parent, Teacher and Child: Human Capital Theory and Early Childhood Education in New Zealand," *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 38, no. 4 (2013).

thesis. This is followed by a brief outline of the history of Playcentre, and the other services which make up the ECEC sector in Aotearoa NZ.

Some words on language

This thesis has a focus on parents and parenting. I use *parents* and sometimes *families* or *whānau* as a short-hand term for the variety of adults who have active responsibility for children. This is common usage in Playcentres where all the adults are referred to as parents, although technically “parents” are only a subset of “families.” I use the term to encompass parents of any gender, parents who live together as a family or separately, and parents who are looking after their grandchildren; in Playcentres the term can also refer to a nanny or other caregiver who is an active participant in the life of the centre. The link is that these people all have responsibilities for their children beyond the boundaries of the ECEC service. I also acknowledge, however, that the majority of parents actively involved in Playcentres are, and have been, women; and the culture of Playcentre has been shaped through being predominantly a women’s organisation.

It is difficult to find language to describe the parents that Playcentre attracts without casting aspersions on parents who make different decisions for their families. In using terms like *active* or *hands-on* parenting, I do not wish to imply that parents who use full-time childcare are not actively parenting, or worse, that they do not care about their children. My intention for this thesis is to promote choice for parents to access support in multiple ways, not to restrict their options. My advocacy for hands-on parenting and for Playcentre is not to be read as opposition to other parenting choices or types of ECEC services.

The parents who choose Playcentre as an ECEC service share a common desire to be the primary caregivers of their children and to be involved in a large proportion of the children’s daily lives. This does not mean that Playcentre parents never leave their children to be cared for by someone else, or never share the parenting role with anyone. It does mean that these parents have generally made an active life choice to have a predominant focus on caring for and educating their children for at least the period of their lives when they are attending Playcentre.

One challenge for this thesis is to separate arguments that support Playcentre as an ECEC service from arguments for valuing the role of child-rearing as a major occupation of parents, as Playcentre parents so strongly identify with their parenting role. In Playcentre discourse, parenting and Playcentre are intertwined to the degree that such a separation is not generally attempted. Parent comments such as “[Playcentre] is about the right to have a real role in our children's education”¹² and “Playcentre's been a fantastic experience for not only me, but for our whole family. My husband and I have learnt new skills as parents”¹³ show the close relationship between personal parenting and collective educational effort in Playcentre. This thesis explores the tension between arguments in support of Playcentre as an ECEC service and in support of parents as carers and educators of their children. Data from Playcentre sources do not always make that distinction.

I use the phrase *early childhood education and care* (ECEC) to refer to the services which are for children who do not yet attend school, that is, from birth to the age of six. This phrase was specifically chosen to emphasise both the care and the education aspects of such services, and to resist the commonly used phrase *early childhood education* (ECE) that focuses only on education. In Aotearoa NZ, different terms have been used over the years. The 1947 Bailey Report¹⁴ and the 1971 Hill Report¹⁵ both referred to “pre-school education.” Feminist childcare campaigners in the 1970s promoted the message the care and education were inseparable in early childhood,¹⁶ and therefore the 1988 report *Education to be More*¹⁷ and subsequent *Before Five* policy document¹⁸ used the phrase *early*

¹² New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Funding Review and 20 Free Hours: Email Discussion, June 2004, Box 10, NZPF Archives, Hamilton.

¹³ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, *A Day in the Life of Playcentre/He Rā ki te Whare Tākaro* (2011), DVD, 6.00-6.10 min.

¹⁴ Consultative Committee on Pre-School Educational Services, *Pre-school Education: [The Bailey report]* (Wellington, NZ: Department of Education, 1947).

¹⁵ Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education: [The Hill report]* (Wellington, NZ: Department of Education, 1971).

¹⁶ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

¹⁷ Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group, *Education to be More: [The Meade report]* (Wellington, NZ: Department of Education, 1988).

¹⁸ Department of Education, *Before Five: Early Childhood Care and Education in New Zealand* (Wellington, NZ: Government Printer, 1988).

childhood care and education (ECCE). However, during the early 1990s the “care” part of this phrase fell into disuse as “education” was emphasised and the common terminology became “early childhood education.” The focus on education, in part, reflected the increasing professionalisation of ECEC teachers, and, in part, the growing emphasis on HCT as a rationale for government investment.¹⁹ In 2018, a variety of terms are being used, even within the Ministry of Education – ECE, ECEC, and *early learning*. I have chosen to reclaim the “care” aspect,²⁰ and emphasise the integration of care and education through using the term ECEC.

Another small resistance is the use of the term *parent cooperatives* in preference to the terminology of *parent-led* introduced by the Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education (SPECE).²¹ This is to avoid a direct comparison of parents-as-educators and teachers in different types of services, as the difference in approaches encompasses more than the difference in the pre-service training of the educators at the centre, or their employment status. The term *parent cooperative* emphasises the collective nature of Playcentre, which I have previously argued contributes to professionalism in the centres²² and to the effectiveness of the support for parents.²³

In this thesis I use the term *Aotearoa New Zealand*, which I shorten to Aotearoa NZ. I use this phrase to emphasise that this country was originally a Māori country,

¹⁹ Carmen Dalli, “Re-visioning Love and Care in Early Childhood: Constructing the Future of our Profession,” *The First Years: New Zealand Journal of Infant and Toddler Education: Ngā Tau Tautahi* 8, no. 1 (2006); Maggie Haggerty and Sophie Alcock, “The Changing Roles of Early Childhood Care and Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Shifting Policy Landscape,” *Global Studies of Childhood* 6, no. 1 (2016), doi:10.1177/2043610615625164; Andrea Delaune, “‘Investing’ in Early Childhood Education and Care in Aotearoa New Zealand: Noddings’ Ethics of Care and the Politics of Care within the Social Investment Approach to Governance,” *Global Studies of Childhood* 7, no. 4 (2017), doi:10.1177/2043610617747980.

²⁰ Dalli, “Re-visioning Love and Care”; Delaune, “Investing in ECEC.”

²¹ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki: A 10 year Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2002).

²² Maureen Woodhams and Suzanne Manning, “Playcentre as a Professional System: Quality Education through Working as a Collective,” *Early Education* 52 (2012).

²³ Junko Satoh and Suzanne Manning, “Breaking Out of the Child-Rearing Cell: Parental Outcomes from Participation in Japanese Playcentres,” *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education* 13 (2010).

and that *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* created the conditions for Māori and the British people to work in partnership to govern these islands. Although that vision has not been realised in practice, my commitment to this vision is indicated in a small way through my naming of this country as Aotearoa NZ.

Aotearoa NZ has a diverse range of peoples. I have tried to be consistent with the terms that I use to describe different cultural or ethnic groups, although the terminology in quotes may differ. Māori refers to the indigenous people of Aotearoa NZ, without differentiating by iwi (tribe). Pākehā refers to white New Zealanders, some of whose families have been here more than 150 years. Pasifika refers to people from any of the Pacific Islands, some of whom grew up in the country of their heritage and some whose families have been in Aotearoa NZ several generations. This group is being recognised as a significant minority population sharing similar characteristics despite being from diverse cultures.

The diversity of the ECEC sector in Aotearoa NZ

The time period for this study is approximately the late 1980s to 2017. During this period there was a diverse range of ECEC services, owned and operated by various community groups, individuals and businesses, and financially subsidised by the government. Some of these services were unique to Aotearoa NZ, and some had been adapted from international models. The following section gives a brief outline of these services in order to contextualise the study for those unfamiliar with the ECEC sector in this country.

Kindergartens began to be established in the late nineteenth century, based on the philosophy of Fredrich Froebel's kindergartens. Froebel's philosophy of care and education for young children included an emphasis on play, and the roles of mothers as children's first teachers. These ideas influenced not only the Kindergarten movement, but many other ECEC services as well. In Aotearoa NZ, Kindergarten associations developed to manage the centres, and the centres traditionally operated half-day sessions, in line with the philosophy of

complementing the home environment.²⁴ This practice was changed only in the late 2000s when government policy made it more sustainable to run one longer session each day.

Successive governments recognised and financially supported Kindergartens, with the first report on pre-school education in 1947²⁵ even recommending that Kindergartens be incorporated into the state schooling system and their teachers be paid by the government. The teachers did go onto the state sector payroll the following year, but incorporation into the state schooling system never eventuated due to a change of government. Kindergartens and the later Playcentres were the preferred model for pre-school education for several decades because they were considered to be education rather than care services. A second report in 1971 recommended that Kindergartens and Playcentres should remain in the voluntary sector but continue to be financially subsidised by the government, essentially recommending the status quo.²⁶ The next major review of ECEC was in 1988 as part of the government's neoliberal restructuring of the economy and public service. This review produced the *Before Five* reforms which brought all types of ECEC services together under a unified administration system (these reforms will be discussed in detail throughout this thesis).²⁷ At the time of these reforms, Kindergartens had the largest proportion of enrolments in the sector. As the reforms were implemented, overall ECEC enrolments increased but the Kindergarten share of enrolments decreased (see figure 1, p. 19).

Kindergartens employed trained teachers to run their sessions, as it was a principle of the service that all the teachers should be properly trained. Parents

²⁴ For more reading on the history of kindergartens in Aotearoa NZ, see May, *Politics in the Playground*; Helen May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*, 2nd ed. (Wellington, NZ: NZCER Press, 2013); Kerry Bethell, "'Not [Just] For A Name That We Plead': Fashioning the Ideological Origins of Early Kindergarten in Dunedin and Wellington, 1870-1913" (PhD, Victoria University of Wellington, 2008), <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/xmlui/handle/10063/6546>; Judith Duncan, "Restructuring Lives: Kindergarten Teachers and the Education Reforms 1984-1996" (PhD, Otago University, 2001), <https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/handle/10523/594>.

²⁵ Consultative Committee on Pre-School Educational Services, *Bailey report*.

²⁶ Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education, *Hill report*.

²⁷ Department of Education, *Before Five*.

were involved in helping on some sessions and fundraising ventures, which helped minimise the voluntary donation. Teachers were trained in Kindergarten colleges, which were incorporated into the teachers' colleges in the 1970s and became part of the university sector by the turn of the century. The Kindergarten diploma became a generic ECEC diploma in 1988, training teachers for both Kindergartens and childcare centres.

Playcentres are parent cooperatives that started in 1941 as a response to women raising their young children on their own while the men were away at war.²⁸ The women who founded Playcentre were well educated and aware of Progressive Education ideas of learning through play, observation as a learning tool and the importance of child development knowledge. These ideas became incorporated into the Playcentre philosophy and practice. Local Playcentres cooperated together through Playcentre associations, and in 1948 the associations came together to form a federation (the NZPF). Like Kindergartens, Playcentres ran half-day sessions and positioned themselves as education, not care, services, and so were viewed as acceptable for government support in the post-war period.²⁹

From the 1950s to 1980s the government supported Playcentres financially, although not to the same degree as Kindergartens; and therefore fundraising was an essential part of the work of Playcentre parents along with general management of centres. The *Before Five* changes in 1989 meant that Playcentres in general received more money, yet this was accompanied by a greater workload in terms of accountability and reporting. Participation in Playcentres peaked in the 1970s,³⁰ although in 1990 it was still the third biggest provider of ECEC (see figure 1, p. 19). Enrolments continued to decline dramatically after 1990.

²⁸ For more reading on the history of Playcentre, see Stover, *Good Clean Fun*; Sue Stover, "Play's Progress? Locating Play in the Educationalisation of Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand" (PhD, Auckland University of Technology, 2011); May, *Politics in the Playground*; Manning, "Democracy meets Rangatiratanga"; Ailsa Densem and Barbara Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*, Rev. ed (Auckland, NZ: New Zealand Playcentre Federation, 2000).

²⁹ Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education, *Hill report*.

³⁰ Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

The initial operating model was that the parents contributed some money to pay for a supervisor, hall hire and equipment. The costs were kept down by parents taking turns to help the supervisor with running the sessions. This original model continued in some parts of the country, while other Playcentres moved to forms of group supervision from the 1960s, partly because of practicality and partly because of an evolving interpretation of the philosophy of shared responsibility. This included whole-group supervision, where all parents stayed for every session and shared the responsibility for running the sessions, and team supervision, where parents were rostered onto a team once or twice a week.³¹ In all models the focus was on parents-as-educators of the children, and distributed leadership. These forms of group supervision were challenged when the *Before Five* reforms of the late 1980s sought to set standards for staff qualifications.

An education system for the adults developed along with the Playcentres, with the first lectures being given in Wellington in 1945.³² This field-based training programme served a dual purpose of educating parents in child development, and training supervisors. The government supported this programme with a small training grant. At the time of the *Before Five* changes for ECEC, the administration of tertiary education was also restructured. The NZPF opted to become an approved tertiary provider to ensure continuity of the adult education programme, and the programme became nationally standardised in order to be approved as a recognised qualification. The NZPF and its affiliated Playcentres therefore became subject to regulation and accountability as providers of both ECEC and tertiary education.

Childcare services were offered from the late nineteenth century, and took a variety of forms such as informal care, “baby farming” services where a woman looked after a number of infants and toddlers, nursery schools and crèches.³³

³¹ Suzanne Manning, Maureen Woodhams, and Shelley Howsan, “Emergent Leadership in Playcentre,” *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice* 26, no. 2 (2011).

³² Sue Stover, “The Debate Continues: Adult Education in Playcentre,” in Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

³³ For more reading on the history of childcare in Aotearoa NZ, see May, *Politics in the Playground*; May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*; Helen May, *Concerning Women*

Most charged fees, although those services set up by philanthropic organisations were generally more affordable. Since childcare was offered so mothers could undertake work or other activities, services mostly operated for full working days.

Childcare services grew markedly after World War II with the increased number of young children due to the post-war baby boom.³⁴ They were not regulated until 1960 and did not receive any direct financial support from the government until 1983. Responsibility for the administration of childcare was originally with the Department of Education, but moved to the new Department of Social Welfare in 1972 and then back to the Department of Education in 1986.³⁵ Final integration into the ECEC sector for childcare came with the *Before Five* reforms of 1989. Government support made possible the rapid expansion of childcare services and increased use of these services due to availability and affordability, as well as a societal shift in the attitudes towards women in paid employment. Figure 1 (p. 19) highlights the exponential growth of childcare services since 1990.

Childcare services employ staff to run the service, and while parents are not required to help out in the centres, they may be involved in various support activities depending on the nature of the centre ownership. Training for childcare workers was introduced in the 1970s with shorter courses than the Kindergarten diploma as it was not considered necessary for care staff to be as highly trained as education staff. In 1988, these various qualifications were integrated into a new three-year diploma to equip teachers to work in any type of ECEC service.³⁶ Prior to the *Before Five* reforms, there was no requirement to employ any trained staff; in 2018 the requirement is for 50% of staff in childcare services to hold an ECEC diploma or degree.³⁷

Considering Children: Battles of the Childcare Association 1963-2003 (Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Childcare Association, 2003).

³⁴ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

³⁵ Anne Meade and Valerie N. Podmore, *Early Childhood Education Policy Co-ordination under the Auspices of the Department/Ministry of Education: A Case Study of New Zealand*. (UNESCO Pub., 2002), <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED468561.pdf>.

³⁶ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

³⁷ Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, New Zealand Government, <http://legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/whole.html#DLM1412501>.

Te Kōhanga Reo was started in 1984 as a Māori initiative, with the purpose of revitalising the Māori language and culture through ECEC.³⁸ The centres were based on kaupapa Māori (Māori ways of living and acting) and included babies as well as older children. The usual hours of operation (generally 9 am – 3 pm weekdays) were longer than sessional services and less than full-time care. The centres therefore crossed the boundaries that existed at that time between the other services. Some of the founders of Te Kōhanga Reo had been previously associated with Playcentres, so it is probably not surprising that there were similarities in operation. Te Kōhanga Reo operated as parent and whānau (family) cooperatives, focused on educating the adults alongside the children; an umbrella organisation, Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (TKRNT), was formed to support the centres.

Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust received some minimal funding through the Department of Māori Affairs until the *Before Five* reforms, when the organisation became an official part of the ECEC sector and received Ministry of Education money as well. Ngā Kōhanga Reo grew exponentially during the 1980s; however, enrolments have decreased since then. Originally Ngā Kōhanga Reo were the only Māori immersion option available, but from the 1990s other immersion services developed which generally operate as teacher-led, full-day services.

The kaiako (teachers) in Te Kōhanga Reo, particularly in its early years, were often older people who could speak the language, and they were supported in this role by parent and whānau helpers. Similar to Playcentre, TKRNT developed its own field-based training programme for those who had lead-pedagogical roles in the centres, based on kaupapa Māori. Likewise, TKRNT had to become an accredited tertiary education provider in order for the training programme to become a recognised qualification for funding purposes, after the reforms of 1989.

³⁸ For more reading on the history of Kōhanga Reo, see May, *Politics in the Playground*; Jenny Ritchie and Mere Skerrett, *Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, Pedagogy, and Liberation* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Connect, 2013); Waitangi Tribunal, *Matua Rautia: Report on the Kōhanga Reo Claim, Wai 2335* (2012), accessed October 18, 2012, <http://www.justice.govt.nz/tribunals/waitangi-tribunal/Reports/wai-2336-the-kohanga-reo-claim>.

Pasifika centres were set up from the 1970s as a way of supporting the increasing population of migrant Pasifika families to bring their children up in the language and culture of their ancestry.³⁹ Many of these groups were set up and supported by churches, were sessional and relatively informal. After the *Before Five* reforms, these centres were funded as unlicensed playgroups unless they could meet the requirements for licensing as an ECEC centre. The major barrier in meeting licensing requirements was being able to attract (and pay for) ECEC teachers who were both qualified in ECEC and knowledgeable in the language and culture of that particular centre, so the rate of licensing amongst Pasifika centres was less than it was for English language centres.⁴⁰

Family day care services, also called **home-based care**, refers to services where caregivers look after children in the caregiver's home.⁴¹ Such services developed from the 1970s, with Barnardos being the major provider organisation. The services were an alternative to centre-based services, for those families who preferred a smaller, more home-like environment for their children, or needed more flexible hours than a centre could give. Many family day care services became licensed after the *Before Five* reforms and therefore accessed government ECEC subsidies. These services enrol a small proportion of children in ECEC overall, but in recent years have had rapid enrolment growth (see figure 1, p. 19).

The caregivers in family day care services were not – and are not - required to have formal qualifications, but have always been supported by the coordinating

³⁹ For more reading on the history of Pacific Island centres, see May, *Politics in the Playground*; Eve Coxon et al., *Literature Review on Pacific Education Issues: Report to the Ministry of Education* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2002); Linda Mitchell et al., *Investigating Quality Learning Experiences in Parent and Whānau-led Early Childhood Services: Background report* (Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2005).

⁴⁰ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁴¹ For more reading on the history of Family day care in Aotearoa NZ, see May, *Politics in the Playground*; Elizabeth A. Everiss, *Bringing It Back To Mind: Two Decades of Family Day Care Development in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Occasional paper no. 5 (Wellington, NZ: Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1999); Anne B. Smith, "Can Home-Based Care Offer High Quality Early Childhood Education?," *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 50, no. 1 (2015), doi:10.1007/s40841-015-0009-9.

service. This usually takes the form of some training sessions, organised playgroups and visits from coordinators who monitor documentation, give advice, and provide equipment. Current regulations state that family day care service coordinators must be qualified and registered teachers.⁴²

Although this mix of ECEC services has stayed fairly constant in the last few decades, the proportion of children enrolled in each service has changed. The overall trend for ECEC has been one of exponential growth, but this has not been spread evenly amongst the services (see figure 1). Playcentre and Te Kōhanga Reo have experienced a drop in the total number of enrolments as well as the proportion of the sector enrolments. Note that education and care services include services with particular philosophies, for example Māori immersion services not affiliated to TKRNT, Pasifika centres, Steiner centres and Montessori centres.

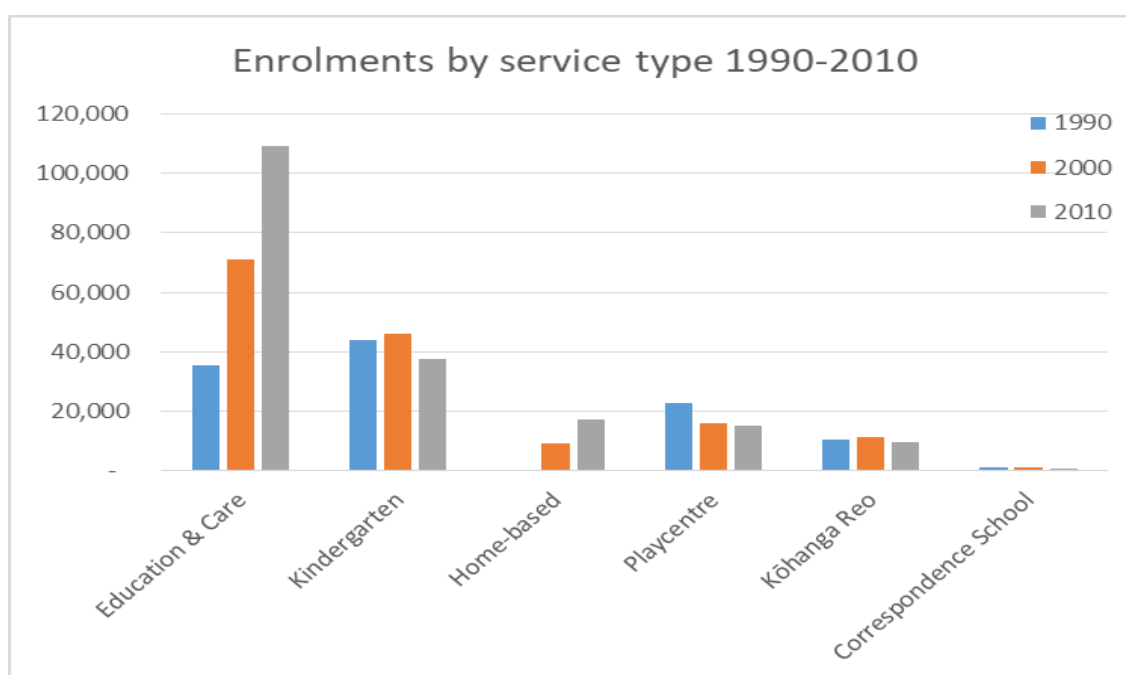


Figure 1. Enrolments by service type 1990-2010. From Ministry of Education data (Education Statistics of NZ for 1990; Enrolments-in-ECE 2000-15).

⁴² *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008.*

The greatest growth in enrolments has been in services that do not require a commitment to voluntary labour by parents, and this was enabled by government financial support that allowed childcare fees to be affordable for more families. The services that continued to offer part-day provision, such as Kindergartens, or continued to require parental commitment as in the case of parent cooperatives, decreased or simply maintained enrolments, which impacted on their long-term sustainability. Yet the diversity of services has been described as a strength of the sector by government working parties⁴³ and other authors.⁴⁴ Most of the services have been home-grown initiatives,⁴⁵ developed to suit a local need, and those services such as Kindergartens that have been modelled on international movements have had extensive modification to the local context. Government policy since the 1980s has tried to accommodate this diversity. Yet increasingly, under the influence of the neoliberal theoretical perspective of HCT, policy has sought to standardise, measure and control ECEC services in a way that has led to pressure for homogenisation of the services.⁴⁶

Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is based around the methodology of Bacchi's WPR approach to policy analysis.⁴⁷ This section gives a broad overview of that structure.

⁴³ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*; ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*; Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*.

⁴⁴ Carmen Dalli, "Towards the Emergence of a Critical Ecology of the Early Childhood Profession in New Zealand," *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 11, no. 1 (2010), doi:10.2304/ciec.2010.11.1.61; Anne Meade, Submission to ECE Taskforce, January 30, 2011, Anne Smith's papers, r7628 6/9, Hocken Collections; May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁴⁵ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁴⁶ Suzanne Manning, "The Early Childhood Education Taskforce and Playcentre Parent Cooperatives: A Mismatch of Policy Discourses," *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* in press (2018); Mere Skerrett in *Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand*; Andrew Gibbons, "In the Pursuit of Unhappiness: The 'Measuring Up' of Early Childhood Education in a Seamless System," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 45, no. 5 (2013), doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2012.00855.x.

⁴⁷ Bacchi, *Women, Policy, and Politics*; Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Bacchi and Goodwin, *Poststructural Policy Analysis*.

The first three chapters are introductory. **Chapter 1** introduces the objective of the thesis, explains the rationale for the specific terminology being used, and gives some context for the ECEC sector in Aotearoa NZ. The methodology and research process are outlined in chapters 2 and 3. **Chapter 2** discusses approaches to policy analysis and presents a rationale for the WPR approach. The WPR approach and the questions Bacchi suggests for guiding the analysis are described, and then matched to specific chapters in the thesis. **Chapter 3** deals with other aspects of the research process, including ethical considerations and my positioning with Playcentre and within the research.

Chapter 4 is the first of the WPR approach chapters, and therefore starts with the policy text that has been chosen as the entry point for this study: the 2011 ECE Taskforce report, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*.⁴⁸ The author and the report will hereafter be referred to as the Taskforce, and the Taskforce report.⁴⁹ The problem representations in the Taskforce report are identified as a lack of participation in ECEC, and the variable and often substandard minimum quality of ECEC services. The assumptions underlying these problem representations are discussed, including concepts and categories and binaries. HCT as a rationality of government is identified as underpinning the majority of these assumptions.

Chapters 5 and 6 trace how HCT has come to dominate ECEC policy discourse, both in Aotearoa NZ and globally. **Chapter 5** is an overview of the political, economic and educational history of most of the twentieth century, encompassing the origins of HCT. One of the purposes of tracing the rise to dominance of HCT is to recover other discourses that have contributed to ECEC policy, and at the same highlight the gaps and silences in current ECEC policy.

Chapter 6 then looks in more detail at the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. This chapter introduces the major ECEC policies and associated policy documents that are examined in

⁴⁸ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*.

⁴⁹ I do not use the term 'ECE Taskforce' in the text as my preference in this thesis is to use the term 'ECEC', and this could lead to a confusion of terminology.

this thesis. The first is the committee report *Education to be More*,⁵⁰ also known as the Meade Report after its chair, and the subsequent government policy, *Before Five*.⁵¹ These two documents were the blueprints for the ECEC reforms, part of the education administration system restructuring in the late 1980s. The second major policy document is the ten-year Strategic Plan for Early Childhood (SPECE), *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, which was intended to run from 2002-12.⁵² The third is the *20 Hours Free ECE* funding policy announced in 2004 and implemented in 2007 for all services, excluding Playcentres and other parent cooperatives.⁵³ These policies have been selected for this study because of their differential impact on Playcentres compared to other ECEC services.

Chapters 7 and 8 examine the impact on Playcentres of the two major policy problem representations of participation and quality respectively. These two chapters present the main historical and archival research of this study, with narratives of the time period between the educational reforms of the late 1980s to the 2011 Taskforce report, from a Playcentre perspective. The focus is on the impact on Playcentres in general, and the reactions, resistances and accommodations that Playcentres and the NZPF made in response. Threaded through these stories is the effect of the growing dominance of HCT and how government policy changed accordingly.

Chapter 9 is a synopsis of ECEC policy since the 2011 Taskforce report until the change of government in 2017. The purpose of this summary is to show that the problem representations contained in the Taskforce report have continued to drive ECEC policy, and Playcentre has continued to be marginalised by this policy.

Producing social change, premised on principles of social justice, is at the heart of a WPR analysis. **Chapter 10** takes up this challenge, and suggests two policy alternatives that could potentially be more beneficial for Playcentres in the future

⁵⁰ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*.

⁵¹ Department of Education, *Before Five*.

⁵² Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*.

⁵³ Helen May, Early Childhood Education Government Funding Papers (ii), 2003-2004, MS-Papers-10796-52, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington; Dalli, "Critical Ecology."

than the current policy. These proposals are then examined for their own problem representations and assumptions, in accordance with the WPR framework.

The concluding **chapter 11** looks both to the past and to the future. The analysis presented in the preceding chapters is summarised, highlighting the influence of HCT, the effects of policy based on individualism applied to a cooperative ECEC service, and the theme of accommodation and resistance to policy. The final reflection is on how the policy proposals of chapter 9 might be received and the next steps for this work.

Chapter Two: Policy and analysis

Conceptual clarity around definitions of policy and policy analysis is a necessary precursor to a study on the impacts of policy. *Policy* is an amorphous concept which means different things to different people. It encompasses individual, organisational and governmental levels of operation, and complex processes of development and implementation. Conceptual models of policy and the policy process are therefore discussed in the first section of this chapter, and related to the definitions used in this thesis.

Approaches to analysing policy are as numerous as policy definitions. The second section of the chapter outlines some of these approaches, and evaluates them for the purposes of this study. The third section then discusses the criteria used for choosing a policy analysis framework for this study, which includes an agenda for social justice and creating social change. These criteria and an evaluation of policy analysis approaches led to the decision to use Bacchi's WPR approach for this thesis.¹ The final section of this chapter describes the WPR approach in more detail, including the six guiding questions that structure the approach (see also Appendix I). It outlines how the six WPR questions are addressed throughout this thesis, with a particular focus on methodological issues encountered during the research.

Defining policy and the policy process

This study is concerned specifically with government policy. Such policy can be broadly defined as the outcome of a problem-solving process and as the basic work of government.² Policy developers have the job of being "practical dreamers,"³ who must detail how to achieve desired outcomes within the

¹ Bacchi, *Women, Policy, and Politics*; Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Bacchi and Goodwin, *Poststructural Policy Analysis*.

² David Adams, H. K. Colebatch, and Christopher K. Walker, "Learning about Learning: Discovering the Work of Policy," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 74, no. 2 (2015), doi:10.1111/1467-8500.12119; Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Sandra Taylor et al., *Educational Policy and the Politics of Change* (London: Routledge, 1997).

³ This was the term used by a Ministry of Education policy advisor when he spoke to our Masters of Education policy class in 2004.

framework of the current government's strategic direction as well as balancing the tensions between social, economic and political objectives. In a Foucauldian sense, policy is a technology of government that is used to regulate the population.⁴ These are some of the things policy does, but do not define what policy is.

Stephen Ball proposed that policy should be considered as both a product and a process.⁵ The product can be a generic policy, such as a target to reduce child poverty; a specific document, such as a government working party report or a document outlining government decisions; or a programme of work. Using a policy-as-text⁶ approach, these documents can be analysed by deconstructing the language, illustrations or other textual features.⁷ The product of policy can also be analysed with a policy-as-discourse⁸ approach, taking into consideration the way language and underpinning knowledges produce certain ways of thinking about problems and how this enables and constrains practices.⁹ In both cases,

⁴ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Peter Bansel, "The Subject of Policy," *Critical Studies in Education* 56, no. 1 (2014), doi:10.1080/17508487.2015.971839; Taylor et al., *Educational Policy and the Politics of Change*.

⁵ Stephen J. Ball, "What is Policy? Texts, Trajectories and Toolboxes," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 13, no. 2 (1993), doi:10.1080/0159630930130203; Les Bell and Howard Stevenson, *Education Policy: Process, Themes and Impact* (London: Routledge, 2006); Sandy Farquhar and Peter Fitzsimons, "Seeing Through the Metaphor: The OECD Toolbox for Early Childhood," *Semiotica* 2016, no. 212 (2016), doi:10.1515/sem-2016-0134.

⁶ Ball, "What is Policy?"

⁷ E.g., Sophie Alcock and Maggie Haggerty, "Recent Policy Developments and the 'Schoolification' of Early Childhood Care and Education in Aotearoa New Zealand," *Early Childhood Folio* 17, no. 2 (2013); Jenny Ritchie, "Nga Tikanga a ngā Mokopuna: Crises in Early Childhood Education Policy in Aotearoa New Zealand," in *Children in Crisis Conference*, ed. Unitec Research Bank (2013), <http://unitec.researchbank.ac.nz/handle/10652/2824>.

⁸ Ball, "What is Policy?."

⁹ E.g., Ella Kahu and Mandy Morgan, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of New Zealand Government Policy: Women as Mothers and Workers," *Women's Studies International Forum* 30, no. 2 (2007), doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2007.01.003; Suzanne Manning, "Blocks are Educational: Revealing Discourses through Early Childhood Policy Illustrations," *History of Education* 47, no. 2 (2018), doi:10.1080/0046760X.2017.1420245; Rianne Mahon, "The OECD's Discourse on the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life," *Global Social Policy* 9, no. 2 (2009), doi:10.1177/1468018109104625.

authors warn that analysis must take into consideration the context in which the policy has been produced.¹⁰

Critical discourse analysis can be applied to policy texts. This type of analysis, in common with other critical scholarship, is unapologetically political and has the aim of disrupting the status quo to benefit those who are already disadvantaged.¹¹ With a discourse approach to analysis, the language of policy texts is not seen to simply describe solutions to selected social problems, but actively constructs those problems. Any attempt to disrupt problem constructions would necessarily entail an analysis of discourses. This is the view underpinning this thesis, that problems are social constructed through policy and therefore critical discourse analysis is presented as an appropriate approach to question policy that disadvantages Playcentres.

Policy processes have been described in a variety of ways. A policy process description usually contains stages of problem definition, policy development, and policy implementation. Prior to the 1990s, this was generally conceived of as a linear and straightforward process that could be analysed from an objective and value-neutral standpoint.¹² Such a view was underpinned by a positivist approach to problem solving. Some recent theorists have presented a more complex view of the policy process, one that is organic, messy and political.¹³ The global,

¹⁰ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Ball, "What is Policy?"; Bell and Stevenson, *Education Policy*; Taylor et al., *Politics of Change*; P. Taylor Webb and Kalervo N. Gulson, "Policy Scientificity 3.0: Theory and Policy Analysis In-and-For This World and Other-Worlds," *Critical Studies in Education* 56, no. 1 (2014), doi:10.1080/17508487.2014.949812.

¹¹ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Terry Locke, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum, 2004); Rebecca Rogers, "An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education," in *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*, ed. Rebecca Rogers (Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 2004), 1–18.

¹² Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Ball, "What is Policy?"; Bell and Stevenson, *Education Policy*; Taylor et al., *Politics of Change*; Webb and Gulson, "Policy Scientificity 3.0."

¹³ E.g., Bell and Stevenson, *Education Policy*; Sandra Taylor, "Critical Policy Analysis: Exploring Contexts, Texts and Consequences," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 18, no. 1 (2006), doi:10.1080/0159630970180102; David Philips, "The Policy Process and Policy on Policy-Making," in Codd, Sullivan, *Education Policy Directions in Aotearoa New Zealand*; Mark Olssen, John A. Codd and Anne-Marie O'Neill, *Education Policy: Globalization, Citizenship and Democracy* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006); Meg Maguire, Annette Braun, and Stephen Ball, "'Where You Stand Depends On Where You Sit': The Social Construction of Policy Enactments in the (English) Secondary

national and local contexts all influence the policy process in profound ways, while still leaving room for human agency at different points of the process.¹⁴ Researchers have foregrounded different agents of the policy process for analysis, such as the perspectives of policy makers,¹⁵ the subjects of policy,¹⁶ or the actors at the sites of dissemination, implementation or enactment of policy.¹⁷

The policy analysis framework for this thesis was required to support the wider project of understanding and applying the processes of change for social justice. There are some examples of past advocacy that have been successful in changing government's ECEC policies, which give some guidance on criteria to include in choosing a framework. Helen May described ECEC policy developments in Aotearoa NZ during the twentieth century as being guided by differing political "gazes" or perspectives.¹⁸ These gazes affected how policy makers viewed ECEC policy problems, and these gazes changed over the course of the century. Initially policy makers had a physical gaze, then moved to a psychological, equity, and then economic gaze, depending on the dominant government discourses of the time. Advocates for policy change had more chance of being successful, May

School," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36, no. 4 (2015), doi:10.1080/01596306.2014.977022.

¹⁴ Taylor et al., *Politics of Change*.

¹⁵ Adams, Colebatch and Walker; Kathryn Bown, "Insider Perspectives on Influence and Decision Making in the Australian Political Sphere: A Case Study of National Quality Policy in ECEC 2006–09," *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 39, no. 4 (2014).

¹⁶ Bansel, "Subject of Policy"; Judith Duncan, "Misplacing the Teacher? New Zealand Early Childhood Teachers and Early Childhood Education Policy Reforms, 1984–96," *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 5, no. 2 (2004), doi:10.2304/ciec.2004.5.2.4; Martin Galvin and Geraldine Mooney Simmie, "Theorising Participation in Urban Regeneration Partnerships: An Adult Education Perspective," *Journal of Education Policy* 32, no. 6 (2017), doi:10.1080/02680939.2017.1320731.

¹⁷ Sølvi Mausethagen and Lise Granlund, "Contested Discourses of Teacher Professionalism: Current Tensions between Education Policy and Teachers' Union," *Journal of Education Policy* 27, no. 6 (2012), doi:10.1080/02680939.2012.672656; Donald Simpson, Eunice Lumsden, and Rory McDowall Clark, "Neoliberalism, Global Poverty Policy and Early Childhood Education and Care: A Critique of Local Uptake in England," *Early Years* 35, no. 1 (2014), doi:10.1080/09575146.2014.969199; Parlo Singh, "Performativity and Pedagogising Knowledge: Globalising Educational Policy Formation, Dissemination and Enactment," *Journal of Education Policy* 30, no. 3 (2014), doi:10.1080/02680939.2014.961968.

¹⁸ May, "Minding, Working, Teaching"; May, *Politics in the Playground*.

argued, if their goals and language matched the political gaze that was dominant at the time.¹⁹

Anne Meade, reflecting on the change that occurred with the *Before Five* reforms, had a similar view.²⁰ She argued that amongst the arguments advanced for better support for childcare, it was mainly the education arguments which were successful, as these were the issues the policy makers were interested in at that time. Meade also proposed that the crucial first step had been to get ECEC onto the government's agenda, which illustrated the power inherent in being able to define the problem that is to be addressed.²¹

Defining the problems of policy is not just about getting attention for a particular issue. It is also concerned with how that problem is framed.²² The framing of a problem (as with May's political gazes) affects how the problem is understood and therefore what solutions are judged to be suitable.²³ Leon Benade described the purpose of policy generally as maintaining a way of living or a strategic direction.²⁴ To change the strategic direction, and create real and sustained change in the material effects of policy, the framing of the problem needs to be disrupted. As social change was an objective for this study, an appropriate analysis framework needed to include a focus on defining and framing the problem(s) constructed within policy.

¹⁹ May, "Minding, Working, Teaching."

²⁰ Meade "Foot in the Door."

²¹ Mathias Urban, "From 'Closing the Gap' to an Ethics of Affirmation: Reconceptualising the Role of Early Childhood Services in Times of Uncertainty," *European Journal of Education* 50, no. 3 (2015), doi:10.1111/ejed.12131; Michael Mintrom and Phillipa Norman, "Participating in Agenda Setting," in Miller, *New Zealand Government & Politics*.

²² Mintrom and Norman, "Participating in Agenda Setting".

²³ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*; Ball, "What is Policy?"; Bell and Stevenson, *Education Policy*; Taylor et al., *Politics of Change*.

²⁴ Leon Benade, "The New Zealand Draft Curriculum 2006: A Policy Case Study with Specific Reference to its Understanding of Teaching as an Ethical Profession," *Policy Futures in Education* 7, no. 1 (2009), doi:10.2304/pfie.2009.7.1.5.

Analysing policy

Les Bell and Howard Stevenson classified policy studies in education as taking three general forms: developing analytic models of the policy process, analysing a range of related policies, or critiquing specific policies.²⁵ In their opinion, these types of studies often did not have a rigorous framework for their analysis. They proposed a framework for analysing policy development that included consideration of the socio-political environment, strategic direction, organisational principles, and operational practice and procedures. An example of the use of this framework in an Aotearoa NZ context was Benade's critique of the Draft NZ School Curriculum.²⁶ He used Bell and Stevenson's framework to good effect to highlight the conception of teachers contained in the Draft Curriculum, which was silent on the topic of teaching as a moral or ethical profession. This example shows how policy analysis can be used to address social justice questions, and not just technical questions on the effectiveness of a particular policy.

A different model categorises policy studies as either *analysis for policy* or *analysis of policy*.²⁷ Analysis for policy can be seen as the work of people such as ministry policy advisors, or advocates within the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector who wish to influence future policy. An example of this would be the report produced 1996 by the Early Childhood Education Project, titled *Future Directions*.²⁸ The purpose of that project was to influence the government to make changes to ECEC policy, by presenting an analysis of current policy and recommending future policy. The project was successful in the long term, as the incoming Labour-led government in 1999 implemented some of the recommendations contained in the report. Analysis of policy includes evaluation and monitoring studies, as well as academic critiques. There are many examples of these types of studies, for example the Ministry of Education-funded evaluation

²⁵ Bell and Stevenson, *Education Policy*.

²⁶ Benade, "NZ Draft Curriculum 2006."

²⁷ Bell and Stevenson, *Education Policy*; Taylor et al., *Politics of Change*.

²⁸ Early Childhood Education Project, *Future Directions: Early Childhood Education in New Zealand* (Wellington, NZ: NZEI, 1996).

of the initial uses of the equity funding which had been introduced in 2002,²⁹ and Sue Cherrington's recent critique of the changes in policies for ECEC professional learning and development.³⁰ These two alternatives, analysis-for and analysis-of policy, overlap in many studies including in the examples given above. The alternatives are perhaps better conceptualised as poles of a continuum rather than discrete categories, with different types of policy analyses being situated at different points along the continuum, as suggested by Taylor et al.³¹

The aim of this thesis was to both analyse the historical impacts of policy, and provide recommendations for future policy. Categorising the study as either analysis-of or analysis-for policy was not appropriate: it was both. On a continuum, the importance of this study might be placed at the mid-way point, as both aspects are equally important.

Over recent decades there has been a trend away from studies about the intention of policy development, towards studies which analyse the impact of policy.³² These impact studies recognise that there are many variables that influence how policy is implemented which can affect how the results of policy are experienced. Sandra Taylor proposed a simple framework for policy analysis that consisted of context-text-consequences.³³ Focusing on consequences can emphasise that analysing impact is broader than analysing implementation. However, analyses of both the intentions and impact of policy development sometimes coalesce in studies that reveal the unintended consequences of particular policies.³⁴ In studies

²⁹ Linda Mitchell et al., *An Evaluation of Initial Uses and Impact of Equity Funding* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2006).

³⁰ Sue Cherrington, "Professional Learning and Development in Early Childhood Education: A Shifting Landscape of Policies and Practice," *The New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 22 (2017), doi:10.26686/nzaroe.v22i0.4148.

³¹ Taylor et al., *Politics of Change*.

³² E.g., Barry Bull, "Policy Implications of Social Justice in Education," *Ethics and Education* 4, no. 2 (2009), doi:10.1080/17449640903326771; Duncan, "Restructuring Lives"; Mitchell, "Shifting Directions"; Andrew Morrison, "Impact of 20 Hours ECE on Playcentres," Ministry of Education, <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/31099/2>.

³³ Taylor, *Critical Policy Analysis*; Taylor et al., *Politics of Change*.

³⁴ Sue Stover, "Odd Alliances: Working Theories on 'Unintended Consequences' of Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa, New Zealand," *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 38, no. 3 (2013); Frances O'Connell Rust, "Counting the Cost of Caring: Intended and

of the impact of policy, the analyses move beyond being exercises in theoretical reasoning, and look at the reality of people's lives. This is an important aspect of studies which advocate for social justice change.

An example of a policy impact study is Australian research by Helen Logan, Jennifer Sumsion and Frances Press,³⁵ which analysed the longer-term effects of the Australian Child Care Act 1972. In particular, the discursive effects on the ECEC sector, teachers and children were examined. They found that the implementation of the Act exacerbated the pre-existing divide between educational preschool services and childcare services, to the detriment of the childcare system and the teachers who worked in them. A further policy impact study example is Lisa Loutzenheiser's Canadian study of two school board policies "which address the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and transgender, Two Spirit (LGBQ and TT) youth to demonstrate how the language of the policy holds meaning and re/produces particular knowledges."³⁶ The article drew on a wider research project where the author was working with LGBTQ+ youth. Loutzenheiser concluded that the identities of the youth are more complex than the identities that the policies construct for them. This had limiting effects on the youth that the policies were designed to empower. She suggested that queer theory could be used to develop policies that would result in more beneficial impacts for LGBTQ+ youth in Canadian schools.

Policy analysis should be systematic and academically rigorous to effectively inform and persuade policy makers. Given that part of the motivation for this study was a sense of injustice at the way Playcentre was being treated in policy, a way had to be found of acknowledging such feelings but still approaching the

Unintended Consequences of Early Childhood Policies," in *Major Trends and Issues in Early Childhood Education: Challenges, Controversies, and Insights*, ed. Joan P. Isenberg and Mary R. Jalongo, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003), 153–63.

³⁵ Helen Logan, Jennifer Sumsion, and Frances Press, "The Child Care Act 1972: A Critical Juncture in Australian ECEC and the Emergence of 'Quality'," *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 38, no. 4 (2013).

³⁶ Lisa W. Loutzenheiser, "'Who Are You Calling a Problem?': Addressing Transphobia and Homophobia through School Policy," *Critical Studies in Education* 56, no. 1 (2014): 99, doi:10.1080/17508487.2015.990473.

analysis in an academically rigorous way. Absolute objectivity was neither possible nor desirable for this study, as will be discussed in chapter 3. A structured framework for analysis, as recommended by Bell and Stevenson,³⁷ was a useful tool to achieve some degree of objectivity. The framework had to conceptualise policy as discourse and encompass analysis-of and analysis-for policy approaches, and include analysis of both the policy problem definitions and the actual impacts of policy on Playcentres. It was also important that the framework led to recommendations for the future, in order to advocate for change. Bacchi's WPR approach to policy analysis fitted with these criteria, and became the methodology chosen at the proposal stage to guide this study.³⁸

Carol Bacchi: What's the Problem Represented to be?

Carol Bacchi was originally from Canada and her early work was in the history of English-Canadian women's suffrage. After moving to Australia, she taught and researched for many years at the University of Adelaide and is now an Emeritus Professor of Politics, having retired in 2009.³⁹ Her main research interests are in feminist political theory and policy theory.⁴⁰ She is best known for her approach to policy analysis, called *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* or WPR approach. In Bacchi's own words, this approach to policy analysis

challenges the conventional view that public policies are responses or reactions to problems that sit outside the policy process, waiting to be discovered and solved. By contrast, the WPR approach argues that policies contain implicit representations of the 'problems' they purport to address. These problem representations enact 'problems' as particular sorts of problems, thus becoming a crucial part of how governing takes place. The goal of the WPR approach is to treat these problem representations as

³⁷ Bell and Stevenson, *Education Policy*.

³⁸ Suzanne Manning, "Parents, Policy and Playcentre: Developing a Critical Research Proposal," in *Emerging Critical Scholarship in Education: Navigating the Doctoral Journey*, ed. Jean Rath and Carol Mutch (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 44–57.

³⁹ Angelique Bletsas and Chris Beasley, eds., *Engaging with Carol Bacchi: Strategic Interventions and Exchanges* (University of Adelaide Press, 2012).

⁴⁰ Carol Bacchi, "Carol Bacchi: Frequently Asked Questions," accessed June 14, 2018, <https://carolbacchi.com/faq/>.

problematizations that require critical scrutiny. Drawing on Foucauldian-influenced poststructural theory, the WPR approach consists of six questions and an undertaking to apply those questions to one's own proposals or proposed 'solutions' in a practice of self-problematization.⁴¹

Bacchi has developed the WPR approach over more than two decades. Her initial book *Women, Policy and Politics*,⁴² in 1999, presented the WPR policy analysis approach she had developed in her teaching and applied it to "the ways in which women's inequality has been understood in Western policy interventions, and the implications for feminist theorists."⁴³ Her second book, *Analysing Policy*,⁴⁴ was intended to specifically guide students and researchers in using the WPR approach, and show how it could be applied to public policy in general. Bacchi's third WPR book, *Poststructural Policy Analysis*, published recently with her colleague Susan Goodwin, "expands on the theory underpinning WPR and provides examples of application."⁴⁵

The WPR approach fits within a critical paradigm as it "questions taken-for-granted assumptions that lodge in government policies and policy proposals by interrogating (problematizing) the problem representations it uncovers."⁴⁶ Bacchi stresses that this questioning of problem representations is different to the "problem-solving" approach of many conventional policy analysis approaches. Further, the WPR approach is not concerned with the intentions of policy makers but instead seeks to "identify the *deep conceptual premises* operating within problem representations... to draw attention to the assumptions and presuppositions that *make it possible*... to develop those policies."⁴⁷ Bacchi argues that the influence of such conceptual premises on policy is the reason that some entrenched disadvantages are hard to shift, despite the best intentions of policy makers. The discrepancy between school achievement of Māori and Pasifika

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Bacchi, *Women, Policy, and Politics*.

⁴³ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, vi.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Bacchi, "FAQ."

⁴⁶ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, xv.

⁴⁷ Ibid., xix, emphasis in the original.

students when compared with Pākehā students is one example of a persistent problem, despite policy makers trying for years to improve these statistics.

Problem representations, according to Bacchi, “are elaborated in discourse.”⁴⁸ In the WPR approach, discourses are “socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a given social object or practice.”⁴⁹ Bacchi continues that discourses which are institutionally sanctioned tend to have higher status than other discourses, making the institutional discourses harder to challenge. However, it is important to find ways of challenging these discourses, because discourses are productive, “they make things happen.”⁵⁰ Discourses define what problem representations are acceptable for policy makers to consider. This is important as problem representations in policy have material effects, and these discursive, subjectification and lived effects are experienced differently for different groups of people. A concern for social justice is at the core of the WPR approach. Bacchi explains this concern:

A WPR approach has an explicitly normative agenda. It presumes that some problem representations benefit the members of some groups at the expense of others. It also takes the side of those who are harmed. The goal is to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects.⁵¹

In this thesis, the premise is that Playcentre as a group has not benefited from the problem representations embedded within ECEC policy over the last three decades. This premise has arisen from empirical observation of the effects on Playcentre, and is explored systematically in this study through the WPR approach. The approach itself consists of six questions and a directive to be self-reflexive and use those same questions on any proposals that the analysis generates. The questions are listed here and as a more detailed list in Appendix I.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 44.

1. What's the 'problem' ... represented to be in a specific policy or policies?
2. What presuppositions and assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

Apply this list of questions to your own problem representations.⁵²

These questions provide a structured framework for policy analysis. The basic method, according to Bacchi, is to select a policy or policy proposal to be analysed and apply the full set of questions including the self-reflexive step; an assessment of the policy can then be offered along with suggestions for change. However, as the questions are interrelated, systematic application of each question results in some repetition. Therefore, Bacchi suggests, and demonstrates in her books, that a more integrated approach can be taken.⁵³ She notes that "the point of the analysis determines which questions are foregrounded. ... As a consequence, every question need not always be addressed in every analysis, although it is useful to keep the full set of questions in mind."⁵⁴ This thesis takes a systematic approach to applying the questions, as will be outlined later in this chapter, while specifically foregrounding the history of ECEC policy over the past three decades and the effects on Playcentre. To illustrate how the approach can be applied, an example of a study using the WPR approach is presented here.

⁵² Ibid., 2.

⁵³ Bacchi, "FAQ."

⁵⁴ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 101.

Judi Randall studied the impact of the ECEC social obligations policy introduced in Aotearoa NZ in 2013, which required beneficiaries with young children to enrol their children in an ECEC service from the age of three.⁵⁵ Using Bacchi's WPR framework, Randall identified problem representations in the policy. Noting that the policy arose from a welfare initiative rather than from education, she suggested that the problem representation in this policy was long-term welfare dependency. Through looking at this problem representation more deeply, Randall identified further problem representations of the high welfare costs of the government, beneficiaries as (ineffective) job seekers, and vulnerable children in need of protection. This is an example of what Bacchi calls "nesting of problem representations," where probing of a problem representation reveals further problem representations and assumptions.⁵⁶

Randall studied the impacts of the social obligations policy through interviews with beneficiary families and ECEC centre managers. Her conclusions were that the policy placed responsibility on families to comply but simultaneously failed to remove the barriers that they faced. She noted that an effect of the policy was to create beneficiaries as a problem and therefore it was silent on "the possibility that ECE facilities should adjust their delivery or that government policy could adjust the provision and funding of services in order to make ECE more accessible."⁵⁷ Further, her analysis concluded that:

Representing children of beneficiaries as vulnerable has caused government policy to marginalise, stigmatise and remove choice for these families. Beneficiary parents are portrayed as ineffective parents who need to be made to enrol their children. As such, they are deprived of the choice that other parents have over ECE enrolment.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Judith Randall, "Impacts of Early Childhood Education Social Obligations on Families and Whānau" (Masters of Education, University of Waikato, 2015); Judi Randall, "Impacts and implications of Early Childhood Education Social Obligations," *Early Childhood Folio* 19, no. 2 (2015), doi:10.18296/ecf.0011.

⁵⁶ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*.

⁵⁷ Randall, "Impacts of ECE Social Obligations", 43.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

In order to disrupt these problem representations, Randall argued for children to be represented as citizens with rights. With this problem representation, policy discourse should be focused on ensuring that children access their rights to basic standards of living, education and family care.

This example shows the WPR approach in action. Randall identified nested problem representations and the assumptions on which these were based, and traced the origins of the problem representations. She undertook a discourse analysis to explore what was left unproblematic and how the problem representations could be thought about differently. This analysis was combined with an empirical study based on interviews to determine the impacts of the policy. This small study encapsulates the WPR approach, although the self-reflexive step of subjecting the problem representation of children's rights to a WPR analysis was not obvious.

The WPR approach in this thesis

The specific way in which the WPR approach was applied in the research is outlined in this section, along with a guide to how the WPR questions align with the different chapters.

The starting point of a WPR approach is to select a policy as an entry point for analysis. As mentioned already, the selected policy was the 2011 ECE Taskforce report.⁵⁹ The first two WPR questions concern identifying problem representations and the assumptions and discourses that underlie these problem representations. That is the work of chapter 4. The terms of reference for the Taskforce made it clear that the government considered participation in ECEC and quality of ECEC services to be the two major problems that needed to be addressed.⁶⁰ Although often shortened to the two words *participation* and *quality*, the actual problem representations were more nuanced.

⁵⁹ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 166–67.

The contested concept of quality was one underlying concept that led to a moment of crisis in the research process. To disrupt this problem representation, it seemed that the thesis would have to argue that improving quality was not a worthwhile goal, and that Playcentre would be disadvantaged by efforts to improve quality. Yet the Playcentre movement has argued that it offers quality ECEC for families,⁶¹ so claiming that quality is not seen as important in a Playcentre setting is inaccurate. However, deeper probing and discussions with supervisors led to the realisation that HCT was the underlying discourse for the quality problem representation – and for the participation problem representation as well – and this was driving policy in a direction which was problematic for Playcentre. The thesis therefore now includes an exploration and critique of HCT and its influence on ECEC.

Chapters 5 and 6 address Bacchi's third and fourth questions, on how these problem representations came to be dominant. This is done by looking at the origins of the underlying assumptions, particularly HCT, and the context in which they evolved. These chapters also address the sixth question about how these problem representations have been produced, disseminated and defended.

Bacchi's question 5, on the effects of the problem representations, becomes the subject of three chapters in this thesis. Chapters 7 and 8 each deal with one of the problem representations of participation and quality, and chapter 9 traces the impacts of both these problem representations in the period between the 2011 Taskforce report and 2017. These chapters contain historical stories concerning Playcentre, about which little has yet been written. Presenting these narratives is one of the major contributions of this thesis and is the result of archival and historical research using both primary and secondary sources. The archives visited were the NZPF archives in Hamilton, the Hocken Collections in Dunedin, the Government Archives in Wellington, and the Alexander Turnbull Library, which is located in the National Library in Wellington. The main archival collections

⁶¹ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, "Public Consultation Backs Playcentre," news release, October 17, 2011, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED1110/S00066/public-consultation-backs-playcentre.htm>.

accessed at the Alexander Turnbull Library were those of the NZPF, and the papers deposited by ECEC academics Anne Meade and Helen May, who had participated in several government-appointed working parties that produced the policies examined in this study. Some information was obtained through Official Information Act requests to the Ministry of Education. Use was also made of the Hutt Playcentre Association library and records, especially to access back copies of the *Playcentre Journal*, and NZPF Conference and National Executive records. These records were supplemented by my own collection of papers from my time as an officer of the NZPF.

Chapter 10 returns to Bacchi's sixth question regarding disrupting problem representations and suggesting alternatives. The aim was to find alternatives to HCT as a rationale for government support for ECEC, and alternatives to a focus on the problem representations of participation and quality. The chapter, in accordance with Bacchi's "explicit normative agenda,"⁶² which seeks to intervene on behalf of those who are disadvantaged, makes practical policy suggestions that could be of benefit to Playcentres and the NZPF. These suggestions are based on the ideas and initiatives developed in the literature and practice in Aotearoa NZ and internationally. The intention is not to detail fully developed policies, but rather to produce suggestions to provoke discussion.

Chapter 10 also encompasses the final part of a WPR analysis, which according to Bacchi is to use the WPR framework to assess the policy alternatives proposed by the researcher. This step is necessary "because there is a need to see to what extent researchers may be operating with assumed, unquestioned knowledges or within specific governmental rationalities that may, in the researchers' judgments, have deleterious consequences."⁶³

To summarise, the methodology followed in this study is that of policy analysis that works with the underlying assumptions, theories and discourses of the policy, which contribute to a problem representation constructed by the policy. The

⁶² Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 44.

⁶³ Bacchi, "FAQ."

systematic framework used is that of Bacchi's WPR approach, which investigates the historical conditions that result in particular problem representations becoming dominant, and analyses the impact of those problem representations of different groups. The aim is to generate policy that will benefit those groups currently disadvantaged, based on different problem representations.

The next chapter deals with another important aspect of methodology, that of ethical implications arising from working with documents and from my relationship with the NZPF as both a member and a researcher.

Chapter Three: Ethical framework

Academic institutions generally have well-established ethical procedures for ensuring that their researchers have guidance around the subject of ethics, and that steps are taken to minimise harm to others arising from the research. This study did not involve human participants and originally involved publicly available documentary material; official ethics approval from the University of Auckland was therefore not required. This did not mean that there would be no ethical issues, so it was necessary to develop an ethical framework for this study that might provide guidance for the issues most likely to arise. Two major issues are highlighted in this chapter, that of ethical considerations around the use of documents, and how my positioning within and outside of Playcentre affected the research. These two factors are then incorporated into an ecological and relational framework for ethical guidance in this study.

The ethics of document analysis

The place of documents in research ethics is ambiguous. Whilst working with documents is generally not mentioned in ethical discussions, it is common knowledge that some documents hold secrets that are not for public circulation. Restrictions for researching with classified documents can be stringent,¹ but are generally imposed by the organisation producing the documents rather than the researcher's institution. In turn, the researcher's institution sets guidelines as to the storage, use and dissemination of the documents produced by the researcher, in effect creating classified documents. The power of documents to cause harm to, or problems for, people or organisations therefore appears to be well recognised. Yet, until recently, ethical discussion in academic institutions has been limited in scope to the storage and dissemination of data. Current university ethics guidelines now tend to make a distinction between researchers using personal

¹ Anne Fitzpatrick, "From Behind the Fence: Threading the Labyrinths of Classified Research," in Doel, Söderqvist, *The Historiography of Contemporary Science, Technology, and Medicine*.

information available publicly or through restricted archives.² It appears that current thinking is if documents contain personal information, they are treated as representing human participants and therefore are subject to ethical regulation. One “grey area” is what constitutes personal information when examining archival documents.

In this study, two main sources of primary documents were used, those produced by the government and those produced by the NZPF. Government documents were produced both by Cabinet and its sub-committees and by government departments, ministries and appointed working groups. These were accessed through the National Archives, the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Hocken Collections. There were restrictions placed on some archival collections to protect them from public scrutiny, such as the 25-year restriction on Cabinet papers available through the National Archives. However, the same documents were sometimes available through a different route, for example when a government department applied different archiving rules, or when the same papers were freely available at the Alexander Turnbull Library. This raised a question as to whether it was ethical to use the documents accessed via alternative routes. One consideration was that the people who wrote these documents, or were on record as having contributed to a public debate or a meeting, would have known that these would form official records. One could assume they acted, spoke and wrote accordingly, and therefore the ethical issues here would be minor.

Access to departmental files also revealed margin notes and frank feedback on drafts, which sometimes told a different story to the official, crafted and final version of documents. These comments occasionally cast an unflattering light on the authors or others who were mentioned. In the archived personal collections there were also personal communications which revealed disagreements that had

² University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, “Applicants’ Reference Manual,” accessed November 1, 2017, <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/research/re-ethics/re-uahpec.html>; Victoria University of Wellington, “Human Ethics Guidelines,” accessed November 1, 2017, <https://www.victoria.ac.nz/research/support/research-office/ethics-approval/human-ethics>.

not been made public. An ethical question arose as to whether such notes should be used in the research, when they were obviously not intended for public circulation. This is a dilemma that other researchers have found.³ In some cases in this research, this material has deliberately not been reported. In one case where material has been used because of its relevance and power to add to the narrative, care has been taken to anonymise the people involved.

The second source of documents was the NZPF. The original proposal was to examine the effect of policy on Playcentre through national meeting minutes that had been circulated throughout the organisation, and through published material from the *Playcentre Journal*. This was soon widened to include NZPF submissions and correspondence with government, and minutes and correspondence of NZPF sub-committees. The NZPF Research Advisory Group gave permission to access all these documents, with the restriction of non-identification of individuals or individual associations in the presentation of the research (see Appendix II).

Access to the NZPF archival records raised another ethical question, as to whether information that is public within an organisation can also be considered public when used for external research purposes. This is a critical point when exemption from ethics approval was based on using publicly available data. At the time of acceptance of the research proposal, the University of Auckland did not require this study to seek ethics approval. However, the policy has since been updated, so that if the researcher has interacted with the participants from whom the data is being gathered, the research is not considered to be simply an analysis of publicly available data. Such research now needs explicit ethics approval.⁴ For this research, the historical period investigated has meant that my interaction with the participants has been limited, but not entirely absent. The likelihood of an ethical dilemma arising from this interaction was therefore minimal, yet still something for me to be aware of. The major issue, as the NZPF had requested, was to ensure

³ Anne Fitzpatrick, "From Behind the Fence," in Doel, Söderqvist, *The Historiography of Contemporary Science, Technology, and Medicine*; Marek Tesar, "Ethics and Truth in Archival Research," *History of Education* 44, no. 1 (2015), doi:10.1080/0046760X.2014.918185.

⁴ University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee.

as much as possible that individuals were not able to be identified, except where this information is unequivocally in the public sphere (for example press releases from the NZPF President).

A further complexity was my relationship with Playcentre, and the level of trust that I had accrued from my previous involvement. On the one hand that trust facilitated my access to the documents, and on the other hand it placed a level of ethical responsibility on me that might not apply to an outsider researcher. The issue of insider/outsider positioning was one that needed to be carefully considered to develop a framework that would guide me in such circumstances, and this will be discussed next.

Insider-outsider positioning

A simple definition of an insider is someone who is a member of a group.⁵ It is a boundary-setting binary, where people are classified as within the group (an insider) or external to it (an outsider). There has been much discussion in the literature as to whether research on a group is better conducted by an insider or an outsider. Justine Mercer summarised the advantages and disadvantages of insider-researchers as people who:

often enjoy freer access, stronger rapport and a deeper, more readily-available frame of shared reference with which to interpret the data they collect; on the other hand, however, they have to contend with their own pre-conceptions, and those their informants have formed about them as a result of their shared history.⁶

⁵ Alan Floyd and Linet Arthur, "Researching From Within: External and Internal Ethical Engagement," *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 35, no. 2 (2012), doi:10.1080/1743727X.2012.670481; Justine Mercer, "The Challenges of Insider Research in Educational Institutions: Wielding a Double-edged Sword and Resolving Delicate Dilemmas," *Oxford Review of Education* 33, no. 1 (2007), doi:10.1080/03054980601094651.

⁶ Mercer, "Challenges of Insider Research" 13.

Similarly, Shirley Pendlebury and Penny Enslin contrasted the difficulty of an outsider being able to represent those of a different culture with that of an insider struggling to step outside of the context to ensure a critical stance.⁷

However, the concept of an insider/outsider researcher binary has been questioned by a number of writers.⁸ They have argued that there are multiple aspects to our identities, and for any research relationship there will be some commonalities between people as well as some differences. We all stand as partial insiders and partial outsiders in our relationship with others.⁹ Further, our identities are not fixed, but are changing and evolving:

Some features of the researcher's identity, such as his or her gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation are innate and unchanging; other features, such as age, are innate but evolving. ... Other dimensions are provided by the time and place of the research...; the power relationships within which the researcher and the researched co-exist; the personalities of the researcher and specific informants; and even the precise topic under discussion.¹⁰

Changing identities have been shown to be a feature of Playcentre members.¹¹ Figure 2 is a diagrammatic depiction of the evolving identities of people within a Playcentre, showing how identity is transformed through participation in the community of practice that is a Playcentre. This research also supports the claim in literature that members of a collective do share similar identities at the same time, or the same understandings of issues that concern the collective.¹² Defining insider/outsider positioning as a binary is therefore problematic.

⁷ Shirley Pendlebury and Penny Enslin, "Representation, Identification and Trust: Towards an Ethics of Educational Research," *Journal of the Philosophy of Education* 35, no. 3 (2001), doi:10.1111/1467-9752.00232.

⁸ David Bridges, "Education and the Possibility of Outsider Understanding," *Ethics and Education* 4, no. 2 (2009), doi:10.1080/17449640903326714; Floyd and Arthur, "Researching from Within"; Mercer, "Challenges of Insider Research."

⁹ Bridges, "Possibility of Outsider Understanding."

¹⁰ Mercer, "Challenges of Insider Research" 4.

¹¹ Suzanne Manning and Judith Loveridge, "Parents as Educators at Playcentre: Understanding the Constraints and Enablers of Teaching Practice," *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education* 12 (2009).

¹² Bridges, "Possibility of Outsider Understanding"; Mercer, "Challenges of Insider Research."

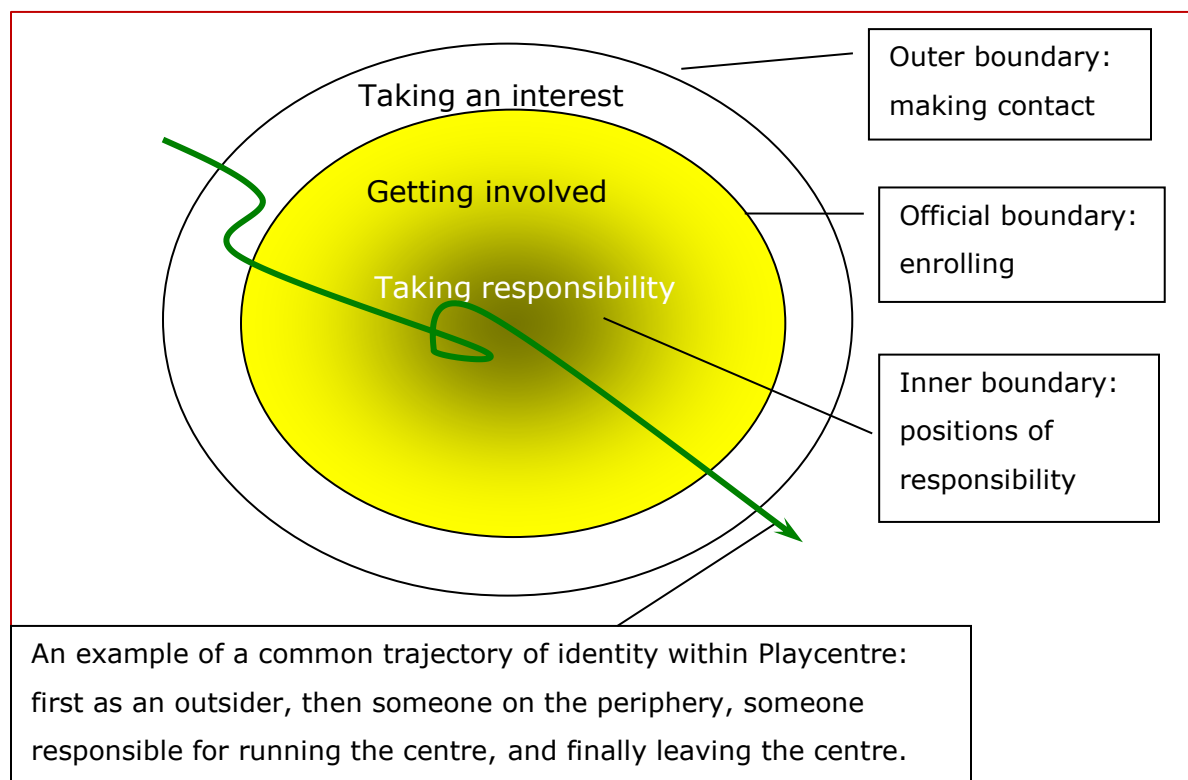


Figure 2. A model of identity trajectory in Playcentre. (Manning & Loveridge, 2009, p. 7). The standpoint taken in this thesis was that researchers cannot be simply classified as insiders or outsiders, but rather the relationship between researchers and the group being researched is better conceived as consisting of multiple dimensions such as temporality and diversity of experience. The question was not whether I should be considered an insider or outsider for the purposes of the research, but rather my relationship to Playcentre needed to be considered across multiple dimensions. The two dimensions of temporality and experience relate both to my positioning as an insider and outsider, and will be considered in turn.

In one sense, I considered myself, and was considered by others, to be an insider to Playcentre due to the length of time I had been involved in the organisation. As noted in the Prologue, I had been involved at multiple levels and in multiple roles. My long involvement was recognised with a life membership award from my regional Playcentre Association. Being made a life member indicated that I had attained a position of respect in the organisation, which brought implications of

power relationships. My opinions now had more authority because of the life-member status.

My insider involvement meant that I had a “preunderstanding” of the organisation’s culture,¹³ and this was undoubtedly of use when interpreting the contents of NZPF archival documents. Due to my experience in different parts of the organisation, the reports, minutes, and letters made sense to me. I could place them in the wider context of how the NZPF conducts its business. My insider status, and particularly the fact that I was known to the NZPF governance team at the time of the research, would also have been a factor in being granted permission to access NZPF archives.

Yet as noted, one is always, in part, an outsider to those being researched. Although I had been involved in Playcentre for a long time, part of the research was an investigation into a time period before my involvement. Many documents had a familiar ring to them, yet they also surprised me by the things that had changed. There is a danger in assuming that to know an organisation at one point in time is to know it throughout its history, as even small periods of time can bring about rapid change. I was therefore partially an outsider to the Playcentre of the late 80s/early 90s.

So, too, I was a partial outsider to the Playcentre of the time when the research was being carried out, because I was no longer actively involved on a daily basis. Much of the literature on insider research is based on the researcher being currently and actively involved in the setting being researched, often using an action research approach.¹⁴ However, according to David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, my study was “traditional research” as there was no intention to self-

¹³ David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010).

¹⁴ Mats Alvesson, “Methodology for Close-up Studies: Struggling with Closeness and Closure,” *Higher Education* 46, no. 2 (2003), doi:10.1023/A:1024716513774; Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*; Carol Costley and Paul Gibbs, “Researching Others: Care as an Ethic for Practitioner Researchers,” *Studies in Higher Education* 31, no. 1 (2006), doi:10.1080/03075070500392375; Floyd and Arthur, “Researching From Within.”

reflect on “my” organisation.¹⁵ Such research could be approached by an outsider researcher as easily as an insider. It could be argued, then, that my positioning as a “past insider” of Playcentre gave a balance of preunderstanding and critical distance, and this was a useful platform from which to carry out the research.

Although my experience within Playcentre was long and varied, I still experienced it from my Pākehā, cis-female, heterosexual, middle-class and urban perspective. Playcentre is very diverse with regard to its members and my particular identity profile meant that I could not assume my experiences would give me an understanding of all other parents in the organisation. It was partly for this reason that the study did not seek to represent the experiences of individual Playcentres or Playcentre parents. Whenever this has been done in the past, it has been hard for generalisations to be made because of the diversity that was found.¹⁶ Instead, the study focused on the impact of policy on Playcentre as a whole organisation, using data such as statistics, official NZPF responses, and collective views expressed at national meetings.

My positioning in regard to Playcentre, then, was not simply that of an insider, but rather that of a recent past member with a legacy that was still remembered by current members, with a particular identity which could be said to reflect many, but by no means all, Playcentre members.¹⁷ My research was to focus not on Playcentre itself, but on the impact of policy *on* Playcentre, and was to generate data through archival documents rather than through qualitative methods with live participants. Given these specific circumstances my challenge was to articulate an approach that would guide me through ethical dilemmas I might potentially face.

¹⁵ Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 104.

¹⁶ Morrison, “Impact of 20 Hours”; Linda Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services: Summary Research Report* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2006); Kimberley Powell et al., *The Effect of Adult Playcentre Participation on the Creation of Social Capital in Local Communities: Report to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation* (Palmerston North, NZ: Massey University & NZPF, 2005); Geraldine McDonald, *Working and Learning: A Participatory Project on Parent-Helping in the New Zealand Playcentre*, Studies in Education no. 32 (Wellington, NZ: NZCER, 1982).

¹⁷ Powell et al., *Adult Playcentre Participation*.

Ecological and relational ethics framework

Qualitative research is a style of research which tends to involve human participants. Literature on ethics in qualitative research have highlighted that ethical codes are based on enlightenment and utilitarian frameworks.¹⁸ Such frameworks rely on universal values and set rules that can be applied “objectively” to any situation. In these cases, ethical responsibility is located with the approving institution or professional body, rather than with the researchers themselves.¹⁹ As noted above, this research did not meet the criteria for requiring ethical approval from my institution, so a utilitarian ethical framework was going to be of limited use.

Extensions of utilitarian frameworks have been promoted by feminist writers such as Nel Noddings.²⁰ She has argued for an ethic of care based on relationships. Ethical responsibility then becomes defined as the researchers’ responsibility to the participants.²¹ Another extension to utilitarian ethics is an ecological perspective, where the cultural and social context of both participants and researchers are taken into account.²² The inclusion of sections in university human ethics policies relating to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* could be taken as an indication that an ecological ethics perspective is now being widely accepted in Aotearoa NZ.²³ A further indication is the growing awareness that the definition of human participants includes not only individuals but also groups of people such as

¹⁸ C. G. Christians, “Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research,” in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011), 61–80; David J. Flinders, “In Search of Ethical Guidance: Constructing a Basis for Dialogue,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 5, no. 2 (1992), doi:10.1080/0951839920050202.

¹⁹ Christians, “Ethics and Politics.”

²⁰ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Delaune.

²¹ Christians, “Ethics and Politics”; Bruce V. Lewenstein, “The History of Now: Reflections on being a “Contemporary Archivist,”” in Doel, Söderqvist, *The Historiography of Contemporary Science, Technology, and Medicine*; Noddings, *Caring*.

²² Flinders, “Ethical Guidance.”

²³ University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, “Guiding Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants,” accessed November 1, 2017, <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/research/re-ethics/re-uahpec.html>; Victoria University of Wellington, “Human Ethics.”

cultures or organisations.²⁴ However, defining the problem of research ethics as primarily an issue concerning human participants provides little guidance for a study such as this, which is focused on archival documents.

The ethics framework for this study needed to take account of the effects that document analysis findings could have on Playcentre as an organisation, as well as on its members. The framework also needed to acknowledge my obligations related to my past-present-future relationship with the organisation, whilst still allowing for the critical stance that was required for the university study.²⁵ David Flinders outlined an ecological ethics which expanded on the feminist relational ethics based on Noddings' ethic of care by including an awareness of, and a respect for, the different cultural identities of the participants.²⁶ Elements of this framework included cultural sensitivity, an avoidance of detachment, and responsive communication. This appeared appropriate to my study, as it allowed me to use my "insider voice," yet still required me to be responsive to Playcentre in all its diversity and over the different historical periods. The ethic of care encompassed in this framework was not directed to the documents themselves, but to the people they represented. In some ways, the documents carry their own mauri (life spirit) by reifying the opinions and thoughts of particular people at particular points of time. As such, these documents should be treated with respect, in the same way as people's verbal opinions in an interview should be treated with respect.

The ecological framework outlined by Flinders with its "avoidance of detachment" gave guidance on potential conflicts between my dual roles as a member of Playcentre and as a researcher; it signalled that my ethical relationship with Playcentre was a priority. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for me to publicly portray Playcentre in a bad way. My trusted status within the organisation would make this worse than if I were an outsider, and would be seen as a betrayal.

²⁴ University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee; Victoria University of Wellington "Human Ethics."

²⁵ Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*; Costley and Gibbs, "Researching Others."

²⁶ Flinders, "Ethical Guidance."

Pendlebury and Enslin are very clear that this would be unethical.²⁷ This aspect was partly addressed by making government policy, rather than Playcentre, the focus of critique for the study. It was also addressed by using whole-of-organisation responses to policy and the agreed outcomes of the meetings as much as possible, rather than focusing on the robust debate and disagreements that can and do occur at Playcentre meetings.

The framework used to guide ethical decision making in this thesis was therefore an ecological and relational one, based on Flinders' model.²⁸ This relied on the acknowledgement of my insider-outsider positioning with respect to Playcentre, and the importance of maintaining good relationships with the NZPF. It included a sensitivity to the diversity both within Playcentre and within the ECEC sector as a whole. The responsibility for ethical interactions was mine, although supported by the University of Auckland through the context of the supervised research in which I was engaged. The aim was to ensure an ethic of care, because I do indeed care about Playcentre.

²⁷ Pendlebury and Enslin, "Representation, Identification and Trust."

²⁸ Flinders, "Ethical Guidance."

Chapter Four: Problem representations in the ECE Taskforce report

The starting text for this WPR analysis is the 2011 ECE Taskforce report. The Taskforce was appointed by the government to review ECEC policy. Michael Mintrom, a former Treasury analyst and then associate professor in Political Studies at the University of Auckland, was appointed chair of the Taskforce. The other eight members included three managers of ECEC organisations (a Kindergarten Association, the employer's organisation the Early Childhood Council, and Pacific Guardian Childcare), a City Council business manager, two academics (one in the field of health and development, the other in ECEC), a primary school principal, and a director of a Māori immersion ECEC service. There were five women and four men on the Taskforce, six members were Pākehā, two were of Māori descent and one was Pasifika (Niuean).¹ The Taskforce was appointed in October 2010, carried out consultation in late 2010 and January 2011, and released its final report in June 2011.²

During the eight-week consultation period that followed the release of the report, there were many public protests from the NZPF and from home-based care services, because of the Taskforce recommendation to exclude these services from mainstream funding and support.³ The response from Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (TKRNT) was to lodge an urgent claim against the government with the Waitangi Tribunal, arguing that, through systematic discrimination against TKRNT, the government was not upholding its duty to protect the Māori language.⁴

¹ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*.

² New Zealand Playcentre Federation, "Public Consultation Backs Playcentre."

³ Inge Doig, "United We Painted...", *Playcentre Journal* 142 (2011); Dowling, "Playcentre Protest Picnic"; Simon Edwards, "Cuts Could End Playcentre, Nannies," *Hutt News*, August 2, 2011, http://huttnews.realviewdigital.com/?iid=51000&xml=Hutt_News; Kate Whitwell, "The ECE Taskforce Report: What Can We Do?" *Playcentre Journal* 141 (2011).

⁴ Waitangi Tribunal, *Matua Rautia*.

The protests and the submissions from the consultation⁵ indicated a lack of support from a significant sector of the public, and therefore the government never formally pledged to implement the Taskforce's recommendations.

The reason that the Taskforce report is of interest to a study concerning Playcentre is that it was the first time a recommendation had been made to deliberately cut funding to parent cooperatives. Previous policy which had excluded parent cooperatives had done so on the grounds that parent cooperatives' funding was not being decreased, but rather the increased costs of teacher-led services were being compensated. In contrast, the Taskforce explicitly recommended that funding for parent cooperatives be cut in order to improve funding for teacher-led services. This policy recommendation would have been politically unacceptable two decades earlier, yet in 2011 the Taskforce considered the recommendation to be justified and presumably, politically acceptable. The WPR analysis undertaken in this thesis seeks to explain how political, social, economic and educational conditions had changed between the late 1980s and 2011 in order for the Taskforce to be able to make this recommendation.

This chapter starts the WPR analysis with the first of Bacchi's questions, by identifying the problem representations in the Taskforce report. The Taskforce terms of reference and report are examined, which shows that two main problem representations underpin the Taskforce's work. These are the lack of participation in ECEC, and the lack of quality of ECEC services. Turning to Bacchi's question 2, the chapter then examines the assumptions and underlying concepts that are contained in the two problem representations.

The two problem representations

The ECE Taskforce was set up by a new government during its first term in office. The National-led coalition came to power in 2008 at a time when the global

⁵ Ministry of Education, "Consultation on the ECE Taskforce Report: An Agenda for Amazing Children," Ministry of Education, www.parliament.nz/resource/0000181836.

economy was in turmoil.⁶ The new government's fiscal strategy was to carefully control any growth in government expenditure and to get "better value" from the existing expenditure, while at the same time encouraging economic growth and reducing the country's vulnerability to future economic shocks.⁷ Government spending on ECEC had more than doubled in the years from 2004/05 to 2009/10⁸ due to increased rates of ECEC subsidies and continued growth of ECEC services. This large growth in ECEC expenditure made it an attractive target for a review to align with the new fiscal strategy.

Accordingly, the Taskforce was set up in 2010, with an official brief to review the value of the government's investment in ECEC. The Taskforce terms of reference⁹ explained the rationale for the review and the economic concerns of the government with regards to ECEC expenditure:

The earliest years of a child's life are of vital importance to their development, wellbeing and success in later life. Government recognises the value of early childhood education, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Early childhood education provides a solid foundation for future learning, and can contribute to success in compulsory and post-compulsory education. Government has made significant additional investment in recent years. This investment is not reaching all the neediest children and families, but is benefiting many children who already have the opportunity for a strong start in their education. Costs to Government are continuing to rise, but with no guarantee of improved outcomes for learners in return.

Current policies have contributed to improvements in participation in early childhood education, but there remains a group who are not benefiting.

⁶ J. Crotty, "Structural Causes of the Global Financial Crisis: A Critical Assessment of the 'New Financial Architecture'," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 33, no. 4 (2009), doi:10.1093/cje/bep023. More information on the Aotearoa NZ political system is given in chapter 5.

⁷ The Treasury, "Financial Information given to Ministry of Education, Early Childhood Policy Group: Official Information Act Response 20150113," www.treasury.govt.nz/downloads/pdfs/oia/oia-20150113.pdf.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 176–77.

Government is committed to raising the participation of those children who currently do not benefit from early childhood education.¹⁰

The Taskforce terms of reference asked for recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of ECEC investment without increasing government expenditure. The specific tasks were to:

- a. undertake a full review of the value gained from the different types of government investment in early childhood education in New Zealand
- b. consider the efficiency and effectiveness of Government's current early childhood education expenditure, and ways that this might be improved, particularly for Māori, Pasifika, and children from low socio-economic backgrounds
- c. develop new ideas on innovative, cost effective and evidence-based ways to support children's learning in early childhood and the first years of compulsory schooling
- d. make recommendations to Government about proposed changes to funding and policy settings for early childhood education, and their costs, benefits and risks, and
- e. consider how to achieve its recommendations without increasing current government expenditure.¹¹

The Taskforce terms of reference indicate that the problem was being represented as insufficient value in terms of the return on the government's investment in ECEC. The problem could have been framed differently, for example that ECEC services needed to be coordinated so that there was sufficient access to appropriate and affordable ECEC for all those who chose to use it. The National-led government, however, preferred an economic and free-market approach to the review of ECEC. As the question of "value" in ECEC cannot be easily quantified in terms of monetary value, other measures of value had to be used, such as participation rates and levels of quality of ECEC services.

¹⁰ Ibid., Terms of Reference, 176.

¹¹ Ibid., 176.

The problem representation of a lack of participation in ECEC

One explicit concern in the Taskforce terms of reference regarding the value gained from the government investment was that research showed that the biggest gains from ECEC were for “children from disadvantaged backgrounds” and yet “the investment is not reaching all the neediest children and families, but is benefiting many children who already have the opportunity for a strong start in their education.”¹² The targeted government expenditure, or the lack thereof, was therefore represented as a problem, and the measure of success in solving this problem was to be increased participation of these needy and disadvantaged children in ECEC services that were the target of the policy.

Participation in ECEC was something that could be measured relatively easily, and was therefore a proxy for determining the value of the government’s investment. The greater the participation rates, the greater the return on the government’s investment. The financial briefing that the Taskforce members received from Treasury noted that although ECEC expenditure had greatly increased because of the 20 Hours Free policy introduced in 2007, ECEC participation rates had only increased by 1%.¹³ A clear inference was that “value for money” would have been a larger increase in participation rates for that amount of expenditure.

The Taskforce report supported this position that lack of participation by some children was seen as part of the problem that had to be solved. The overview given in Part 1 of the report included a section on *Focusing Problems*¹⁴ that were used by the Taskforce early in its work together, which included this statement:

The Government accords high priority to ensuring all children can participate in quality early childhood education. ... Despite considerable recent growth in government funding for early childhood education services, there are still many children who do not engage with formal education and care services prior to entering school. Given the research evidence of benefits from pre-schoolers acquiring a strong start in education, and the transparency of any vulnerabilities in human capital as children embark on

¹² Ibid., 176.

¹³ The Treasury, Official Information Act Response 20150113.

¹⁴ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 13–14.

the important transition to school, ways must be found to ensure all children benefit from at least some engagement with early childhood education services.¹⁵

The problem here was stated as ensuring “all” children participated in ECEC. The focus, however, was definitely on the small majority who did not participate, identified as Māori, Pasifika and children from low socioeconomic status (SES) groups (statistics as at 1 July 2010):

While most children are reported as having participated in early childhood education prior to starting school (94.5%), participation rates of Māori (89.4%), Pasifika (85.3%) and children entering deciles 1-4 schools (and hence likely to be from low socio-economic groups) (89.1%) are lower.¹⁶

To put these participation rates in context, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) *Starting Strong* research found an OECD country average of 82% participation in ECEC for 4-year-olds in 2012.¹⁷ The rates in Aotearoa NZ, then, were already high. However, there was a definite disparity between sub-populations, as shown in the statistics quoted above. This disparity was represented as a problem because ECEC was seen as beneficial, so differential participation was seen as discrimination against those who were not able to benefit from ECEC. Indeed, the Taskforce had high expectations of the benefits of participation in ECEC:

Participation in high-quality early childhood education can make the difference between having a life of poverty and dependence or a life characterised by on-going self-development and positive social engagement.¹⁸

The presupposition that ECEC is always beneficial is discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷ OECD, *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris: OECD, 2015). doi:10.1787/9789264233515-en, 22.

¹⁸ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 13.

The problem representation of low-quality ECEC services

The Taskforce terms of reference stated the rationale for government investment in ECEC:

The earliest years of a child's life are of vital importance to their development, wellbeing and success in later life. ... Early childhood education provides a solid foundation for future learning, and can contribute to success in compulsory and post-compulsory education.¹⁹

The value of ECEC was therefore framed in terms of its contribution to children's learning, and the ability of children to learn in ECEC settings was attributed to the quality of those settings. The *Key Messages*²⁰ in the Taskforce report included the need for "funding and regulatory mechanisms [to] be reformed in ways that drive up and reward the provision of higher quality services."²¹ The problem was represented in terms of not all ECEC services being of sufficient quality to effectively contribute to children's learning in order to produce this "solid foundation" for future schooling success. The Taskforce report devoted an entire essay to *Aiming for High-Quality Services*,²² and recommended rewarding "high-quality" services and putting pressure on "low-quality" services to improve or close. Further, there was emphasis on the need for improvement, with *Key Messages* that there should be a "drive to higher quality across the sector... through greater professionalism,"²³ "a stronger and increased focus on developing broader measures and assessments of the quality of provision,"²⁴ and "a stronger emphasis on quality needs to be reinforced and supported by investment in the identification of effective professional practice, and focussed research and evaluation."²⁵

Along with an insufficient general level of quality of provision, the Taskforce represented the variability in quality standards as problematic, stating:

¹⁹ Ibid., Terms of Reference, 176.

²⁰ Ibid., 3–4.

²¹ Ibid., 4.

²² Ibid., 40–49.

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

We recommend that the Government take action in the coming years to raise the quality of early childhood education in New Zealand, reduce variance in quality levels, and ensure that all children have access to appropriate services, given their needs.²⁶

The issue of variability related to the bottom end of the range of quality levels, rather than a concern that some ECEC services were “too high” in quality:

Quality in New Zealand early childhood education services is generally good, but there is significant variance. It is essential that we continue to push for a more uniformly high baseline of quality in early childhood education.²⁷

The solution to insufficient quality was represented as encouraging innovation and new practices. The Taskforce terms of reference required the group to “develop new ideas on innovative, cost effective and evidence-based ways to support children’s learning in early childhood and the first years of compulsory schooling,”²⁸ which implied that the problem was that “old” ideas were not adequate to achieve the desired outcomes. Continuous improvement in the sector was a goal that was linked to innovation in *Essay 11: Promoting an Innovative, Continuously Improving Sector*.²⁹

Assumptions and theoretical underpinnings

The second question in Bacchi’s WPR framework examines presuppositions and assumptions in order to identify the conceptual premises underpinning these problem representations. It is not a question of “why something happens but how it is possible for something to happen – what meanings need to be in place for something to happen.”³⁰ Bacchi recommends using discourse analysis to uncover these conceptual premises, suggesting that focusing on key concepts, categories and/or binaries are useful approaches. Key concepts in a policy shape

²⁶ Ibid., 2.

²⁷ Ibid., 40.

²⁸ Ibid., 176.

²⁹ Ibid., 162–68.

³⁰ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 5.

understandings of the issues. Bacchi defines concepts and their importance in this way:

Concepts are abstract labels that are relatively open-ended. Hence they are hotly contested. People fill them with different meanings. Disputes over the meaning of key concepts are related to competing political visions. A great deal is therefore at stake in the meanings assigned to concepts.³¹

Categories – such as ethnicity, location or gender categories – are important because of their role in governing populations:

The creation of people categories has significant effects for the ways in which governing takes place, and for how people come to think about themselves and about others. ... Categories, particularly people categories, are created through measurement, highlighting the important role played by measurement techniques such as censuses and surveys in governing.³²

Finally, Bacchi explains the importance of binaries as dichotomies where:

what is on one side of a binary is considered to be excluded from the other side. In addition, there is a hierarchy implied in binaries. One side is privileged, considered to be more important or more valued than the other side. Invariably binaries simplify complex relationships. Hence, we need to watch where they appear in policies and how they function to shape the understanding of the issue.³³

In identifying key concepts, categories and binaries, the analysis should not accept these things “as given, but to see how they function to give particular meanings to problem representations.”³⁴ Each of the two main problem representations of the Taskforce report will now be examined, to identify underlying conceptual premises that shape how these problem representations are understood.

³¹ Ibid., 8.

³² Ibid., 9.

³³ Ibid., 7.

³⁴ Ibid., 9.

Lack of participation in ECEC

Early childhood care and education refers to a concept that means different things to different people and in different countries. In Aotearoa NZ, the concept generally encompasses out-of-home childcare arrangements, provided by a wide range of different services. The original early childhood curriculum, 1996 *Te Whāriki*, defined curriculum as “the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development.”³⁵ In contrast, ECEC, when used as a concept, does not tend to include a child’s “sum total of experiences” in early childhood but only that part which is provided by an ECEC service. For example, the updated 2017 *Te Whāriki* defined ECE settings as “any place where young children receive education and care” including “all types of licensed and regulated early childhood education provision” as well as “unlicensed and informal playgroups.”³⁶ The care and education that occurs within the home, facilitated by family members, was not included in this concept of ECEC. A problem representation of a lack of participation in ECEC takes for granted that this ECEC will occur outside the home.

The concept of ECEC contains an assumption that ECEC is always beneficial for children and their families, hence the government rationale for increasing participation in ECEC services. Reviews of research have shown that ECEC can have beneficial outcomes for children.³⁷ These literature reviews point to ECEC making the most difference to children’s lives when they come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Conversely, reviews of research have also shown that ECEC that is not of sufficient quality can be damaging for children.³⁸ Further,

³⁵ Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa* (Wellington, NZ: Learning Media, 1996), 10.

³⁶ Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa/Early childhood curriculum* (<https://education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/ece-curriculum/te-whariki/>, 2017), 7.

³⁷ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*; Mitchell, Wylie and Carr, *Outcomes of Early Childhood Education: Literature Review* (Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2008).

³⁸ Sarah-Eve Farquhar, “What the Research says about ECE Effects and the Influence of Parents/Families on Development and Educational Outcomes,” ChildForum,

there is some concern that services which are not culturally responsive can negate the beneficial effects of ECEC, which is particularly a problem for children of Māori and Pasifika cultures.³⁹ Measuring participation rates does not distinguish between ECEC that is beneficial and that which is harmful, diminishing the effectiveness of participation as a measure of value gained from government expenditure. This limited value of participation rates as a tool for evaluating ECEC policy is supported by this comment in the editors' introduction to a book on the provision of ECEC for "disadvantaged children" in different countries:

Table 1.3 shows enrolment in ECEC at different ages in 2008 [for different countries]. ... Of course, Table 1.3 does not tell us whether attendance is part time or full time, whether it works effectively as childcare as well as early education, whether children have access to highly trained staff and in what ratios, and whether children from disadvantaged backgrounds are the children most likely to miss out or least likely to receive the best provision.⁴⁰

A focus on the lack of participation in ECEC by Māori, Pasifika and children from low SES groups leads to categorisation of children in ECEC by ethnicity and by location. This categorisation is supported by the collection and reporting of disaggregated statistics.⁴¹ The categorisation in the Taskforce report of children from low SES backgrounds was based on the decile of the school that they entered

<http://www.childforum.com/policy-issues/parenting-a-ece-use/388-research-ece-effects.html>; Mitchell, Wylie and Carr, *Outcomes of Early Childhood Education*; Carmen Dalli et al., *Quality Early Childhood Education for Under-Two-Year-Olds: What Should It Look Like? A Literature Review* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2011).

³⁹ Maria Cooper and Helen Hedges, "Beyond Participation: What We Learned from Hunter about Collaboration with Pasifika Children and Families," *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 15, no. 2 (2014), doi:10.2304/ciec.2014.15.2.165; Gibbons and Farquhar, "Mapping Policies"; Jenny Ritchie, "Qualities for Early Childhood Care and Education in an Age of Increasing Superdiversity and Decreasing Biodiversity," *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 17, no. 1 (2016), doi:10.1177/1463949115627905.

⁴⁰ Ludovica Gambaro, Kitty Stewart, and Jane Waldfogel, "Introduction," in *An Equal Start? Providing Quality Early Education and Care for Disadvantaged Children*, CASE Studies on Poverty, Place and Policy, ed. Gambaro, Stewart and Waldfogel (Chicago: Policy Press, 2014), 15.

⁴¹ E.g., Ministry of Education, "Prior Participation in ECE: Statistics on Children that Regularly Participated in Early Childhood Education Prior to Starting School," <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/early-childhood-education/participation>.

at the age of five or six.⁴² The Taskforce report constantly grouped “Māori, Pasifika and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds” as the targets for increasing participation, and used these categories (two ethnic, one SES) to define “disadvantaged backgrounds.” This quote from *Essay 2: Reprioritising Government Expenditure*⁴³ gives one example:

All children benefit from high-quality early childhood education, but children from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to gain most. In New Zealand, Māori and Pasifika children, and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, participate in early childhood education at levels lower than the national average.⁴⁴

This quote makes a clear connection between disadvantage and the three categories of children. There is a danger in accepting this linkage unproblematically, as it can lead to a deficit approach to working with these children and their families, particularly with Māori and Pasifika families. Joce Nuttall, critiquing an earlier policy for very similar language, expressed this concern well:

[In the policy] we meet with “disadvantaged backgrounds “targeted communities”, and “ethnic communities”. Such phrases reinforce a deeply-held deficit view of Māori and Pasifika communities, at least when measured against middle-class, pākeha benchmarks of social and educational success.⁴⁵

These categories have been useful in various policies to highlight and therefore attempt to address the very real disadvantage that has accrued to Māori and Pasifika families through historical and ongoing racism and discrimination. The tension is that use of these categories can lead to the implication that to be Māori

⁴² The decile system was a method of classifying schools based on the socioeconomic indicators associated with the locations where the students live, for the purpose of allocating extra funds where they were most needed. Schools where the majority of students come from low SES areas were classified as decile one and received the most extra funding, through to decile ten for the schools with the wealthiest students.

⁴³ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 50–71.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁵ Joce Nuttall, *Pathway to the Future? Doing Childcare in the Era of New Zealand's Early Childhood Strategic Plan* (Wellington, NZ: Institute for Early Childhood Studies Victoria University of Wellington, 2005), 7.

or Pasifika is in itself a disadvantage. The problem representation of a lack of participation, when measured by simple participation rates categorised by ethnicity and low SES, implies this deficit approach.

The participation problem representation also contains an underlying binary relating to productive/non-productive adults. This refers both to parents currently raising young children as well as to the future adults that the children will become. To be productive is to be employed in the paid workforce, financially and socially independent. One of the *Key Messages* of the Taskforce report showed that this was the aim for children:

Early investments in citizens will increase their ability to contribute to society as productive adults, equipped and willing to give more than they take.⁴⁶

This was also seen by the Taskforce as a major aim for parents and rationale for government investment in ECEC:

We propose that the Government should continue to make significant investments into early childhood education. There are several reasons. ...

- Children of beneficiaries who attend early childhood education can gain access to services that have a safe, healthy, orderly and stimulating environment, while their parents engage with training or seek to re-enter the workforce.
- Access to high-quality early childhood education services that operate during working hours create greater opportunities for parents to participate in the paid workforce, thus increasing the likelihood that children will grow up protected against socio-economic disadvantage, and parents will remain productively employed throughout their adult lives.⁴⁷

In *Essay 8: Supporting Parental Engagement in Paid Work*⁴⁸ the Taskforce mentioned briefly that “parent-child nurture” was also important:

⁴⁶ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 122–33.

However, the focus on promoting employment should not overlook the importance of direct parent-child nurture. A parent's entry or re-entry into the labour force should not occur too soon in their new child's life, or result from undue financial pressure. Paid parental leave provisions have an important part to play in this.⁴⁹

Given that paid parental leave provisions were available only during the first year of a child's life, it might be inferred that the Taskforce was supporting direct parent-child nurture for infants more than for older children. Further, the overall emphasis of the report was that parents should be productive by engaging in some paid work while they are raising children, as indicated by *Essay 8*, and numerous other references. The thing that was being "produced" was economic prosperity, for themselves and their families, and for society.

In binary opposition to this productive parent is the non-productive parent who "only" raises their children, and perhaps engages in volunteer work. Marilyn Waring captured this lack of recognition of the value of caring work to society in her 1988 book *Counting for Nothing*. She argued that the GDP system of measuring productivity cannot accommodate caring work or other non-monetary contributions to society and therefore the value of this work becomes invisible.⁵⁰ This undervaluing of caring was also present in the Taskforce report. Anne Smith, a Taskforce member, expressed her reservations that the Taskforce report constructed mothers who do not do undertake paid work as beneficiaries or dependents, which did not recognise the importance of their parenting work.⁵¹ The productive adult is the privileged side of this binary, with a non-productive adult being something to be avoided by individuals and prevented or minimised by government. A lack of participation in ECEC was represented as a problem because it prevents parents being productive, and creates a risk that children will not grow up to be productive. ECEC services that do not "release" parents to

⁴⁹ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁰ Marilyn Waring, *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value & What Women are Worth* (Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

⁵¹ Presentation slides, August 2011, Anne B. Smith, ECE Taskforce papers, 2010-2011, r7628 6/9, Hocken Collections, Dunedin.

participate in productive paid employment are therefore not considered to be acceptable solutions to this problem representation.

Low-quality ECEC services

Quality is a concept that has been debated in the ECEC sector for some time. Peter Moss co-edited a book with Alan Pence in 1994 on the topic of quality in early childhood services, and he wrote "that 'quality' in early childhood services is a relative concept, not an objective reality."⁵² He further defined the concept of quality as having two meanings, one analytical and descriptive, and the other evaluative:

In the former meaning, 'quality' is used to analyse, describe and understand the essence or nature of something - what makes it what it is. ... In the evaluative meaning of 'quality', we are trying to assess how well a service performs or, more specifically, to what extent it meets its goals or objectives.⁵³

Using these definitions, applying the concept of quality to ECEC services in an analytical sense requires an understanding of the holistic nature of a service and what makes it distinctive. In an evaluative sense, the concept of quality is used to measure a service and compare the measurements with the values and objectives of a service that have been described (or proscribed). When used in policy, it is the evaluative meaning of the concept of quality that is most often used, and this was the case for the Taskforce report as shown in their working definition of quality:

The Taskforce considers that a useful definition of quality in the New Zealand early childhood education context is as follows: "Quality early childhood education derives from the factors and processes that cause (i.e. are not merely correlated with) good outcomes for children who experience it."⁵⁴

⁵² Peter Moss, "Defining Quality: Values, Stakeholders and Processes," in *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New Approaches to Defining Quality*, ed. Peter Moss and Alan R. Pence, Early Childhood Education series (London: Paul Chapman, 1994), 1.

⁵³ Moss and Pence, eds., *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Service*, 1–2.

⁵⁴ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 41.

Moss and Pence, along with their colleague Gunilla Dahlberg, continued to problematise the concept of quality. Their well-known book *Beyond Quality*, now in its third edition, argued that:

'Quality' is a concept that is neither neutral nor natural. Rather, it is a constructed concept, inscribed with assumptions and values that make it a powerful tool for normalization and control, for governing at a distance and managing performance.⁵⁵

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence summarised the quality research during the 1990s as understanding quality to be "a *subjective, value-based, relative and dynamic* concept, with the possibility of *multiple perspectives* or understanding of what quality is."⁵⁶ They further suggested that:

What seems to underlie the 'problem with quality' is a sense and an unease that what has been approached as an essentially technical issue of expert knowledge and measurement may, in fact, be a philosophical issue of value and dispute. Rather than discovering the truth, and with it certainty, we encounter multiple perspectives and ambivalence."⁵⁷

Quality can therefore be seen as a contested concept that is constructed rather than being a measure of some objective entity, and is based on multiple perspectives and values. Many prominent Aotearoa NZ ECEC authors such as Carmen Dalli, Sarah Farquhar, Helen May, Anne Meade and Linda Mitchell, have supported this view of the concept of quality.⁵⁸ The Taskforce report itself acknowledged the contested nature of the concept:

⁵⁵ Gunilla Dahlberg, Peter Moss and Alan R. Pence, *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of Evaluation*, 3rd ed., Routledge Education Classic Edition series (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2013), ix.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6, emphasis in the original.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Dalli et al., *Quality Early Childhood Education for Under-Two-Year-Olds*; Sarah-Eve Farquhar, "Quality in Early Education and Care: What Do We Mean?," *Early Child Development and Care* 64, no. 1 (1990), doi:10.1080/0300443900640108; May, *Politics in the Playground*; Anne Meade, "A Big Enough Challenge to Engage our Best Thinking: Early Childhood Quality," in *Proceedings of the Seventh Early Childhood Convention*, II, II (Seventh Early Childhood Convention, 1999), 255–62, II; Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

'Quality' is a contested and culturally-specific term. A 2003 European report concluded that "definitions of quality and what should be measured depend on cultural values and wider understandings of childhood."⁵⁹

Despite this general understanding, the concept of quality used in the Taskforce report seemed to be that of a measurable entity which can be defined and regulated for, ensuring certainty of outcomes. For example, the Taskforce had an issue with home-based care services because the relative absence of qualified teachers did not meet their criteria for ensuring quality:

Our understanding of the notion of quality leads us to have some concerns about the quality of education and care that can be provided by home-based service providers under current arrangements. While home-based services have some strong quality characteristics, such as small group sizes and low ratios, they do not have a qualified, professional workforce, which we regard to be essential to good outcomes from early childhood education. Instead, up to twenty educators without high-level early childhood education teaching qualifications are supervised by a single qualified teacher in the role of the network's coordinator.⁶⁰

The notion of quality described in this quote did not show accommodation of "multiple perspectives" of quality but rather relied on set factors that would produce what could be recognised as "good quality." This creates a narrow view of quality, and of the purpose of ECEC itself. Dahlberg et al. argue that broadening the meaning of the concept of quality will not, in itself, change the technical approach to evaluating ECEC or solve the "problem with quality."⁶¹ They locate the concept of quality in a modernist paradigm, so it carries the modernist values of "reliability, dependability, predictability and consistency ... [and] reducing variation."⁶² These values at the core of the quality concept work against values of diversity, experimentation and innovation, and instead promote standardisation and conformity.

⁵⁹ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶¹ Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 94.

The Taskforce used categories of centre-based and home-based services, and teacher-led and parent-led services, to differentiate between ECEC services in terms of quality. With both categorisations, the key issue was the presence or absence of qualified teachers, as noted with the concerns for home-based services quoted above. The Taskforce then combined these categories to create a binary: teacher-led, centre-based services were considered to be “quality” services, and parent-led and/or home-based services were considered to be “other” than quality. *Essay 3: Reforming Funding Mechanisms*⁶³ outlined this proposal:

For both funding and wider purposes, we agree the early childhood education sector comprises two component groups:

- licensed centre-based, teacher-led services
- licensed other services.

We make this fundamental distinction because we consider that high-quality, teacher-led services should be encouraged and supported by the new funding system. We consider that ‘other’ services, (for example, parent-led services) should qualify for some financial support, but should not be the main focus of the new system.⁶⁴

In reality, these ECEC services are not as distinct as presented in this binary based on constructed categories. For example, parent-led services have been shown to be capable of providing quality ECEC,⁶⁵ parents and whānau in parent-led services such as Playcentre and Kōhanga Reo do receive training and support, some parents in parent-led services and some home-based carers have previously trained as teachers, and many staff working in childcare centres are not fully qualified teachers. Bacchi warned about the way binaries oversimplify complex issues,⁶⁶ which certainly occurs in this instance. The binary presents diversity as a negative, in order to govern and regulate the sector.

⁶³ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 72–81.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁵ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

⁶⁶ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*.

Creating certainty

The main problem representations in the Taskforce were that there was a lack of participation in ECEC, especially by Māori, Pasifika and children of low SES backgrounds, and that the quality in ECEC services was variable, with too many low-quality services. These problem representations were underpinned by the concepts of ECEC as a beneficial non-familial service, and quality as a service characteristic that could be measured, improved, and, if the right conditions were found, guaranteed. Specific categories of children were presented as disadvantaged and therefore the target of the participation policy solutions, and specific categories of services were presented as “not-quality” and marginalised in the quality policy solutions. Underlying all of these presuppositions was the predominant rationale for why the government should invest in ECEC: to ensure the economic productivity of adults, both the parents in the current time and the children in the future. The government was looking for certainty that these outcomes would be achieved.⁶⁷ Michael Mintrom, Chair of the Taskforce, stated that “the Government primarily wanted to gain reassurance that this area of public expenditure represented good value for money.”⁶⁸ The Taskforce report reinforced this view:

The Government and taxpayers need assurance that public investments in early childhood education will yield the highest possible returns – for children, their parents and all of society.⁶⁹

The approach of the Taskforce to creating this certainty of return on government investment was underpinned by human capital theory, a theory that was originally developed in the 1960s and used to drive policy in the ECEC sector from the 1990s. The next chapter introduces HCT and its context, and traces the history of how it has come to dominate ECEC policy.

⁶⁷ Helen May and Anne B. Smith, “Connections between Early Childhood Policy and Research: Herbison lecture,” <http://www.nzare.org.nz/herbison-lecture.aspx>, 2016.

⁶⁸ Michael Mintrom, “The Taskforce Reports: Designing Policy for E.C.E.,” *Early Education* 50 (2011): 29.

⁶⁹ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 13.

Chapter Five: Historical context of ECEC policy in Aotearoa NZ

The problem representations contained in the Taskforce report have been identified as a lack of participation in ECEC by some groups of children, and the insufficient and variable quality of ECEC services. The third question in Bacchi's WPR approach turns to history to trace how these particular problem representations came to be dominant in Aotearoa NZ in 2011. According to Bacchi, the purpose of this step is to "reflect on the specific developments and decisions ... that contribute to the formation of identified problem representations [and] to recognise that competing problem representations exist both over time and across space."¹ The history of the problem representations is also a history of the development of the assumptions which underlie the problem representations. Questions can be asked as to how "being productive" as an adult came to be of such importance to our society, and what other ways of contributing to society have been important in the past. Such questions have their answers in the political, economic, social and educational history in Aotearoa NZ, and it is this history that is briefly presented in this chapter.

An important part of this history is the development of HCT and how this theory has come to dominate social and educational policy decision making in the twenty-first century. It has provided a rationale for the government interest in ECEC in general, and shaped the problem representations of participation and quality. Therefore, the history explored here will pay particular attention to the place of HCT, and how it has successfully competed with other theories, approaches or discourses.

This chapter will start with an explanation of the theory and assumptions of HCT, given its central importance to the history of the problem representations. The main part of the chapter then traces "specific developments and decisions" that

¹ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 10.

created the conditions for HCT to become the underpinning theory of choice for education in general and ECEC in particular. This history has three parts: the political context, the economic context, and the context of government policy interest in ECEC and young children in general. The timeframe starts with the formation of political parties in the late nineteenth century, to show the values and underlying principles that drove policy during much of the twentieth century. The end point is nominally the decade of the 1980s, with the next chapter taking up the history of the problem representations more specifically, starting from the education reforms of 1988.

Investing in human capital

Human capital theory arose from the field of liberal economics, prominently supported by the Chicago school of economics in the United States. In the 1960s the Chicago school was a strong advocate for liberal economics ideas at a time when the majority of Western governments followed the Keynesian system of planned economic management. Theodore Shultz was one of the first to introduce the idea of the importance of human capital alongside conventional nonhuman capital, and how this might help solve some of the economics puzzles of the time.² His colleague Gary Becker applied the idea of human capital more specifically to education.³ As a biographer put it, Becker “applied economics to areas that few would have thought feasible.”⁴ Shultz and Becker were some of the first academics to use economics to explain our social world, something that has gradually become commonplace.

The concept of human capital arises from traditional economics theories of production.⁵ In these theories, a person or company invests in capital consisting

² Theodore W. Shultz, “Investment in Human Capital,” *The American Economic Review* 51, no. 1 (1961).

³ Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, With Special Reference to Education*, 3rd ed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁴ Edward P. Lazear, “Gary Becker’s Impact on Economics and Policy †,” *American Economic Review* 105, no. 5 (2015): 80, doi:10.1257/aer.p20151107.

⁵ Becker, *Human Capital*; Shultz; Brian Keeley, *Human Capital: How What You Know Shapes Your Life*, OECD Insights (Paris: OECD, 2007).

of physical goods, which can be sold, or the physical means to produce goods or services, and which will then make (him/them) a profit. Money can be considered capital in this traditional sense. Human capital is a metaphor that compares the knowledge, skills and attributes of a person to physical and monetary capital that is used to generate profit. According to Becker, "activities that influence future ... income by increasing the resources in people ... are called investments in human capital."⁶ There are many things which could "increase the resources in people" such as health care for continued good health, and travel to increase a person's cultural literacy. Education to increase the skills and knowledges of a person is one of the main factors which can be controlled at a population level by a government. Human capital theorists have shown strong mathematical correlations between higher levels of education and higher post-education income levels.⁷ Despite critique,⁸ these analyses have been generally accepted, so the idea that investments in education result in higher future earnings is now virtually unquestioned by policy makers.⁹

Assumptions of human capital theory

Human capital theory is based on the assumptions of neoliberal economics, which Becker termed "modern economics"¹⁰ and Theodora Lightfoot-Rueda and Ruth Peach refer to as "market-oriented economics."¹¹ I will outline three of these

⁶ Becker, *Human Capital*, 11.

⁷ Becker, *Human Capital*; James J. Heckman, "Policies to Foster Human Capital," *Research in Economics* 54, no. 1 (2000), doi:10.1006/reec.1999.0225; James J. Heckman and Dimitriy V. Masterov, "The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children," *Review of Agricultural Economics* 29, no. 3 (2007), doi:10.1111/j.1467-9353.2007.00359.x.

⁸ E.g., Daniel Schugurensky, "1961 Theodore W. Shultz Publishes 'Investment in Human Capital'," <http://schugurensky.faculty.asu.edu/moments/1961schultz.html>.

⁹ Becker, *Human Capital*; Theodora Lightfoot-Rueda, "Human Capital Theory and Shifting Perceptions of Teachers in the United States," in *Global Perspectives on Human Capital in Early Childhood Education: Reconceptualizing Theory, Policy, and Practice*, ed. Theodora Lightfoot-Rueda and Ruth Peach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Margaret Stuart, "Cradle and All; Rocking the Cradle of Wealth: Human Capital Theory and Early Childhood Education in New Zealand, 1999-2008" (PhD, Auckland University of Technology, 2011).

¹⁰ Becker, *Human Capital*, 17.

¹¹ Theodora Lightfoot-Rueda and Ruth L. Peach, "Introduction and Historical Perspective," in Lightfoot-Rueda, Peach, *Global Perspectives*, 8.

assumptions here: that the behaviour of an economy can be predicted by aggregating the responses of individuals without reference to collective action; that individuals are autonomous, rational in their decision making, and seek to maximise their own economic position; and that a minimally regulated market economy is the best way of allowing these individuals to interact in order to achieve the best allocation of scarce resources.

The first assumption, that the behaviour of the economy as a whole is best estimated by aggregating the behaviour of individuals, is an economics approach known as methodological individualism.¹² This is the basis of microeconomics, where analysis starts at an individual or micro level and builds to explain the whole economy or macro level. Methodological individualism assumes that any effect on the economy arising from collective action is the same as aggregating the individual effects. An alternative to this approach was the macroeconomics championed by Keynesian economists, which was the preferred approach for most of the Western economies from World War II until the 1980s. In a macroeconomics approach, economy-wide indicators such as interest rates are used to understand, explain and regulate the economic situation. In contrast, a microeconomics approach creates policy that focuses on developing individual entities rather than regulating how these individuals interact or collaborate with each other. It is worth noting that both approaches are based on capitalism, that is, the separation of capital and the means of production.¹³

The second assumption relates to the nature of the individual at the heart of neoliberal economics, which has been much critiqued for the narrowness of its

¹² Nicholas Wapshott, *Keynes/Hayek: The Clash That Defined Modern Economics* (Carlton North, Vic, Australia: Scribe, 2011); Nesta Devine, *Education and Public Choice: A Critical Account of the Invisible Hand in Education* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); New Zealand Association for Research in Education, "Neoliberalism, Welfare and Education: "The New Zealand Experiment": Critique and Critical Transformations" Paper for AREA Conference, New Orleans (AREA Conference, New Orleans, 2000) unpublished manuscript, www.amat.org.nz/Neoliberalism.pdf.

¹³ Ravi Kumar, "Transformative Criticality and a Pedagogical Framework of Transcendence" (2018), Paper presented at the VIII International Conference on Critical Education, 25-28 July 2018, London, UK.

conception.¹⁴ This individual is able to make autonomous choices, without undue influence or pressure from others. Nesta Devine explains how this individual therefore represents a male of the dominant culture, who is not constrained by society in the same way as other genders or a person of the non-dominant culture.¹⁵ The individual man is considered to make rational choices, which tend to be defined as choosing the option that will return him the maximum economic benefit for the least input. Altruistic behaviour is not expected from this man, as helping others for no personal gain is not seen as a rational decision.¹⁶ It is assumed for the purposes of the neoliberal microeconomics analyses that individuals will be self-interested. This assumption becomes difficult to reconcile with the concepts of love, caring and human rights as motivations for behaviour, in the context of parenting and ECEC.

The third assumption is that the market is the best and therefore preferred method of allocating scarce resources amongst individuals. This assumes that a market left without interference or regulation will come to an equilibrium, and this will be the best possible solution for allocating resources within that market. This neoliberal belief in an eventual market equilibrium has survived despite empirical evidence to the contrary.¹⁷

The assumption of the superiority of the market for resource allocation has been transferred to non-economic spheres of government activity such as the provision of social services, including education.¹⁸ In simplistic terms, neoliberal education policy assumes that allowing students and their families to choose between

¹⁴ E.g., Stuart, "Cradle and All"; Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Theodora Lightfoot-Rueda and Ruth L. Peach, "Introduction and Historical Perspective," in Lightfoot-Rueda, Peach, *Global Perspectives*.

¹⁵ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*.

¹⁶ Wapshott, *Keynes/Hayek*; Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Stuart, "Cradle and All."

¹⁷ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Wapshott, *Keynes/Hayek*; Brian S. Roper, *Prosperity for All? Economic, Social and Political Change in New Zealand since 1935* (Southbank, Vic, Australia: Thomson/Dunmore Press, 2005); Stuart, "Cradle and All"; Jane Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment: A World Model for Structural Adjustment?* (Auckland, NZ: Auckland University Press; Bridget Williams Books, 1995).

¹⁸ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Stuart, "Cradle and All."

competing education providers will ensure the quality of the education provided, since rational individuals will not choose or pay for a poor-quality product. The market competition view of resources allocation creates tensions in ECEC, as it relies on “winners and losers” as a means of making resource allocation decisions. Yet when an ECEC service “loses”, young children and their families are adversely affected. This was clearly illustrated when the ABC chain of ECEC centres went into receivership in 2008, at a time when the company owned around 30 percent of services in Australia, and over 50 percent in some Australian communities.¹⁹ The Australian government was forced to fund a rescue package to keep the centres open while new buyers were sought, as that level of interruption to ECEC services was considered unacceptable. In this case, market failure was unable to be tolerated because the wellbeing and productivity of families were at risk.

These assumptions of methodological individualism, the rational and autonomous chooser, and the primacy of the free market, are the basis for HCT as well as neoliberalism. These assumptions and approaches to economics and policy making were contested during much of the twentieth century, yet became dominant in global politics by the end of that century and into the twenty-first. The conditions that enabled this dominance arose from the changing political, economic and social conditions through the twentieth century. Understanding these changes is important if the hegemonic status of neoliberalism and HCT are to be challenged.

¹⁹ Helen May and Linda Mitchell, *Strengthening Community-Based Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: Report of the Quality Early Childhood Education Project* (Wellington, NZ: NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2009).

Twentieth century historical overview

Politics in Aotearoa NZ has long been dominated by two political parties, Labour and National. Their differing approaches and principles reflect their respective left and right positioning on the political spectrum. During the twentieth century, the National Party, with its conservative policies, held power for the majority of time, interspersed with shorter periods of Labour party governments that introduced radical social change policies.²⁰ Thus the impacts of a change of government have been significant, particularly in relation to policy for women and children in general and ECEC in particular. The dominant economic approach also changed throughout the century, impacting on the way in which different governments supported ECEC. The next three sections of this chapter outline the political and economic context of Aotearoa NZ and the changing rationales for government support for ECEC. A diagrammatic timeline is shown in figure 3, as an aid to understanding the history that follows.

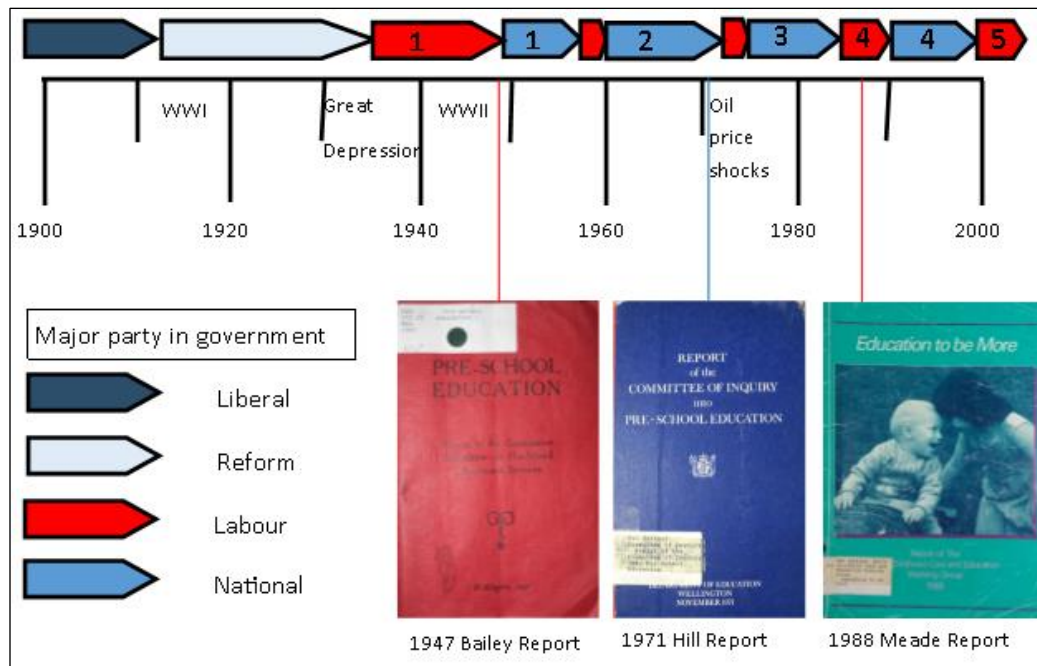


Figure 3. Political timeline of 20th century.

²⁰ Raymond Miller, ed., *New Zealand Government & Politics*, 5th ed (South Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press, 2010); Roper, *Prosperity for All?*; Richard S. Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy: Crown-Māori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa 1900-1950* (Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press, 2004).

Political context: Individual versus state responsibility

The political philosophies of the two major political parties in Aotearoa NZ were developed over the course of the twentieth century. This section traces the development of these political philosophies, and the decisions and policies that flowed from them. The changing political conditions are highlighted here to show that the neoliberal and HCT discourses that were dominant at the end of the twentieth century and into the next were not the only alternatives. The analysis also intends to “provide insights into the power relations that affect the success of some problem representations and the defeat of others.”²¹

New Zealand has been governed by a democratically elected government since the 1850s. Initially the government was made of independent members who were primarily representatives for provincial issues. The Liberals were the first political party to hold office, from 1891-1912, and they were noted for implementing significant economic and social changes. The Liberal party espoused a rhetoric of egalitarianism and looking after the “ordinary New Zealander,” and supported individual land ownership and export-driven economic measures.²² The second political party, the Reform party, was formed in 1905 and was a politically conservative party that positioned itself as being against socialism. Similar to the Liberal party, it supported individual land and home ownership, and also advocated for public service reform. The Reform party had the support of farmers and those urban workers seeking social mobility, especially when the party took strong measures against major industrial disputes. Those same actions earned them the enmity of trade unionists and other labour supporters. The “Reform Era” lasted until the Labour party won the 1935 election.²³

²¹ Carol Bacchi, “Policy and Discourse: Challenging the Construction of Affirmative Action as Preferential Treatment,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 1 (2004): 11, doi:10.1080/1350176042000164334.

²² Ministry for Culture and Heritage/Manatū Taonga, “A History of New Zealand 1769-1914,” in *New Zealand History*, ed. Ministry for Culture and Heritage/Manatū Taonga, accessed March 17, 2016, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/history-of-new-zealand-1769-1914#heading7>.

²³ Ibid.

The Labour party was formed in 1916 from the Social Democrat Party and a number of other labour movement affiliations. The party espoused socialist philosophies of collectivism and supported the rights of the working class. The first Labour government was elected in 1935 as a response to the deprivations of the Great Depression. Labour expanded government provision of health, housing, education and public infrastructure, to provide a welfare state where people had rights as citizens to be looked after from “the cradle to the grave.”²⁴ In this context, a 1939 statement on education as a citizen’s right, written by the then Director of Education, Clarence Beeby, and the Minister of Education, Peter Fraser, has been much quoted since:

The government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every child: whatever his level of ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers.²⁵

This quote has underpinned the philosophy of state educational provision since the 1930s, as a form of state-society consensus on education.²⁶ In many ways it encapsulates the socialist philosophy of the Labour party.

As a response to the election of the Labour government, the Liberals/United Party and the Reform party merged in 1936 to create the National Party. It was founded on the principle of “policy based on sound finance and private enterprise.”²⁷ The National Party won the 1949 election, and was then in government for much of the remainder of the twentieth century, punctuated with shorter periods in

²⁴ Peter Aimer, “Labour Party,” in Ministry for Culture & Heritage/Manatū Taonga, *Te Ara*; Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party, 1916-2016* (Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press, 2017).

²⁵ Original quote in Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, E1, 1939, p. 2, cited in Helen May, “A 'right as a citizen to a free [early childhood] education' 1930s-2000s,” *Childrenz Issues: Journal of the Children's Issues Centre* 9, no. 2 (2005): 21.

²⁶ C. E. Beeby and Paula Wagemaker, *The Biography of an Idea: Beeby on Education*, Educational Research series no. 69 (Wellington, NZ: NZCER, 1992); May, “A Right as a Citizen.”

²⁷ Neill Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy: A History of the Vote in New Zealand* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2003), 150.

opposition to a Labour government (see figure 3 above, p. 81).²⁸ The new National Party continued to hold in tension the two strands of liberalism and conservatism that characterised the founding parties, and the most successful governments were those that were able to balance these interests. The National Party gained popularity amongst its supporters for firm action against “militant unionism” such as that expressed in one of the country’s most widespread industrial confrontations, the 1951 Waterfront Dispute. This reinforced the traditional party stance against socialism and the labour movement. Long-serving Prime Minister Keith Holyoake summarised the National Party’s principles in 1959 thus:

The National Party believes in a property-owning democracy. ... We believe in the maximum degree of personal freedom and the maximum degree of individual choice for our people. We believe in the least interference necessary with individual rights, and the least possible degree of state interference.²⁹

Robert Muldoon was Prime Minister and Minister of Finance from 1975-84, and was known for his autocratic and aggressive leadership style as well as a strongly interventionist approach to economic management. By the end of his government’s term in office, his approach to economic management was increasingly frustrating to many who held traditional National Party views of minimal government and rational incrementalism in policy making.³⁰ At that time, younger National Members of Parliament were espousing free-market ideas, which were more in tune with the traditional party emphasis on personal freedom, individual choice and less state intervention. In an unexpected turn of events, these free-market ideas were implemented by the Labour government under David Lange, which defeated Muldoon and the National Party in 1984.

²⁸ Colin James, “National,” in Miller, *New Zealand Government & Politics*; National Party, “National’s History: from National Party website,” accessed November 20, 2017, <https://www.national.org.nz/history>.

²⁹ Colin James, “National Party,” in Ministry for Culture & Heritage/Manatū Taonga, *Te Ara*, 4.

³⁰ Colin James, “National”; National Party, “History.”

Comparing the two parties and their impact in the middle of the twentieth century, the Labour party held government office³¹ for less time than the National Party, yet their terms were generally associated with rapid change. The first Labour government, from 1935, consolidated and expanded the welfare state, the fourth government, from 1984, started the dismantling of the welfare state in the name of neoliberalism. Further, the fifth government, from 1999, introduced many reforms in ECEC which earned them the nickname of the “nanny state.”³² In contrast, the National governments have tended to make incremental policy changes, in line with their conservative political roots.

Both the third National government under Muldoon (1975-84) and the fourth Labour government under Lange (1984-90) were anomalies in the general philosophical approach of each party. For example, the third National government imposed greater state control on the economy and funded large state asset building; the fourth Labour government deregulated the economy and sold off state assets. These two governments created divisions within each majority party, between those who supported the new policy directions and those who wished to return to the traditional party philosophies.³³ In both cases this division led to election losses and a return to power for the other major party.

Economic context: From Keynesianism to neoliberalism

The anomalous fourth Labour government espoused neoliberal economics ideas, in line with a global trend away from the Keynesian economics approaches that had held sway during the middle years of the twentieth century. The neoliberal economics approach was a modern version of classical liberal economics that had been dominant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This approach relied on government financial austerity and minimally regulated markets to set

³¹ 1935-1949, 1957-1960, 1972-1975, 1984-1990, 1999-2008, 2017-.

³² Roper, *Prosperity for All?*; May, *Politics in the Playground*; Peter Aimer, “Labour,” in Miller, *New Zealand Government & Politics*.

³³ Franks and McAloon, *Labour*; Gerald Grace, “Welfare Labourism versus the New Right: the Struggle in New Zealand's Education Policy,” *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 1, 1-2 (1991), doi:10.1080/0962021910010103; Colin James, “National”; Meade, “Foot in the Door”; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

an appropriate equilibrium of prices and employment levels. Friedrich von Hayek from the Austrian school of economics, a serious and conservative personality, was a champion of this style of monetary policy. He was very much influenced in his approach by having experienced crippling inflation in Austria after World War I.³⁴ In contrast, the charismatic John Maynard Keynes from England championed active management of the economy through manipulating monetary policy and government spending, which came to be known as Keynesian demand management. His goal was to reduce the misery caused by high levels of unemployment, as experienced in the Great Depression.³⁵ During the 1930s there was much public debate between these two men and their opposing ideas. At stake was convincing governments how they should manage economies, to avoid a repeat of the social ills of the Great Depression.

The recovery of the Western world's economies after World War II, through increased government spending, gave empirical support to Keynesian demand management. This evidence, combined with Keynes' persuasive personality, contributed to Keynesian economics becoming the dominant economics approach during the long post-war economic boom. The approach became the "modern economics" espoused by Western nation states. Hayek, along with his liberal colleagues, formed a minority interest group to keep alive the liberal economics ideas.³⁶

Economic growth with only minor recessions continued through the 1950s and the 1960s.³⁷ This was taken globally as proof of the efficacy of Keynesian demand management. However, productivity started to slow during the 1960s, and then in the 1970s the increasing of oil prices by the Arab oil-producing nations triggered massive inflation throughout the world's economies. A situation known as "stagflation" occurred in many economies, where high levels of inflation were accompanied by low or nil economic growth and rising unemployment. This was

³⁴ Wapshott, *Keynes/Hayek*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Wapshott, *Keynes/Hayek*; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

³⁷ Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

not a situation that was supposed to occur within the Keynesian economics paradigm. Alternatives were looked for, and these ideas were supplied by Hayek's group and the economists of the Chicago school of economics in the form of neoliberalism. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the UK from 1979, and Ronald Reagan, President of the United States from 1981, were prominent supporters of neoliberal economics ideas and therefore had a large influence on the global rejection of Keynesian demand management.³⁸ The fourth Labour government, from 1984, was the first to introduce these neoliberal ideas into Aotearoa NZ, and it did so comprehensively and rapidly through restructuring and deregulating the economy, the public service, and social systems such as education and health.³⁹ The impact and further development of these neoliberal ideas, and their contribution to the development of the problem representations in the Taskforce report, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Social context: Support for ECEC

The twentieth century brought many social changes alongside the changes in political and economic management. The focus here is on government social policy and how it influenced, and was influenced by, changes in society, especially attitudes to young children and their care and education. Changing societal attitudes towards the roles of women as mothers and as providers for their young children also contributed to changing government interest in ECEC provision.

Government interest in young children and their wellbeing, upbringing and education increased dramatically over the twentieth century. Helen May has analysed this history through numerous publications.⁴⁰ As introduced in chapter 2, she uses a framework of "political gazes" to analyse the changing rationales for government support of ECEC.⁴¹ May describes the political gaze as the main lens through which the government views social and educational policy for early

³⁸ Roper, *Prosperity for All?*; Wapshott, *Keynes/Hayek*.

³⁹ Peter Aimer, "Labour"; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*; Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*.

⁴⁰ E.g., May, "A Right as a Citizen"; May, "Minding, Working, Teaching"; May, *Politics in the Playground*; May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*; Helen May, "'Blue Skies' Talk in the 'Playground'," *Delta* 54, 1&2 (2002).

⁴¹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; May, "Blue Skies."

childhood and therefore determines what problems will be targeted for change. The political gaze changes over time and earlier gazes become less important, although they do continue and overlap. These gazes, therefore, are useful to explore the discourses that contributed to different problem representations of ECEC over time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the government was concerned with infant mortality and health, and therefore children were viewed through a physical gaze. Non-government organisations that focused on the physical health of children were encouraged, and sometimes financially supported to a small degree. This was the era of the Plunket Society, founded by Truby King, which focused on improving infant mortality through educating mothers.⁴² Specially trained Plunket nurses visited new mothers to monitor the growth and development of their infants and provide advice based on the latest scientific knowledge available. There was an underlying eugenics discourse in this work, which focused on producing physically strong and healthy (and therefore also moral), white, British citizens.⁴³ Kindergartens also strongly promoted hygiene habits, which were associated with moral and character development. It was hoped that the children would pass these habits onto their wider families.⁴⁴ Through Plunket and Kindergarten, mothers could be taught the “right” techniques for moulding the ideal, moral, future citizen. Alternatively, if the mothers were found to be inadequate, Kindergartens were available to rescue the children. The government was content to let these largely volunteer organisations carry out this work, giving approval to the work but not taking responsibility for it.

The two World Wars, and the Great Depression in between, produced mental health stresses and psychological disorders for large numbers of people. At the same time, there was growth in the science of psychology and it was being

⁴² May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*; Margaret Stuart, “Managing Mothers to Build their Child's Worth: The Economic Positioning of the Maternal Role,” *Global Studies of Childhood* 2, no. 4 (2012), doi:10.2304/gsch.2012.2.4.319.

⁴³ Maxine Stephenson, “Creating New Zealanders: Education and the Formation of the State and the Building of the Nation” (PhD, University of Auckland, 2000).

⁴⁴ May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*.

extended to young children and their education by people in England such as Anna Freud and Susan Isaacs.⁴⁵ The Aotearoa NZ government's political gaze broadened from being concerned only with physical health to encompassing emotional and mental health, wellbeing and resilience. This gaze coincided with the baby boom after World War II, and followed on from the progressive education movement which emphasised the psychological benefits of play- and activity-based programmes for young children.⁴⁶ Mothers had been seen as responsible for the physical survival and wellbeing of their children and for bringing up morally upright citizens, and to this was now added children's optimal emotional development. ECEC services provided safe spaces for children to play, and opportunities to educate mothers about emotional and psychological development. Therefore, ECEC services became a small part of the development of the welfare state, as a complement to the child-rearing work that mothers were undertaking. The first government report specifically concerning ECEC was produced in 1947, commissioned by the Labour government.⁴⁷ The "Bailey report"⁴⁸ recommended that a state pre-school system be set up as part of the national school system, although attendance would remain voluntary. This was to be based on the kindergarten model, and the Kindergartens and new Playcentres would be incorporated into this state system. The rationale given was that:

since the health and right nurturing of children must increasingly be a community responsibility as well as a parental one, the community should support, reinforce, and supplement the resources of the home.⁴⁹

The Committee would not recommend the full-day nursery model, except in special circumstances, because this would deprive children of the "vital experiences that only the normal home can provide."⁵⁰ The socialist Labour

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ May, *Politics in the Playground*; May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*; Stover, "Play's Progress"; Gwen L. Somerset and Naomi Morton, *Sunshine and Shadow: The Life of Gwendolen Lucy Somerset* (Auckland, NZ: New Zealand Playcentre Federation, 1988).

⁴⁷ Consultative Committee on Pre-School Educational Services, *The Bailey report*.

⁴⁸ Named after the Chair of the Committee, Colin Bailey.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

government at that time was prepared to supplement the early education of the home, but not to replace it and risk psychological damage to children.

Integration of preschool education never occurred, as the first National government, elected in 1949, declined to implement these recommendations, consistent with their philosophy of family responsibility for children. Further support for the view that it was a mother's responsibility to bring up children came from John Bowlby's theory of attachment.⁵¹ Long-day care by someone other than the mother was theorised as damaging for the child's development, and the National government was not about to challenge popular views on this. The country was experiencing what was, on the surface, a golden era of prosperity, with comfortable and rising living standards for the majority of citizens, "peaceful" race relations between Pākehā and Māori, and settled social conditions.⁵² Government policy was designed for maintenance, not change.

The 1960s and 70s saw a growing awareness that not all citizens were as content as had been portrayed, and activist groups started to push for greater rights and freedoms for groups such as Māori, homosexuals, and women. For feminists, provision of state-funded childcare was key to women's emancipation.⁵³ The National government set up a review of pre-school education in 1971, but the Committee did not read the mood for change well.⁵⁴ The Hill report⁵⁵ recommended that the government extend support for half-day "educationally-focused" services run by voluntary organisations, such as the Kindergartens and Playcentres. The 1971 Committee said that:

The need is not for direct State control [as was the view of the 1947 Committee] but for increased State assistance and for a closer working relationship between the voluntary bodies and the Department of Education.⁵⁶

⁵¹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Stuart, "Managing Mothers."

⁵² Hill, *Māori and the State*; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

⁵³ Megan Cook, "Women's Movement: The Women's Liberation Movement," in Ministry for Culture and Heritage/Manatū Taonga, *Te Ara*; May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁵⁴ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁵⁵ Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education, *The Hill report*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

Day nurseries and other childcare services were positioned as being care facilities only, and therefore any support from the government should come from outside the field of preschool education. The rationale for supporting the educational services was based on optimising child development, by “providing a service which is an extension of home”⁵⁷, complementing the mother’s work of child-rearing. This status-quo view was seen as disappointing by childcare advocates.⁵⁸

The political gaze for ECEC during the 1970s slowly turned towards equity issues, which was the dominant gaze of the Labour government from 1984. The divide between “care” and “education” services was removed from administration in wide-ranging reforms, and provision of childcare as well as preschool education became accepted as a responsibility of government.⁵⁹ The discourse of children’s rights was another equity issue that became prominent, after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) was adopted in 1989 and ratified by New Zealand in 1993.⁶⁰

The equity gaze of the politicians was also balanced by an economic gaze, which grew from the neoliberal restructuring of the late 1980s. This gaze became progressively stronger during the 1990s and 2000s as HCT arguments began to be applied to education at tertiary level⁶¹ and then to earlier levels of education.⁶² By the mid-2000s, the economic political gaze for policy in ECEC was very strong. This time period also saw a significant increase in policy activity relating to ECEC, which will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁸ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁵⁹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Meade and Podmore, *ECE Policy Co-ordination*.

⁶⁰ United Nations, “Convention on the Rights of the Child,” United Nations, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>.

⁶¹ Patrick Fitzsimons, “Human Capital Theory and Participation in Tertiary Education in New Zealand,” in *Education Policy in New Zealand: The 1990s and Beyond*, ed. Mark Olssen and Kay Morris Matthews (Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press, 1997).

⁶² Stuart, “Cradle and All.”

Poised for change

This chapter has started tracing the history of the two problem representations of the Taskforce report, to show the influences that have led to the dominance of these problem representations over others. Focusing mainly on the early to middle twentieth century, the history shows that the development of the two-party political system in Aotearoa NZ has had a large influence on decisions regarding government support for ECEC. The National Party, in government for the majority of the time period, advocated for ECEC to be the responsibility of the family, with support from voluntary ECEC organisations. The Labour Party, in contrast, advocated for a collective approach to welfare in general. This led, in the late 1980s and beyond, to policies focused on increased government support for ECEC, as will be shown in the next chapter.

The way that government economic management changed created the conditions for HCT to become prominent. For the middle part of the century the economics orthodoxy was Keynesian macroeconomics which focused on government management of the economy as a whole, regardless of which political party held office. During the 1980s, following international trends, the economics approach changed to neoliberal microeconomics where the government's role was to set the parameters within which a free-market economy could develop with minimal government interference. The focus became preparing individuals to be productive within the economy, rather than the economy adjusting to accommodate individuals. The idea of developing individuals' human capital therefore became more important and was explored further in policy, including ECEC, from the 1990s.

The third focus of the history in this chapter has been May's political gazes, which highlight the different problem representations that governments have constructed with regards to young children. The gazes, or problem representations, have variously been a concern for children's physical wellbeing, their psychological and emotional wellbeing, their equitable treatment in society, and more recently, an economics concern to make the most efficient use of government expenditure. The next chapter continues this history from the

education reforms of the late 1980s, showing the influences and tensions that shaped the problem representations in the new millennium.

Chapter Six: Developing problem representations

The main timeframe of this thesis encompasses the fourth and fifth Labour governments, and the fourth and fifth National governments, that is, from 1984-2017. This chapter focuses on the political, economic and ECEC policy contexts from 1984 to the Taskforce report in 2011. The problem representations of raising participation and increasing quality started to become prominent from this time, and the development of these problem representations was shaped by the economics political gaze¹ of the governments from the 1980s.

The economic gaze could be said to have started with the fourth Labour government (1984-90), with the deregulation of the economy and the restructuring of the public service using neoliberal principles. The fourth National government (1990-99) then continued with the neoliberal policy direction.² The fifth Labour government (1999-2008) dissociated themselves from the hard-line neoliberal policies of the previous Labour government, and instead advocated “third way” politics.³ This was a political compromise designed to modify and soften, but not undo, the neoliberal political and economic structures that had been put in place during the previous two decades. The fifth National government (2008-17) continued to position itself as centre-right on the political continuum, based on the liberal and conservative strands that have been a feature of the

¹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; May, “Blue Skies.”

² The voting system in Aotearoa NZ changed from “First Past the Post” to the “Mixed Member Proportional” [MMP] system in 1996, and since then all governments have been coalitions, led by one of the two major parties. See Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*; Michael Mintrom and Phillipa Norman, “Participating in Agenda Setting,” in Miller, *New Zealand Government & Politics*.

³ John A. Codd, “Education Policy and the Challenges of Globalisation: Commercialisation or Citizenship?” in Codd, Sullivan, *Education Policy Directions*; Olssen, Codd and O’Neill, *Education Policy*; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

party. This government was more moderate in its approach than the fourth National government had been.⁴

This chapter introduces the most influential ECEC policies and reports during this period, and how these policies were shaped by their contexts. The historical analysis aims to show how the problem representations of participation and quality developed through and because of these policies. The particular policies reviewed are *Before Five*⁵ and its preceding report *Education to be More*,⁶ the Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education's (SPECE) *Ngā Huarahi Aratai/Pathways to the Future*,⁷ and the *20 Hours Free ECE* funding policy announced in 2004 and introduced in 2007.⁸ This discussion sets the context for the analysis of the impacts of these policies and problem representations on Playcentre, which is the subject of the following two chapters. A diagrammatic overview of the timeframe and the major ECEC policies is shown in figure 4, below.

⁴ Colin James, "National."

⁵ Department of Education, *Before Five*.

⁶ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*.

⁷ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*.

⁸ Dalli, "Critical Ecology"; May, MS-Papers-10796-52.

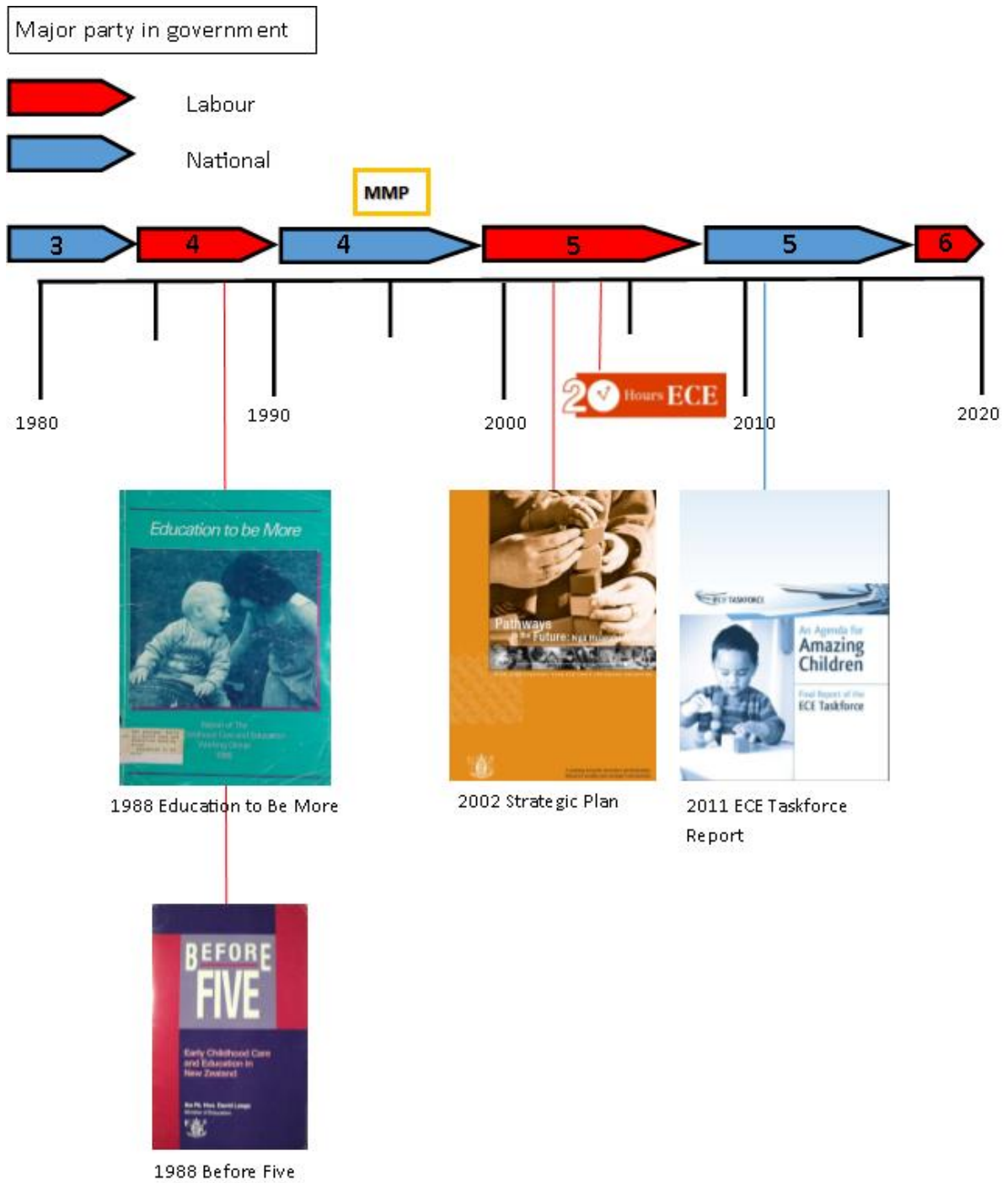


Figure 4. ECEC policy timeline 1980-2020.

Before Five

In its first term from 1984, the fourth Labour government commenced the “structural adjustment” of the country using neoliberal principles. The economy was deregulated to open it up to internal and global market forces. Departments of the public service were restructured to separate the provision of services from policy-making functions in newly created ministries. State-owned enterprises were created from the old government departments and these were expected to run infrastructure services, such as the railways and telecommunication services, as profit-maximising businesses.⁹ In its second term from 1987, the government moved its attention to social policy, including education. A Royal Commission on Social Policy had already been set up in 1986, but by the time its report was released, the direction of social policy had already been broadly decided.¹⁰ Neoliberal principles, rooted in an economics perspective, were to be applied to governance areas traditionally not associated with economics.¹¹

The Treasury brief to the incoming government in 1987 was in two volumes, with one volume dedicated to a review of education and recommendations for change.¹² Such a large briefing on education coming from the finance department rather than the Department of Education indicates how influential Treasury was in the processes of government at that time. Use of HCT in the briefing was explicit, with the view that developing human capital was an individual and not a governmental responsibility. The briefing argued that education should be considered a private good, since the benefits accrued to the individual, and therefore should be considered a commodity like any other. It was recommended that the government encourage a market approach to education, to allow this commodity to be traded and for market forces to allocate resources in the fairest way possible. Further, the government should be involved in policy, regulation

⁹ Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

¹⁰ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

¹¹ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*.

¹² The Treasury, *Government Management: Brief to the Incoming Government* (Wellington, NZ: The Treasury, 1987).

and funding of education, but not necessarily in the actual provision.¹³ In terms of ECEC, the Treasury was in favour of the “normal” family taking responsibility for child-rearing, with the government providing some targeted assistance for disadvantaged families, and with richer families being able to buy assistance on the childcare market.¹⁴

The Treasury view was in tension with the Labour government’s equity themes for social policy, which were concerned with *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, women’s equality and human rights, Pasifika peoples and supporting families.¹⁵ Childcare was a key policy lever within several of those themes, and it was the Labour government’s policy to ensure that quality child care was widely available and accessible to all. This perspective saw ECEC as a human right and as a public good, rather than the Treasury and HCT perspective of ECEC as a personal choice and benefit.

In 1987 the re-elected Labour government announced a major review of the administration of education, with the intention of restructuring according to neoliberal principles as had been occurring in the rest of the public sector. The three education sectors – compulsory schooling, early childhood, tertiary – were reviewed in that order. Each review was carried out by a government-appointed working group, and was followed by a published government policy response. The report *Administering for Excellence* and the subsequent *Tomorrow’s Schools* policy¹⁶ set the basic structure that was subsequently adapted to the early childhood and tertiary sectors. This structure was to replace the Department of Education with a smaller, policy-focused Ministry of Education. Budgets and decision making were to be devolved to individual self-managing schools, which would be governed by Boards of Trustees made up of elected volunteers from the school’s parent community. Schools would compete with each other for students,

¹³ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Grace, “Welfare Labourism; The Treasury, *Government Management*.

¹⁴ The Treasury, *Government Management*.

¹⁵ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*.

¹⁶ Taskforce to Review Education Administration, *Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education [The Picot Report]* (Wellington, NZ: Government Printer, 1988); Department of Education, *Tomorrow’s Schools: The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand* (Wellington, NZ: Government Printer, 1988).

and would be funded for the number of students attending. Internally, the government signalled that it was going to restructure along the lines recommended by the *Administering for Excellence* report, and this was to be taken into account by the other working parties, including the one reviewing ECEC.¹⁷

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Working Group was set up in 1988 by the Cabinet Social Equity Committee. Anne Meade, an ECEC academic who was seconded to an advisory role in the Prime Minister's office, was appointed chair. The ECCE Working Group membership consisted of government officials and three members of Māori and Pasifika communities. The subsequent report, *Education to be More*,¹⁸ recommended self-managing early childhood services that would be funded by, and accountable to, the new Ministry of Education. The new ECEC model made no distinction between the various types of early childhood services such as Playcentres or childcare centres, and for administration purposes, all services that could meet the licensing requirements would be funded using a universal formula. This model of funding had been suggested in the Hill report in 1971; however, without the context of the wider education changes, that recommendation had not been implemented.¹⁹

The government response was the *Before Five* policy²⁰ which accepted the majority of the recommendations from *Education to be More*. This response implied the government was accepting the equity focus of the working group, even though the language of the *Before Five* document represented the problem as one of developing human capital through ECEC. For example, in the policy, ECEC was positioned as the first step towards the educational achievements that would produce a "successful" (i.e., economically productive and independent) adult in the future, as David Lange, the Prime Minister and Minister for Education, said in his foreword:

¹⁷ Anne Meade, Working Party Papers on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), 1988, MS-Papers-9006-04, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁸ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*, often referred to as the Meade report, after the chair.

¹⁹ Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education, *The Hill report*.

²⁰ Department of Education, *Before Five*.

Research shows that resources put into early childhood care and education have proven results. Not only do they enhance the individual child's learning, the advantages gained help create success in adult life. Improvements in this sector are an investment in the future. Our children are our future. They need a good start in life.²¹

The framing of the policy using HCT was a political compromise, giving a rationale for the new model that would meet the government's social equity goals and still be acceptable to the strong neoliberal faction within government.²² Policy aimed at developing human capital was the meeting point of these views.

Participation problem representation

At the time the *Before Five* policy was developed, the government emphasis was on access to ECEC, rather than participation. The ECCE Working Group terms of reference included the task of making recommendations on "the role and responsibility of the government in relation to... the need for more equitable access to childhood care and education."²³ The Working Group articulated the values on which they based their recommendations, and again the language was that of access to ECEC rather than participation:

We strongly support:

- flexibility and diversity in early childhood care and education
- community involvement in decision making, in resource allocation, and in accountability procedures
- responsiveness to consumer needs
- maximum accessibility to services
- increased affordability of services
- promotion of the rights of children and families²⁴

²¹ Ibid., 1.

²² Meade, "Foot in the Door."

²³ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*, iv.

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

The problem representation of a lack of access to ECEC is different to that of a lack of participation in ECEC. The former problem representation leads to policies that aim to increase the affordability of ECEC, and to provide more places for children whose families would like to use ECEC services, especially where ECEC places are not available or there are long waiting lists. This has been the problem representation for many European countries for many years,²⁵ and was also the problem representation of *Education to be More*. The problem representation of a lack of participation, in contrast, focuses on the children and the families. Policies in this case aim to enable or persuade families to participate in ECEC. Some policies would be similar, for example removing barriers such as the high costs of ECEC. However, with a problem representation of access rather than participation, more choice and autonomy are assigned to the families as to whether or not to engage with ECEC.

Quality problem representation: Quality

The issue of the quality of ECEC services had been of concern to the sector and researchers for some time previous to *Before Five*.²⁶ A literature review by Dalli et al.²⁷ categorised research on ECEC quality into three waves. In the first wave, from the 1960s, research was predominantly focused on demonstrating that childcare was not harmful for children, to counter the dominant theories of that time which positioned mothers as the only suitable primary carers of children.²⁸ The second wave of research, starting from the 1970s, sought to identify key elements of the environment that would result in quality ECEC. The third wave of research, from the late 1980s, broadened the view of quality to include ecological and sociocultural perspectives, acknowledging that quality could mean different things to different people. According to Dalli et al., at the time that *Before Five* was published, the main research around quality in ECEC was focused on defining

²⁵ Gambaro, Stewart and Waldfogel, eds., *An Equal Start?; OECD, Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris: OECD, 2001).

²⁶ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

²⁷ Dalli et al., *Quality ECE for Under-Two-Year-Olds*.

²⁸ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

the service elements that were necessary for ensuring quality. The concept of quality having multiple contextual definitions was just beginning to be discussed.

The problem representation of *Education to be More* and *Before Five* constructed quality as something that could be achieved by regulating for a set of standards, relating to the quality factors that research had identified. Such regulation can be expensive for government, which might have contributed to the different language used in the report and the policy. *Education to be More* often used the phrases “good-quality services” and “adequate standards,” whereas the government response in *Before Five* used the phrase “minimum standards of quality.”²⁹ During the development of *Before Five*, there was a lot tension in government between supporters of ECEC and the Treasury view that ECEC was a family responsibility and therefore government costs should be constrained.³⁰ Setting “minimum” requirements appeared to be the compromise.

The quality system recommended by *Education to be More* and adopted by *Before Five* had two tiers: the first was the National Guidelines or “minimum standards” for licensing, and the second was a charter that set out extra “quality” features for a particular service. *Education to be More* explained the charter concept in this way:

10.2.1 The charter will act as a two-way "contract": between the service and its community (the parents/whanau); and between the service and the government. It will set out the objectives of the service, within the government's overall national guidelines for early childhood.

10.2.2 The charter, then, is the meeting point between community needs and national standards for early childhood services. It provides the opportunity for parents and community members to clearly identify early childhood needs as they see them and to design a service to meet those needs.³¹

The further problem representation contained within the charter was that an ECEC service should be responsive to its community’s needs, and therefore

²⁹ Department of Education, *Before Five*, 25.

³⁰ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Meade, “Foot in the Door.”

³¹ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*, 50.

opportunities needed to be provided for the community to become involved. The two-tier model that was implemented brought these two problem representations together – that quality should be improved through standard setting, and through local negotiation. However, the incoming National government replaced the charter with a national *Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices* late in 1990, and removed this second tier.

National directions

The National government elected in October 1990 inherited an economy in recession, due to the global economic trend at that time.³² Following the neoliberal economic approach of financial austerity as a response to recession, the government immediately started to reduce its expenditure. As social spending was one of the biggest areas of government expenditure, this was a primary target. It was also in line with the neoliberal idea of the state as a welfare safety net for those most in need rather than providing welfare for all, which became the basis for the National government's redesign of the welfare system. The 1990 December Social Policy Initiative and 1991 Budget included radical cuts to welfare benefit payments, reduced ECEC funding, and a new surcharge for retirement pension payments. The Minister of Finance explained the rationale for the changes in her Budget speech:

We had three urgent objectives.

The first was to reform the labour market to give New Zealand one of the most dynamic industrial relations frameworks in the world. That reform is now in place.

The second was to redesign the Welfare State, and tonight we move from the design phase to implementation.

The third was to put firmly behind us the fiscal problems which have plagued previous governments and hampered the progress of New Zealand.³³

³² Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

³³ Ruth Richardson, Budget 1991: Honourable Ruth Richardson, Minister of Finance, 30 July 1991, R18491568, National Archives, Wellington, 20.

This Budget had profound effects on the social setting of Aotearoa NZ, and was later shown to be a key factor in rapidly rising poverty and inequality rates.³⁴

The education initiatives in the 1991 Budget clearly showed the influence of HCT, with its future focus and emphasis on the role of education in producing economically productive (employed) adults:

Education is a key investment in our economic future. The Government is determined to provide an environment that enables businesses and individuals to develop internationally competitive and innovative skills.³⁵

The specific initiatives for ECEC were summarised as:

- The Parents as First Teachers initiative will receive \$945,000 funding.
- Early childhood funding is maintained, except for a reduction for under-two-year olds. Low-income parents will continue to receive financial assistance for childcare.
- Kindergartens will be bulk funded for salaries from 1 February 1992.
- The 1990 early childhood education regulations have been simplified to ensure resources go into learning, not buildings.
- Staffing and qualification demands have been eased, but quality standards are maintained.³⁶

The political optimism in this announcement glossed over some issues that were of concern to the sector. The *Before Five* funding package had set differential rates for over- and under-two-year olds, with the younger children's rate being higher to account for the regulated lower staff-to-children ratio.³⁷ The Budget reduction was in the order of 40% for under-two-year olds, which severely affected those services that had already budgeted fees and staffing levels based on the higher

³⁴ Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*; Jonathan Boston, "Child Poverty in New Zealand: Why It Matters and How It Can Be Reduced," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 46, no. 9 (2014), doi:10.1080/00131857.2014.931002.

³⁵ Richardson, Budget 1991, 30 July 1991, R18491568, National Archives, 20.

³⁶ Lockwood Smith, *Education Policy: Investing in People, Our Greatest Asset* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 1991), 4.

³⁷ Department of Education, *Education Gazette* Vol. 68, No. 16, 1 Sept 1989, (Government Printer, 1989).

rate.³⁸ Further, stating that funding levels had been maintained hid the fact that the *Before Five* funding package had scheduled funding increases over a number of years, and this Budget stopped those staged increases. "Easing the qualification demands" was another concern for the sector, and this change led to a system that was shown by the end of the decade to be unworkable,³⁹ as will be further discussed in chapter 8. The other initiatives were also contested, particularly the Parents as First Educators initiative and the bulk funding for Kindergartens. While they are important parts of ECEC history in Aotearoa NZ, they are not of direct relevance to this thesis and so will not be discussed here. Interested readers are referred to May's history in *Politics in the Playground*.⁴⁰

The overall education strategy of the National government was clearly based on HCT. The strategy document released in 1994, *Education for the 21st Century*,⁴¹ listed these "National Aims for the 21st Century":

- A community of shared values.
- A sound foundation in the early years for future learning and achievement.
- High levels of achievement in essential learning areas and essential skills throughout the compulsory schooling years.
- Excellence in tertiary education, postgraduate study, and research.
- Attainment of qualifications to enable all to participate successfully in the changing technological and economic environment.
- A highly skilled workforce at enterprise and industry level to enhance New Zealand's international competitiveness.
- Equality of educational opportunity for all to reach their potential and take their full place in society.

³⁸ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

³⁹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Anne Meade, Papers - Early Childhood Qualifications and Regulations Project, 1998, MS-Papers-9006-25, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴⁰ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁴¹ Ministry of Education, *Education for the 21st Century* (Wellington, NZ: Learning Media, 1994).

- Success in learning for those with special needs.
- Full participation and achievement by Maori in all areas of education.
- Improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of resource use in education.⁴²

These aims show that the priority for the government was an education system that would produce adults with the skills and knowledges required by “enterprise and industry” in order to be able to contribute productively to the economy. Achievement of qualifications was the measure of success. ECEC was positioned as the solid foundation for developing human capital through schooling success. There were some other social objectives indicated as well, particularly an awareness that the education system did not always include all children. Those with special learning needs and Māori children were specifically mentioned.

The inclusion of Māori in particular reflected the growing awareness of government obligations under *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. There had been a Māori self-determination movement building from the late 1960s, alongside other protest movements such as second-wave feminism.⁴³ One of the government responses was to set up the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975, to hear claims from Māori where terms of *Te Tiriti* had been breached.⁴⁴ During the 1980s, the Tribunal’s powers were extended, and number of high-profile landmark court cases ruled in favour of Māori complainants. These cases led to legislation such as the Māori Language Act 1987 where Te Reo Māori was designated an official language of Aotearoa NZ, the Treaty of Waitangi (State Enterprises) Act 1988 which allowed for the return of state assets to Māori, and the inclusion of Māori concerns in the Resource Management Act 1991.⁴⁵ To negotiate settlements of claims with Māori, the government set up a policy unit within the Department (later Ministry) of Justice in 1989, which became the Office

⁴² Ibid., 22.

⁴³ Richard S. Hill, *Māori and the State: Crown-Māori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa, 1950-2000* (Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press, 2009); May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁴⁴ About the Waitangi Tribunal: <https://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/about-waitangi-tribunal/>.

⁴⁵ Mark Derby, “Waitangi Tribunal – Te Rōpū Whakamana,” in Ministry for Culture and Heritage/Manatū Taonga, *Te Ara*; Hill, *Māori and the State*.

of Treaty Settlements in 1995.⁴⁶ These initiatives show that awareness of Māori rights under *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* was very much a political issue in the 1990s. The awareness was also extended to the education sphere. In the ECEC sector during the 1990s, umbrella organisations started to address the issue of how to build partnerships with Māori, which created internal tensions for these organisations.⁴⁷

Acknowledgement of the rights of different groups of people was a political issue extending beyond that of *Te Tiriti* and Māori. Aotearoa NZ had a history of ratifying United Nations human rights conventions, dating back to the 1940s. One important convention that impacted on ECEC was UNCROC which the government ratified in 1993.⁴⁸ These human rights conventions in general influenced governments and resulted in legislation such as the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993. Independent entities were set up to promote human rights, specifically the Human Rights Commission which was established in 1977,⁴⁹ and the Office of the Children's Commissioner, established in 1989.⁵⁰ The ECEC sector picked up the discourse of children's rights, as will be discussed further below.

During the National government's three terms in office, 1990-99, the major policy change was the introduction in 1996 of the first curriculum for ECEC, *Te Whāriki*.⁵¹ During the early 1990s the government started reviewing the school curriculum, and proposed to also have a curriculum for ECEC that could be used to hold ECEC services accountable.⁵² The ECEC sector was concerned about the potential for the school curriculum to be "pushed down" into ECEC, so, in effect, the sector took ownership of the process. Academics Helen May and Margaret Carr won the

⁴⁶ Hill, *Māori and the State*; Office of Treaty Settlements website: <https://www.govt.nz/organisations/office-of-treaty-settlements/>.

⁴⁷ Manning, "Democracy meets Rangatiratanga"; May, *Concerning Women Considering Children*.

⁴⁸ United Nations, UNCROC.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Commission website: <https://www.hrc.co.nz>.

⁵⁰ Children's Commissioner website: <http://www.occ.org.nz/>.

⁵¹ Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum*, 1996.

⁵² Helen May, "Early Childhood Care and Education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: An Overview of History, Policy and Curriculum," *McGill Journal of Education* 37, no. 1 (2002).

contract, and together with Tamati and Tilly Reedy, they developed a curriculum in consultation with the sector. *Te Whāriki* has since won international acclaim, and is considered a taonga (treasure) by the ECEC sector.⁵³

The ECEC sector was also proactive in trying to influence future policy, and keep ECEC on the government's policy agenda. The teachers' union, the New Zealand Educational Institute – Te Rui Roa, organised a group of ECEC representatives to assess the state of the sector and make recommendations for the government. Amongst the recommendations of the report, *Future Directions*, were funding increases and the development of a strategic plan for early childhood that would enable coordination and planning of provision.⁵⁴ The National government never formally accepted the report, however the Labour party did adopt some of the recommendations into their manifesto for the 1999 election. The most notable of these recommendations, for the purposes of this thesis, was the strategic plan.⁵⁵

International developments contributed to raising the profile of ECEC policy. The OECD commenced major comparative studies of ECEC policy across member countries. The OECD Education Directorate started one comparative study in 1998 with the dual aims of evaluating and promoting ECEC policies which supported children's early development as well as women's participation in the labour force.⁵⁶ The aims encompassed both HCT and children's rights/equity discourses:

The provision of care and education for young children is a necessary condition for ensuring the equal access of women to the **labour market**. In addition, early development is seen as the **foundation of lifelong learning**. When sustained by effective fiscal, social and employment measures in support of parents and communities, early childhood programming can help to provide a **fair start in life for all children** and contribute to **social integration**.⁵⁷

⁵³ May "An Overview," 2002; May, *Politics in the Playground*; Joce G. Nuttall, ed., *Weaving Te Whāriki: Aotearoa New Zealand's Early Childhood Curriculum Framework in Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Wellington, NZ: NZCER Press, 2013).

⁵⁴ Early Childhood Education Project, *Future Directions*.

⁵⁵ Labour Party election manifesto 1999, In Anne Meade, Papers Relating to Strategic Plan for ECE (i), 2000, MS-Papers-10827-13, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁵⁶ OECD, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris: OECD, 2006), 3.

⁵⁷ OECD, *Starting Strong*, original emphasis.

There were two rounds of reviews, with the first (1998-2000) covering twelve countries and the second (2002-04) covering an additional eight countries. From 2001, a series of comparative reports arising from the reviews were published, under the title *Starting Strong*.⁵⁸ Successive governments of Aotearoa NZ declined to participate. However, the new Minister of Education from 1999, as well as Ministry officials, was aware of this ongoing work.⁵⁹

Participation problem representation

The National government's approach to governance included an emphasis on goal setting and measurable targets. The 1994 strategy document *Education for the 21st Century* stated that "early childhood curriculum guidelines are being developed which will clearly define the goals of early childhood education."⁶⁰ The use of the word *guidelines* perhaps suggests a more technical approach to curriculum and pedagogy than that promoted by the actual curriculum document when it was eventually approved, showing a difference in thinking between the sector and the government in this instance.

Targets for ECEC were set in the *21st Century* document, and these showed a change from the earlier problem representation of increasing access by using enrolment figures as the measure of success. There were targets for increasing the overall proportion of three- and four-year-old children enrolled in ECEC, for increasing the participation of Māori children under five, and the participation of Pasifika children under five.⁶¹ The problem representation of participation was now an official government objective, as explicitly stated in a policy briefing paper in December 1996:

The primary objectives in early childhood education over the past 6 years have related to improved participation and quality, as necessary preconditions for the achievement of improved educational outcomes for

⁵⁸ OECD, *Starting Strong*; OECD, *Starting Strong II*; OECD, *Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris: OECD, 2012); OECD, *Starting Strong IV*.

⁵⁹ Meade, Papers Relating to SPECE (i), MS-Papers-10827-13.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Education, *Education for the 21st Century*, 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

children. The Government's Strategic Result Areas refer to the "development of programmes and a curriculum which will enable an increasing proportion of children to receive effective early childhood care and education, particularly those at risk."⁶²

A focus on participation as a problem representation for policy also came from the ECEC sector itself towards the end of the decade, and particularly from academics and advocates of children's rights perspectives. These advocates promoted awareness and implementation of UNCROC through ECEC. Education was addressed specifically in Articles 28 and 29 of UNCROC, which obliged states to guarantee children's rights to education, including providing free and compulsory primary education.⁶³ This echoed the citizens' rights to education espoused by the first Labour government.⁶⁴ Early childhood education was not mentioned in the UNCROC text, but advocates argued that children's rights to education included the right to ECEC.⁶⁵ However, advocates also drew on a human capital problem representation, and argued that not only was it children's right to be able to access ECEC, it was essential to their future educational achievement. The Human Rights Commissioner argued in 2003 that formal ECEC was "essential" because of "the very significant impact of quality early childhood education on a child's achievements at primary school."⁶⁶ In another example, Sarah Te One analysed ECEC policies from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s from a children's rights perspective. In this paper she aligned herself with other researchers who had "used Article 29 [of UNCROC], which says children have the right to achieve their educational potential, to argue for free, universal provision of early childhood services."⁶⁷ The problem representation was subtly changing from inequitable and

⁶² Ministry of Education, Early Childhood Briefing, 1996, OIA request 797809.

⁶³ United Nations, UNCROC.

⁶⁴ Beeby and Wagemaker, "The government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every child: whatever his level of ability whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers.", see also this thesis p. 83; Grace, "Welfare Labourism"; May, "A Right as a Citizen."

⁶⁵ Te One, "Children's Rights"; Rosslyn Noonan, "Early Childhood Education: From Optional Extra to Essential, from Privilege to Right" (Human Rights Commission, 2003), Paper presented at the AEU National Early Childhood Education Forum.

⁶⁶ Noonan, "Optional Extra," 12.

⁶⁷ Te One, "Children's Rights" 172.

differential access to ECEC, to the need to ensure all children participated in ECEC for their future educational success and development of their human capital.

Quality problem representation

Quality initiatives from the *Before Five* reforms were based largely on establishing the minimum standards for licensing, as described previously. Establishing qualification levels for staff was one of the more contested standards; an agreement was finally reached in 1990, almost a year after the other standards were released. This *Qualifications Blueprint* document⁶⁸ will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8. In terms of developing the problem representation of quality improvement, the significant feature of the *Blueprint* was that it allowed for different qualifications for “services with high parent involvement” such as Playcentre, and those without, for example Kindergartens. This was the start of the categorisation of services as teacher-led/parent-led, although this division was used for policy purposes only, during the 1990s, and did not enter the public discourse until the 2000s.

The approach of finding separate quality indicators and measures for different ECEC services continued through the decade. When the government introduced quality funding in 1996, there were separate eligibility criteria for teacher-led services and for parent cooperatives. The government initiated a further project, to explore quality indicators that could be used to measure quality in different types of services.⁶⁹ This project led to the development of resources to educate staff on how to support quality in the sector. However, the desired “recipe” for ensuring quality remained elusive. The problem representation of quality was firmly based on the modernist concept described by Dahlberg et al.,⁷⁰ as an objective and measurable entity that was possible to describe and prescribe. The diversity of services was seen as a strength, and the focus was on finding ways of

⁶⁸ Ministry of Education, *Early Childhood Education Qualifications and Training: A Blueprint for the Future* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 1990).

⁶⁹ Anne Meade, Papers - Quality Indicators Project, 1998-1999, MS-Papers-9006-26, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁷⁰ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*.

maintaining that diversity while still improving quality. It was not a tension that was resolved during this time.

Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education

The turn of the millennium saw a new Labour-led government in Aotearoa NZ, and a positive economic outlook worldwide. Information and communications technology, and in particular the Internet, was changing the world of paid employment. This technology was enabling globalisation of ideas, supporting multi-national companies, and producing new jobs in the “knowledge economy.”⁷¹ Politically, governments were recognising the strategic value of investing in the human capital of their populations, moving away from the neoliberal version of human capital as a private good. The political approach was not to abandon neoliberalism altogether, but rather to try to navigate a third way between welfarism and neoliberalism. Andrew Giddens was one of the most prominent writers on third way politics. According to Olsen, Codd and O’Neill:

Anthony Giddens (2000) sees the 'third way' as 'concerned with restructuring social democratic doctrines to respond to the twin revolutions of globalization and the knowledge economy'. An important feature of third way politics for Giddens, is that it recognizes the essential role that government and democratic institutions have in maintaining a prosperous market economy. Thus an effective market economy requires a level of social cohesion that can only be sustained by a flourishing civil society.⁷²

The term *social investment* has been used to encompass approaches such as third way politics. According to Elizabeth Adamson and Deborah Brennan, the third way was a form of social investment approach. They argued that the social investment was based on HCT:

⁷¹ John A. Codd, “Education Policy and the Challenges of Globalisation: Commercialisation or Citizenship?” in Codd, Sullivan, *Education Policy Directions*; Jane Gilbert, *Catching the Knowledge Wave? The Knowledge Society and the Future of Education* (Wellington, NZ: NZCER Press, 2005); Wayne Hope and Iain Stephenson, “Global Capitalism and the Knowledge Economy: The New Zealand Experience,” in Codd, Sullivan, *Education Policy Directions*.

⁷² Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, *Education Policy*, 201.

The terms 'social investment' and 'social investment state' refer to strategies that promote social policy as a productive factor, rather than a drag on economic development. ... Social investment strategies are designed to help populations adapt to the demands of post-industrial, knowledge-based economies that require skilled and flexible labour. ... Social investment calls for policies that boost human capital (e.g. early education and care, school education, tertiary studies and lifelong learning) and that make best use of 'underutilized' human resources, by supporting the employment of women, sole parents and people with disabilities.⁷³

The social investment approach requires an active government, in contrast to the 1990s neoliberal minimalist government. Critics of third way and social investment politics, however, did not see the approach as fundamentally different from neoliberalism.⁷⁴ Rianne Mahon compared differing variants of the social investment approach, arguing that the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (DELSA) had changed its interpretation of social investment over the decades of the 1990s and 2000s. She termed the three variants neoliberal, inclusive liberal, and social democratic:

Neoliberal variant

- Macroeconomic fundamentals: price stability and fiscal austerity
- Welfare state as a burden; social policies limited to targeting the very poor, preparing them to participate in the labour market
- Families are responsible for raising children

Inclusive liberal version

- Macroeconomic fundamentals: price stability and fiscal restraint

⁷³ Elizabeth Adamson and Deborah Brennan, "Social Investment or Private Profit? Diverging Notions of 'Investment' in Early Childhood Education and Care," *International Journal of Early Childhood* 46, no. 1 (2014): 49, doi:10.1007/s13158-013-0098-x.

⁷⁴ John A. Codd, "Education Policy and the Challenges of Globalisation: Commercialisation or Citizenship?" in Codd, Sullivan, *Education Policy Directions*; Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, *Education Policy*; Jane Kelsey, *At the Crossroads: Three Essays* (Wellington, NZ: Bridget Williams Books, 2002).

- Social Investment in human capital via education, including early childhood education and training for all. Focus on equity over the life course
- Public investment in the child as human capital in the making

Social democratic version

- Need for new synthesis of Keynesian and post Keynesian ideas
- Social Investment in human capital plus social protection. Combines focus on future with concern for equality in the here and now
- Public support for the child as citizen in the here and now as well as human capital in the making⁷⁵

The Labour-led government from 1999 promoted their approach as third way politics, following the New Labour government in the UK at that time.⁷⁶ With respect to ECEC in particular, Labour definitively rejected the neoliberal variant of social investment above, where the welfare state was seen as a burden and raising children was seen as a family's responsibility. Instead Labour embraced the inclusive liberal variant with its focus on ECEC as human capital, as can be seen from their 1999 election manifesto:

Labour views quality early childhood education as a basic right, which must be available to all children, without regard to wealth, income or where they live. Early childhood education produces beneficial outcomes for individual children and their families. Children are given the opportunity to interact with others beyond the family and their growth and development is enhanced. Children who have experienced high quality early childhood education score higher on a range of competency measures when they go to school. ... If all New Zealand children begin their lifelong learning in high quality early childhood education, the whole society will benefit, both socially and economically.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Rianne Mahon, "Social Investment According to the OECD/DELSA: A Discourse in the Making," *Global Policy* 4, no. 2 (2013): 153, doi:10.1111/j.1758-5899.2012.00182.x, quote slightly edited.

⁷⁶ Franks and McAloon, *Labour*.

⁷⁷ Labour Party election manifesto 1999, p. 2, Meade, Papers Relating to Strategic Plan for ECE (i), MS-Papers-10827-13.

There was international support for a social investment approach to ECEC, politically in the form of the OECD policy studies, scientifically with new findings from neuroscience, and economically through the work of James Heckman. These studies emphasised the importance of the early years in determining the course of a person's life, and argued that this was the most cost-effective age for intervention initiatives.

In the political arena, the Labour government took office about the time that the OECD Education Directorate's *Starting Strong* project started. The first report was published in 2001, and the second set of country reviews was undertaken from 2002. The employment directorate of the OECD, DELSA, was also interested in ECEC policy, and had started a similar set of country reviews in 2001. The project was called *Babies and Bosses*, reflecting the primary concern of DELSA with provision of childcare to enable mothers to participate in paid employment. The DELSA reviews studied three or four countries per year for four years, 13 countries in total,⁷⁸ with Aotearoa NZ as a second-year participant.⁷⁹ These studies supported social investment in ECEC for maintaining the human capital of mothers.

Scientific research in neuroscience gave more support for social investment in ECEC. A growing amount of research showed how brain development was shaped by important experiences in the early years, particularly before the age of three years. Appropriate learning experiences for young children were shown to be necessary for developing higher-level conceptual skills in later life.⁸⁰ In Aotearoa

⁷⁸ OECD, *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life 1* (Paris: OECD, 2002), Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands; OECD, *Babies and bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life 2* (Paris: OECD, 2003), Austria, Ireland and Japan; OECD, *Babies and bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life 3* (Paris: OECD, 2004), New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland; OECD, *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life 4* (Paris: OECD, 2005), Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom; OECD, Willem Adema and Peter Whiteford, *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries* (Paris: OECD, 2007).

⁷⁹ OECD, *Babies and Bosses 3*, 2004.

⁸⁰ Anne Meade, "Remembering: Knowing the Moment Cannot be Repeated," *Children's Issues: Journal of the Children's Issues Centre* 6, no. 2 (2002); Deborah Phillips and Jack P. Shonkoff, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000).

NZ, the Brainwave Trust was founded in 1998 to disseminate these ideas to parents and to policy makers.⁸¹

The United States economist James Heckman, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2000,⁸² provided economic arguments for a human capital and social investment approach to ECEC.⁸³ During the 2000s he carried out econometric analysis of data from several high-profile United States longitudinal studies such as the Perry Preschool program,⁸⁴ to show the long-term benefits of ECEC. His arguments included the equal importance of non-cognitive and cognitive skills for educational achievement, and how ECEC can counter some of the disadvantages faced by children living in poverty. In particular, he argued for early intervention and ECEC as the most cost-effective government investment. His analyses showed the cumulative impact of learning and education throughout a person's lifetime:

skill begets skill; learning begets learning. Early disadvantage, if left untreated, leads to academic and social difficulties in later years. Advantages accumulate; so do disadvantages.⁸⁵

He was explicit that his contribution to the debate on education and inequality was through advancing an economic productivity rationale for early intervention, rather than a social justice one.⁸⁶ Mintrom, Chair of the ECE Taskforce, acknowledged the influence that Heckman's studies had had on the development of recommendations in the Taskforce report.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Brainwave Trust Aotearoa, "Who We Are," <http://www.brainwave.org.nz/who-we-are/>.

⁸² James J. Heckman, "James J. Heckman - Biographical," Nobel Prize, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/2000/heckman-bio.html.

⁸³ E.g., Heckman, "Policies to Foster Human Capital"; James J. Heckman, Alan B. Krueger and Benjamin M. Friedman, *Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003); James J. Heckman, "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children," *Science* 312, no. 5782 (2006), doi:10.1126/science.1128898; Heckman and Masterov, "Productivity Argument."

⁸⁴ Heckman and Masterov, "Productivity Argument"; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, "Perry Preschool Study," <https://highscope.org/perrypreschoolstudy>.

⁸⁵ Heckman and Masterov, "Productivity Argument" 447.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Michael Mintrom, "Broader Perspectives," in Boston, Gill, *Social Investment*.

The changing millennium therefore saw a changing attitude towards government provision of ECEC. Social investment arguments positioned ECEC as a prime site for government intervention to achieve its long-term social and economic goals in a cost-effective manner. Although these arguments were still being developed and disseminated at the beginning of the decade, they had influence on policy directions. This was the context in which government initiated the project in the year 2000.

Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki

The Labour Party adopted the recommendation of the *Future Directions* report⁸⁸ to produce a strategic plan that would enhance a coordinated and cohesive approach to ECEC policy. The new government started work on the SPECE almost immediately. Anne Meade, chair of the *Education to be More* working group, was appointed as chair of the new SPECE working group. The group was large, with members drawn from across the ECEC sector, representing the diversity of services. The SPECE terms of reference asked for the development of a strategic plan to meet the government's broad aims for ECEC, which were to:

Improve access to, participation in and quality in early childhood education; and Close the Gaps in participation in quality early childhood education between Māori and non-Māori, and Pacific and non-Pacific children.⁸⁹

The problem representations of participation and quality can be clearly seen in these terms of reference, as well as reference to the earlier problem representation of access. The ethnic categories within the participation problem representation had also become explicit, linked with the Labour government's *Close the Gaps* policies that aimed to reduce inequalities between Pākehā and Māori/Pasifika.

The SPECE working group produced two consultation documents, in 2000 and 2001, in the process of developing the final plan. This contributed to the plan

⁸⁸ Early Childhood Education Project, *Future Directions*.

⁸⁹ Terms of Reference. Anne Meade, Papers Relating to Strategic Plan for ECE, 2000, MS-Papers-10827-12, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

being well accepted by the sector when it was eventually released. The final SPECE was written by a smaller Technical Planning Group, which consisted of Anne Meade and Ministry officials. The SPECE was published by the government as *Pathways to the Future/ Ngā Huarahi Arataki* in 2002, and was intended to be a ten-year plan. It was available as a highly formatted book with many photographs and illustrations included.⁹⁰

The SPECE outlined strategies to further the government's goals of increasing participation and improving quality, and added a third goal of increasing collaboration. An attempt was made to accommodate the diversity of ECEC services through having separate strategies for "teacher-led" and "parent-led" services, although there were few concrete strategies for parent-led services beyond the promise of reviews and research to be carried out. The SPECE strategies formed the basis of the government ECEC policy agenda for most of the 2000s.

Participation problem representation

The problem representations for the SPECE working group were clearly set in the terms of reference quoted above, and were not questioned by the group. Unlike the problem representation of *Before Five*, in which providing access to ECEC was the concern, the problem was now constructed around ensuring everyone participated in – and therefore benefited from – ECEC services. This problem representation was underpinned by discourses of children's rights and of HCT. The SPECE working group was initially uneasy that the government's agenda was biased towards HCT in the form of labour market objectives, which prompted Meade to write to the group after the first meeting in September 2000 with reassurance:

You are aware that some people, including Cabinet Ministers, take the position that Government is involved in ECE for labour market reasons, such as investing in children as the future workers, and assisting parents of young children to enter/stay in the labour market. This is a viewpoint

⁹⁰ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*; Manning, "Blocks are Educational."

that seems to make members uncomfortable. Instead, our viewpoint is in favour of child and whanau learning and support for that. In our report, we will need to discuss both the labour market viewpoint and our learning-focused one, and provide justification for ours.⁹¹

The rationale of assisting women to do other activities besides caregiving, including paid employment, had been a theme in the report *Education to be More* but had not been persuasive with the government of the time. Rather, it had been the effect on children's education that had been persuasive.⁹² A decade later, during his address to the sixth meeting in May 2001, the Minister for Education asked specifically for greater consideration in the report for labour market objectives.⁹³ The group recommended that the government fund a certain amount of hours of ECEC for every child as an entitlement, a compromise to meet both child education and women's labour market objectives;⁹⁴ however, this policy never made it to the final plan. A review of funding was promised instead.⁹⁵

Quality problem representation

In the fifteen years between publication of *Education to be More* and of the SPECE, there had been a shift in the attitude towards government responsibility for provision of ECEC. In the 2000s, the government had a social investment attitude that ECEC was a beneficial investment, and a concern of government was ensuring that ECEC was effective, that is, that services were of sufficient quality. Therefore, the problem representation of ensuring "minimum standards" was replaced with that of ensuring "quality ECEC." For example, the Minister for Education said in his foreword of the SPECE that "the Government's vision is for all New Zealand children to have the opportunity to participate in quality early childhood education, no matter their circumstances."⁹⁶ As the decade progressed, the problem

⁹¹ Letter from Anne Meade to SPECE WG, 4 September 2000. Meade, Papers Relating to Strategic Plan for ECE (i), MS-Papers-10827-13.

⁹² Meade, "Foot in the Door."

⁹³ Anne Meade, Papers relating to Early Childhood Education Working Group (ii), 2001, MS-Papers-10827-04, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1.

representation was escalated to ensuring “high quality” ECEC, which was the terminology used throughout the Taskforce report.

The introduction of a division between “services with high parent involvement” and others in the 1990 *Qualifications Blueprint* was now reified as parent-led/teacher-led services. This language and structure was used for the SPECE in order to accommodate parent cooperatives’ different ways of operating, and recognise multiple ways of attaining quality provision.⁹⁷ This problem representation was similar to that being used in the quality funding policy and Quality Indicators project of the 1990s; however, the difference here was the language that was attached to the division. With the SPECE, the terms “teacher-led” and “parent-led” services entered into public discourse.

20 Hours Free ECE

One of the most significant policies arising from implementation of the SPECE came from the funding review 2003-2004. The new funding system for ECEC was developed alongside policy work on a new system of tax credits. Both were announced in the 2004 Budget, as the *20 Hours Free ECE* funding and the *Working for Families* tax credits.⁹⁸ *Working for Families* focused on incentivising paid employment as a way of reducing welfare dependency,⁹⁹ and this meant that there was strong pressure on the Minister of Education to promote parental paid employment objectives with the new ECEC funding system.¹⁰⁰ The final *20 Hours Free ECE* policy was based on a cost-driver approach using supply-side subsidies to ECEC services, on a universal basis rather than targeted to any population groups. *Working for Families* supplemented this with targeted assistance through childcare subsidies for employed low-income parents.

⁹⁷ Meade, Submission to ECE Taskforce.

⁹⁸ Helen May, Papers re Labour Party's Free Early Childhood Education Policy, 2004-2008, MS-Papers 10796-44, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁹⁹ Susan St John, “Putting Children at the Centre: Making Policy as if Children Mattered,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 46, no. 9 (2014), doi:10.1080/00131857.2014.931005.

¹⁰⁰ Helen May, Early Childhood Education Government Funding Papers (i), 2003-2004, MS-Papers-10796-51, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The input from different government agencies during the funding review showed the competing discourses of HCT and economic rationalism versus children's rights and equity of access.¹⁰¹ The economic perspective from the Treasury was that better value for money would be gained from a targeted, demand-side approach,¹⁰² an approach favoured by the OECD DELSA in the *Babies and Bosses* studies. The NZ Institute for Economic Research also echoed this perspective in its later evaluation of the *20 Hours* policy.¹⁰³ In contrast, the policy lessons from the OECD Education Directorate in the *Starting Strong* 2001 report were in support of universal approaches and substantial public investment in services and infrastructure for ECEC.¹⁰⁴ The targeted and demand-side approach was in conflict with the universal and supply-side approach used in Aotearoa NZ since the *Before Five* reforms and reinforced by the SPECE, as noted by Ministry of Education officials:

The OECD has not finalised its review of New Zealand [*Babies and Bosses*], but it usually favours a greater use of funding directed through parents as service users, as opposed to bulk funding to providers, on the grounds that this stimulates demand and locates greater control and choice with parents. Such a fundamental change in the structure of early childhood funding raises issues beyond the scope of this paper as it is likely to be contradictory to the direction of the ECE Strategic Plan.¹⁰⁵

The final package was a compromise between the two approaches, through the combination of *20 Hours* and *Working for Families*. The new ECEC funding system was intended to fully fund up to twenty hours for any child attending a teacher-led service.¹⁰⁶ It was initially restricted to community-based services, but this was

¹⁰¹ Helen May, "New Zealand: A Narrative of Shifting Policy Directions for Early Childhood Education and Care," in Gambaro, Stewart, Waldfogel, *An Equal Start?*

¹⁰² Helen May, Early Childhood Education Government Funding Papers (ii), 2003-2004, MS-Papers-10796-52, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰³ Helen May, Papers Relating to Debate about Early Childhood Education, 2005-2008, MS-Papers-10796-45, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰⁴ OECD, *Starting Strong*, 2001: 4.

¹⁰⁵ MOE, Draft Cabinet paper on ECE Funding, March 2004, p. 2. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (i), MS-Papers-10796-51.

¹⁰⁶ May, Papers re Labour Party's Free ECE Policy, MS-Papers 10796-44; May, "Minding, Working, Teaching."

changed after pressure from private providers of ECEC.¹⁰⁷ Playcentre and other parent-led services, however, remained excluded until the government changed in 2008. The impact of that exclusion is explored in chapters 7 and 8.

Participation problem representation

The government recognised that the implementation of some of the strategies of the SPECE would result in increased costs for ECEC services, for example higher qualification requirements and compulsory registration of ECEC teachers. One of the objectives of the funding review was to limit fee rises in ECEC services so that participation rates would not decrease. The Treasury summarised the situation as “the key objective is to distribute the costs of the Strategic Plan between the Government, parents and the broader sector in a way which avoids any reduction of participation of children in ECE or negative labour market impacts.”¹⁰⁸ This objective kept the problem representation of participation to the forefront of policy making during the funding review.

Quality problem representation

The *20 Hours* policy was promoted as an entitlement for children, in the same way as schooling was provided by the government, theoretically for “free.”¹⁰⁹ The funding was supposed to fully fund those twenty hours, and some extra hours would be subsidised by the government in the usual way. The idea of an entitlement had been raised in the *Education to be More* working party, but had not been seriously considered at that time.¹¹⁰ It had again been discussed, and proposed, by the SPECE working group, but was not accepted by the government

¹⁰⁷ Bushouse, “20 Hours Free ECE.”

¹⁰⁸ May, ECE Government Funding Papers (ii), MS-Papers-10796-51.

¹⁰⁹ Helen May, Early Childhood Education Government Funding Papers (iii), 2003-2004, MS-Papers-10796-53, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹¹⁰ Minutes of Meeting, 19 May 1988. Meade, Working Party Papers on ECCE, MS-Papers-9006-04.

as part of the SPECE.¹¹¹ The government, however, subsequently incorporated that idea into the funding review.¹¹²

In the lead-up to the start of *20 Hours*, the government was careful to link ECEC and quality, with statements such as “free ECE is about ensuring that all children have access to quality education.”¹¹³ The NZPF objected to this framing, as Playcentres were excluded from the policy and the implication was therefore that they did not deliver quality education. The Ministry attempted to mitigate this perception with extra statements like “Playcentres continue to provide high quality education and care to their families” added to the end of press releases.¹¹⁴ However the overall problem representation remained, that this policy was designed to address the quality issues in teacher-led services. The positioning of parent-cooperative services within this problem representation was ambivalent. The effect of this situation is discussed further in chapters 7 and 8.

National government from 2008

The National-led coalition government took office in 2008, again at a time of a global financial crisis. The financial crisis was not as severe in Aotearoa NZ as in many other Western countries; however, it was sufficient to justify National’s tight fiscal management. Further financial pressures on the economy came with the Christchurch earthquakes in 2010 and 2011.¹¹⁵ According to Johnathan Boston and Derek Gill, these events prompted “the government to find cost savings and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its policy interventions, not least in the broad – and fiscally expensive – area of social policy.”¹¹⁶ The social investment

¹¹¹ May, “Blue Skies.”

¹¹² Helen May, “Towards the Right of New Zealand Children for Free Early Childhood Education,” *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* 2, no. 1 (2008), doi:10.1007/2288-6729-2-1-77.

¹¹³ Education Gazette, 2007; Helen May, Papers Relating to Implementing Free Early Childhood Education, 2006-2009, MS-Papers-10796-46, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹¹⁴ Education Gazette, 2007; *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Jonathan Boston and Derek Gill, “Overview - Key Issues and Themes,” in Boston, Gill, *Social Investment*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

approach adopted by the government around 2011 had a focus on reducing welfare dependency, as measured by a reduction in the long-term fiscal liability of the government, through tighter targeting of interventions towards particular groups identified as having high-risk profiles.¹¹⁷

With regard to ECEC policy, the National government introduced two significant changes in 2010, during its first term in power, concerning the *20 Hours* policy and the qualified-teacher target from the SPECE. One change was to include parent cooperatives in the *20 Hours* policy, fulfilling an election promise.¹¹⁸ At the same time, the word *free* was dropped from the *20 Hours* policy title in order to indicate the government's position that this funding was a subsidy and not a fully funded entitlement. The other change was to modify the SPECE target of having 100% qualified teachers in ECEC services by 2012, dropping this target to 80%.¹¹⁹ An accompanying change was to remove the funding band for services with 80-100% qualified teachers. This affected Kindergartens in particular, which collectively lost millions of dollars in funding.¹²⁰

This was the context in which National set up the Taskforce in 2011. The twin problem representations of increasing participation rates and increasing quality of services were continued, with the new government's approach to social services favouring more targeted interventions. These are the problem representations as identified and discussed in chapter 4.

In summary, the two problem representations evolved during the timeframe 1988-2011, each becoming more dominant and more strongly linked to HCT. The problem representation of a lack of participation in ECEC was framed in the 1989

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ National Party ECE policy 2008, May, Papers Relating to Debate about ECE, MS-Papers-10796-45; NZPF, "20 Hours Free comes to Playcentre," news release, June 30, 2010, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED1006/S00119/20-hours-free-comes-to-playcentre.htm>.

¹¹⁹ Helen May, "New Zealand: A Narrative of Shifting Policy"; May and Smith, Herbison lecture.

¹²⁰ Olivia Wannan and Tommy Livingston, "Capital Kindergartens May Lose Teachers to Cuts," *Stuff*, October 14, 2015, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/73012392/Capital-kindergartens-may-lose-teachers-to-cuts>.

Before Five policy as a lack of access to affordable ECEC. New administrative and funding arrangements put in place by the Labour government were kept by the new National government in the 1990s, and despite the financial struggles of many ECEC services, enrolments in ECEC overall increased. Enrolments in Playcentres and Ngā Kōhanga Reo, however, decreased. The Labour-led government from 1999 again had ECEC on its agenda for change and support. The SPECE in 2002 identified a lack of participation in ECEC as a major problem, particularly with Māori and Pasifika families. As discussed, the SPECE drew on a blend of HCT and children's rights discourses. This problem representation of a lack of participation was continued by the National government from 2008, with a strong focus on targeting Māori and Pasifika families for the greatest cost-effectiveness of ECEC as an intervention for developing human capital. This was the problem representation that was used in the Taskforce report.

Running in parallel was the development of the problem representation of a lack of baseline quality in ECEC services and an unacceptable level of variation of quality. At the time of *Before Five* the government was intervening to set minimum standards for ECEC services, and was prepared to make an exception for parent cooperatives such as Playcentres, to accommodate parents-as-educators. During the 1990s, the National government promoted quality of ECEC services primarily through the development of an ECEC curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, followed by professional development training and resources. The Labour government was overt about promoting quality through the policies of the SPECE, and was prepared to fund it through the *20 Hours* policy. However, the SPECE also publicly divided the sector into parent-led and teacher-led services, and policy support for quality in parent-led services was lacking. When the next National government took office, the social investment approach to developing human capital influenced the problem representation of "high-quality" ECEC as being necessary to achieve the desired outcomes. The emphasis on high quality and the division of services into parent/teacher-led resulted in a problem representation that assumed parent-led services were not a cost-effective investment for the government, as discussed in chapter 4.

These changing problem representations have had material impact on Playcentres over the years. Having reviewed the background of these problem representations, the WPR analysis now moves onto examining these impacts and effects in more detail. This is the work of the next two chapters, with chapter 7 focused on the problem representation of participation, and chapter 8 focused on quality.

Chapter Seven: Participation problem representation

The WPR approach is based on the presumption that problem representations benefit some groups of people more than others, and can have deleterious effects on particular groups.¹ The group at the centre of this study is Playcentre and its members, and therefore this chapter carries on the WPR analysis by examining the various effects of the “lack of participation in ECEC” problem representation on Playcentres and the NZPF. The participation problem representation focused on families, particularly parents, rather than ECEC services, although the policies had significant effects on ECEC services themselves. The problem representation contained a strong element of targeting, in that the families being persuaded to participate in ECEC were Māori, Pasifika and those from low SES backgrounds. Underlying discourses of the problem representation included a concern to maintain the human capital of parents through ensuring they could remain “productive” by releasing them from child-rearing duties during work hours. Policies based on the participation problem representation had various effects, which included sustainability issues for small centres, and undermining the role of parents-as-educators because of the growing discourse of formal ECEC as essential. This chapter analyses these and other effects.

Bacchi suggests examining three interconnected types of effects:

Discursive effects: effects which follow from the limits imposed on what can be thought and said;

Subjectification (or *subjectivisation*) effects: the ways in which subjects and subjectivities are constituted in discourse;

Lived effects: the impact on life and death.²

¹ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*.

² Mitchell Dean, "Governmentality and Powers of Life and Death" in *Analysing Social Policy: A Governmental Approach*, ed. Greg Marston and Catherine McDonald (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2006), quoted in Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 15.

The first two types of effects, in particular, flow from the treatment of policy as discourse, as discussed in chapter 2. In a WPR approach discourse is taken to be “socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a given social object or practice.”³ The emphasis is on the underlying knowledges rather than on the rhetoric that shapes the policy, or the intentions of the policy makers. Such limits on thinking, however, have lived effects for people and organisations in their everyday lives, which should be acknowledged and analysed.

This chapter presents a history of Playcentre from the late 1980s to 2011, in terms of how changing ECEC policy affected Playcentre as compared to other ECEC services, and how Playcentre responded. The chapter is arranged chronologically, starting with the impact of the *Before Five* policies, followed by the decade of the 1990s, the introduction of the SPECE and the subsequent funding policy *20 Hours Free ECE*, and ending with the potential effects of the Taskforce report recommendations. This history is then used to analyse the discursive and subjectification effects which arose from the policies based on the participation problem representation.

Before Five

Funding linked to participation

The *Before Five* policies were intended to improve families’ access to ECEC services through increased government funding support and removing differential funding based on service type. As Prime Minister David Lange noted in a press release when the *Education to be More* report was launched, “there are 20 different types of early childhood education organisations funded in 26 different ways.”⁴ The principle of the new funding system was that of a universal subsidy for any type of ECEC service that met the licensing criteria. This subsidy was based on the number of “child-hours” (the number of children enrolled and the number

³ Ibid., 35.

⁴ Anne Meade, Working Party Papers on ECCE, 1987-1988, MS-Papers-9006-03, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

of hours they attended), up to a maximum of 30 hours per week.⁵ The new funding was therefore directly related to participation, and the effects of the funding can be considered as lived effects of the participation problem representation.

The costs of an ECEC service include the fixed costs of running the service, such as maintaining a suitable venue, and variable costs that relate to the number of children, such as replacing consumable equipment items. With funding dependent on the numbers of children attending, a certain number of child-hours was required in order to cover the fixed costs of a centre, which would differ between centres depending on their particular situation. An NZPF officer wrote in 1991:

The funding provided on a child/session basis from government does not address many of the unique difficulties that playcentre associations face. The funding assumes that, other than child number, all our centres are equal – equal facilities, equal travelling costs, equal location costs, equal woman power. But we know this is not true.⁶

The NZPF Treasurer at the time of *Before Five* implementation calculated that “a centre needs nearly 20 children/session to really do well.”⁷ This was never going to be possible for many Playcentres that operated in rural areas. Rural Playcentres tended to have small numbers of families involved. A minimum of only ten families was required to be recognised as a Playcentre by the Department of Education, and many centres operated sessions only once or twice a week, with fewer than twenty children present.⁸ A high proportion of Playcentres were, and still are, located in rural and low-population-density areas compared to other ECEC services. The background report to the *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services* research in the early 2000s gave these statistics:

Playcentre has the highest number of services in rural locations of any licensed service. Forty-two percent of all licensed rural education and care services are playcentres. 179 out of 492 playcentres (36%) were in rural

⁵ Department of Education, *Before Five*.

⁶ Playcentre Journal Editor, “Federation News,” *Playcentre Journal* 80 (1991).

⁷ NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 1989-1990, 97-030-10, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁸ McDonald, *Working and Learning*; Powell et al., *Adult Playcentre Participation*.

locations at 1 January 2002, and a further 60 were in minor urban locations. This compares with 28% of kōhanga reo, 7% of home-based, 4% of education and care and 2% of kindergartens.⁹

The proportions of rural Playcentres in the late 1980s and through the 1990s were similar. Figures 5 and 6 show the proportions of Playcentres in different locations in 1995, and the trends from 1988-95.¹⁰

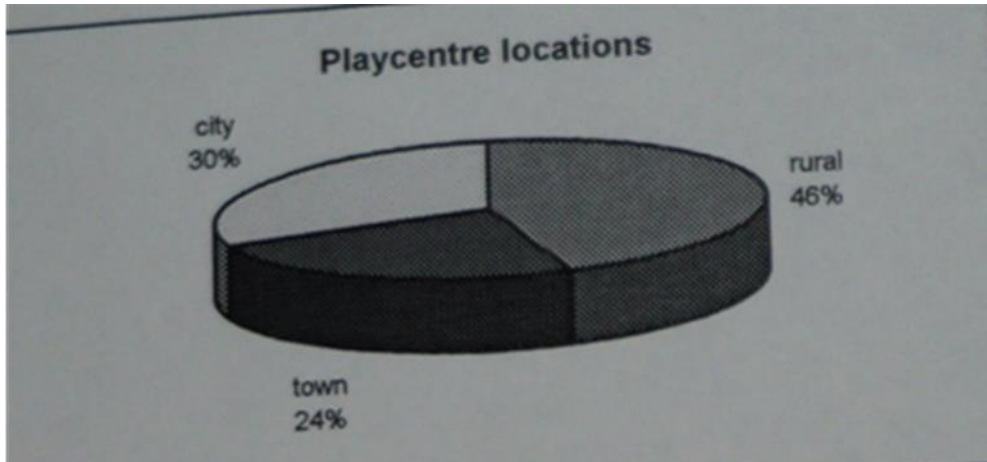


Figure 5. Proportion of rural/town/city Playcentres in 1995. (NZPF Archives, Secretary files, Pink statistics data)

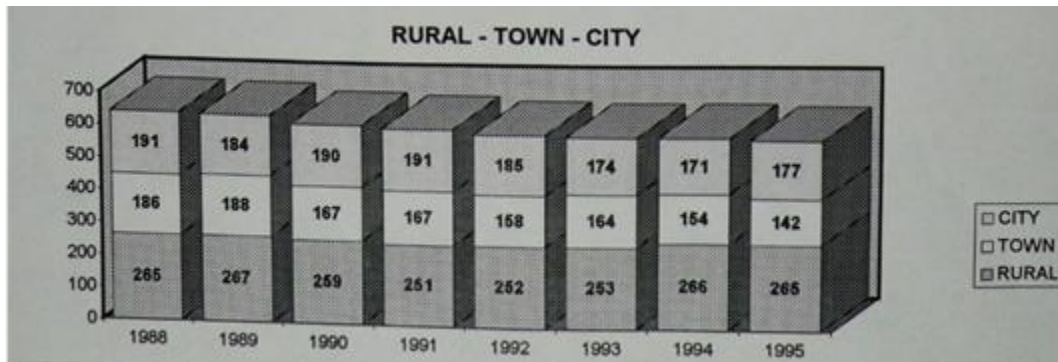


Figure 6. Numbers of Playcentres, categorised by location, 1988-95. (NZPF Archives, Secretary files, Pink statistics data)

⁹ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

¹⁰ NZPF, Secretary's Files: Pink Statistics and Correspondence, 2002-381-3/7, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The issue of higher costs because of specific factors such as isolated location, high numbers of children with special needs, or catering for children under the age of two years was addressed in the *Education to be More* report. It was recommended that the funding rate for particular centres should include a weighting for these extra costs. The *Before Five* policy document was a little more cautious, categorising these services as "special cases" where the Minister could grant extra funding:

3.1.15 The Minister will be able to give weightings to bulk-grant formulae for costs that are outside the control of services – such as for extraordinary locational costs of for individual children with handicapping conditions. (Extraordinary locational costs could include remoteness of high inner-city accommodation costs.)¹¹

In 1989, *Before Five* Implementation Working Groups worked on the details of the policy. Draft reports were circulated to ECEC organisations for feedback in April. The Bulk Funding Working Group report suggested a number of funding formulae, essentially variations on a formula consisting of a base rate multiplied by a weighting for under-two children, with additional funds for other costs such as children with special needs or rural locations.¹² The NZPF acknowledged the proposed weightings in their consultation feedback:

2.2.7 We appreciate the inclusion of small centres in this document. Should their need for weighting require approval it must be a speedy process not holding up their delivery of their grant.¹³

Given that weighting for small rural services had been signalled in *Education to be More*, *Before Five*, and the Bulk Funding Working Group reports, the NZPF was disappointed when the final funding rates were announced in September 1989.¹⁴

¹¹ Department of Education, *Before Five*, 21.

¹² Bulk funding working group consultation draft report. Helen May, Reports - Before Five Working Party, 1989, MS-Papers-9181-2, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹³ NZPF, Subject files, 1981-1993, 97-030-10, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁴ Department of Education, *Education Gazette*, Vol 68, No 16, 1 Sept. An example of the NZPF attitude to the funding rates is in the 1995 letter from the NZPF President to the Minister of Education which stated "Since 1989 rural Playcentres have been waiting for the promised "weighting" of their bulk funding," in NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Funding, 2002-381-1/01.

The only weighting approved was for “infants and toddlers under the age of two years who attend without a parent.”¹⁵ This weighting was to compensate for the new staffing requirements for teachers working with this age group. Playcentres were not eligible for this funding because both Playcentre policy and Department of Education requirements meant that all infants and toddlers were accompanied by their parents at any session they attended.¹⁶

Without the weighting for rural location or small size, it was predicted that many of the rural services would struggle for financial sustainability. The Bulk Funding Implementation Working Group report had acknowledged this issue:

The smallest *Base Rate* which will ensure that the tiny playcentres do not receive a significant decrease in funding is \$10.40 per session per child.¹⁷

However, the funding rate for Playcentres announced in September 1989 was \$2.50 per hour per child¹⁸ which equated to \$7.50 per three-hour session per child. Although this would lead to a large increase in funding for most Playcentres, the NZPF Treasurer observed that it was not the case for the centres with smaller numbers of children and sessions:

Small centres would be little better off than before. We should be able to ensure each centre gets more than before; we should be able to see most people get nearly 4 times what they used to, but in the spirit of Before Five, small centres may not get the increase large ones do.¹⁹

The NZPF was therefore predicting that the new funding regime based on the participation problem representation would specifically disadvantage small and rural centres, and history has proven this prediction correct. The NZPF responded by establishing a process to share funds within the organisation. In order to do that, however, the organisation had to address the question of whether the NZPF

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Department of Education, Circular 1984/15 Standards for the Administration and Organisation of Playcentres Recognised by the Director-General of Education, 93-324-4, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁷ Bulk Grant Working Group consultation report, Appendix 3. May, Reports - Before Five Working Party, MS-Papers-9181-2.

¹⁸ Department of Education, *Education Gazette*, Vol 68, No 16, 1 Sept.

¹⁹ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

would continue to exist, given the new neoliberally aligned administration system based on autonomous and independent ECEC services.

Bulk funding

Funding for Playcentres prior to *Before Five* consisted of a large number of targeted grants.²⁰ Centres received establishment grants, annual maintenance grants (based on numbers of sessions) and sessional grants (based on child numbers – either under or over 20 children at a session). Regional Playcentre associations received liaison grants based on the number of centres they supported. The NZPF received an administration grant, and a training grant that was mostly disbursed to the associations. Both the NZPF and associations were also funded by levies from associations and centres respectively.

Before Five introduced a system of bulk funding, where each centre received funding that was a subsidy for all operating costs, including building maintenance. In line with neoliberal free-market ideas, there would be no restrictions on how the centre chose to spend that money. The NZPF and associations would no longer receive any money directly from the government for early childhood education (the adult education system was subsidised by the government out of a different budget and is not considered here). Therefore, the continued existence of the NZPF could no longer be taken for granted. A memo from the NZPF Standing Committee to associations in February 1989 pointed this out:

Funding is based mainly upon child numbers ..., and there is no special allowance for administration. This means that centre grants will need to support, on a levy system, both the Association and Federation, if they are to be maintained, remembering that there will be more money than at present.²¹

²⁰ Pam Fuller, "First, Find a Building." *Making Space for Playcentre*, in Stover, *Good Clean Fun*; Playcentre Journal Editor, "The Strands of History: Background to the Development of Playcentre," *Playcentre Journal* 72, no. 2 (1988); Letter from Dept Education, Sep 1988. NZPF, National Executive, Conferences, Conventions, Submissions, Legal Correspondence, Department of Education Papers, 93-324-4, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

²¹ NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

The maintenance of the NZPF as an umbrella organisation was more than a practical operating decision; it was also a philosophical decision. A Playcentre by definition had to be affiliated to the NZPF, and was therefore required to operate within Playcentre philosophy.²² The NZPF Standing Committee outlined to the centres the benefits of remaining affiliated:

Playcentres need to think about their futures. Centres would be entitled to go it alone and work independently of the Playcentre movement. There are, however, many advantages in opting to remain a Playcentre:-

1. The stress and decision making in writing a charter will not be yours alone.
2. You will remain part of the Playcentre Education programme which you would otherwise have to provide and/or fund yourselves.
3. Access to support people (Liaison Officers, Buildings, Equipment, etc.) as you need them and at no further cost.
4. The benefits of being part of a wider organisation, i.e., Conferences, Convention, National Leadership and Training Days.
5. Continuity - if your centre should in the future go through a period of stress and low numbers, the support of an Association could well mean its survival.²³

The NZPF organised a special general meeting of associations in August 1989 to discuss implementation of *Before Five* policies, and the question of whether "Playcentre [would] continue to have a national identity, common philosophy and political voice in the form of the NZ Playcentre Federation"²⁴ was raised. The NZPF President also raised the issue in the Playcentre Journal early the following year, writing that "the future of Federation will depend on Playcentre people wanting to continue with a national organisation."²⁵ The general mood of the Playcentre members, however, was for continuation. After the special meeting, the NZPF

²² Department of Education, Circular 1984/15 Standards for the Administration and Organisation of Playcentres

²³ NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

²⁴ Janet Leggett, "Standards and Charters," *Playcentre Journal* 76 (1989).

²⁵ Barbara Chapman, "Before Five: Towards Equity," *Playcentre Journal* 77 (1990): 9.

President, Barbara Chapman, wrote to Mike Cooper, who had attended the meeting on behalf of the Ministry:

Thank you for being at our Special Meeting in New Plymouth, and putting yourself in the firing line yet again. You certainly caught the initial reactions, since most people had only just received the purple book. ... It is a pity in a way that you were not there at the end to see the meeting looking at positive action arising from the weekend process. ... I thought you may be able to enjoy the enclosed poem, if you haven't already seen it, that appeared on the notice board on the last morning of our meeting. We know who wrote it, but I think she might prefer to remain anonymous!²⁶

The "purple book" was the *Early Childhood Management Handbook*²⁷ containing the new minimum standards (it arrived in a purple folder). The poem referred to was entitled "Purple Poetry," and expressed frustration about having to fit into a system that did not appear to accommodate Playcentres:

The Minimum Standards and Charter are here
Don't hold your breath while you wait for our cheer
With worry and questions the whole thing is fraught
Some statements are not of the Playcentre sort
Playcentre is special, it really is grand
And we want to let our identity stand
We'll fit in your scheme without too much fuss
But honestly folks, your scheme should fit us.²⁸

This poem shows the thinking of Playcentre members, that they wanted Playcentres to continue more or less in their current form and organisation. After this point there was no further discussion on the matter. No remit was taken to

²⁶ Letter from NZPF to Mike Cooper, 1 Sep 1989. NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

²⁷ Ministry of Education, *Early Childhood Management Handbook* (Wellington, NZ: Government Printer, 1989).

²⁸ Excerpt from Anonymous, "Purple Poetry," Sept 1989. NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

any national meeting concerning either the dissolution or the continuation of the NZPF, and no association raised any discussion around withdrawal from the NZPF. Despite the NZPF officer holders acknowledging the potential of dissolution of the federation, it appears that this option was never seriously considered in the wider organisation.

The problem representation of participation as expressed through bulk funding was based on neoliberal discourse, where ECEC services were assumed to act both autonomously and independently. Playcentres and the NZPF resisted this discourse by choosing to act both autonomously and collectively.

NZPF equity sharing – supporting small centres

The *Before Five* funding system started at the beginning of 1990. As predicted, small and rural centres struggled financially under the new system based on participation levels, especially as many of these centres required major building upgrades to meet the new minimum standards. One association “made a plea” to the national conference in May 1990 for special consideration:

Three quarters of their centres [had] low child hours and therefore low funding and ... were in isolated rural localities. Association funds had, as a result, dropped while the cost of providing support services over such a large area had increased. One centre had already closed during the past year because it couldn't fund a new building.²⁹

A national equity sharing scheme was proposed, where the larger, more urban-based and more financially stable associations contributed a share of their bulk funding to a national pool. This money would then be allocated to smaller, financially struggling associations.³⁰ The national meeting of associations in November 1990 voted unanimously to develop this scheme, and the final details were agreed to at the 1991 national conference.³¹ A journal article in 1991 informed the general Playcentre membership of this new scheme:

²⁹ Playcentre Journal Editor, “Conference: Funding and Equity Hot Topics,” *Playcentre Journal* 78 (1990).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Playcentre Journal Editor, “Federation news” *Playcentre Journal* 80 (1991).

The purpose of the federation equity fund would be to ensure that each playcentre receives a fair and equitable share of the government's bulk grant to centres. Since the introduction, last February, of the former government's child/session based bulk funding for early childhood care and education centres, many playcentres (particularly those with low rolls, or less than three sessions per week) have struggled financially to provide a centre and sessions which meet both playcentre and Ministry of Education standards and requirements.

Several associations have established their own equity funds by levying better funded centres to provide added income for financially struggling centres. However the associations with several low-funded centres under their wing have been left without means to share funds. The proposal for a federation fund aims to share funds between associations so that all are able to meet funding shortfalls in centres as well as pay for their own support services for centres.³²

This equity fund quickly became established as an accepted part of the NZPF, and continued for the next 25 years. The centres that received higher amounts of funding paid higher levies - centres in 2008 were paying an average of 30% of their funding in levies, which means that the more well-off centres were paying a higher proportion than that.³³ It was a collective response to the inequity of a funding system based almost solely on participation rates. In this way the NZPF collectively mitigated the lived effects of policies based on the participation problem representation.

1990s decade

Funding linked to participation

The administration and funding changes of *Before Five* were intended to increase access to, and participation in, ECEC. They were successful in terms of increased enrolments and growth of services in ECEC overall, particularly in childcare services. The impact on Playcentres was different, with dropping enrolments (see

³² Ibid.

³³ Bernard Woodhams and Maureen Woodhams, "Supporting Playcentres in the 21st Century: A Report for the New Zealand Playcentre Federation" (September 2008).

figure 1 in chapter 1, p. 19) and closure of centres (see figure 7, below).³⁴ Numbers of Playcentres had peaked in the 1970s,³⁵ and had been dropping since then. Figure 7 shows that enrolments then declined more rapidly after *Before Five* was introduced.

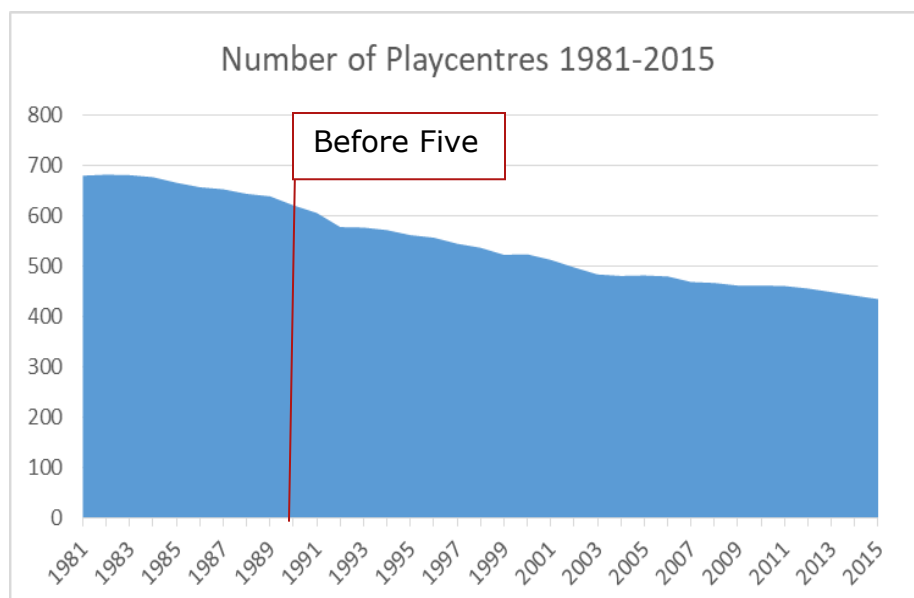


Figure 7. Numbers of Playcentres 1981-2015 (Data from NZPF Secretary files Pink Statistics, and Ministry of Education data summary 2015).

Playcentre associations reported at the 1991 conference the difficulties in maintaining viable centres under the new regime, with many centres going into recess:

Assn A: What a year! ... The changes have brought problems. Three rural centres are in recess and [one] Playcentre has become the first to operate from licensed premises - the local Workingmen's club - because its centre fire report was unacceptable to the Ministry. Half of our centres may not meet regulations and may be forced to accept playgroup funding.

³⁴ NZPF, Secretary's Files: Pink Statistics and Correspondence, 2002-381-3/7; Ministry of Education, "Early Childhood Education me Ngā Kōhanga Reo Data Summary Report 2015," www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/early-childhood-education.

³⁵ Sue Stover, "The History and Significance of the Playcentre Movement," in Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

Assn B: Two centres have gone into recess, not solely due to the changes but we have a new group in the process of becoming an affiliated playcentre.

Assn C: We are seven rural centres, having lost one through the gruelling process of charter writing, meeting regulations and supervision requirements. More are likely to look closely at opting out. With the economic situation as it is playcentre parents face greater pressures at home, needing to find a second income and have their time and energy stretched fully.³⁶

The lived effects of dropping enrolments and difficulties in ensuring financial stability created stresses for Playcentres, particularly with regard to the expectations placed on volunteers. These expectations changed with the introduction of *Before Five*, and were also affected by the changing financial and employment conditions of the 1990s. The parent-cooperative approach to providing an ECEC service was severely challenged by these changes, as predicted by the NZPF during the implementation phase of *Before Five*.

Playcentre volunteers

The initial reaction of the NZPF to the *Before Five* policies was one of cautious optimism that the increased funding would be worth the effort involved in becoming licensed, and that Playcentre would be able to continue as a parent-cooperative service. Associations reported to the 1990 conference how busy they were, but the tone was generally positive, for example:

Assn B: Minimum Standards and Charters have dominated. Encouraging increase in valuing of Playcentre.

Assn D: Enormous increase in paper work and business for meetings. ... Importance of passing on right information "Don't do anything until we find out for sure!" ... Determined to retain Group Supervision, training levels high.

Assn E: A busy year. Health and Minimum Standards inspections less of a problem than expected due to hard work by centre and Exec. people.

³⁶ *Playcentre Journal* Editor, "The Year That Was," *Playcentre Journal* 81 (1991).

Excellent relationship with Ministry.... Pleased to have a computer. Positive feelings despite ups and downs.³⁷

However, by 1991, many associations were more pessimistic and were reporting their frustrations with the bureaucratic processes:

Assn A: At [one centre] the president's child was seen escaping over the 'childproof' gate during an ERO inspection and at [another centre], when a building inspector was asked for advice about repiling the centre, he told parents he did not inspect buildings.

Assn B: We have felt frustrated by conflicting interpretations from different Ministry personnel, by non-negotiable negotiations, by urgent rigid – but at the eleventh hour deferred – deadlines, by unrealistic expectations placed on centre people. We are now left feeling disillusioned by the whole process.

Assn D: During the past year [we have] faced many challenges and as a result we have developed a new range of skills and sharpened up our old ones.³⁸

The central thrust of the educational administration changes in the late 1980s, especially of *Tomorrow's Schools* and *Before Five*, was to streamline bureaucracy and devolve responsibility for decision making to individual schools and ECEC services. As noted in the quotes above, the bureaucratic processes in the transition period were perceived by Playcentre parents as being worse than previous. Further, the lived effect of the devolution of responsibility was an increase in administrative requirements and accountability for the individual services. For Playcentre, that meant an increase in administrative workload for volunteers. The NZPF Property Convenor summarised some of the issues in the 1993 annual conference report:

The workload: Ministry expectations versus Playcentre expectations. Are they realistic/acceptable? ... The Government/Ministry of Education has imposed standards (building and training) that now make the provision of Early Childhood Education very expensive to establish and increasingly expensive and time consuming to administer/maintain. Hence the growing

³⁷ NZPF, Proceedings and Minutes of the 43rd Annual Conference, May 10, 1990. Hutt Playcentre Association Archives.

³⁸ *Playcentre Journal* Editor, "The Year That Was" 10–11.

number of small centres going into recess, often rural and playing an important social/support role for the small numbers of families of the area. ... Who decides if the 1 session/week 10 family pack away centre is viable and qualifies for a building subsidy?³⁹

The NZPF President again raised the workload issue with the Minister of Education in 1996:

Ever increasing "workload/expectations" on parents takes time away from learning and growing with their children - a reason they choose to belong to Playcentre.⁴⁰

The increasing administrative workload had the potential for a negative spiral effect, in that frustrated volunteers could choose to leave Playcentre for an ECEC service that did not require so much of their time, leaving fewer people to share the workload. Anecdotally this was acknowledged by many in the NZPF to have occurred in the centres.⁴¹ Therefore, although the policies were intended to solve the problem of families' lack of access to, and participation in ECEC, the effect on Playcentre was the opposite. Playcentres closed, creating less access to ECEC, particularly in rural areas. Many of the Playcentre parents who chose to stop participating in Playcentres would have enrolled in a different ECEC service and therefore, from a government point of view, participation rates would have been maintained. The specific lived effects on Playcentres would not have been obvious in statistics that focused on addressing the problem representation of participation on a national scale.

Bulk funding

The *Before Five* changes, with the devolution of responsibility to self-managing services, followed neoliberal principles of contracting services and minimal

³⁹ Property Report, NZPF. Conference Papers 46th Annual Conference, May 14, 1993, Hutt Playcentre Association Archives.

⁴⁰ NZPF, *Empowering Playcentre Potential: Investing for the Future*, 1996. OIA request 797809, 6.

⁴¹ These anecdotes were shared at many National meetings that I have attended over the years.

interference in the services' decision making. Bulk funding was based on these principles.⁴² The NZPF took some time to adjust to this new method of operating.

In the mid-1990s, the NZPF put significant effort into finding alternative funding streams for Playcentre. In 1995 and 1996, the NZPF sent many letters, reports and submissions to the Ministry and various ministers, and NZPF office holders attended numerous meetings. Correspondence to the Ministry of Education suggested that the government could include a rural weighting in the bulk funding formula, increase the training grant for the NZPF supervisor training programme, give a one-off grant to establish a rural travel fund for providing the training in rural areas, or recognise Playcentre as a parent-development programme and fund it in the same way that the Parents as First Teachers initiative was funded.⁴³

The strategy followed was persistence, which was not particularly effective on its own. This was because the NZPF was asking for money for specific functions, which was the way that money had been allocated under the old Department of Education. The new Ministry of Education told the NZPF at a meeting in 1995 that money was no longer allocated for specific tasks and that they should use the language of the government when putting forward their requests.⁴⁴ Not long after, the Ministry advised the NZPF in a letter that:

Before the Ministry could support an argument for an increase in funding, it will be necessary to express your outputs in a measurable form, and compare them with other providers. Increased funding could then be expected to provide a measurable increase in outputs (such as a quantifiable increase in education and training) which could justify your case for additional support from Government.⁴⁵

⁴² Devine, *Education and Public Choice*.

⁴³ NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Miscellaneous, 1994-1998, 2002-381-1/01, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington; NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Funding, 1994-1998, 2002-381-1/02, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴⁴ Meeting notes, NZPF & MOE, 25 Aug 1995. NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Miscellaneous, 2002-381-1/01.

⁴⁵ Letter from MOE to NZPF, 20 December 1995, New Zealand Playcentre Federation, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Funding, 2002-381-1/02.

As a result of the discussions between the NZPF and the Ministry of Education, the funding for Playcentres was analysed in the 1997 government Budget round. This resulted in an increase in funding for Playcentres through becoming eligible for the higher rate of subsidy for under-two-year-olds, with the government deciding that the exclusion of Playcentre operated against the neoliberal principles of funder-provider contracts. This was one occasion when the NZPF was able to secure a beneficial outcome, by working within the government problem representations.

Playcentre parents

When *Before Five* rates were being negotiated within government agencies in 1989, it had already been established that the funding was not going to be for under-two-year-old children if their parent was present.⁴⁶ The government was prepared to fund extra staff in ECEC to care for the infants and toddlers, but were not prepared to pay parents to look after their own children at an ECEC service. This impacted Playcentres significantly, especially as the weighting for rural services never eventuated. The reason given by a Ministry official in 1996 for the parent rule was that:

When the new funding policy was first introduced, playcentres and the special ed centres were excluded as a means of restricting the fiscal impact. The presence of a parent essentially served as a 'justification', although there was an element of 'they have lower costs because parents take the place of employed staff' involved.⁴⁷

The NZPF accepted the ruling at the time that *Before Five* was introduced, even going so far as to comment on the Bulk Grants Implementation Working Group's report that:

Playcentres do cater for children birth to school age. However our constitution states that all children under 2 and a half must be accompanied

⁴⁶ Ministry of Education, Playcentre Under-2s Funding, 1996-1997, OIA request 797809.

⁴⁷ MOE memo, 26 August 1996, *ibid*.

by a parent or a care-giver. For this reason it seems inappropriate for playcentres to receive weighted funding for younger children.⁴⁸

This statement reflects the discourse around infants and toddlers in Playcentres. The babies had always been part of the centres because they accompanied their mothers on rostered days, yet they were seen as additional to the main programme. The main programme was geared more towards the education of the older children, with some adjustments to accommodate the babies. This started to change in the 1990s with the development of the new early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*,⁴⁹ which created a sector-wide move to include infants and toddlers in curriculum planning. Since Playcentres were expected to meet all regulations for the under-twos, in common with other providers, by 1995 the NZPF was arguing that Playcentres should be able to access the under-twos rate.⁵⁰

When the Ministry considered the issue of eligibility for the under-twos rate, they discovered a number of issues relating to the presence or absence of a parent. For example, if a parent attended regularly while they were trying to settle a baby in a new ECEC centre, would that make a centre ineligible to claim the higher rate for that baby? How would this be determined? Another example was early intervention centres, where parents were expected to attend with their children; these services were also complaining about the inequity.⁵¹ This memo from a Ministry official encapsulates the difficulties with the exclusion of Playcentre from accessing the funding rate, through reference to the principles of neoliberal funder-provider contracting:

The inappropriateness and inadequacy of this position is very clear. The Ministry funds on the basis of services meeting requirements (licence/homecare order and charters) and enrolments. The means by which services cover their costs (volunteers, fund raising, or fees) is their business and not ours. Also the fact that playcentres required the parents of under 2s to attend with their children is a red herring for policy decisions. For

⁴⁸ NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum*, 1996.

⁵⁰ Letter from NZPF to MOE, 30 June 1995. NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Funding, 2002-381-1/02.

⁵¹ Ministry of Education, Playcentre Under-2s Funding, OIA request 797809.

other ec services we do not vary the funding policy according to their own operating policies - eg, kindergartens are not funded at the higher rate because they have a policy of only employing staff with a ec [*sic*] diploma (there are other essentially unrelated historic reasons).⁵²

The government Budget of 1997 announced that all services were eligible for the higher under-twos rate, regardless of whether a parent was present or not. The NZPF welcomed the change, seeing it as successful advocacy.⁵³ In May's terminology, it was an example of a coincidence of the politicians' political gaze and the activists' dream, leading to change.⁵⁴

Strategic plan

Funding linked to equity

One of the strategies of the SPECE that was linked to improving participation in ECEC was the introduction of equity funding. This was additional to funding based on participation that had dominated the 1990s. Equity funding was an election policy of the Labour party, and was subsequently included in the SPECE.⁵⁵ The new funding gave a rating to ECEC services which were based in low-income or isolated communities, offered language immersion programmes, or had high numbers of children with English as an additional language or with special educational needs. It was deliberately tied to communities or types of programmes, but not to the type of service, in line with the universal nature of ECEC policy since the *Before Five* reforms. However, it moved away from the idea of a universal subsidy based on participation numbers. The differential funding rates for under- and over-twos had been the first exception to the universal subsidy, and quality funding from 1996 (discussed in the next chapter) also recognised additional costs. Both those exceptions were originally based on the increased costs of employing staff, either in higher numbers (under-twos funding) or with higher qualifications (quality funding). Neither of those factors affected

⁵² MOE memo, 26 August 1996. Ibid.

⁵³ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Miscellaneous, 2002-381-1/01.

⁵⁴ May, "Blue Skies."

⁵⁵ Meade, Papers Relating to Strategic Plan for ECE, MS-Papers-10827-12.

Playcentres directly. Costs related to small and rural centres as targeted by equity funding, however, definitely affected Playcentres.

Equity funding started in 2002 and was beneficial for Playcentres because high numbers of rural Playcentres were eligible for the scheme. It was a relatively small funding boost, with most eligible Playcentres receiving between \$1000 and \$2000 per year, the smallest amounts of any of the equity-funded services.⁵⁶ An evaluation of the use of equity funding in 2003 and 2004 found that most services, including Playcentres, used the money for quality improvements rather than targeting increased participation through enrolling new families.⁵⁷ For Playcentres there was a participation effect which surprised the researchers:

Unexpectedly, the use of Equity Funding to enhance quality was sometimes associated with gains in the regularity and duration of attendance and parent/whānau involvement. These gains occurred when parent and whānau-led services, particularly playcentres, employed staff to reduce volunteer workloads, when services included parents in activities that interested them, such as excursions and wānanga, when additional staff were employed to work with families, and when improvements were made to resources and the service environment. The Equity Funding use made the service more attractive to parents/whānau or led to better communication.⁵⁸

This finding would not have been surprising to Playcentre parents or the NZPF. As already noted, the workload associated with administering Playcentres had escalated during the 1990s, and was the most disliked feature of the new regime. Relieving some of this disliked volunteer work encouraged adult participation, and in Playcentre this also resulted in children being brought to the centre more often.

A further boost for Playcentres came with the 2004 government Budget, which included a top-up payment for small centres, so that every centre was guaranteed a minimum amount of bulk funding grant in a year.⁵⁹ A Cabinet policy paper just

⁵⁶ Mitchell et al., *An Evaluation of Equity Funding*.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3–4.

⁵⁹ Memo to associations, Budget press release, May 2004. NZPF, Miscellaneous Papers, 2000-2005, Box 21, NZPF Archives, Hamilton.

prior to the Budget described this funding in terms of ensuring access to ECEC through increasing the sustainability of small and rural centres:

There would be a top-up subsidy for small chartered rural ECE services that might not otherwise be viable, to guarantee a base level of funding and maintain access to quality ECE in isolated areas. The top-up would be an interim measure to support rural ECE while the Ministry of Education carries out the review of rural ECE that was signalled in the strategic plan. The top-up subsidy would be additional to Equity Funding, which recognises the higher cost of providing ECE in isolated areas.⁶⁰

This small centre top-up, combined with equity funding, was not large in monetary terms but was significant in the small budgets of the tiny Playcentres. It was a recognition that the lived effects of the policy problem representation had been particularly deleterious for small centres, and that the problem of access to ECEC had to be considered alongside the problem of participation.

20 Hours Free ECE

Funding linked to costs

The funding review, signalled in the SPECE as a strategy to achieve both the participation and the quality goals, started in 2003. The end result, as described in chapter 6, was *20 Hours Free ECE* funding, from which Playcentres and other parent cooperatives were excluded. A Ministry of Education briefing paper gave this rationale for the cost-driver approach that underlay the new funding:

Most costs created by Strategic Plan initiatives would fall on full-day teacher-led ECE services, which best support labour market participation. Government recognised, and directed the review of funding to address the potential tension between participation and quality objectives in the Plan, and the risk that flow-on costs of kindergarten pay parity and costs of teacher registration would jeopardise labour market and ECE participation. The current funding proposal would both neutralise the risk to participation

⁶⁰ 2004 Cabinet Policy Committee POL Min (04) 7/12A & B, p. 5. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (ii), MS-Papers-10796-52.

from quality improvements and support participation through increased quality and free ECE.⁶¹

The funding review was to find ways to cover the costs of improvements to services that were required by the new policies arising from the SPECE, rather than compensating for historic underfunding.⁶² From this perspective, there was no need to include Playcentres in the funding, as this Ministry of Education internal memo pointed out:

For playcentres there is likely to be little initial change in funding in the short-term from cost drivers funding as there is little regulatory change to quality settings, ie, they are not required to meet the teacher registration targets under the Strategic Plan.⁶³

The government media announcements framed the exclusion of parent cooperatives in positive terms, summarised by an NZPF memo to associations:

Teacher-led services will receive higher rates of funding relating to cost drivers, lower ratios and qualifications, Parent-led services will continue to be funded at a rate that means that they can charge low fees – Both receive a funding rate increase.⁶⁴

Playcentre parents and the NZPF, however, were not content with a continuation of funding levels when other services were to get an increase. An internal Ministry memo summarised the Playcentre reaction to the *20 Hours Free* announcement:

- It is not fair that playcentres are not being funded to provide the 20 hours free ECE for 3 and 4 year-olds from July 2007; and
- That by not extending the free provision to playcentres, parents will choose to use other providers instead.⁶⁵

⁶¹ ECE Funding paper, March 2004. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (i), MS-Papers-10796-51.

⁶² Memo to associations, Budget press release, May 2004. NZPF, Miscellaneous Papers, Box 21.

⁶³ MOE memo FP25/07/00/2. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (iii), MS-Papers-10796-53.

⁶⁴ Memo to associations, Budget press release, May 2004. NZPF, Miscellaneous Papers, Box 21.

⁶⁵ MOE memo FP25/07/00/2. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (iii), MS-Papers-10796-53

The Ministry proposed the following response in answer to the reaction from Playcentre:

- The new funding system will continue to fund parent-led services in a way that meets the large proportion of their costs so they can continue to provide low-cost ECE to children of all ages, for as many hours a week as they attend;
- We recognise that, as family members contribute their valuable time to playcentres by educating their children, playcentre is not free even if there is no charge; and
- Hours of attendance in a playcentre will not count against the hours of free a three or four year old can access in another community-based ECE service, so a playcentre parent does not have to choose only one provider.⁶⁶

The premise of the cost-driver approach was that Playcentres as ECEC services would not have reduced funding or increased costs, and therefore status quo was fair and equitable. With regards to the parents, the focus of the *20 Hours* policy was on increasing participation in ECEC. For teacher-led services, high fees were a disincentive to participation, therefore the *20 Hours* policy eliminated those fees by a higher subsidy to the services. For parent cooperatives the cost was recognised as not being financial, but rather it was the requirement to be involved and commit time to the service. The government saw this as a barrier to participation, but did not see that increased funding would make a difference as parents would still commit their time as a matter of philosophy. Therefore, the government offered ECEC – free of fees and time commitment – at another, teacher-led service, which parents could take up as well as attending Playcentre. From the government perspective, this would increase the number of hours these families participated in ECEC, and not penalise them for choosing to be involved in Playcentre, thus addressing the problem representation of participation.

Playcentre parents tended to view the situation differently. One aspect was that Playcentre parents did not necessarily wish to increase the hours of attendance at

⁶⁶ MOE memo FP25/07/00/2. *ibid.*

an ECEC service, as is discussed below in the section on discursive effects. Another aspect was that Playcentres had low fees as a matter of principle, to make the service accessible to all families. This was achieved by using volunteer labour to do a lot of the necessary management and administration, as well as using parents-as-educators. In the early years of Playcentres, this involvement in management gave many women an outlet for intellectual stimulation and skill development that was not available to them in a society that discouraged women from higher levels of education and from paid employment.⁶⁷ However, by the 2000s mothers had more options available to them, and managing Playcentres competed with many other demands on their time. The government had recognised this situation in a paper on costings of ECEC:

One key issue for both kindergartens and parent-led services is the reliance upon volunteer labour which allows them to run at lower financial cost. Research commissioned by the Ministry of Education highlights increased problems in finding volunteers. Changing parental time availability and increasing professionalism of centres has the potential to increase costs significantly.⁶⁸

By the 2000s, time spent on administration was no longer seen as a welcomed outlet for Playcentre parents, but was seen as a problem.⁶⁹ In contrast, time spent with children on Playcentre sessions was not seen as a problem, and was one of the primary reasons parents chose to be involved with Playcentre. This attitude was highlighted in a 2001 survey carried out by the NZPF Promotions team:

"We're in Playcentre because we want to spend time with our children not dealing with the piles of paper generated by the Ministry and by ourselves," lamented one centre. Employing paid administrators to deal with paperwork was a solution suggested by many who felt that any conflict between paid

⁶⁷ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Stover, "The History and Significance of the Playcentre Movement."

⁶⁸ Update on costings FP25/07/00/2, S02/1991, p. 7. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (ii), MS-Papers-10796-52.

⁶⁹ Woodhams and Woodhams, "Supporting Playcentres"; Sue Sparkes, "'Excellent Response' Shows Common Questions and Themes Wanted for the Research," *Playcentre Journal* 112 (2001); Mitchell et al., *An Evaluation of Equity Funding*.

and voluntary positions that could arise would quickly disappear as the advantages of a lighter workload became obvious.⁷⁰

What the government was offering with the *20 Hours* policy was no relief from the administrative “burden.” As Playcentres were seen to be coping through volunteer labour and keeping costs low, the government was not going to pay any extra, for example to enable paid administrators. Rather, the government was offering “free time” at another ECEC service, in order to relieve parents from the “burden” of playing with children at a Playcentre. This was a result of the government’s problem representation of encouraging participation in ECEC, focusing on hours of attendance rather than the quality of the experience for all those involved.

The mismatch of perspectives was illustrated in this email exchange between NZPF office holders in 2004, at the time of the announcement of the *20 Hours* policy. One of the office holders had been to a meeting organised by the Ministry of Education, and had a conversation with a Ministry official who was involved in the policy’s development. The NZPF office holder was indignant at the suggestion that she would want to be relieved of the “burden” of spending time with her children, and the Ministry official was surprised at the reaction. The other NZPF office holders supported the views of their colleague:

I think that she [Ministry official] was actually surprised at Playcentre's negative reaction to the budget. She said that there was a belief that the free 20 hours would help Playcentre's volunteers who deserve a rest from children after contributing so much. This was quite a revelation to me! (A, 22 June 2004)

How very 'kind' of them [Ministry] to assume we want a rest from our children and that the block is the 'free' hours! That we would prefer to hand them over to 'trained' teachers and go out and do something really exciting like cleaning (one of my ex-playcentre friends does this) other people's houses in order to get the cash together in preference to feeling that we are contributing through the 20 hours we might be able to spend at Playcentre. I guess the idea of volunteering and why people do it is truly foreign to some people. (B, 23 June 2004)

⁷⁰ Sparkes, “Excellent Response” 10.

Your email was mind-boggling to say the least. For goodness sake – why would I put my child into care so I could do voluntary work for an organisation that supports me to be the first and best educator of my child!! Because I need a break and a teacher-led service could do it better - yeah right, I do voluntary work for Playcentre because I'm committed and passionate about its beliefs, I enjoy the work and it fits in with my family and its priorities and supports me as educator of my children. (C, 23 June 2004)⁷¹

The Ministry did listen to feedback from the NZPF, and although the decision to exclude Playcentres from the *20 Hours* funding remained, in 2006 the government announced a specific increase in funding rates for Playcentre funding rates:

Playcentres will also receive a boost of \$4 million over the next four years to ensure they are more financially sustainable. The funding will help reduce the time Playcentre volunteers currently need to spend on administration, so they can spend more time with children.⁷²

This was a political compromise, attempting to mitigate the lived effects on Playcentres of policy based on the participation problem representation, whilst not changing the problem representation itself.

ECE Taskforce

Funding linked to participation and professionalisation

The National-led government from 2008 included Playcentres in the *20 Hours* funding, starting in 2010, but also cut the 80-100% funding band for teacher-led services. Public expenditure on ECEC continued to rise overall, despite the government holding expenditure per full-time-equivalent child⁷³ at 2010 levels.⁷⁴ Controlling this expenditure was an important part of the government's fiscal policy. Accordingly, the ECE Taskforce set up in 2010 was asked to address the problems of increasing participation and improving quality without requiring

⁷¹ NZPF, Funding Review and 20 Free Hours: Email Discussion, Box 10.

⁷² Education Gazette, 22 May 2006. May, Papers re Labour Party's Free ECE Policy, MS-Papers 10796-44.

⁷³ 1,000 funded child hours a year make up a full-time equivalent child (FTE child).

⁷⁴ Ministry of Education, "Public Expenditure on Early Childhood Education," accessed May 25, 2018, <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/resource/public-expenditure-on-early-childhood-education-ece>.

increased expenditure. The Taskforce sought to achieve this balance by proposing a more targeted approach. The system that had developed since *Before Five* was a universal subsidy based on enrolments, to which had been added a number of different weightings and equity payments that mostly related to features of the ECEC services. The Taskforce recommended moving to a subsidy based on enrolments with different weightings relating mostly to the individual child:

The major feature of our proposal is to focus payments on meeting the early childhood education needs of the individual child. Payments would no longer be based on licensed numbers. The amount of subsidy would be calculated and paid through a formula-based funding mechanism that recognises the needs of individual children. We describe this as the **per-child-hour subsidy**, to be paid for a specified number of hours participation per week.⁷⁵

Funding for individual children would depend both on their families (“priority” or “non-priority”) and the service (“teacher-led, centre-based” or “other”).⁷⁶ The service funding was a broad categorisation based on service type, not the needs of an individual service. The categorisation was designed to exclude parent cooperatives and home-based care services from mainstream funding, in order to support the preferred teacher-led, centre-based services within current expenditure. A response by the Victoria University Institute for Early Childhood Studies argued that the positioning parent-led services as outside the mainstream would have detrimental effects:

A further concern is that the proposed funding model positions ECE services as either teacher-led or “other.” Whilst the Taskforce’s acknowledgement and emphasis on the professionalisation of the teacher-led sector is welcoming for these services, the positioning of Playcentre services and Te Kohanga Reo as “other,” and the significant funding reductions that are likely to flow from this positioning, seem counterproductive to the Taskforce’s intention to improve access to ECE. This is particularly the case for Maori, Pasifika and rural children since reductions in funding for these services is likely to lead to the closure of many centres, reducing choice for

⁷⁵ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 72, emphasis in the original.

⁷⁶ Anne B. Smith, “Position paper on Essay 3: Reforming funding mechanisms” (2011) unpublished manuscript; Smith, ECE Taskforce papers, r7628 6/9; ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*.

families and putting greater pressure on teacher-led services. Such an outcome is also likely to increase government costs as children transfer to teacher-led services.⁷⁷

The reaction from the sector against this exclusion of parent-led services from sustainable funding was so strong that the government publicly rejected the possibility of following this particular recommendation of the Taskforce. The potential lived effects on Playcentres were not acceptable to the (voting) public, and therefore not to the government either.

Discursive and subjectification effects

The problem representation of a lack of participation led to a number of different policies, as presented in the first part of this chapter, mostly centred on funding formulae. Policy based on the participation problem representation had particular lived effects on Playcentres, which differed from the effects on other services. The NZPF resisted and responded to those policies and its effects, as shown above. The WPR approach, however, looks at more than the lived effects of a problem representation. It also analyses the discursive and subjectification effects of a representation. Bacchi defines discourses as being concerned with the privileged knowledge that set limits on what can be thought and said,⁷⁸ and these discourses become the accepted and often unchallenged ways of thinking. The discourses produce limited subject positions that can be taken up by people, in this case parents. These subject positions have differing status and agency associated with them. Four discourses underlying the problem representation of participation will be explored here, with emphasis on the limits they impose and the subject positions they produce. These are the discourses of “the productive adult” and “the independent adult,” and discourses concerning formal ECEC, and rangatiratanga and democracy.

⁷⁷ VUW IECS submission on Taskforce report. Smith, ECE Taskforce papers, r7628 6/9.

⁷⁸ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 35.

The productive adult

Since the 1980s, Aotearoa NZ had been following neoliberal principles to manage the economy and the public service, in line with global trends. As noted in chapter 5, neoliberal approaches are based on modelling the behaviour of an assumed self-maximising person. This person is a lifelong learner, a flexible worker, independent and capable of making (his) own decisions.⁷⁹ Above all, this person is a productive contributor to the economy. Those people who do not conform to this assumed person are considered “risks.” The government’s job is to minimise risks, and so effort is put into developing people’s human capital in order that they might be productive.⁸⁰ The end goal is paid employment, and this is central to the productive adult.

For parents, this means that the expectation is that they will be in paid employment. “Good” parents provide for their families without relying on welfare. If parents choose to not work in paid employment but rather focus on child-rearing as their main occupation, and/or choose to do volunteer work, they are seen as responsible for any financial troubles they might have. This is a change in attitude from the welfarism that was dominant in the middle of the twentieth century.⁸¹ The current discourse privileges the subject position of “working parent” and the full-time carer is a risk to be mitigated. In the words of Susan St John in 2014, “today, in policy rhetoric, a mother is valued when she does paid work, not the work of procreation, nurturing, mentoring the young lives entrusted to her.”⁸² Another study, by Ella Kahu, reached a similar conclusion ten years earlier:

⁷⁹ Emma Buchanan, “Economistic Subjects: Questioning Early Childhood Pedagogies of Learning, Participation, and Voice,” in Lightfoot-Rueda, Peach, *Global Perspectives*; Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Stuart, “Cradle and All.”

⁸⁰ Willem Adema, “Towards Coherent Care and Education Support Policies for New Zealand Families,” *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* 28 (2006); Becker, *Human Capital*; Theodora Lightfoot-Rueda and Ruth L. Peach, eds., *Global Perspectives on Human Capital in Early Childhood Education: Reconceptualizing Theory, Policy, and Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Olssen, Codd and O’Neill, *Education Policy*; Iris Duhn, “The Making of Global Citizens: Traces of Cosmopolitanism in the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki,” *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 7, no. 3 (2006), doi:10.2304/ciec.2006.7.3.191.

⁸¹ Grace, “Welfare Labourism”; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

⁸² St John, “Children at the Centre” 1006.

Paid work is consistently privileged over caregiving. Motherhood is all but invisible and is constituted as inevitable and undesirable, while paid work is constituted as essential to individual well-being and a duty of citizenship. The analysis demonstrates that despite drawing upon feminist discourses to warrant its vision, the policy is driven by capitalist goals of increased productivity and economic growth rather than the needs of women.⁸³

Part of the reason for classifying caring and volunteer work as “non-productive,” despite the obvious value to society, is that there is no monetary exchange, making it difficult to quantify the economic impact. Marilyn Waring highlighted this in her classic book *Counting for Nothing*, showing the limitations of gross domestic product as a measure of economic growth.⁸⁴ Indeed, child-rearing in the 1990s was seen as a personal responsibility and cost. This would partly explain the initial reluctance of the government to fund Playcentres at the higher under-twos rate, as this was seen as the equivalent of paying parents to look after their own children. The attitude was that there was no beneficial impact on the economy until people were paid for non-parental care on some sort of contractual basis.

Part of the participation problem representation is that increasing children’s participation in ECEC contributes to women’s labour market objectives. The history in the first part of this chapter showed that these objectives gained more prominence in the 2000s. The change can be illustrated by the benefits of ECEC proposed by the different reports that have been discussed. *Education to be More* listed the features of ECEC that were in the interests of caregivers (parents) as:

- to have real choice about whether or not they wish to re-enter the paid workforce
- to do voluntary work
- to be available for public duties such as membership of local bodies
- to further their own education
- to have regular rest and leisure time.⁸⁵

⁸³ Kahu and Morgan, “Women as Mothers and Workers.”

⁸⁴ Waring, *Counting for Nothing*.

⁸⁵ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*, 6.

Ten years later, the SPECE explained why increasing participation in ECEC was important, referring to the “training, education, and employment needs of parents.”⁸⁶ The use of ECEC for participating in voluntary work, public duties or leisure time was no longer mentioned. In another ten years, the Taskforce report simplified this list even further to only employment needs:

Access to high-quality early childhood education services that operate during working hours create greater opportunities for parents to participate in the paid workforce, thus increasing the likelihood that children will grow up protected against socio-economic disadvantage, and parents will remain productively employed throughout their adult lives.⁸⁷

The vision of *Education to be More* for women to have “real choice about whether or not they wish to re-enter the paid workforce” was severely limited in the vision of the Taskforce, two decades later.

Playcentres, however, do not have “releasing” parents for paid employment as their primary aim. The philosophy is *Whānau tupu ngātahi – Families growing together*, referring to education and support for both children and parents, and others involved in nurturing children.⁸⁸ Playcentres work through involvement, the sociocultural “transformation through participation,”⁸⁹ and through building a community of learners through shared experience.⁹⁰ Therefore, Playcentres are disadvantaged by ECEC policies that aim to increase children’s participation in ECEC in order to increase parents’ participation in the labour workforce. The *20 Hours* policy was arguably a prime example of this, given the pressures to meet government labour objectives as described in chapter 6, and as shown in the

⁸⁶ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, 9.

⁸⁷ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 27.

⁸⁸ NZPF, “Philosophy.”

⁸⁹ Barbara Rogoff, *The Cultural Nature of Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁹⁰ Nikolien van Wijk and Wilton Playcentre members, “Wilton Playcentre: A Community of Learners, Tall and Short,” in *Cresting the waves: Innovation in Early Childhood Education*, ed. Anne Meade (Wellington, NZ: NZCER Press, 2007), 56–62; Satoh and Manning, “Breaking Out.”

evaluation of the policy by Maureen Woodhams.⁹¹ The *20 Hours* policy takes for granted the discourses of the productive adult, and assumes that this subject position is desired and would be chosen by all parents wherever possible.

The independent adult

The assumed neoliberal productive person is also an independent actor in the economic market place. In neoliberal market economics, the behaviour of the economy is modelled by aggregating the behaviour of all the independently acting individuals. This leaves no space for the concept of social or collective action and how this might modify people's behaviour.⁹² Indeed, a principle of neoliberal government is that the market place is a more effective and fairer distributor of scarce resources than a collective approach.⁹³ Parents are expected to be independent and able to provide for themselves and their families without government welfare, and they are expected to find the support that they need. In this case, the preferred subject position is the independent parent; the dependent parent is seen as a problem.⁹⁴

In the same way that "good parents" are independent providers for their families, so too a "good ECEC centre" is able to sustain itself because it meets the needs of families and therefore will attract those families to participate. This is the premise behind public choice theory.⁹⁵ However public choice theory in relation to education has been shown to be problematic and ineffective, as many of the assumptions of behaviour have not proved accurate.⁹⁶ This includes the assumption of a self-maximising person, which does not take into account

⁹¹ Maureen Woodhams, "Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Examining Labour's "20 Hours Free" Early Childhood Education Policy," *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 17 (2008).

⁹² Patrick Fitzsimons, "Neoliberalism and 'Social Capital': Reinventing community," in *Neoliberalism, Welfare and Education: "The New Zealand Experiment": Critique and Critical Transformations*, Paper for AREA Conference, New Orleans.

⁹³ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*.

⁹⁴ Grace, "Welfare Labourism"; Randall, "Impacts of ECE Social Obligations"; Roper, *Prosperity for All?*

⁹⁵ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*; Cathy Wylie, *Vital Connections: Why We Need More Than Self-Managing Schools* (Wellington, NZ: NZCER Press, 2012).

⁹⁶ Devine, *Education and Public Choice*.

individual or collective altruistic behaviour. For rural Playcentres, the idea of public choice determining whether or not the service was effective, as shown by enrolments, was not as relevant. Often the rural Playcentres were the only option for the community; as a parent cooperative, the Playcentre would always cater to the community needs to some extent, and due to low population density, enrolments would never be high. Funding based on the principle of “bigger is better” does not meet the needs of these services. Yet the small centres were subjectivised as being at fault for their predicament, by not being able to be fully independent.

The Playcentre movement steps outside the independent/dependent binary, in favour of interdependence. Playcentres operate as parent cooperatives, where autonomous adults work together to provide an ECEC service and for mutual support. Similarly, the NZPF operates as a collective organisation where the centres are autonomous but work together for the benefit of the whole organisation. To support parents to work together, the adult education programme has a strand dedicated to working together effectively using collective processes.⁹⁷

The problem of sustaining small centres was addressed collectively by establishing an equity sharing fund so that the bigger Playcentres had a mechanism for supporting the smaller ones. This approach reflects Olssen, Codd and O’Neill’s view of “democratic communitarianism” which involves:

(1) a critique of individualism, including individual rights and recognition of the 'common good' including the shared values and practices of a community; (2) a positive conception of the role of the state, and (3) a recognition of the social nature of the self. It is our view that communitarianism if suitably modified, offers a more viable philosophical basis for social democracy in the twenty-first century than does Rawlsian 'political liberalism'.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Playcentre Education, *Curriculum for the New Zealand Playcentre Federation Certificate: Red Curriculum* (1994); Playcentre Education, *The Playcentre Education Diploma Curriculum: Green Curriculum* (2000).

⁹⁸ Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, *Education Policy*, 228.

A democratic communitarianism, according to Olssen et al., gives rise to a model of community which is not homogeneous, and allows individual centres, and parents within the centres, to maintain their points of difference and operate autonomously whilst still contributing to a collective.

The importance and impact of operating as a collective has often been overlooked by policy makers and policy influencers. For example, Crispin Gardiner's independent review in 1991 concluded that:

It appears that most Playcentres are waiting until the review of regulations is finished before deciding exactly what to do with the Bulk Funding. ... It appears that little has occurred in Playcentres as a result of the Bulk Funding.⁹⁹

What this conclusion did not account for was the process of collective decision making that was occurring within the NZPF. The NZPF was setting up an equity sharing fund as described above, as well as capital works funds to support the massive job of property upgrades that would be required because of the new minimum standards. It was not that the Playcentres were waiting to make a decision, rather the process of effective collective decision making was taking time.

The government funding calculations for Playcentre costs since 1989 have not taken account of the support by the NZPF, which has been paid for out of levies from centres and through the use of a large amount of volunteer time. Bernard and Maureen Woodhams quantified these costs in a study that recommended the government factor in the funding of this support when discussing cost drivers of Playcentres.¹⁰⁰ The problem representation of a lack of participation leads to funding policies that focus narrowly on individual centres and the enrolled families, assuming independent behaviour. The effect is to discourage collective approaches to sharing costs and support.

⁹⁹ Helen May, Papers Relating to Reviews of Early Childhood Funding, 1991, MS-Papers-10796-25, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰⁰ Woodhams and Woodhams, "Supporting Playcentres."

Choosing formal ECEC

Bacchi's WPR approach is concerned with governance through problem representations, and the discourses that underpin them. The problem representation of participation is based on ECEC discourses, which include bodies of knowledge around child development and pedagogical practices. These knowledges have contributed to the professionalisation of ECEC teachers, and divided parents from teachers, as well as formal ECEC from the holistic experiences of a young child. From the government's perspective, the aims of human capital development require this specialised knowledge, and therefore also require teachers and formal ECEC.

In order to be effective in terms of developing the human capital of the whole population, the government needs to ensure that all children participate in ECEC. Ros Noonan captured this idea in 2003 with the speech title "*Early Childhood Education: From Optional Extra to Essential.*"¹⁰¹ For parents, this means the choice is now between which ECEC service to use. The choice not to use ECEC at all is strongly discouraged, despite ECEC not being compulsory in Aotearoa NZ (except for beneficiaries, since 2013¹⁰²). Once again, the subject position available for parents is clear: "good" parents take their children to an ECEC service.

This subject position creates ambiguities for Playcentre parents. On the one hand, Playcentre parents value the role of hands-on parenting, and strongly support parents as the educators of their own children both at the centre and beyond it.¹⁰³ Playcentres operate sessionally so as to allow parents and children to spend time together outside of the ECEC centre.¹⁰⁴ The NZPF submission to the SPECE made it clear that compulsory full-time attendance at an ECEC was not a desirable view:

¹⁰¹ Noonan, "Optional Extra."

¹⁰² Randall, "Impacts of ECE Social Obligations".

¹⁰³ NZPF, "Philosophy."

¹⁰⁴ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*.

Increase in participation should be about families having access to enrol in a service, deciding how often or how many hours to attend is the decision of the family.¹⁰⁵

A national education meeting discussed the SPECE draft report, and the feedback again encompassed the idea that ECEC as experienced by a young child is more than what happens within the confines of an ECEC service:

The meeting affirmed the belief that the issue of how or where children should receive their education during this time of their life was broader than the concept which seems to generally prevail within this document – namely that it occurs preferably in situations which are controlled and regulated by government requirements.¹⁰⁶

The ECEC service was seen by members of the NZPF as a support for the primary educators, identified as the parents or whānau. This view of the ECEC service as a support instead of the main site of education for young children was also expressed in the NZPF President's submission to the ECE Taskforce:

Learning takes place everywhere that children are, and particularly when they are in the care of adults who genuinely care about them and make time to talk to them and play with them. Any outcomes of the review should recognise and empower parents. There is considerable evidence that parental education and community involvement such as that provided by Playcentre, Kohanga Reo and Parents' Centres supports parents to provide high quality care and education to their children.¹⁰⁷

Therefore, the choice of a parent or whānau to undertake the early education of their child/ren themselves and not to participate in formal ECEC at all is something that is congruent with Playcentre philosophy. The reaction of the NZPF officers to the suggestion that they might want to send their children to another ECEC service so they themselves can have "time off," as discussed above, is an indication of this discourse within Playcentre. Another example of this discourse is shown in a

¹⁰⁵ NZPF, ECE Strategic Plan, 2000-2004, Box 10, NZPF Archives, Hamilton. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁰⁶ National Education meeting, Sep 2001. Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Submission to the Early Childhood Education Taskforce, NZPF, 2001, in author's personal archives.

comment made in an informal survey of Playcentre parents contributing to a Facebook page, which was submitted to the ECE Taskforce:

Support should be given to all parents to enable them develop a positive environment of life learning for themselves and their children. NOT removing the children from the family for long hours thus further dis-empowering parents to raise their children, and reducing family time together within the home and community.¹⁰⁸

At the same time, Playcentre was an early ECEC service in Aotearoa NZ, and has a history of advocating for the value of formal ECEC participation. One Playcentre writer in 1969 even described the attitude as “evangelical”:

Twenty-one years ago Play Centre was an evangelical movement preaching the virtues of pre-school experience, and parent involvement.¹⁰⁹

Playcentre parents go to great lengths as volunteers to provide an ECEC service for other people’s children, as well as their own. The adult education programme teaches the ECEC bodies of knowledge of child development and pedagogical practices to all parents who participate in a Playcentre. In all these ways, Playcentre parents support formal ECEC alongside the ECEC that occurs outside the centres.

The basic principle is that, in general, Playcentre parents support the right of other parents to choose whether or not to participate in formal ECEC, and which service to participate in if they choose a formal setting. This requires that parenting itself is seen as a valid occupational choice, as discussed above in the discourse of the productive parent. The effect of the discourse that assumes the primacy of formal ECEC for the wellbeing of young children is that parents’ right to choose to opt out is severely limited.

¹⁰⁸ Submission to the ECE Taskforce from the NZPF on parental views, 31 January 2011, in author’s personal archives.

¹⁰⁹ Toby Easterbrook-Smith, “An Opinion Concerning the Future of the Playcentre Movement,” *Playcentre Journal* 16 (1969): 24.

Rangatiratanga and democracy

The problem representation of participation constrains subject positions for parents to that of productive and independently acting adults providing for their families, and developing the human capital of their children so that they, too, can become productive and independent adults in turn. The focus on increasing participation of Māori and Pasifika families suggests that these families are seen as problems, through being unproductive and dependent. Certainly, these families are overrepresented in all the negative social statistics, including within education, and this is an equity issue that successive governments have tried to address. However, generally, the norms to which these families are expected to conform are those of middle-class Pākehā families.¹¹⁰ As discussed in chapter 4, Joce Nuttall pointed out that targeting Māori and Pasifika in this way constructs a deficit view of these families and communities. She linked the targeted strategies of the SPECE to HCT:

There is an overwhelming sense of social pathology embedded in the [strategic] plan: these children [i.e., Māori and Pasifika children] are at risk of failing to acquire, prior to school entry, the thinking and behaviours necessary to success in Western schooling; consequently, they represent a threat to the future health of the nation. ... It is essential for the future economic viability of New Zealand, in an increasingly globalised economy, that these workers are literate, numerate, and compliant participants (i.e., taxpayers) in the mainstream economy.¹¹¹

In contrast, the Māori approach to addressing the negative statistics is to work with the concept of Māori culture as a strength, and develop services based on kaupapa Māori (Māori ways of living and acting). Ngā Kōhanga Reo are a good example of this.¹¹² The concept was developed by Māori, and Māori had control of the development and operation of the service. In this way, Māori were exercising

¹¹⁰ Nuttall, *Pathway to the Future?*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹² Mere Skerrett in *ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand*; Waitangi Tribunal, *Matua Rautia*.

rangatiratanga, or autonomy, over their own lives and services. Pasifika ECEC services have developed in much the same way.¹¹³

In the 1990s, the NZPF undertook a journey to give rangatiratanga to Māori within the organisation. This required discovering how to give voice and power to Māori through modifying the existing Pākehā-centric democratic processes.¹¹⁴ This was a struggle that required persistence in the face of conflict by all members of the NZPF, a willingness to change attitudes and traditional practices, and focused education over a long period of time. The ongoing education around *Te Tiriti* and biculturalism was essential, as there was, and is, a high turnover of parents in Playcentres. The parents come with different degrees of knowledge of these issues, but generally this reflects the level of knowledge in the wider community. In the 1990s, this community knowledge was very low, and although there has been some progress in this area since then, there is still a long way to go before Tiriti knowledge can be assumed. A major milestone in the bicultural journey for the NZPF occurred in 2011, with the election of the first co-Presidents in a new Tiriti-based structure.¹¹⁵

The problem representation of increasing participation of Māori and Pasifika families, therefore, does not sit well with the NZPF. The *Te Tiriti o Waitangi Biculture Framework*, adopted by the NZPF at the 2007 annual conference, stated the principle that “Māori will have self-determination to determine their aspirations for tamariki/mokopuna and whānau in education.”¹¹⁶ Policy focused on persuading Māori to choose a particular option favoured by the government can undermine rangatiratanga, or self-determination.

Further, as discussed above, the NZPF supports the rights of parents and whānau to be considered as competent educators outside the boundaries of an ECEC

¹¹³ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

¹¹⁴ Jenny Corry, “Bicultural Developments: Playcentre Talks Treaty,” in Stover, *Good Clean Fun*; Manning, “Democracy meets Rangatiratanga.”

¹¹⁵ Manning, “Democracy meets Rangatiratanga.”

¹¹⁶ NZPF, Proceedings and Minutes of the 60th Annual Meeting and Conference, 2007, in author’s personal archives, p. 17.

service. The problem representation, however, assumes that if the right information was provided to these families, if the barriers to their accessing an ECEC service (such as unaffordable fees, lack of transport, lack of a culturally responsive service) were removed, then the families would choose to participate, and hence their “deficiencies” would be removed. Although these barriers are worthwhile subjects of ECEC policy, the effect of dividing the population into advantaged and disadvantaged groups is to assert greater control over “disadvantaged” groups rather than the promotion of rangatiratanga.

Moving focus from parents to services

Policy using the problem representation of participation focuses on the families, particularly the parents, of young children. The policies use various methods to try to persuade and support these parents to bring their children to an ECEC service. In the process, parents are encouraged to adopt subjectivities of the productive and independent parent, who participates in the paid workforce and ensures that their children attend ECEC services for their future academic success.

Policies based on the problem representation of participation reward those services that attract the most enrolments, with little regard for the sustainability of centres. In particular, those smaller centres located in low-population-density areas, predominantly Playcentres, are disadvantaged despite providing access to ECEC in areas that have few options available.

The participation problem representation also reinforces the parent/teacher divide that has been created by the problem representation of improving quality. The quality problem representation produces policies which impact more specifically on ECEC services, rather than on families directly. The effects of that problem representation are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: Quality problem representation

This chapter turns to the second of the two main problem representations in the Taskforce report, that of quality in ECEC services. There was a general concern that too many services were not of sufficient quality to ensure good outcomes for children. There were two main reasons for this concern. One was a human rights argument that poor-quality ECEC was harmful for children, and the other was the human capital development argument that poor-quality ECEC did not ensure the necessary foundation for later school learning and achievement.

The concept of quality in the Taskforce problem representation was constructed using modernist values of certainty and closure, reliability and standardisation.¹ Although the Taskforce recognised that quality was a contested concept,² it was still used unproblematically as something that could be measured, compared and improved. The quality concept used in the Taskforce report was an evaluative measure, used as a proxy for effectiveness of the ECEC service. *Effectiveness* in the Taskforce report, was defined as that which produced good outcomes for children, for example:

Supporting high-quality early childhood education for all children is an effective way to increase both economic productivity and child, family and community well-being.³

The evidence base clearly shows that early childhood education is an effective investment for governments: one that can pay off many times over through increasing the odds that children will grow to be productive citizens.⁴

Long-term benefits or *good outcomes* of ECEC were framed in the Taskforce report using primarily economics language, as in the examples above. The Taskforce

¹ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*.

² ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 41.

³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

acknowledged there were immediate benefits that went beyond economics, for example when the report stated “perhaps most importantly, their quality of life, as they experience it as a child, is enriched”⁵, but this perspective was minimal. Discussions on the purpose of ECEC and what constitutes good outcomes or effectiveness for ECEC services are important, because if quality is used as an evaluative measure then there should be clarity and agreement around what is being evaluated.

As in the previous chapter, the first part of this chapter examines the lived effects of policies based on the quality problem representation, specifically the lived effects on Playcentres and the NZPF. Again, this section on historical effects is presented within a chronological framework. The major effects identified resulted from policy on ECEC qualifications, and setting criteria for quality standards that could accommodate parent cooperatives. The second part of the chapter is a discussion on the discursive and subjectification effects of the quality problem representation. The particular effects explored relate to the increasing emphasis on standardisation that was generated by the quality problem representation, and the way that teacher qualifications have come to be used as a proxy measure for quality. The dividing line between parents and teachers will again be commented on, with regard to the subjectification accompanying the quality problem representation.

Before Five: The Qualifications Blueprint

The creation of a unified ECEC sector in the late 1980s⁶ called for a universal application of standards and practices. The very idea that quality could be identified as something separate to particular services was new.⁷ This created a need for definitions and standards of quality that were applicable across all service types. One issue with universal quality standards concerned teachers and their qualifications, as parent cooperatives did not use pre-service trained teachers as

⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁶ Stover, “Play’s Progress.”

⁷ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Meade and Podmore, *ECE Policy Co-ordination*.

a matter of philosophy. This created tensions during the implementation of *Before Five* which still existed at the time of the Taskforce.

The baseline for quality in the *Before Five* policies was the *Management Handbook* 1989 that contained the minimum standards for licensing, which covered such things as property requirements, staffing ratios and curriculum issues.⁸ The minimum standards were developed by a number of implementation working groups, each of which had representation from the ECEC sector. There was brief consultation with the sector before the working group reports were finalised by the Ministry of Education and the Cabinet. The issue of staff qualifications was initially part of this process, but because of disagreements both from Playcentre and from government departments, these were not finalised until the publication of the *Qualifications Blueprint* in 1990.⁹ The development of these qualification standards was the first testing ground for the universal application of quality regulations, and the NZPF argued vigorously for an exception to be made for Playcentres. The story spans three working groups and much political compromise, to find a solution that was acceptable to all factions of the government and the ECEC sector.

Qualifications working group one

The initial Qualifications Implementation Working Group, chaired by Anne Smith, a well-respected academic and childcare advocate, recommended that the “person responsible” in each centre for licensing purposes (as set by the Licensing Working Group) should hold the three-year Diploma of Teaching (ECE).¹⁰ The Playcentre Federation response to the draft report in March 1989 was that it was not sensible to require people working in different settings to hold a generic ECEC qualification, as different services required different sets of knowledges:

From the report it is apparent that this is viewed as the sole qualification enabling people to work in early childhood settings. We feel that this is

⁸ Ministry of Education, *Early Childhood Management Handbook*.

⁹ Ministry of Education, *Qualifications Blueprint*.

¹⁰ Draft Report, April 1989. Ministry of Education, Early Childhood Education Qualifications, Accreditation and Training Working Group, 1989, R7250452, National Archives, Wellington.

quite inappropriate. The benchmark qualification cannot equip people to work in all settings unless it ensures training in the full range of services. Thus a top-up would still be necessary for those services with a particular philosophy or character.¹¹

The NZPF was displaying the service-specific thinking that was precisely what childcare advocates had been trying for years to displace, in order for a unified ECEC sector to be formed.¹² A generic ECEC qualification, suitable for any type of ECEC service, was indeed what the Working Group had in mind, even for Playcentres who did not generally employ teachers. The rationale was that higher-level qualifications had been shown to be strongly linked to higher quality levels,¹³ and in order to improve the overall standards of quality in the sector, the minimum qualification needed to be universally applied. The qualification recommended was the new Diploma, which entailed three years of study. The NZPF responded that:

We have strong concerns about the expectation that all early childhood services employ someone with a Benchmark qualification by the year 2000. This to us is quite unrealistic and undesirable.¹⁴

This solution of the Diploma as a benchmark qualification came from the perspective of services which employed staff to care for and educate children, and did not consider the different characteristics of a parent cooperative. Insisting that a parent could not take on the role of the "person responsible" in a Playcentre unless they had already obtained a three-year Diploma of Teaching at a Teacher's college would have been an insurmountable barrier to the majority of Playcentres. It also did not fit with the NZPF's belief in the quality of the Playcentre adult field-based training programme that had been continuously developed since the 1940s.¹⁵

¹¹ Education Convenor submission on draft Qualifications report. NZPF, Subject files Before 5, 97-030-10.

¹² May, *Politics in the Playground*; Stover, "Play's Progress."

¹³ Dalli et al., *Quality ECE for Under-Two-Year-Olds*.

¹⁴ Feedback on draft Qualls WG report, April 1989. NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

¹⁵ NZPF, Circulars, Reports and Notes, 1987-1988, MS-Papers-6410-04, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The NZPF was further concerned that the practice of group supervision would not be accommodated in a system that designated a single person as responsible for the whole session.¹⁶ The “traditional” supervision arrangement in Playcentres was a trained supervisor supported by a roster of parent helpers, and sometimes an assistant supervisor.¹⁷ Group supervision had developed in Playcentres in the 1960s, where responsibility was shared amongst members of a supervisory team, or sometimes amongst the whole group. By the 1980s, group supervision was a well-established practice, and therefore designating a single “person responsible” would be neither simple nor philosophically acceptable in Playcentres.¹⁸

These issues meant that the recommendation of this first Qualifications Working Group would conflict with the Playcentre philosophy of all parents being empowered to be the educators of their children, as described by the NZPF President at the time:

We need to reach an understanding with the new Ministry of Education that empowering people means recognising the value of parents too, as the providers of education. That appears to be in question under the new minimum standards and charter requirements ... Playcentres felt it important that their parent supervision methods and field-based training would be recognised and acceptable in future.¹⁹

The Qualifications Working Group considered the feedback from the NZPF and the majority decision was to stay with the principle of quality as universally applicable, and not alter the qualifications requirement for a single person responsible for different services. The final report addressed the issue of whether it was feasible for Playcentres to train supervisors to a diploma level, but sidestepped the NZPF’s concern of whether it was philosophically appropriate to do so:

A minority of the group supported an exception being made for playcentre but the majority believed that if playcentre receives the same bulk funding as other early childhood centres and has access to PCET [Post Compulsory

¹⁶ Leggett, “Standards and Charters.”

¹⁷ McDonald, *Working and Learning*.

¹⁸ Manning, Woodhams and Howsan, “Emergent Leadership in Playcentre.”

¹⁹ Barbara Chapman, “Needs of Children First,” *Playcentre Journal* 76 (1989): 8.

Education and Training] funding for training that they would have greatly increased resources to allow training to benchmark level to be achievable.²⁰

However, the recommendation was not accepted by the Cabinet committee in June 1989.²¹ Treasury officials objected to the steep rise in requirements for qualified staff, with the main concern being the projected rising cost of ECEC. The Treasury had a significant influence on government decisions in the 1980s and 90s, and the Treasury officials' views often differed from those of the Ministry of Education.²² This created what Sue Stover has termed an "odd alliance,"²³ where the Treasury and the NZPF were arguing for the same end goal – for parents to be considered as capable educators of their young children – albeit for the different reasons of cost or philosophy, respectively. Treasury officials also supported the NZPF's stance when they argued that the Diploma as a benchmark qualification would discourage parent involvement and affect ECEC quality:

The trend to increased professionalism could have other costs such as a reduction in parent involvement and promotion of the idea that good child care and education is something for professionals alone and not for parents. This would be a serious loss. Childcare services in New Zealand are noted for a high level of parental involvement and such involvement is considered by some experts as a very important aspect of quality.²⁴

The dominant reason for Treasury opposition to ECEC professionalisation was the "unnecessary" cost to the government. As noted in chapter 6, from the late 1980s the government viewed non-compulsory education as a private good which should be paid for by individuals and families, in line with the dominant HCT approach. ECEC was not seen as a necessary part of the education system but rather as an optional extra or as a childcare benefit for working parents. Treasury officials therefore resisted attempts by the Ministry of Education to both increase the costs

²⁰ Working Group Report, 1990, p. 22. Ministry of Education, ECE Qualifications, Accreditation and Training Working Group, R7250452.

²¹ Treasury Report 8508, 25 May 1989. Ibid.

²² Grace, "Welfare Labourism."

²³ Stover, "Odd Alliances."

²⁴ Treasury Report 8508, 25 May 1989. Ministry of Education, ECE Qualifications, Accreditation and Training Working Group, R7250452.

of ECEC and increase the government's responsibility to fund those costs.²⁵ A different political compromise was necessary to resolve this impasse.

Qualifications working group two

The Treasury officials' recommendation in June 1989, and later the Cabinet committee directive, was that there should be multiple options that "would allow for different attainment levels and different approaches to early childhood care and education,"²⁶ rather than a single benchmark qualification for all services. A second working party was convened in July from Ministry of Education staff and chaired by Sarah Mulheron, at that time a Ministry official. The group agreed that they did not want to "down-grade" the quality initiative, and did not want to create a tiered system between teachers with higher qualifications and childcare workers with lower qualifications, as operated in the English system. The group was adamant they wanted to keep the qualification as a diploma-level equivalent.²⁷ Their compromise was to draw on the points system that had been developed for the purpose of cross-crediting old ECEC qualifications to the new Diploma, and recommend an alternative points version of the Diploma. This second report was eventually rejected by the Cabinet committee in December 1989 on the grounds that it still relied on a single qualification (that is, the Diploma) as the benchmark, despite a variety of ways of attaining it.²⁸

The NZPF was concerned that Playcentres would be made to conform to the Diploma benchmark and a single person responsible for licensing purposes, and office holders were not aware of the internal disagreements or ongoing work on this subject. Assurance was therefore sought from politicians and officials that Playcentre would have separate requirements. The answers were vague and

²⁵ Grace, "Welfare Labourism"; Meade, "Foot in the Door."

²⁶ Treasury Briefing notes for SEQ meeting 7 June 1989. Ministry of Education, ECE Qualifications, Accreditation and Training Working Group, R7250452.

²⁷ Notes from Working Party on Benchmark Quals, 5-6 July 1989. Ibid.

²⁸ State Services Commission, *Before Five: Early Childhood Benchmarks*, 1989, R4196617, National Archives, Wellington.

contradictory. At a meeting in February 1990, NZPF office holders were “disturbed and upset” to be told that:

There will have to be a trained person on the premises – trained according to the list for Childcare dated July 1989 (in November, we were given every reason to believe that we had a special case in Playcentre).²⁹

The NZPF office holders therefore encouraged associations to “get political” in a news bulletin which included a draft letter for use by associations:

We don't believe that yelling and screaming does us any good, but suggest associations could get political, using the draft letter to M.P.'s and prospective M.P.'s.³⁰

In response to the NZPF's protests, the Associate Minister of Education, Margaret Shields, justified the stance being taken in a letter dated April 1990:

This is not an attempt to discredit the value and benefit of parent involvement and supervision. Every centre with such high parental attendance as playcentre enjoys is indeed fortunate. But the establishment of a minimum qualification level is intended to both upgrade the quality of early childhood care and education and to ensure the optimal benefit to children.³¹

This stance softened somewhat by May 1990 when the Minister of Education Phil Goff addressed the Playcentre Conference:

In most early childhood education areas, the requirement for a three year training, in line with that for primary level teaching, is being phased in. There is, however, clearly a need to acknowledge that where parents are involved with their own children's early education, with a high ratio of adults to children, requirements may need to be applied differently.³²

²⁹ News Bulletin to Regional Meetings, February 1990, NZPF, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Letter from Ass Min Shields to NZPF, April 1990. NZPF, National Executive Minutes, Department of Education Correspondence, 1988-1991, 93-324-4, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³² Playcentre Journal Editor, “Conference: Before Five Issues Dominant,” *Playcentre Journal* 78 (1990): 9.

The conflicting messages from politicians and Ministry officials created much uncertainty and anxiety within the NZPF, as core aspects of Playcentre were being questioned: parents-as-educators on sessions, group supervision, and the adult education programme. These things had been seen in the past to contribute to quality, yet now they were apparently not sufficient. The problem representation was that quality needed to be improved, and individual, external-to-Playcentre qualifications were being presented as the solution.

Qualifications working group three

The Minister's comments at the May conference reflected his knowledge that a third Qualifications Working Group had just been set up, chaired this time by Anne Meade. The policy outcome of that Working Group was released in August, commonly referred to as the *Qualifications Blueprint*.³³ The *Blueprint* divided ECEC services into two categories, and assigned different qualification requirements for each:

Group 1 Services with limited parental involvement in 'sessions'; typically kindergarten, childcare, home-based care schemes (e.g. family day care),
Group 2 Services with extensive/considerable parental involvement in 'sessions'; typically playcentre, Te Kohanga Reo and Pacific Island Language Groups.

Group 1 services would need to have head teachers and supervisors with qualifications equal to a 120 points (or three year full time) course by 1995.

Group 2 services would gain points by two means: supervisors would bring qualification points, and 40 points would be credited for parental involvement.³⁴

Treasury and State Services Commission officials had objected, unsuccessfully, to ECEC supervisors being required to hold a Diploma of Teaching, on the grounds of "credential creep."³⁵ They argued that this requirement would lead to further increases in requirements for teachers and make ECEC progressively more

³³ Ministry of Education, *Qualifications Blueprint*.

³⁴ Working Group Report, 1990, p. 22. Ministry of Education, ECE Qualifications, Accreditation and Training Working Group, R7250452.

³⁵ State Services Commission, *Before Five: Early Childhood Benchmarks*, R4196617.

expensive for the government to fund. The officials projected a time when ECEC teachers would be asking for pay parity with compulsory schooling teachers, and this, they felt, was not required. This was indeed what the childcare advocates in the ECEC sector and the Ministry of Education were trying to achieve – increased qualifications to improve the overall quality of services in the sector.

However, the proposed solution did fulfil the Treasury request for multiple benchmark qualifications, although not by creating a divide between different types of workers in the ECEC sector. The multiple benchmarks instead applied to different types of services – high or low parent involvement – which was what the NZPF had been advocating for. This created a major exception to the universal application of quality standards across the sector. The *Playcentre Journal* editor called the *Qualifications Blueprint* “a breakthrough in acceptance of Playcentre philosophy and method of operation.”³⁶ The NZPF were pleased that the practice of group supervision had been recognised in policy, and that the NZPF training programme was seen as acceptable for supporting parents to educate their children.

The *Qualifications Blueprint* gave Playcentres an accessible way of meeting standards without requiring some parents or paid supervisors to have pre-service diploma training. It also positioned Playcentres as a quality service because of the involvement of parents, and defined other services in opposition to that level of parent involvement:

The criteria recommended for Group 2 services are:

- additional parents, whanau [family] are present at all sessions;
- a significant number of parents, whanau are undertaking training courses;
- the philosophy of the centre is that parents, whanau are integral to the 'staff' team and carry responsibility for the children's learning;
- the service is non-profit-making.

³⁶ Playcentre Journal Editor, “Editor's Note,” *Playcentre Journal* 79 (1990).

The 40 points per centre credit for Group 2 services is in recognition of the contribution of the parents, whanau. Group 1 comprises all services which do not meet Group 2 criteria.³⁷

In practice, these categories were administrative only and talk of “high parent involvement” never became the norm against which all services were measured for quality. Yet it is interesting to note that at this time, teacher-led services were described as Other to the parent-cooperative model of operation. The problem representation of quality as standardisable across all services had been modified sufficiently to accommodate Playcentres and other parent cooperatives such as Ngā Kōhanga Reo. This meant that the lived effects of the policy were minimal changes to those practices and philosophies that Playcentres valued highly.

1990s decade

The government elected in 1990 maintained the new ECEC structure, although details were reviewed to align with the government’s neoliberal ideology of fiscal constraint and targeted assistance.³⁸ The 1991 review resulted in changes to the points system set up by the *Qualifications Blueprint* a few months earlier.³⁹ The Minister for Education, Lockwood Smith, summarised the changes by stating that “staffing and qualification demands have been eased but quality supervision standards have been maintained.”⁴⁰ The rationale given was that the government:

was concerned that the regulations for property and for staffing ratios, training, and qualifications were too strict and made it unnecessarily difficult for providers to offer early childhood education at a reasonable cost. In making the necessary changes, the government has been careful to secure the quality of early childhood education, and the health and safety of children.⁴¹

³⁷ Working Group Report, 1990. Ministry of Education, ECE Qualifications, Accreditation and Training Working Group, R7250452.

³⁸ Letter from Lockwood Smith, Minister of Education, to Prime Ministerial Committee on Reform of Social Assistance. Helen May, *Funding Review - Government Working Group Papers*, 1991, MS-Papers-9181-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³⁹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Smith, *Education Policy*.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Education Policy*, 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

The change in qualification requirements was from 120 to 100 points. The old two-year diploma was classified as 80 points and the new three-year diploma was 120 points, so the new 100 points requirement was supposedly the equivalent of two and a half years of training. For this National government, the problem representation of improving quality was not focused on raising qualification levels of staff. The problem representation here was one of ensuring minimum quality standards of ECEC services whilst simultaneously protecting government expenditure from escalating costs.

Playcentre qualifications

For small and rural Playcentres struggling to meet the new training and licensing requirements, the drop to 100 points was a useful change. So, too, was the change in 1995 that raised the group “parent points” for Playcentres from 40 to 60 points. As set out in the *Qualifications Blueprint*, the other points came from individual supervisors who had specific levels of the Playcentre training.⁴² These changes partially offset the challenges of a new emphasis on participation in the Playcentre adult education programme. As the Playcentre professional development contract director told the NZPF education team, there had been a change during the 1990s:

parent education used to be offered to people, but now as soon as people arrive they are pressured to undertake the training. This is solely to keep the playcentre licensed.⁴³

This is an indication of the internal tensions surrounding the purpose of the Playcentre adult education programme, tensions that created much debate after *Before Five*. The ECEC qualifications offered in the teachers’ colleges were being upgraded and the three-year Diploma of Teaching was becoming the standard, despite the attempts of the National government, and in particular Treasury, to make this non-compulsory. The tertiary education system was also being changed

⁴² Letter from MOE to NZPF, 6 December 1994. NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Funding, 2002-381-1/02; Ministry of Education, *Qualifications Blueprint*.

⁴³ Letter to Federation Education from PD Director, 1999. New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Licensing, 1991-2002, Box 10, NZPF Archives, Hamilton. Emphasis in the original.

by government reforms, and new requirements were being put in place for providers of ECEC qualifications, including the NZPF. The NZPF responded to these changes, but there was internal disagreement about whether these changes were always for the better. The adult education programme was as fundamental to Playcentre philosophy as having parents-as-educators, so these debates were important.

Parenting education was part of the foundation of the original Playcentres, especially those started by Gwen Somerset in Feilding and Doreen Dalton in Christchurch. Their purpose was to support young mothers, by introducing them to the latest child development ideas through group discussions, and observing children at play.⁴⁴ The formal education programme started in 1945 with child development lectures by Beatrice Beeby, again focused on child development but with the additional purpose of training Playcentre supervisors. Over time each Playcentre association developed its own supervisor's certificate, and there was considerable variability throughout the country.⁴⁵ The training programme had a number of certificate levels: *Introductory, Parent Helper, Assistant Supervisor and Supervisor*. The first levels focused more on parent education, with topics of play and child development, and the higher levels were designed more for supervisors and included courses on running centres, working with parents and group dynamics. From the late 1960s there was also an emphasis on leadership training, for the purposes of managing the associations as well as the centres. In 1968, the first National Supervisor's Certificate, additional to the Association Supervisor's Certificate, was developed, delivered and managed by the NZPF education sub-committee.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Stover, "The History and Significance of the Playcentre Movement."

⁴⁵ Stover, "The Debate Continues".

⁴⁶ Jean Goldschmidt, "How Leadership Emerged in Playcentre," in Stover, *Good Clean Fun*; Manning, Woodhams and Howsan, "Emergent Leadership in Playcentre"; Stover, "The Debate Continues."

Challenges to the non-standardisation of the Playcentre training came with the move to an integrated three-year Diploma for all ECEC services in 1987.⁴⁷ The Playcentre training stayed separate from the new Diploma. However, the NZPF education team was concerned to ensure that the Playcentre training would still be valued by the sector, as many Playcentre-trained women had found employment in childcare or training colleges after their time at Playcentre.⁴⁸ The NZPF education sub-committee undertook a project to establish standard cross-crediting of the Playcentre training to the new ECEC Diploma, although this was a difficult process given the non-standard nature of the programme across different associations.⁴⁹

The *Before Five* administration reforms radically changed the rationale for the NZPF's adult training programme. The new ECEC licensing agreement negotiated with the Ministry of Education in 1990 was based on breaking the association certificates into "Parts" which equated to a certain amount of points, in the language of the *Qualifications Blueprint*.⁵⁰ At the same time, the tertiary education administration reforms required the NZPF to register with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) as a private training establishment (PTE) in order to continue to receive a training grant. The Playcentre qualification also had to be approved by NZQA. Whilst the initial registration and approval were relatively straightforward, stricter requirements were added as the new NZQA established itself and its processes, and re-registration in 1996 was at first declined. A training coordinator was employed in 1996 and a quality management system for the adult education programme was set up in order for re-registration to occur.⁵¹

Playcentre Education, as the new PTE was known, started a process of defining the Playcentre curriculum in 1992. This took the form of a collation of the essential

⁴⁷ Meade and Podmore, *Early Childhood Education Policy Co-ordination*; NZPF, Circulars, Reports and Notes, MS-Papers-6410-04.

⁴⁸ NZPF, Circulars, Reports and Notes, MS-Papers-6410-04; Stover, "The Debate Continues".

⁴⁹ NZPF, Circulars, Reports and Notes, MS-Papers-6410-04.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Education, *Education Gazette series* (Ministry of Education, 1992).

⁵¹ Stover, "The Debate Continues".

elements of all the different training programmes, and was eventually published as the *Red (folder) Curriculum* in 1994.⁵² The NZPF education team reassured the associations that this was not a move towards standardisation:

The need for NZ Qualifications Authority recognition of association certificates in supervisor training lead to a conference decision to apply for approval and accreditation of such certificates. [The] Federation Education Convenor ... explained to delegates that the decision to develop an association supervisor's certificate, which would be issued by the federation, was not a move to nationally standardise association training programmes.⁵³

However, when re-registration was declined in 1996, there was a major shift in attitude towards standardisation and regarding the purpose of the training programme. The associations decided that the *Red Curriculum* needed to include more on biculturalism and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, health and safety, Ministry regulations and requirements, and curriculum planning and assessment.⁵⁴ These knowledges were now seen as necessary for managing a Playcentre because of the *Before Five* changes, the introduction of *Te Whāriki*, and Playcentre's continuing bicultural journey.⁵⁵ Child development and play were still core aspects of the training, but the balance of content in the courses was moving from parenting education towards education for ECEC teaching and management.

The associations agreed to create a national curriculum for the new National Early Childhood Certificate (a lower level than the Diploma) requirements, set by NZQA and based on unit standards. Unit standards was a new approach to tertiary education, where standards developed by "industry" and approved by NZQA could be pieced together to form a qualification. This was to replace a holistic approach to a qualification programme of study.⁵⁶ The Playcentre *Yellow (folder) Curriculum* was designed to tailor a programme of unit standards for Playcentre parents.⁵⁷

⁵² Playcentre Education, *Curriculum for the NZPF Certificate: Red Curriculum*, 1994.

⁵³ Playcentre Journal Editor, "Recognition Needed," *Playcentre Journal* 87 (1993).

⁵⁴ Playcentre Education, *Early Childhood Certificate Curriculum: Yellow Curriculum* (1998).

⁵⁵ Manning, "Democracy meets Rangatiratanga."

⁵⁶ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁵⁷ Playcentre Education, *Yellow Curriculum*.

However, a prime motivator for offering the NZQA unit standards certificate was the portability of the qualification, so that it would be recognised by employers and by other tertiary education providers offering degree-level qualifications.⁵⁸ When NZQA reduced the credits associated with the Certificate, effectively “devaluing” the qualification, Playcentre associations decided to abandon this *Yellow Curriculum*.⁵⁹

The wider ECEC sector was rejecting unit standards as the basis for ECEC qualifications, in favour of holistic programmes of study,⁶⁰ which also influenced the NZPF decision. The government then announced in 1998 that the points system, which was generally agreed to be not working well, would be dropped in favour of the three-year Diploma as a benchmark qualification.⁶¹ Playcentre Education was therefore required to re-negotiate a licensing agreement with the Ministry of Education, and the structure of the new curriculum was an important part of that negotiation.⁶²

The new curriculum was for a Playcentre-specific diploma, published in 2000 in a green folder. The Playcentre Diploma was at an NZQA level below that of the Diploma of Teaching (ECE). This was a decision based around the capacity of the Playcentre volunteer system to cope with the requirements for delivering higher-level qualifications⁶³ but also from viewpoints within the NZPF that the Playcentre training programme was for Playcentre purposes and not those of the wider ECEC sector or government. The professional development director at the end of the decade illustrated this perspective in a letter to Playcentre Education:

Many times we have been told that parents do not want to be professional early childhood educators, that they have not got enough time to do the

⁵⁸ Playcentre Education, *The Playcentre Education Diploma Curriculum: Green Curriculum*, 10.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁶¹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Meade, Papers - EC Qualifications and Regulations Project, MS-Papers-9006-25.

⁶² Meade, Papers - EC Qualifications and Regulations Project, MS-Papers-9006-25; NZPF, Licensing, Box 10.

⁶³ Diti Hill, Robyn Reid, and Sue Stover, “More Than Educating Children: The Evolutionary Nature of Playcentre's Philosophy of Education,” in Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

formal playcentre training when they have other commitments in their life, that they would rather play with the children than do administrative work.⁶⁴

Yet other sections of the Playcentre organisation had different views on the value of the qualifications, for example expressed in this letter from one Playcentre Association to the NZPF Standing Committee:

We understand your view of not wanting formal qualifications in the licensing agreement, in your work you are dealing with many centres not able to meet the requirements. We also want to support those centres, and we are sure there are ways of keeping these centres open, but at the same time we strongly believe, when world-wide research as well as our own experience show how qualifications matter, that we can't ignore all this evidence. ... Yes, we also believe in skills that parents have and we must treasure the cooperative way in which we make decisions and run our sessions, but to completely disregard the evidence that qualifications do matter will not do Playcentre any good.⁶⁵

The compromise between these views was that Playcentre continued as a registered PTE, offering an NZQA-approved qualification at no financial cost to Playcentre parents, but not a qualification that was equivalent to the new ECEC benchmark, the Diploma of Teaching. The *Green Curriculum* Playcentre qualification became the basis for the new licensing agreement negotiated with the Ministry of Education.⁶⁶

For the NZPF, the problem representation of quality, and especially the linking of qualifications with quality, led to a strong emphasis in the 1990s on revising and upgrading the adult education programme. The content was revised and expanded, and the management of the programme became more formalised and standardised in order to meet the requirements of a registered PTE. The lived effects of these changes were experienced in all Playcentres and associations, as pressure was put on parents to train for the sake of their centre's licensing

⁶⁴ Letter to NZPF, May 1999. New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Licensing, Box 10.

⁶⁵ Letter to NZPF from a Playcentre association, October 1999. NZPF, Education Team Papers, 1999-2000, Box 16, NZPF Archives, Hamilton.

⁶⁶ Ministry of Education, *Qualifications for Group Supervision in Playcentres: Circular 2001/16* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2001).

requirements and as the training itself kept changing. The tensions around the changes led to philosophical and operational questions about the position of Playcentre qualifications in the wider ECEC sector and the feasibility of supporting these qualifications.⁶⁷ These tensions are further discussed below in the section on discursive effects.

Quality funding

Three years after the first ECEC funding review commissioned by the National government, a new funding review was set up. The first review in 1991 had resulted in cutting back qualification and staffing requirements whilst maintaining a rhetoric that quality of ECEC services was not being affected. By 1994, the government was revisiting that decision. The guiding principles set for the review group of government officials started with a reference to quality:

The regulatory framework should be designed so that all licensed early childhood services meet quality standards which are appropriate to the developmental needs of the child, and which do not unnecessarily constrain the supply of services.⁶⁸

The review led to the introduction of Rate 2 quality funding, announced in the 1995 government Budget and implemented in 1996, and designed to encourage services to move beyond the minimum licensing standards.⁶⁹ A subsequent Quality Funding Working Group was set up, with sector representation and Anne Meade as chair, to design quality criteria for services to be eligible for the new funding. For generic ECEC services, the criteria was the Diploma of Teaching for the person responsible, and higher-than-minimum staff-to-child ratios. For

⁶⁷ Stover, "The Debate Continues"; Sue Stover, "Fellow Travellers - Adult Education amongst Children: Part Two Playcentre as a Social Movement," *New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning* 26, no. 2 (1998); NZPF, Circulars, Reports and Notes, MS-Papers-6410-04.

⁶⁸ EC Funding Review, ETE (94) 7, 15 March 1994. Anne Meade, Working Party Papers - Quality Funding Group, 1994-1995, MS-Papers-9006-22, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁶⁹ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

Playcentres, there were multiple criteria based on the Parts of the *Red Curriculum* training programme and the practice of group supervision.⁷⁰

Despite the efforts to provide multiple pathways to quality funding, by 1999 the take-up rate by the ECEC sector was 45%, and for Playcentres it was only 3.2%.⁷¹ For the majority of the ECEC sector this low take-up rate was explained through the financial rewards being not high enough to warrant the cost of meeting the requirements, and this explanation was extended to Playcentres.⁷² However, for Playcentres, the reasons for the low uptake of quality funding did not relate to lack of qualifications amongst the parents. Instead, it was because of the all-or-nothing approach to quality funding, and the assumption that an ECEC service would have stable staffing and qualification levels at all times. This was not a feature of many Playcentres.

Playcentres operated as sessional centres, with a large variation in the number of sessions per week offered by each centre (anywhere between one and ten sessions a week).⁷³ Where team supervision was practised, each session could be run by a different supervision team.⁷⁴ These teams changed regularly during the year, and, each time, a new license was issued by the Ministry of Education. Some Playcentres also operated a "dual roll" system, where one group of families might attend for three sessions per week, and another group attend for three different sessions.⁷⁵ With the high turnover of parents within Playcentres, the supervision teams generally go through cycles of building and then losing capability in terms of people with experience and training. With two groups operating in one centre it was quite possible that one group could qualify for the Rate 2 quality funding and the other one would not. As quality funding was allocated only on a whole-centre basis, a Playcentre in that situation would not qualify. This was pointed out

⁷⁰ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Meade, Working Party Papers - Quality Funding Group, MS-Papers-9006-22.

⁷¹ May, *Politics in the Playground*, 237.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Powell et al., *The Effect of Adult Playcentre Participation*.

⁷⁴ Manning, Woodhams and Howsan, "Emergent Leadership in Playcentre."

⁷⁵ NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Funding, 2002-381-1/02.

to the Ministry by the NZPF in 1996, in an unsuccessful effort to get the policy changed:

These groups change according to needs of the families and the availability of people to be involved. The decision to limit services to only one funding rate at a time discriminates against Playcentres where several separately identifiable groups use one early childhood facility. ... Thus recognition of specific higher funding criteria for Playcentre is made meaningless by the adoption of processes which preclude Playcentre's participation in the new policy.⁷⁶

The lack of flexibility around quality funding created anomalies for non-Playcentre services as well. A newspaper article published not long after quality funding had been introduced gave this example:

One childcare centre manager ... said all her staff were highly trained, but one of the centres she ran did not qualify between 7.45 and 8 am, and another between 4 and 4.15 pm. "Is that rubbish or what?" she asked.⁷⁷

The principle of a centre only being able to access one funding rate at a time applied not just to quality funding, but to all other funding rates as well. This created a problem for at least one Kindergarten which ran a playgroup on a Wednesday afternoon, for children soon to start Kindergarten. This one session in the week did not meet the criteria for the Kindergarten-specific Rate 3 funding, so they had to choose between running the entire centre on lower funding, running an unfunded playgroup, or stopping the playgroup altogether. They had been told by the Ministry of Education that:

Under the present system if we were to continue this process we would have to reduce to rate 2 funding for all our sessions for the last two weeks of the term which in terms of us meeting our operating costs is not realistic. I had thought that I could inform the Ministry that we would send them a

⁷⁶ Letter from NZPF to MOE, 15 Jan 1996. Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

⁷⁷ NZ Education Review, Reopening the Childcare Qualifications 'Can of Worms', 8 May 1996. Anne Meade, Papers relating to Early Childhood Group, 1993-1996, MS-Papers-10827-08, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

list of what sessions were to be funded at rate 2 but was told we cannot do this as funding cannot be on two different rates in the same week.⁷⁸

Hence, although the quality funding criteria had been designed to accommodate diversity in the sector (and particularly, Playcentres and Ngā Kōhanga Reo), the rule that there could only be one rate for the whole centre for a whole week negated the attempt at inclusion. The problem representation underlying the funding approach was of quality as a fixed, stable and consistent entity that could be used to classify an ECEC service in an unproblematic way. With this concept of quality, the lived effect for Playcentres was a missed opportunity to benefit from the increased funding.

Strategic Plan

The SPECE development and consultation process in 2001-02 was an opportunity for the ECEC sector to contribute to defining policies based on the problem representation of improving quality. For the NZPF, this contribution appeared to be more reactive than proactive. As the SPECE developed, the NZPF became more aware that the focus of policies for quality was the professionalisation of teachers. The NZPF was already in a different category of service, as established by the *Qualification Blueprint*. There did not appear to be strategies or discussion around improving quality in parent cooperatives. The NZPF President vented her frustration at one meeting:

[She] said strategies 9 & 10 were defined in terms of teacher language and only relates to teachers. When it is put on paper it is not their story. Playcentre must come up with a licensing model 'where parents will provide, to enhance abilities as parents', and it all gets lost amongst Ministry models and language. She asked – 'How do we get our qualifications valued? ... Everything we do is measured from outside, and each time policy changes we lose a little of our philosophy as we have to fit the Ministry model.' ... [She] concluded by saying they'd not come up with new regs for this model

⁷⁸ Dunedin Kindergarten Association, submission to SPECE working group. Anne Meade, Papers Relating to Early Childhood Education Working Group (i), 2001, MS-Papers-10827-03, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

of offering ECE. We can't - you'll have to ask Trevor [Minister of Education].⁷⁹

The NZPF was not able to “come up with new regulations,” but was able to articulate the philosophy that Playcentre wanted to see in the SPECE document. This was outlined in an update from the NZPF Standing Committee, which urged Playcentres to make a submission to the SPECE working group:

While it is encouraged and entirely appropriate for responses to be personal thoughts, there is also a great need for Playcentre Philosophy and our Early Childhood provision to be reflected in the document. It is essential that we are able to protect our belief that Parents are the First and Best Educators of their Children. It is time Parents/Family and Whanau in a Playcentre setting were valued alongside trained teachers.⁸⁰

However, despite identifying a gap in the policies, there was obvious difficulty in coming up with a new model, strategies or potential regulations that would support Playcentres and other parent-cooperative services. Neither from the NZPF, the SPECE working group, or government policy makers had concrete suggestions. When the final SPECE was published, the goal to “improve quality of ECE services” had the largest number of strategies associated with it, grouped into five categories. The category of “increasing the numbers of registered teachers” was the largest, with eight strategies and sub-sections. These strategies were quite specific, with concrete actions identified. For example, time-bound targets were set for increased numbers of registered teachers in ECEC services, new qualification requirements were set based on the three-year Diploma, and pay parity for Kindergarten teachers was to be pursued. In contrast, the strategies for supporting quality in parent-led services were more generalised and vaguer:

- Research ways to support parent and whānau-led ECE services and develop policies to maintain and enhance quality in these services.
- Review regulations to support the quality of ECE services where parents and whānau are responsible for providing ECE.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ SPECE Urgent Update, August 2001. NZPF, ECE Strategic Plan, Box 10.

- Review funding of services where parents and whānau are responsible for providing ECE, to promote quality.
- Provide information and support (such as professional development and other training) to promote the delivery of quality ECE in services where parents and whānau are responsible for providing ECE.⁸¹

The lived effect, therefore, of the problem representation of improving quality through standardisation was that policy making for parent cooperatives was put on hold. Research and reviews were signalled, with the hope and promise that these would lead to identification of appropriate quality standards and policy strategies to ensure these standards could be achieved. Policies for improving quality in parent cooperatives, however, remained elusive.

Quality in Parent and Whānau-Led Services research

The *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services* research was undertaken by a team from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) and the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (TKRNT). Data was gathered from mid-2004, with phase 1 of the research published as a background report in 2005⁸² and the final research published in 2006.⁸³ This release of the report was a long time after the original projected publication at the end of 2004.⁸⁴ The NZPF was concerned with the timeframe of the process, as it had been expected that the research would provide some suggestions for policy that could feed into the funding and regulation reviews that were already taking place.⁸⁵ This was raised with the Ministry of Education in 2004:

We are concerned that the report from this research project will not be available for consideration during the criteria development phase of the regulatory review, which is currently taking place. We understood that one of the aims of this research was to examine factors which make up structural quality within parent led services. ... The time frames given for

⁸¹ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, 15.

⁸² Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

⁸³ Linda Mitchell et al., *Quality Parent/Whānau-led Centres, and the Factors that Support it: Technical report* (Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2006); Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

⁸⁴ Minutes of MOE/NZPF mtg, 19 Aug 2005. NZPF, Miscellaneous Papers, Box 21.

⁸⁵ Minutes of MOE/NZPF mtg, 19 Aug 2005. Ibid.

the release of the report [mid-2005] mean that data analysis will not be completed until after the criteria development of the regulatory review phase has been completed. This means decisions will be made before any relevant information gained from the research is available.⁸⁶

The NZPF had good cause to be concerned, as the Ministry of Education took the view that any decisions with regard to Playcentre and other parent-cooperative services should wait until the research was completed. This view was expressed in a number of different papers. For example, in February 2004, a Cabinet paper explained why parent-cooperative services were being excluded from the *20 Hours* policy about to be announced in the Budget:

Playcentres, licence-exempt services, kindergarten, home-based care networks and Te Kohanga Reo would not receive the same funding increases as other ECE services, as they face smaller increases in costs from the strategic plan. ... Research currently in progress is likely to inform government decisions on further investment in quality within parent-led services.⁸⁷

A draft ECE funding paper in March 2004 also reminded the Minister that:

Key planks of the ECE Strategic Plan are ... quality improvements for parent-led services, to be developed after research into quality in parent-led services in New Zealand⁸⁸

After the announcement of the *20 Hours* funding, a Ministry memo outlining potential responses to the NZPF included reference to the research:

The reaction to the changes from 1 April 2005 to cost-drivers funding is that there is not much in it for playcentres. ... Government funded research is underway into quality factors in parent/whanau-led services. If research identifies the specific factors and therefore cost drivers underlying quality provision in these services then more funding may follow.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Letter from NZPF to Minister Mallard, 15 Dec 2004. NZPF, Standing Committee Papers, 2001-2004, Box 8, NZPF Archives, Hamilton.

⁸⁷ MOE cabinet paper, SDC(04)6, 'Review of ECE funding: Public Consultation', Feb 2004, p. 7. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (i), MS-Papers-10796-51.

⁸⁸ MOE draft ECE Funding Paper, March 2004, p. 5. *ibid.*

⁸⁹ MOE memo 'ECE funding review' FP25/07/00/2, June 2004. May, ECE Government Funding Papers (iii), MS-Papers-10796-53.

When the NZPF requested information in 2005 about the release of the report, which they knew had been completed by the researchers, the Ministry of Education blamed the upcoming election for the delay:

The MOE stated that this is a quality assurance process. They are meeting with reviewers next week. The report requires sign-off by the Minister, which won't happen until after the election. The timeline for the release of the report will occur after the new Government has formed, when it will be decided how to distribute the information. There will probably be another advisory group meeting to consult on disseminating the info. The MOE cannot give a definite date for meeting or release of the report.⁹⁰

It was clear that policy development for Playcentres was on hold until after the *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services* research had been completed. However, the final research did not deliver the clear policy directions that were hoped for. It did provide a qualitative picture of the different parent-led services, and made some general recommendations.⁹¹ As a Ministry official commented to the NZPF during a meeting just prior to the release of the research, "a strong finding is that all types of services can achieve high quality."⁹²

The two direct recommendations for Playcentre that arose from the *Quality* research were that there should be extra funding to "reduce the high levels of volunteer work in playcentres" and for "making a greater contribution towards the costs of playcentre education courses and professional advice."⁹³ The first recommendation had been implemented in the 2006 Budget, before the report was released, with an increased funding rate for Playcentres for administration. The second recommendation had also been implemented, but not as a result of the research. Playcentre Education had moved from receiving a tertiary training grant to the more substantial funding available to other tertiary training providers in 2006, after a number of years of negotiation with the Tertiary Education

⁹⁰ Minutes of MOE/NZPF mtg, 19 Aug 2005. NZPF, Miscellaneous Papers, Box 21.

⁹¹ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

⁹² Notes of Research on quality in parent/whanau-led services advisory group meeting held on 9 Dec 2005, p. 2. Ministry of Education, Parent-led research, OIA 892278.

⁹³ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*, ix.

Commission.⁹⁴ Playcentre Education had had to implement a standardised national enrolment and reporting system in order to be eligible for this funding.

Apart from the funding review, the other major policy initiative that the *Quality* research was supposed to influence was the regulations review. This review was almost complete by 2008 when a new government was elected, and had some changes made by the new government before implementation. In November 2014, in answer to my official information request on actions taken as a result of the *Quality* research, the Ministry referred to the regulations review:

When this report was released, we already had a programme of work underway for initiatives that supported quality in parent/whānau-led services. These initiatives included funding increases for Playcentre in 2006 and Te Kōhanga Reo in 2007, and the introduction of a new regulatory framework for parent/whānau-led services in 2008.⁹⁵

The regulations review was not seen by the NZPF as a positive initiative in terms of supporting Playcentres to improve quality. In fact, the NZPF President reported to the 2008 annual conference that:

Federation teams have worked hard to ensure that the new regulations have the least possible impact on Playcentre, but there is still a lot of work to be done, mainly upgrading buildings to ensure that all our Playcentres meet the new regulations and can continue to be funded, while providing quality early childhood education.⁹⁶

Policy having the “least possible impact” was probably not what the Ministry of Education had in mind with the regulatory review. Governments generally make policy to bring about a positive change, using the mechanisms which Meade summarised for the SPECE working group as “funding, regulatory systems, and Government involvement.”⁹⁷ The difficulty of turning the *Quality* research findings

⁹⁴ Tertiary Education Funding Manager's report, NZPF, Conference Papers 2008, Author's personal papers.

⁹⁵ Cover letter, November 2014. Ministry of Education, Parent-led research, OIA 892278.

⁹⁶ NZPF, Conference Papers 2008, 6.

⁹⁷ Minutes of 5th meeting, 7 Mar 2001. Anne Meade, Papers Relating to Strategic Plan for ECE (iii), 2000-2001, MS-Papers-10827-15, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

into specific policy strategies was outlined by a Ministry official in a meeting prior to the release of the research:

[The Ministry of Education] needs to think about findings from a policy angle – what might be the solution. Sometimes it is difficult to see how government might influence things e.g. the finding that more years of experience helps. The question is how to keep people. Finding that openness to special needs is influenced by attitudes: how can you influence attitudes? What can government do? ... What areas can government support? To some extent government can help support advice and support.⁹⁸

The Labour-led government and the Ministry of Education during the 2000s were willing to support Playcentres and other parent-cooperative services, and yet the policy solutions were not obvious and the end result was that very little happened to specifically support these services. Such a situation reinforces an aspect of the recipe for achieving social change, put forward by May and Meade at different times: it is necessary for the advocates to be able to articulate a clear message of what they want from the government.⁹⁹

It is also possible that the problem representation of quality as a stable, independent entity that could be used to measure and evaluate services was constraining policy ideas. The main emphasis was on research to find those indicators that contributed to producing quality in parent-cooperative services. The concept of quality itself, as a useful tool for evaluation in all settings, was not being questioned.¹⁰⁰ The lived effect was that the divide between teacher-led and parent-led services was widened and reified in policy, with parent-led services being marginalised.

20 Hours Free ECEC

The divide between services was clearly shown in the *20 Hours* policy, which specifically excluded parent cooperatives until 2010. The reason for exclusion built

⁹⁸ Notes of Research on Quality in Parent/Whanau-Led Services Advisory Group meeting held on 9 Dec 2005. Ministry of Education, Parent-led research, OIA 892278.

⁹⁹ Meade, "Foot in the Door"; May, "Minding, Working, Teaching."

¹⁰⁰ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*.

on the lack of developed policy arising from the SPECE: no extra funding was deemed needed, because no extra costs had been placed on parent cooperatives by new policy requirements, because no new policies had been developed. In other words, parent cooperatives had been marginalised in the SPECE and this led to further marginalisation in subsequent policy, in a negative – but logical – spiral.

There was a further unintended effect of the *20 Hours* policy on parent cooperatives. The government promoted the policy as an entitlement for children to *quality* ECEC. By excluding parent cooperatives, there was an implicit message that these services were not considered to be quality services, and quality was linked specifically to the presence of qualified teachers.¹⁰¹ After protest from the NZPF, the Ministry tried to mitigate this effect in their publicity information. For example, the Ministry's *Education Gazette* in 2008 carried an article on *20 Hours* funding, one year after it was introduced:

From 1 July 2007 Free ECE has enabled parents to have a greater choice about their children's regular involvement in quality teacher-led early childhood education and some kōhanga reo. Free ECE is about ensuring that all children have access to quality education. Strong early learning foundations will help more young New Zealanders off to a good start in life. Playcentres continue to provide high quality education and care to their families. They are unique as family members give their valuable time to join in their child's education and care.¹⁰²

The addition of Playcentre to this article in some ways added to the Othering of the service, in that it is clearly separate to the policy that is about ensuring children have a "good start in life." The Ministry even offered, in October 2007, to support individual Playcentres and Ngā Kōhanga Reo to become teacher-led services if that was desired, but government policy held firm to excluding these services from the *20 Hours* policy if they remained parent-led.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Bushouse, "20 Hours Free ECE"; Woodhams, "Looking a Gift Horse"; Morrison, "Impact of 20 Hours Free ECE on Playcentres."

¹⁰² NZ Education Gazette, 14 July, 2008. May, Papers Relating to Implementing Free Early Childhood Education, MS-Papers-10796-46.

¹⁰³ NZPF, Ministry of Education Papers, 2001-2007, Box 28, NZPF Archives, Hamilton.

An attempt was made to quantify the effects of the *20 Hours* policy on Playcentres with a Ministry research report.¹⁰⁴ The main impact analysed was the change in the number of families enrolled in Playcentres in the period immediately following the introduction of the *20 Hours* funding. The findings were that there might have been some drops in roll numbers that could be attributed to the new policy, but the number of contradictory results and variability overall prevented significant statistical conclusions being reached. This research, however, did not address the question of the influence of the *20 Hours* policy on public perceptions of Playcentre, nor the longer-term impacts and trends. It is not easy to measure or estimate lost opportunities, that is, the number of people who would no longer consider Playcentre as an ECEC option because of the *20 Hours* implication that their children would not receive quality ECEC at a parent cooperative. Anecdotally, Playcentre members considered that the *20 Hours* policy would eventually result in Playcentre becoming a service for under-three-year-olds, although no research was carried out to confirm this.

ECE Taskforce report

By the time the Taskforce was deliberating, the division between parent cooperatives and teacher-led services was well established, and this was not benefiting the parent cooperatives. Anne Meade pointed this out in a submission to the Taskforce:

The [SPECE] working group acknowledged it offered less policy in relation to parent and whanau led services, which are frequently the only ECE services in rural New Zealand. And the minimal 2002 policies have barely gained traction – for example their funding review never eventuated. The result of this neglect is closure of existing services in need of greater support but getting less. Moreover, it was not the intention of the working group to drive a wedge between teacher-led ECE and parent-led ECE services. That categorisation was intended only for staff qualifications but came to be used widely by officials, thus creating an unwarranted large space between types of ECE service. I recommend that the Taskforce focus

¹⁰⁴ Morrison, "Impact of 20 Hours Free ECE on Playcentres."

attention on improving the public investment in playcentres and kōhanga reo.¹⁰⁵

The Taskforce did not choose to recommend improved public investment in parent-cooperative services. Instead, the recommendations were based on a problem representation of creating maximum certainty in achieving quality, linking this with qualified teachers. Having qualified teachers was the factor that produced the strongest correlations with quality in the literature.¹⁰⁶ Other identified factors were not as clear, and less likely to guarantee a good cost-benefit ratio for government investment. Accordingly, the Taskforce recommended improved funding for teacher-led services, improved professional development for teachers and further research aimed at improving teacher-led services. In the Taskforce recommendations, parent cooperatives would be supported to a much lesser extent. It appeared that the Taskforce did not accept that the government had a responsibility to sustain parent cooperatives as an ECEC option.

The response of the NZPF was to focus on giving the message to the government, both directly in submissions and indirectly through the media, that “Playcentre is quality.” This NZPF press release illustrates the key message:

The ECE Taskforce report showed a strong bias towards centre-based daycare run by paid teachers as an indicator of good quality ECE, in sharp contrast to research showing that the parent-run Playcentre model produces educational outcomes for children at least as good as services staffed by teachers. Hidden on the ECE Taskforce website was a funding exemplar which recommended cutting Playcentre funding by 63%. This threat galvanised Playcentre parents and educators to participate in the consultation process, giving full voice to their experience of the high quality education Playcentres provide.¹⁰⁷

Associations and centres were supported to spread this key message of quality by the NZPF team:

¹⁰⁵ Meade, Submission to ECE Taskforce.

¹⁰⁶ Dalli et al., *Quality Early Childhood Education for Under-Two-Year-Olds*; Mitchell, Wylie and Carr, *Outcomes of Early Childhood Education*.

¹⁰⁷ NZPF, “Public Consultation Backs Playcentre.”

It will be important during this process to refer to key points of evidence that support Playcentre as a high-quality early childhood option that is worthy of government's support. Key people within the federation are busy collating this type of evidence now, and we will share more of this work with you as soon as we are able to. We look forward to working with you all to ensure that Playcentre's views are heard loud and clear by the government.¹⁰⁸

The message of quality was the same one that the NZPF had used in response to being excluded from the *20 Hours* policy, and was aimed at influencing the public perception of Playcentre as being the equal of other ECEC services. The argument was not based on a recognition of the Playcentre qualification as being equivalent to a Diploma of Teaching, as had been argued by the NZPF in the late 1980s.¹⁰⁹ The changes in qualifications since that time meant that equivalence was no longer an option. Instead, the NZPF emphasised parent involvement alongside support and training for parents, and thus were returning to the principles of the *Qualifications Blueprint*. In that document, *high parent involvement* was deemed to produce quality and *Other* services had to find alternative routes to achieve the same thing. In the Taskforce report, this situation had been reversed.

The vocal protests against the Taskforce report, along with criticism from supporters of teacher-led services¹¹⁰ prevented the major reorganisation of the funding system. However, other recommendations made their way into government policy over the next few years, some of which were not beneficial to Playcentres. The victory was temporary and incomplete.

Discursive and subjectification effects

The problem representation of quality improvement rested on a concept of quality that encouraged standardisation, and the NZPF responded to this over two decades by increasing standardisation in many aspects of its operation. Meeting requirements became increasingly difficult to do within a volunteer organisation,

¹⁰⁸ Whitwell, "What Can We Do?."

¹⁰⁹ NZPF, Circulars, Reports and Notes, MS-Papers-6410-04.

¹¹⁰ Mitchell, May, Dalli, Duncan, and Carr, Media Release, 1 June 2001. Smith, ECE Taskforce papers, r7628 6/9.

and therefore more paid positions were created within the NZPF, at all levels from federation to centres. However, during the 2000s, policy to encourage quality became increasingly associated with qualifications of the educators, and focused on developing teachers who held higher-level qualifications. The qualification level surpassed what could be offered through the NZPF and thus reinforced the division between parent cooperatives and teacher-led services. The Ministry of Education and the NZPF struggled to find ways to work together within the discourse of quality. This discourse defined quality as requiring standardisation across the sector, and tended to be simplified as equivalent to qualifications. The quality discourse delineated separate roles for parent and teachers, thus discouraging the availability of *educator* as a subject position for parents. The effects of the standardisation and qualification discourses and the parent/teacher subjectification divide will now be briefly explored.

Quality requires standardisation

Quality is a modernist concept, intended to provide a stable and consistent way of measuring the desirable attributes of an ECEC service, as discussed in chapter 4.¹¹¹ As a concept, quality provides a way of comparing services and assessing the risk of children being adversely affected by participation in an ECEC service, as well as assessing the likelihood of achieving the desired educational benefits. This assessment is important to the government in order to make decisions on how to allocate resources for maximum beneficial effect. As discussed, the government's rationale for supporting ECEC in the 2000s was underpinned by HCT, and the Taskforce in particular used economics discourses to frame the argument for government investment. Quality can be researched, evidence gathered, and externally regulated, and this approach bypasses the need for democratic discussion in the community formed around an ECEC service. Dahlberg et al.¹¹² critique the quality discourse for the loss of such democratic discussion, and the

¹¹¹ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*.

¹¹² Ibid.

standardisation of quality criteria across different services and different communities.

Playcentres, in contrast, operate democratically and can provide a forum for such discussions. As parent cooperatives and communities of learners,¹¹³ Playcentres are always in a state of becoming, bringing a new generation of parents into greater knowledge and awareness of themselves and their community, of child development and the sociocultural context of that development. Because of this continual process of building a community of learners, variability rather than standardisation is one of the key features of the organisation. This was noted by Geraldine McDonald in her 1970s research:

Playcentres vary in so many ways. ... Apart from parent education and parent participation, which are part of all playcentres, there is really no 'standard model'.¹¹⁴

Variability was noted again by a Ministry of Education researcher in the 2000s, in an evaluation of the impact of the *20 Free Hours* policy on Playcentres:

The average ... cannot be said to describe the typical Playcentre experience, as there does not appear to be a typical experience.¹¹⁵

Variability is the antithesis of standardisation. Projects to define quality in parent cooperatives have struggled to find significant evidence of causal factors, in part because of the variability of processes and experiences in the centres. Projects such as the Quality Funding¹¹⁶ and Quality Indicators projects¹¹⁷ of the 1990s, and the *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*¹¹⁸ research in the 2000s, were based on the concept that standardised factors could be found and applied across all parent cooperatives. This is similar to the *school improvement* discourse referred to by Benade, as part of a technical-reductionist approach to finding out “what works” and then applying that across all schools regardless of their local

¹¹³ van Wijk and Wilton Playcentre members, “Wilton Playcentre.”

¹¹⁴ McDonald, *Working and Learning*, 88.

¹¹⁵ Morrison, “Impacts of 20 Hours Free ECE on Playcentres” 3.

¹¹⁶ Meade, Working Party Papers - Quality Funding Group, MS-Papers-9006-22.

¹¹⁷ Meade, Papers - Quality Indicators Project, MS-Papers-9006-26.

¹¹⁸ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

context.¹¹⁹ This approach, according to both Benade and Dahlberg et al., limits thinking about schools and ECEC services as ethical and political institutions, where local communities are involved in determining the purposes and outcomes of the services.¹²⁰

The push for standardisation also limits innovation, despite innovation being valued within the sector and by the government.¹²¹ One Kindergarten teacher in the early 2000s expressed her frustration at being prevented from being innovative due to bureaucratic requirements:

Too often it has been championed that the diversity of Early Childhood is a strength - my recent experience certainly reaffirms that this is pure rhetoric and a great ideal that has quickly becomes lost in the push for generic standards and the operation of the funding systems. It appears to me that good practice and improved services to children and families is a lesser priority to more important matters such as "you can't do this because other services will want the same" or "it is not specific to the regulations so it can't happen."¹²²

Innovation requires trying things which have not been tried before or applying the ideas in a different way, and this also means accepting that not everything will be successful. If a service is required to be consistently of a high quality there is no room for trial-and-error, or making mistakes, and this discourages innovation.¹²³ Playcentres have impacts on the lives of parents and children in part because participation in the centres allows people to try new things, make mistakes and hopefully learn from them, and in turn support others to grow and learn as well. This is a messy process, and does not always meet standard criteria for quality as

¹¹⁹ Benade, "The NZ Draft Curriculum 2006."

¹²⁰ Benade, "The NZ Draft Curriculum 2006"; Gunilla Dahlberg, Peter Moss and Alan R. Pence, *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Postmodern Perspectives* (London: Falmer Press, 1999).

¹²¹ Anne Meade, ed., *Cresting the waves: Innovation in Early Childhood Education* (Wellington, NZ: NZCER, 2007).

¹²² Dunedin Kindergarten Association, submission to SPECE working group. Meade, Papers Relating to Early Childhood Education Working Group (i), MS-Papers-10827-03.

¹²³ Manning, Woodhams and Howsan, "Emergent Leadership in Playcentre."

determined by the government. This does not mean that the Playcentre Way¹²⁴ does not have value.

Quality equals qualifications

The discourse of formal ECEC was discussed in chapter 7, especially the way that this discourse focuses on children's experience in formal institutions. Such a discourse limits thinking about ECEC in the wider context of children's learning in the early years. A similar idea is present within the quality discourse, that is, quality depends on the qualifications of the teacher. Research has shown that the relationships children have in early childhood are critical for their learning, and that adults with more training tend to be better at developing and maintaining those relationships.¹²⁵ There are many ways that adults can learn about supporting children through reciprocal relationships, and only one of those ways is by pre-service or field-based training resulting in a recognised qualification. Requiring adults to have a minimum level of qualification is an easy way to promote the necessary skills for ECEC teaching. Over time this has become the dominant focus, as the NZPF pointed out in feedback to the ECE Qualifications Project in 1998:

Our concerns lie primarily in the contention that quality is defined only by qualifications. [...] While the [Competent Children] report indicated there was room for improvement, Playcentre was seen to achieve quality outcomes for children through a combination of factors, not primarily diploma level qualifications.¹²⁶

Such a qualification certifies that the person has been taught (or at least exposed to) a set of knowledges appropriate to ECEC, and has had a chance to develop the skills needed for caring and educating young children. Those with the recognised qualifications will still have a range of abilities, from those who just pass the qualification to those who pass it easily. In other words, qualifications

¹²⁴ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*.

¹²⁵ Dalli et al., *Quality ECE for Under-Two-Year-Olds*; Mitchell, Wylie and Carr, *Outcomes of ECE*.

¹²⁶ NZPF submission to EC Qualifications and Regulations project, 1998. NZPF, President's Files - Ministry of Education, Miscellaneous, 2002-381-1/01.

support people to become good ECEC teachers but do not guarantee that this will happen. Other forms of learning will also contribute to the quality of the ECEC educator, although these are more difficult to quantify. Playcentre recognises the value of formal learning through its adult education programme, which was started over 60 years ago. However, the organisation also values the informal learning that comes from being part of a community of learners.¹²⁷ Children are also observed to benefit from the ongoing learning of the parents, through experiencing the effect of their parents' learning outside of the Playcentre sessions. Neither children's nor adults' learning is static, which contributes to the quality of the ECEC experience for everyone involved. The value of learning outside of formal qualifications has been recognised in previous policy, for example the attestation process allowed for in the *Before Five* policy, where:

elders of an ethnic group attest as to the skills and of the individual seeking recognition. (The Ministry of Education will recognise attestation as evidence that the staff concerned have the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure the standards of care and education required by the state).¹²⁸

A holistic view of ECEC might therefore benefit from a holistic and dynamic view of ECEC educators' learning.

A holistic view of quality in ECEC would also look at factors beyond the formal qualifications of individual adults. The NZPF submission to the Quality Indicators project in 1998 argued this point:

Playcentre has always challenged the assumption that the knowledge in an early childhood service could reside in one or two trained people. We would support a more inclusive approach that recognises the knowledge, experience and skills that others bring. We would argue that a service that

¹²⁷ Valerie N. Podmore and Sarah Te One, "Nurturing a Culture of Care for Infants and First-Time Parents: The SPACE Programme at Te Marua/Mangaroa Playcentre Early Childhood Centre of Innovation (Round Two)," Ministry of Education, <http://thehub.superu.govt.nz/publication/coi-te-marua-mangaroa-playcentre-space-programme-nurturing-culture-care-infants-and-first>; Satoh and Manning, "Breaking Out"; Sue Stover, "Fellow Travellers - Adult Education amongst Children: Educating Parents in the Playcentre Movement, 1941-1997," *New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning* 25, no. 2 (1997); Stover, "The Debate Continues"; van Wijk and Wilton Playcentre members, "Wilton Playcentre."

¹²⁸ Department of Education, *Before Five*, 29.

includes and values parents as an integral part in the session provision as well as in the management has a much to offer in terms of quality as a service relying on one or two trained people.¹²⁹

Group supervision, which was defended by the NZPF during the implementation of *Before Five* and resulted in the provisions of the *Qualifications Blueprint*, was based on the principle that shared responsibility is a sustainable and effective way of producing quality provision.¹³⁰ Knowledges are shared and adults learn from watching and working alongside those more experienced than themselves. The *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services* research found that better quality was observed when Playcentre supervision teams had a good mix of experienced and newer parents.¹³¹ This approach is difficult to accommodate when the discourse of quality centres on individual, formal and pre-existing qualifications. Carmen Dalli called this an “unintended consequence of the strategic plan policies,” particularly the qualification requirements where the “emerging concern was that the broad brush of policy requirements, applied in a ‘one-size-fits-all’ manner, was in danger of undermining the historically celebrated diversity of the sector.”¹³²

Parent or teacher but not both

The discursive effect of standardising quality and conflating quality with qualifications led to a strong division between the roles of parents and teachers in ECEC. The Taskforce report referred to parent engagement and the necessity of parents being involved in the service, but this was not considered to be in a teaching role.¹³³ Parents were positioned as carers and the ones who knew their children best, and teachers were the professionals with the qualifications and therefore the specialised knowledge for education. These were distinct and separate roles in the Taskforce report. This was essentially the care/education divide between services that ECEC advocates had worked hard to eliminate in the

¹²⁹ NZPF submission to Quality Indicators project, 1998. Meade, Papers - Quality Indicators Project, MS-Papers-9006-26.

¹³⁰ Woodhams and Manning, “Playcentre as a Professional System.”

¹³¹ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

¹³² Dalli, “Critical Ecology” 66.

¹³³ Manning, “Mismatch of Policy Discourses.”

1970s and 80s,¹³⁴ but in a different form. The role of parents-as-educators, where parents combined their parenting knowledge with experience in a centre and with both formal and informal training, was not a subject position offered in the Taskforce report. The increasing professionalisation of teachers in the 2000s meant that anyone without a teaching qualification was not considered to be an effective ECEC teacher. Training was required, and that training needed to equate to at least a diploma-level qualification. Indeed, one scholarly discussion on teacher professionalism referred to Playcentre parents as “untrained”:

There have been debates about ways of continuing to value the contribution of untrained mothers (or other home carers) who work alongside their children in services like playcentres or in the indigenous Kohanga Reo.¹³⁵

A statement such as this oversimplifies the situation. Certainly, some parents in a Playcentre will be untrained and only bring their parenting knowledge with them. Yet many others will be on a journey to discover more about how to support their own and other children to grow and develop, as participating in the adult education programme is an expectation of all Playcentre members. Most of these parents will not have the equivalent of a diploma- or degree-level qualification in ECEC, as current ECEC teachers are required to have, yet *untrained* is not an accurate description. Still other parents may already have a relevant qualification, prior to joining a Playcentre. Overall, the Playcentre philosophy is that all parents can be effective educators of their children, with support and a collective effort,¹³⁶ and this should be a subject position available to parents if they choose to identify with it.

Playcentre aims to build community

Quality as a concept was promoted in the Taskforce report as a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of ECEC services, following the dominant discourses of the time. Effectiveness was defined in terms of human capital development, where

¹³⁴ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Meade and Podmore, *Early Childhood Education Policy Co-ordination*

¹³⁵ Carmen Dalli, “The New Teacher in New Zealand,” in *Professionalism in the Early Years*, ed. Linda Miller and Carrie Cable (London: Hodder Education, 2008), 146.

¹³⁶ NZPF, “Philosophy”; Manning, “Mismatch of Policy Discourses.”

individual children and parents were given the opportunity to develop skills that would allow them to be productive members of society in the future (for children) or now (for parents). The Taskforce recommendations focused on ways of trying to guarantee this effectiveness, looking for certainty and standardisation from the ECEC services. Playcentres struggled to meet the standardisation requirements which had been designed for a teacher-led operating model, especially as working with parents and community is necessarily open-ended and variable. Further, for Playcentre, the aims of ECEC and conceptions of effectiveness are broader than those defined by human capital development.

Dahlberg et al. have argued that the aims of ECEC should be debated at both a national and local level.¹³⁷ Freedom to decide on local aims for ECEC also gives freedom to define effectiveness in meeting those aims. In Aotearoa NZ, TKRNT has argued that the aims of Ngā Kōhanga Reo are different to those of the Ministry of Education.¹³⁸ Whereas the Ministry of Education classify Ngā Kōhanga Reo as a service for the purpose of young children's early education, TKRNT see the purpose of the service as nurturing te reo me ōna tikanga Māori (Māori language and culture).

Similarly, the NZPF does not see Playcentre as simply a service for children's early education. Playcentres were founded on the concept of providing mutual support for families,¹³⁹ and adult education, growth and development has always been an important theme. Playcentre aims to build community. Any measure of the effectiveness of Playcentre should measure not just what happens at the centre and the effect that has on children, but also the short- and long-term effects on families and communities.

The NZPF has made some attempts over the years to measure the effects of adult participation in Playcentres. It has been repeatedly found that participation results in social networks for parents, as well as for children. This was reported in a small

¹³⁷ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*.

¹³⁸ Waitangi Tribunal, *Matua Rautia*.

¹³⁹ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*; May, *Politics in the Playground*; Stover, "The History and Significance of the Playcentre Movement."

survey in 1991 by a NZPF Standing Committee member, which found that improving women's future employment was not a major effect, rather "it was the development of personal skills and of friendships which were the lasting legacies of Playcentre."¹⁴⁰ In this case, the human capital development was not the lasting benefit, rather it was social-network development. This lasting benefit was further confirmed by research in the 2000s which showed that "friendships that endured outside of playcentre" contributed to sustaining Wilton Playcentre as a community of learners.¹⁴¹ The lasting nature of the friendships formed was also highlighted by this tongue-in-cheek *Playcentre Journal* article written by two teenagers in 1977:

Playcentre mothers are a particular breed, a real trial to their families. When mothers first go to Playcentre some join – but others become involved! (Involved is a very Playcentre word.) ... When your mother has reached this stage it is better not to go shopping with her as you will be continually accosted by talkative strangers. You should then be prepared to stand for half an hour on the cold street while they talk Playcentre.¹⁴²

On a more serious note, the development of social networks amongst parents can have wider community effects, as found by the 2005 Playcentre-commissioned research on adult participation:

The experience of participating in Playcentre may be the first encounter that adults have with other families with whom they would not normally associate thereby increasing the opportunity for socialisation with a range of other adults. Playcentre, according to project participants, has a "levelling" effect and often means that adults are able to encounter issues of diversity, equity and bi-culturalism not usually encountered outside the Playcentre setting.¹⁴³

The development of social networks for children is also a benefit. Indeed, social development and friends are some of the primary reasons parents bring their

¹⁴⁰ Stover, "The Debate Continues", 54.

¹⁴¹ Nikolien van Wijk et al., "Transforming Learning at Wilton Playcentre," Ministry of Education, <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/22551/34856>, x.

¹⁴² Anonymous, "A Playcentre Mother in the Family," *Playcentre Journal* 40 (1977): 16.

¹⁴³ Powell et al., *Adult Playcentre Participation*, 3.

children to Playcentre. One parent in 1970 articulated clearly why she thought the Playcentre was necessary:

I think it is better to remember that the Playcentre supplies what the home cannot supply in the same way – the companionship of children of the same age, a sense of adventure and responsibility and independence and experiment, opportunity to learn to share and help and to control one's impulses and feelings, opportunity to learn new skills and ideas, opportunity for wider knowledge and experience.¹⁴⁴

The parent-to-parent and child-to-child interactions were again emphasised by respondents to two surveys in the early 2000s, which both asked about the reasons that people chose to attend Playcentres:

The things that Playcentre Survey respondents most commonly liked most about Playcentre were meeting and interacting with other parents (39%), being with their children (33%), and their child's interaction with others (27%).¹⁴⁵

Adults most often participate in Playcentre for the perceived social experience benefits for their children, so that they can participate alongside their children, because of convenience of the location, and because of the 'feel' of the centre.¹⁴⁶

It is difficult, therefore, for quality as defined by factors such as educator qualifications, ratios and group sizes, to be an adequate measure of the effectiveness of Playcentres. A better measure of effectiveness would have to measure the development of social networks, and the benefits of activities engaged with outside of the centre. It is debatable whether this would be possible; after all, how does one measure a friendship?

Finding an appropriate language of evaluation

The focus of the problem representation of quality was on ECEC services, in contrast to the family focus of the participation problem representation. Quality

¹⁴⁴ Ruth Lake, "Playcentre isn't home," *Playcentre Journal* 17 (1970): 4.

¹⁴⁵ Kathleen Murrow, "An Investigation of the Early Childhood Education Market: Report to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation" Author's personal archive (New Zealand Playcentre Federation, 2002), x.

¹⁴⁶ Powell et al., *Adult Playcentre Participation*, 2.

was addressed through the policy levers of funding, regulation and support. Different approaches to funding quality were introduced, from funding for minimum standards in the *Before Five* system, to a higher funding rate for services with better staff/children ratios and higher levels of qualified staff, to funding based on the costs of employing qualified staff. The increasing focus on qualifications as a basis for assessing quality for funding purposes created difficulties for Playcentres, whose adult education programme and qualifications were designed as field-based training for Playcentre parents rather than for professional ECEC teachers. Regulations and support for Playcentres were minimal, especially in the 2000s, as the government and the NZPF struggled to formulate concrete policies to support Playcentres that did not revolve around professional teachers.

These policies were based on the concept of quality as requiring standardisation and invariability, which necessitated a lot of standardisation of Playcentre processes that had previously been developed to meet differing local and regional needs. Further, the conflation of quality with qualifications and the presence of qualified teachers reified the divide between teacher-led services and parent cooperatives. The message to the public during the 2000s, reinforced by the Taskforce, was that the government favoured teacher-led services.

These concepts of quality, and the rationale of government support for ECEC as being for the purposes of human capital development, have acted to marginalise Playcentres. The aim of Playcentres is holistic family support, where child and adult education is valued equally, and where effectiveness should be measured in terms of lasting friendships and a sense of community. In order to move forward from this point, the NZPF and the government need to agree on a shared purpose and language of evaluation. Chapter 10 makes some suggestions to be considered in this light. First, however, chapter 9 presents policy developments of the fifth National-led government from 2008-2017, showing the continuation of the two major problem representations of participation and quality.

Chapter Nine: Continuing problem representations 2011-2017

This study started with the problem representations contained in the 2011 Taskforce report, then traced the development of those representations and their underlying assumptions. Along the way, the lived and discursive effects of these problem representations on Playcentre have been examined. Having arrived back at the Taskforce policy recommendations in the previous chapter, this chapter now takes the analysis forward, up to the change of government in 2017. The purpose is to show the continuity of the two problem representations of participation and quality, as well as some of the attempts to develop policy to accommodate Playcentres with their parents-as-educators and focus on holistic family support.

The selected policies discussed in this chapter are grouped under the main problem representation of each policy, although there is necessarily some overlap. The main policies reviewed and the timeline are presented diagrammatically in figure 8 below (p. 213). Turning first to the participation problem representation, the programme of work set up in 2010 to promote ECEC participation will be presented. The evaluation of this Participation Programme showed some interesting learning about factors that are important for families, which connect with the way Playcentres operate. The programme of work was designed to help the government meet the ECEC participation target that became part of the Better Public Services (BPS) programme, announced in 2012 as part of the National government's data-driven social investment approach to social policy.¹ The third policy selected for discussion here is a social and employment policy, not an education one. The Social Obligations for Beneficiaries policy came into effect in 2013, and generated negative effects both for beneficiaries² and for Playcentres.

¹ Jonathan Boston and Derek Gill, eds., *Social Investment: A New Zealand Policy Experiment* (Wellington NZ: Bridget Williams Books, 2017).

² Randall, "Impacts of ECE Social Obligations".

Finally, the discussion will turn to the updated BPS programme, which showed a move away from the previously dominant focus on increasing participation in ECEC.

The second section of the chapter deals with the problem representation of lack of quality. Funding has been at the forefront of sector concerns regarding the ability of ECEC services to provide quality provision, particularly since the removal in 2010 of the funding band for services that employed 80-100% qualified teachers. This has been an area of conflict between the ECEC sector and the government. In contrast, the updating of the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*,³ involved the sector and received widespread support (and some critique).⁴ *Te Whāriki* has been instrumental in guiding the work of ECEC educators, in a non-prescriptive way. It has generated discussion about the aims and practices of ECEC, and is widely used for evaluation purposes both internally and externally. This curriculum represents an approach to quality that steps outside standardised criteria. The history of the two policy workstreams – funding and updating *Te Whāriki* – illustrates the difference between the government and the sector working cooperatively, or not. It also illustrates how an increasing emphasis on a teacher-led profession can have adverse effects for Playcentres.

The final policies reviewed under the quality problem representation are those of professional development and research partnerships initiatives. These issues are significant for Playcentres, as evidence shows how quality in Playcentres depends on the external support that is provided.⁵ Extending the teacher-led/parent-led division to professional development and research policies therefore has the potential to negatively affect Playcentres. The concluding section summarises the reviewed policies to highlight continuation (or not) of the problem representations.

³ Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum*, 1996; Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki*, 2017.

⁴ Education Review Office, "Sector Welcomes Te Whāriki Update 2017," <http://www.educationreview.co.nz/news/2017/new-article-16/>.

⁵ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*; Woodhams and Woodhams, "Supporting Playcentres."

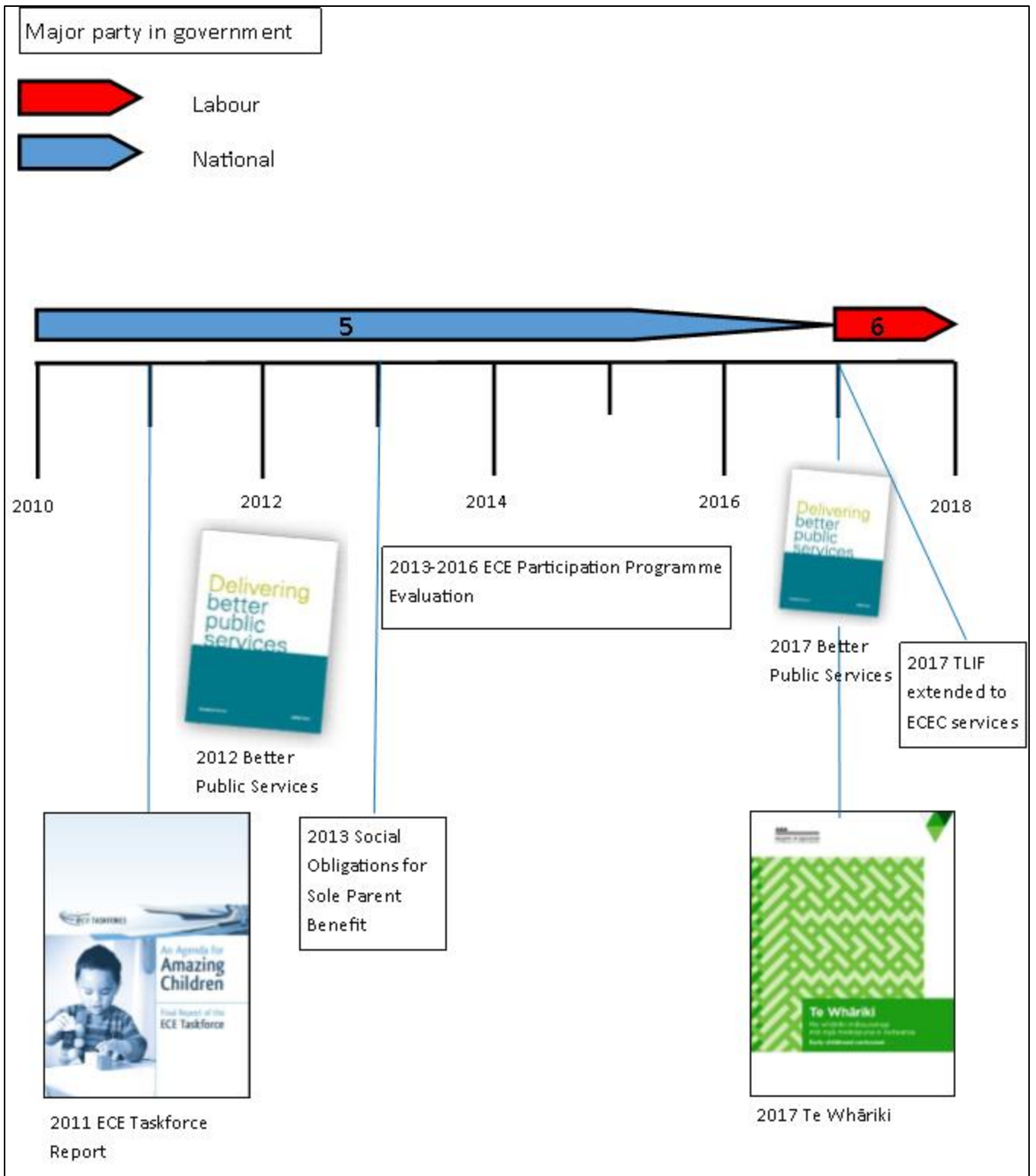


Figure 8. ECEC Policy Timeline 2010-18.

Policies for increasing participation in ECEC

ECE Participation Programme

In 2010, the government announced funding for a Ministry of Education programme of work, to increase participation in ECEC. This was a multi-initiative programme, consisting of:

Six initiatives to increase participation in ECE in target communities where the greatest number of children without prior ECE participation live. The aim of the programme is to increase the number of children participating in quality ECE by 3,500 by the year 2014.⁶

This work was to be targeted at “priority” groups, in line with the National government’s philosophy of cost-effectiveness through targeting. The priority groups were similar to those of the SPECE:

Priority children are deemed to be non-participating Māori and Pasifika children, and children from low socioeconomic communities.⁷

The initiatives in the programme were wide ranging in their focus, from working with families, communities or ECEC services, to funding and facilitating new services – either playgroups or fully licensed services. The two initiatives that will be discussed here are the supported playgroups and the targeted assistance:

- Supported Playgroups (SP)—certificated playgroups, with regular support from a kaimanaaki/playgroup educator in areas with low participation.
- Targeted Assistance for Participation (TAP)—grants, incentives and partnership opportunities to help establish new services and child spaces in those communities where new child places are needed most and are not being created quickly enough.⁸

The Ministry commissioned a research team from Waikato University to carry out an ongoing evaluation of the programme, and reports were published in 2013,

⁶ Linda Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation, Delivery of ECE Participation Initiatives: Baseline Report* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2013), 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

2014 and 2016.⁹ The overall programme was successful in terms of the goal set by the Ministry to increase enrolments by 3,500 by 2014, particularly within the priority groups:

MOE figures of enrolments through the initiatives show 3,497 active enrolments at December 2013, with 8,344 enrolments since the start of the Participation Programme. Consistent with policy intent, these were predominantly Māori (54%) and Pasifika (41%) children in low income communities.¹⁰

There was less success in sustaining the participation, with many children leaving the initiatives:

While some children go on to school and others to another ECE service, we do not know where some 3006 children, a considerable number, have gone or the reasons why they have left.¹¹

The problem representations behind this programme of work were the same as those of the Taskforce, which was deliberating at the same time (2010-11). That is, the problem representations were that there was a lack of participation in ECEC and that the “problem” was specifically that Māori and Pasifika, and families from low SES groups, were the ones with the lowest participation and yet were considered the ones who would gain the most from ECEC. The evaluation research showed how difficult it is to sustain changes in enrolment patterns over the longer term, and to develop services that are self-sustaining.

The Targeted Assistance for Participation (TAP) initiative was the most successful in achieving the aim of increased participation, as it resulted in 40% of the new enrolments from the overall Participation Programme by December 2013.¹² The

⁹ Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation, Baseline*; Linda Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation: Delivery of ECE Participation Initiatives: Stage 2* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2014); Linda Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation: Stage 3 Report to the Ministry of Education* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2016); Linda Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation: Stage 4 report to the Ministry of Education* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2016).

¹⁰ Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation Stage 3, 4*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

TAP initiative consisted of financial and other assistance for new services to be established or extended in targeted areas, sometimes with new centres being built. Successful TAP-supported initiatives were found to provide more than just ECEC services, involving parents and communities as well:

In common, all TAP ECE providers interviewed offered a range of opportunities for family support in addition to Early Childhood education. Some services acted as integrated hubs for services offering ECE as well as other services for families/whānau e.g., budgeting, health. Most also held a comprehensive network of relationships with services in their community they could call on if necessary.

An interesting aspect of this finding was that there was increased participation in ECEC when the families gained benefits through their involvement. These benefits were more than their children receiving an education and the families being “free” to undertake paid employment, and so the benefits were broader than those encompassed by HCT. These extra benefits for the families were in terms of education, support and opportunities for family members other than the young children attending the service. This holistic approach is also the foundation of Playcentre philosophy, encapsulated by Gwen Somerset’s metaphor of the two wings of a butterfly – child education and adult education working together.¹³

The Supported Playgroups initiative was also considered successful, particularly as a first step for many families and whānau to start participating in ECEC. Similar to the TAP, Supported Playgroups had benefits for the parents as well as the children:

Benefits for families from attending a supported playgroup were: opportunities for networking with others; and opportunities for support from knowledgeable coordinators and a chance to take part in courses.¹⁴

The difficulty for Supported Playgroups was their reliance on Ministry-funded coordinators. Transitioning to a self-sustaining, community-run playgroup without an umbrella organisation to provide support was seen as problematic, and yet the

¹³ Sue Stover, *Planning for Playcentres: A Hands-on Resource* (Auckland, NZ: Playcentre Publications, 2001).

¹⁴ Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation Stage 3*, 9.

funding from the Ministry was for fixed-term contracts and not guaranteed to be renewed. The evaluation research highlighted this problem:

Sustainability is a key issue—playgroups fluctuate in roll numbers. All SP providers interviewed/surveyed felt that sustainability is supported by a skilled coordinator working with the playgroup to analyse problems and plan measures to address issues. Sustainability is more likely for playgroups that have a permanent and free venue, something that only some playgroups enjoy. The cost of venues and need to pack and unpack equipment is problematic and a disincentive for playgroup parents to persist.¹⁵

A key aspect of the success of the playgroups was the coordinator, who needed to have both ECEC knowledge as well as skills with working with a range of adults to get the group to work effectively:

The coordinator plays a crucial role in supporting playgroup quality, and encouraging families/whānau to take part in the playgroup and early learning. Coordinators described the model as highly successful in engendering parental involvement in the playgroup and in their child's learning. Parents and coordinators alike are troubled by the future loss of coordinators as their limited contract expires.¹⁶

For Supported Playgroups then, as with the TAP-funded initiatives, the success factors in increasing participation were found to be those that the NZPF has put into place over the years. These included a support organisation for advice and a means of sharing resources, moving from pack-away centres to purpose-built centres, providing an education programme that focuses both on early childhood and adult education, and having a system which nurtures future supervisors. Thus, the evaluation research provided support for the promotion of interdependence, amongst services and amongst communities, despite the problem representation of participation being based on a discourse of independence, as discussed previously.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Better Public Service programme

From 2010, the government started moving to a stronger focus on a data-driven social investment approach.¹⁷ This involved setting measurable goals across the public service, which could be used to monitor and evaluate progress. These goals were set out in the 2012 BPS programme.¹⁸ This was a five-year work programme (2012-17) designed to “focus public sector efforts on progressing key social and economic issues.”¹⁹ Important elements of the BPS programme were said to be “clear outcomes, measurable targets, and transparent reporting of progress to the public.”²⁰

There were ten targets set, grouped into five themes. The themes were:

- reducing long-term welfare dependency
- supporting vulnerable children
- boosting skills and employment
- reducing crime
- improving interaction with government.²¹

The target to increase ECEC participation was under the *Vulnerable Children* theme, which reinforced the deficit view of the priority groups that were targeted by the problem representation of low participation. The Ministry of Education set up five taskforces to achieve the results that were expected from education, one of which was the Early Learning Taskforce. All the taskforces were expected to carry out the same general policy work:

The Taskforces are mandated to progress education outcomes for Māori learners, Pasifika learners, learners with special education needs and

¹⁷ Boston and Gill, *Social Investment*.

¹⁸ State Services Commission, “Better Public Services: Results for New Zealanders,” <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/bps-results-for-nzers>; Ministry of Education, “Participation in Early Childhood Education: Evidence Booklet,” accessed January 2, 2018, <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/participation-in-early-childhood-education-evidence-booklet>.

¹⁹ Ministry of Education, “Evidence Booklet,” 7.

²⁰ Paula Bennett, “Better Public Services Results Refresh: Paper to Cabinet Committee on State Sector Reform and Expenditure Control,” Office of the Minister of State Services, www.ssc.govt.nz/sites/all/files/cabpaper-bps-results-refresh-2.pdf, 5.

²¹ State Services Commission, “Better Public Services.”

learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. They design and prioritise actions, based on data, to achieve results.²²

The focus of the Early Learning Taskforce was on strategies to achieve the BPS target of increased participation in ECEC. A booklet written for the Early Learning Taskforce gave the background for the participation target in the BPS programme and outlined the actions that had been set:

The first result set under the second theme – *Supporting Vulnerable Children* – aims to increase participation in ECE. The Programme set the target: ‘in 2016, 98% of children starting school will have participated in quality ECE’ (State Services Commission, 2012).

The Programme proposed seven key actions to achieve this target:

- Improve information collection to identify vulnerable children
- Change funding policies to incentivise better support for and participation by vulnerable children
- Increase information sharing to locate children and improve services
- Improve cohesiveness of front line public services and other providers for vulnerable families using already successful work across agencies
- Government agencies will scale up initiatives already showing success in supporting vulnerable children to participate in ECE.²³

The Ministry of Education collected information on prior ECEC experience through school enrolment forms, asking whether the child had attended ECEC regularly in the previous six months and if so, what type of service, the hours of attendance and how long this attendance had been for.²⁴ Statistical tables on the percentage of children with “prior participation” were routinely published and updated on the Education Counts website. The BPS target, as stated above, had the aim that children would participate in “quality ECE”; however, information about the quality of the ECEC service the children attended, or the quality of the child’s particular experience, was not collected. It appears that for the purposes of the BPS target,

²² Ministry of Education, “Evidence Booklet,” 7.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

all ECEC services were deemed to be quality ECE, despite the other major problem representation in government policy regarding the variability of quality and the low-quality provision in some services.

The BPS target for ECEC in 2012, based on the same participation problem representation as the Taskforce, also had the same discursive effect in terms of privileging formal ECEC over a holistic view of young children's learning, as discussed in chapter 7. This discourse can be seen in the evidence booklet prepared for the Early Learning Taskforce, which acknowledged that sometimes parents choose not to participate:

parental choice – some parents may be aware of ECE and the services available to them, but may choose to retain their children in the home or not to enrol their children for reasons other than resource, access, or cultural requirements.²⁵

This acknowledgement came in a section headed "Why do some children miss out on ECE?" and was listed as one of the "key barriers" that needed to be overcome. Here, the parental choice to not participate in formal ECEC was represented as a problem to be overcome. The underlying rationale for government support of ECEC as human capital development resulted in this discourse that children are always better off attending formal ECEC services, instead of whatever parents and families might provide for them. This discourse sits uncomfortably with Playcentre philosophy, which views Playcentre as an extension of the home and values parents as capable educators of their children.²⁶

The deficit view of Māori, Pasifika and low SES families in the BPS programme also sits uncomfortably with Playcentre philosophy, again as discussed in chapter 7. Rangatiratanga, or autonomy, is not promoted by a government target that has pre-determined what is best for the children of these groups. The target also positioned ECEC within the welfare policy domain. Such a positioning was antithetical to the spirit of the *Before Five* reforms which promoted ECEC as a

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

²⁶ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*; Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

universal right and not a welfare benefit for the disadvantaged. This deficit discourse had been present previously, as has been noted in this thesis; however, the BPS programme with its participation target in the *Vulnerable Children* section made this more explicit.

ECEC as a social obligation

In 2013, the National-led government changed the welfare benefit system. As part of the changes, from July that year it became compulsory for people receiving the Sole Parent Benefit to enrol their children in an approved ECEC programme from the age of three until starting school, for at least fifteen hours per week.²⁷

The NZPF sought assurances from Work and Income, the agency responsible for benefit payments, that attendance at a Playcentre would meet the social obligations requirements even if the hours of attendance were fewer than fifteen. This was of concern to the NZPF as the average hours of attendance at a Playcentre was under five hours per week.²⁸ Although this assurance was given, anecdotally there were stories of some Work and Income staff being unaware of this assurance, and even directing beneficiaries away from Playcentres to an ECEC service that offered more hours.²⁹

These lived effects for Playcentre arose out of the discourses of the productive and independent adult, which underlay this new policy. The main aim of the policy, according to Randall's critique, was to move parents off welfare and into paid employment.³⁰ This is not the aim of Playcentre, which prioritises support for parents as carers and educators of their children more than support for parents to undertake paid employment. Thus, the staff at the Work and Income agency

²⁷ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, "Playcentre Assured It Is Suitable ECE for Beneficiaries," news release, September 14, 2012, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED1209/S00111/playcentre-assured-it-is-suitable-ece-for-beneficiaries.htm>; Randall; Work and Income, "Obligations for getting sole parent support," accessed January 4, 2018, <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/obligations/obligations-for-getting-sole-parent-support.html>.

²⁸ Ministry of Education, "ECE Data Summary 2015."

²⁹ NZPF Co-President Susan Bailey, Phone conversation with Suzanne Manning, July 17, 2017.

³⁰ Randall, "Impacts of ECE Social Obligations".

would be less inclined to view Playcentre as a valid option for sole parents to meet their social obligations under the Act.

The *Social Obligations* policy also contributed to the discourse of children as vulnerable, alongside the BPS target, and to the idea of ECEC participation as a remedy. Randall argued that such an approach was not always in the best interests of the children:

The three interrelated dominant discourses underpinning this policy, economic rationalisation, the positioning of beneficiaries as job seekers, and the positioning of children as vulnerable, has left the child as citizen invisible.³¹

Children's rights and the child-as-citizen discourses had been prominent in the late 1990s and early 2000s.³² The fact that the new National government was moving away from this perspective was noted by ECEC academics Te One and Dalli as early as 2009.³³ The positioning of children as vulnerable and the focus on ECEC participation continued throughout the National-led government's term of office. However, there was some softening of this stance in 2017, when the BPS programme had its scheduled review.

Better Public Service Results Refresh

The BPS programme was a five-year work plan starting in 2012, so, accordingly, it was updated in 2017.³⁴ In the positive spin of government-speak, the programme was renamed the "Better Public Service Results" and the update was termed a "Refresh." As such it appears that the government was signalling that their aim was to produce results and not just aim at a target, and that changing the targets/results was a progressive step, not an admission of failure. The Cabinet paper, proactively released to the public by the government, claimed the BPS programme had been a successful approach:

³¹ Ibid., ii.

³² May, "A Right as a Citizen"; Noonan, "Optional Extra"; Te One, "Children's Rights."

³³ Sarah Te One and Carmen Dalli, "The Status of Children's Rights in Early Childhood Policy 2009," *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 19 (2009), <https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/nzaroe/issue/view/164>.

³⁴ Bennett, "BPS Refresh."

The targets we set were highly ambitious and we did this deliberately to force the system to stretch to perform better. The Results have been successful in bringing about change in the way the public service operates, and have improved outcomes for New Zealanders in some difficult areas.³⁵

The Refresh included a mixture of retaining, retiring and changing existing targets, and setting some new ones. The principles for making these changes were described as:

- 4.1 Build on what works, in particular what we have learnt from Social Investment and from the effectiveness of existing BPS Result targets
- 4.2 Retain existing Results and targets until targets are met or almost met
- 4.3 Limit the number of Results to focus on a small number of critical areas, those that will have the most impact on long-term outcomes for New Zealanders, based on evidence of impact
- 4.4 Use Targets and measures that are meaningful and important to, and easily understood by, the public
- 4.5 Require agencies to work together, to improve long term outcomes and reduce cost to government
- 4.6 Clearly communicate key government priorities and the level of ambition

The principles followed the government's developing social investment approach with its emphasis on using data to provide evidence, close targeting of initiatives, and encouraging cross-agency collaboration.³⁶ As the ECEC participation target was one that had almost been achieved, it was dropped from the BPS Results Refresh:

Some Results are almost achieved, with targets likely to be met in 2017 or soon after. We propose to move these out of the BPS Results programme with the targets to become performance measures for the responsible agencies. This includes Result 2 (*Increase ECE participation*); and Result 3 (*Increase infant immunisation and reduce rheumatic fever*).³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., 4–5.

³⁶ Jonathan Boston and Derek Gill, "Overview - Key Issues and Themes."

³⁷ Bennett, "BPS Refresh," 2.

The ECEC participation goal (target/result) became the responsibility of the Ministry of Education as part of their core business. As a performance measure, the Ministry would have to report to Parliament on this measure at regular intervals, but it was no longer going to be a government priority within the BPS programme. Policy based on the participation problem representation would therefore be continued.

There was, however, some change within the problem representation of participation, as the government responded to the critique that ECEC was not only for vulnerable children. The *Vulnerable Children* area of the BPS was reorganised to focus on the prevention of child abuse. Early intervention for supporting families was now in a new area, which had a health focus:

7. We propose several new Results. For the social sector Results these are based on social investment and a life course approach recognising that effective interventions at early life stages often reduce the need for more expensive and less effective interventions later in life.

8. We therefore propose a new *Good start to life* Result area comprising new Results and targets that will drive investment in vulnerable groups early in their life courses. We will also improve access to social housing, a key factor affecting the life outcomes for vulnerable children and families, through a new Result.³⁸

The new BPS targets modified the problem representation of participation, by making formal ECEC a normalised part of education rather than a particular problem to be solved. As discussed in chapter 7, this had some negative implications for Playcentre, especially when not only attendance at an ECEC service was promoted but also a minimum number of hours. The new targets also moved away from the remedial view of ECEC. The move back to a view of ECEC as a positive way of supporting families has the potential to benefit Playcentres, along with other ECEC services, and especially if the lessons discussed above,

³⁸ Ibid.

from the ECE Participation research,³⁹ are followed. How the negative and beneficial effects balance out for Playcentres remains to be seen.

Overall, the policies of the fifth National government have reinforced the division between teacher-led and parent-cooperative services, despite the government not having formally accepted the Taskforce report. Increasing participation remained a prominent problem representation until recently, still firmly based on the principles of human capital development. This update of policies since the Taskforce report now moves onto the second problem representation, that of improving quality.

Policies for improving quality of ECEC services

Funding and quality

In 2010, the National-led government dropped the SPECE target of employing 100% qualified teachers in teacher-led ECEC services to 80%, and this was followed by cutting the funding band for 80-100% qualified teachers.⁴⁰ This affected Kindergartens in particular,⁴¹ but also those childcare centres eligible for Rate 2 quality funding. With this policy change, the government was not reinforcing the discourse of quality equals qualifications, unlike the previous government. The message was that the baseline for quality was a mix of qualified teachers and unqualified or in-training staff, and that was what the new government was prepared to fund.

The Taskforce in 2011 recommended a modified approach. The Taskforce argued strongly for the benefits of having a fully qualified ECEC workforce. However, the funding system proposed was based on the attributes of the individual children attending the service with a higher rate for services classified as high-quality services. The funding rates would not be differentiated according to the proportion of qualified teachers:

³⁹ Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation Stage 3*.

⁴⁰ Helen May, "New Zealand: A Narrative of Shifting Policy"; May and Smith, "Connections between Early Childhood Policy and Research."

⁴¹ Wannan and Livingston, "Capital Kindergartens may Lose Teachers to Cuts."

Proposed system: Rate differentiation is an incentive to providers (teacher quality incentive not related to cost)

Rationale: We want to encourage services to improve quality, but we do not believe that meeting the full cost of additional teachers is the best way of doing that. Teacher pay should be determined between a teacher and their employer. Wealthier parents should be prepared to meet some of the cost of early childhood education, which includes some of the cost of a higher-quality workforce.

Existing features: Rate differentiation meets cost (e.g. cost of teachers)⁴²

This proposal was a move away from the cost-driver approach of the *20 Hours* policy, which was based on the principle that the government would fully fund the service cost of providing twenty hours of ECEC. The proposal deemed that 80% qualified teachers was adequate for minimal quality, and additional teachers should be funded by the parents. This appeared to be a system where wealthy parents would pay for a higher-qualified ECEC workforce and less wealthy parents would only have access to a lower-qualified ECEC workforce. The Taskforce did not represent this as a problem.

In contrast, the idea of Playcentres, with trained parents being the educators at the centre, was represented as a problem by the Taskforce. Their proposal was that the rate should be differentiated between teacher-led, centre-based and parent cooperatives or home-based services. The teacher-led services would be the focus of the funding, and parent cooperatives and home-based services would be minimally supported. The Taskforce was explicit that only teacher-led services could fully meet the government aims for ECEC.

Although the government did not implement the Taskforce's recommendations for a change in the ECEC funding system, a further review of funding was started in 2015. This review encompassed both school and ECEC (now termed *early learning*) funding. A Cabinet paper in 2016 presented the current system:

Current funding systems for early learning and schooling have developed in ad hoc ways over time and focus on the inputs for running an entity

⁴² ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 77.

rather than the educational outcomes for children and young people. Less obvious - but just as worrisome in an increasing competitive global market - is the lack of lift and stretch in student learning potential. We see the measure of this in the declining numbers of New Zealand students in the top percentile of international benchmarks. These benchmarks also show a decline in performance by New Zealand students, both compared to other countries and against our previous results.

This problem representation shows the economic rationalism and HCT discourses that were influencing the funding review. The goal of education was presented as achieving academic qualifications in order to improve the country's future competitiveness in the global market. This was a very different goal to the broad education espoused in the Fraser/Beeby statement of 1935, that education should be designed for each person to reach their full potential.⁴³ The solution to improve the education system, as proposed by the 2015-16 government review, was more targeted funding, to be based on individual children and not on the institution providing the service. The proposed change was therefore very similar to that of the Taskforce. The Taskforce had proposed:

Payments would no longer be based on licensed numbers. The amount of subsidy would be calculated and paid through a formula-based funding mechanism that recognises the needs of individual children. We describe this as the **per-child-hour subsidy**, to be paid for a specified number of hours participation per week.⁴⁴

Echoing this proposal in November 2016, the Cabinet paper recommended:

3.1 a core funding model in both early learning services and state and state integrated schools made up of two components:

3.1.1 *a curriculum-based per-child funding amount* - as the funding basis and tailored to the learning expectations of children and young people at each stage of the curricula. In early learning this involves moving to per-child funding. ...

⁴³ Beeby and Wagemaker, *The Biography of an Idea*; May, "A Right as a Citizen."

⁴⁴ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 72.

3.1.2 additional funding for individual challenges. ...⁴⁵

Unlike the Taskforce, the Minister of Education committed to keeping the diversity of the ECEC sector and ruled out differentiating between funding for “teacher-led, centre-based” and “other” services:

No change is envisaged to the funding differentials between different types of early learning services, such as between kindergartens and home-based services.⁴⁶

This funding proposal was approved in principle, and more detailed policy work was underway when the Labour coalition government came to power in 2017.

A key feature of the proposed per-child funding, both in 2011 and 2016, was that ECEC funding would no longer be attached to specific components of quality, as had been the focus since the mid-1990s when Rate 2 quality funding was introduced. The 2016 proposal assigned money on the perceived educational challenge of the children, and the ECEC provider would be expected to meet those challenges in whatever way they chose. Initiatives for achieving quality provision, an expected feature of ECEC services, were decoupled from funding. The funding based on the child also avoided the issue of reinstating the funding band for 80-100% teachers, although the 80% requirement remained in the regulations.

It is difficult to know how these proposals would affect Playcentres if implemented. Since they are based on the numbers of children attending a centre, small Playcentres would again be adversely affected, but this would be offset by supplementary funding for small and isolated services. Quality incentives would be separate from the funding rates, and this might be beneficial for Playcentres who could possibly define what “quality” is in their own centres. With a change in government, future decisions on this funding policy are uncertain, particularly as

⁴⁵ Ministry of Education, “Cabinet Paper Review of Funding Systems: Update and Next Steps,” <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/consultations-and-reviews/education-funding-system-review/background-information-for-the-education-funding-system-review/>, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

the newly elected Labour government has promised to reinstate the 100% qualified-teacher funding. Analysis will have to wait until decisions are made.

Updating Te Whāriki

The Taskforce in 2011 addressed one of its policy essays and four recommendations towards reviewing the implementation of the 1996 ECEC curriculum, *Te Whāriki*. This was justified in economic terms:

A holistic, socioculturally-based curriculum is a key component of quality early childhood education provision. ... *Te Whāriki* is considered a model of best practice, nationally and internationally, but could benefit from a comprehensive review of its implementation. We recommend that this takes place as soon as possible. ... A robust review could identify cost-effective ways to improve outcomes from early childhood education in New Zealand.⁴⁷

Three years later, the Ministry of Education set up the Advisory Group on Early Learning (AGEL), to address the problem of variable implementation of *Te Whāriki* by ECEC services:

There is, however, wide variation in how well *Te Whāriki* is implemented by early childhood education (ECE) services and how the foundation it provides is carried on into the early years of schooling.⁴⁸

Implementation of *Te Whāriki* was a problem representation within the wider problem representation of improving quality. As discussed in chapter 8, the concept of quality required standardisation, and the removal of local variability. *Te Whāriki* had become a crucial part of the quality standards, and variability in its implementation was therefore also seen as a problem, as outlined by the Taskforce in 2011,⁴⁹ the OECD Aotearoa NZ country profile in 2012,⁵⁰ the Education Review Office in 2013,⁵¹ and the AGEL report in 2015. The AGEL report

⁴⁷ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 106.

⁴⁸ Advisory Group on Early Learning, *Advisory Group on Early Learning Report to the Ministry of Education* (Ministry of Education, 2015), 39.

⁴⁹ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*.

⁵⁰ OECD, *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: New Zealand 2012* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012).

⁵¹ Education Review Office, *Working with Te Whāriki*, Education evaluation reports (<http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/working-with-te-whariki/>, 2013).

made twenty overlapping recommendations which were all deemed high priority and were a mix of short- and long-term initiatives. The group considered that these recommendations “together ... comprise an inter-related strategy for strengthening implementation of *Te Whāriki* and supporting continuity of learning across the early years.”⁵²

While none of the recommendations directly addressed the issue of types of qualifications in ECEC, the AGEL supported a return to 100% qualified teachers as a baseline for effective implementation of *Te Whāriki*:

These demands suggest that formal qualifications are essential. The Advisory Group debated whether all early education and care services teachers should be qualified to the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree. We acknowledge the continuing professional and industrial campaigns here and overseas aimed at lifting the workforce’s qualifications, and the uneven qualifications base still in effect here. All teachers of five- to eight-year-olds must have a degree, but the same does not apply to all teachers of children from birth to four. The group therefore supports, as a professional principle, moves towards a fully qualified early childhood education and care workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand.⁵³

The report did not give an opinion on how Playcentre parents would fit into the fully qualified workforce. The language of most of the report and the recommendations simply used the terminology of provisional and qualified teachers.

The Ministry accepted the AGEL’s recommendation to commission an update of *Te Whāriki* and in 2016 set up a group of “early learning academics and practitioners to develop a draft of *Te Whāriki* for wider consultation.”⁵⁴ The writing group also consulted with the writers of the original *Te Whāriki*. A consultation draft was released in November 2016, with these major changes from the 1996 version:

1. updated context, language, examples, and implementation advice

⁵² Advisory Group on Early Learning, *AGEL Report to the Ministry of Education*, 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵⁴ Ministry of Education, *Update of Te Whāriki: Report on the Engagement Process* (Ministry of Education, 2017), accessed June 30, 2017, <http://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/the-story-of-te-whariki/>, 2.

2. stronger bicultural framing and a focus on identity, language, and culture, and on inclusion of all children
3. fewer, clearer learning outcomes
4. links to The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa
5. a streamlined structure that is more easily navigated
6. The overarching structure of principles, strands, and goals was unchanged⁵⁵

The consultation that followed showed widespread sector support for the changes, along with a number of concerns. For the NZPF, the biggest concern was the absence of acknowledgement of different philosophies and approaches to ECEC, in particular the philosophy and practice of parents-as-educators of their own children. The clear separation between parents and teachers, noted in the discursive effects of the quality problem representation in chapter 8, continued to frame the thinking about adults in ECEC. Some of the consultation feedback referred to the theoretical underpinning of the new draft *Te Whāriki* marginalising ECEC services with different philosophies, including parent cooperatives:

In general, these respondents thought the theories of learning and development section did not reflect the breadth of theories that underpin the various philosophies in ECE. ... Some approaches that were seen to be marginalised were Steiner, Montessori, hospital or home-based education, and whānau and parent-led services.

Reasons behind this included:

1. limited reference to all philosophies and service settings
2. some learning outcomes that contained concepts incompatible with some learning philosophies
3. no description of what constitutes a kaiako.⁵⁶

This quote refers to the debate around the use of the word *kaiako* throughout the document. While this Māori word means *teacher*, its use signalled a willingness to

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 11.

consider a wider range of meanings associated with the term. Words from different languages often do not translate directly, but bring with them cultural connotations. Since the term was being used in a wider context than previously, the sector wanted an explicit and agreed definition. Feedback through the consultation debated possible meanings and uses:

The term *kaiako*, which the draft used as an umbrella term for a range of roles associated with the care and education of children in ECE settings, received a considerable amount of feedback.

Overall there was mixed support for the term's use. Some strong views were expressed, especially by those who did not support it. Many felt its use conflated non-qualified and qualified teachers. Another concern was the reduction in status that qualified ECE teachers could face if they were referred to differently from their primary and secondary peers. There was concern about how *kaiako* responsibilities tied in with the Education Council's teacher competencies. In general, respondents noted there could be conflicts from trying to set out generic responsibilities that encompass a diverse group of people.

Respondents representing parents and play centres were not against use of the term. But they frequently stated that the definition did not clearly refer to parents, and this needed to be amended. Others observed that the term could be used more consistently throughout the draft, for instance, where the word "adult" had been used, "*kaiako*" would be more appropriate.⁵⁷

The debate shows the tensions that the writers faced, between supporting the principle of a fully qualified ECEC workforce and accommodating the philosophy of parent-cooperative services. The NZPF negotiated with the writers to make sure that a reference to parents-as-educators was included in a definition of *kaiako*.⁵⁸ The final version of *Te Whāriki* had this footnote definition of the term:

Kaiako includes all teachers, educators and other adults, including parents in parent-led services, who have a responsibility for the care and education of children in an ECE setting. In settings where parents have collective responsibility for the curriculum, it is understood that *kaiako* will also be

⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁸ NZPF Co-President Susan Bailey, Conversation with author, June 30, 2017.

parents and whānau. Although ECE services use a range of different terms, this document uses *kaiako* because it conveys the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning, which is valued in this curriculum.⁵⁹

The NZPF saw this as successful advocacy for the inclusion of Playcentre philosophy and practice.⁶⁰ However, it also shows the increasing move towards standardisation and consequent reduction of diversity in the ECEC sector; now parent cooperatives were only accommodated as an after-thought.

Professional development and research partnerships

The government has funded professional learning and development (PLD) contracts since the mid-1990s, originally to assist ECEC services to implement the new early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (1996).⁶¹ Providers of PLD were rapidly set up, often attached to university faculties of education. The NZPF was awarded a contract to provide PLD specifically to Playcentres,⁶² and has continued to hold such contracts with the Ministry since that time. Although Playcentres could choose to work with any PLD provider, most preferred to work with the NZPF PLD team. An evaluation of PLD programmes in 2013 stated this finding:

Services with particular characters or philosophies value highly undertaking PD with providers who have in-depth and first-hand knowledge of the service types they are working with. In addition to Immersion Māori and Pasifika services discussed above, playcentre and home-based services clearly prefer working with providers and facilitators who have this expertise and can tailor programmes to fit their philosophy.⁶³

The government has changed the parameters for PLD contracts over the years, including what the topic of focus can be, whether centres choose to participate in PLD or have to participate because of a poor Education Review Office report, and the size of the funding. Over the years of the National government, the funding

⁵⁹ Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki*, 7.

⁶⁰ NZPF Co-President Susan Bailey, Conversation with author.

⁶¹ Cherrington, "Shifting Landscape."

⁶² Stover, *Planning for Playcentres*.

⁶³ Sue Cherrington et al., "Evaluation of the Ministry of Education-funded Early Childhood Education Professional Development Programmes," 2013, Ministry of Education, https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/Evaluation_of_MoE_Funded_ECE_PD_Programmes, 7.

has been cut and restrictions on access have become tighter, in line with the government's general philosophy of targeting funding to areas of most need and the best return on investment.⁶⁴ The NZPF PLD team has managed to cope with the changing parameters, despite the difficulties that this has sometimes caused.⁶⁵

In some ways, the PLD contracts are an example of government policy that can successfully accommodate the Playcentre approach to ECEC. Funding is provided independent of the service-operating model, with the NZPF gaining contracts as a provider of PLD. This has enabled Playcentres to have access to Playcentre-specific PLD, which has been shown to be beneficial in supporting Playcentres.⁶⁶ Neither has this benefit come at the expense of other services' access to PLD. If the Taskforce recommendations to restrict PLD support to only teacher-led, centre-based services had been implemented, Playcentres would have been denied access.

Other initiatives for supporting, developing and sharing good practice between ECEC services were schemes which paired researchers and practitioners. One was a SPECE strategy to "establish six Centres of Innovation on a three-year cycle to showcase excellence and innovation in ECE."⁶⁷ The first six Centres of Innovation (COIs) were selected from applicants in 2003, and there were two more rounds of selection in the following years. The objectives for the COIs were to:

- build the use of innovative approaches that result in improved early childhood learning and teaching based on Te Whāriki: Early Childhood Curriculum;
- facilitate action research, with the help of researchers, to show the results the innovative approaches have on learning and teaching;

⁶⁴ Cherrington, "Shifting Landscape."

⁶⁵ Author's personal experience with the NZPF PLD team; Telephone conversation with an NZPF PLD facilitator, July 13, 2017.

⁶⁶ Cherrington et al., "Evaluation of ECE PLD," 2013; Sue Cherrington and Deborah Wansbrough, *An Evaluation of Ministry of Education Funded Early Childhood Education Professional Development Programmes* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, 2007); Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

⁶⁷ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, 15.

- share the knowledge, understanding and models of practice with others in the early childhood education sector and parents/whānau.⁶⁸

All ECEC services were eligible in principle to apply to be selected as a COI. Two Playcentres were accepted: Wilton Playcentre in 2003,⁶⁹ and Te Marua Mangaroa Playcentre in 2005.⁷⁰ These projects showed the capability of teams of parents, working in centres as educators, to produce useful and professional research in conjunction with professional researchers. When the COI programme was set up, there was no suggestion that Playcentres would not be eligible.

The Labour government then set up a programme in 2003 called the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI), based at the NZ Council for Educational Research, which sought to “enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices to improve outcomes for learners.”⁷¹ The definition of *teacher* was defined broadly enough to include the Playcentre approach:

To be eligible for the fund, proposals need to come from partnerships involving teachers and researchers. In the context of the TLRI, teachers are defined as education and training practitioners.⁷²

The Canterbury Playcentre Association was successful in their application for a funding grant in 2008, and carried out a two-year project with their research partners on supporting children’s working theories.⁷³

The new National government did not take the same view of the value of such research schemes as the Labour government. The government stopped the COI programme in 2008, although the TLRI programme, which was aimed at both the school and ECEC sectors, continued. The Taskforce in 2011 recommended that

⁶⁸ Podmore and Te One, “SPACE Programme at Te Marua/Mangaroa Playcentre,” 1.

⁶⁹ van Wijk et al., “Transforming Learning at Wilton Playcentre.”

⁷⁰ Podmore and Te One, “SPACE Programme at Te Marua/Mangaroa Playcentre.”

⁷¹ Teaching and Learning Research Initiative, “Home page,” accessed July 21, 2017, <http://www.tlri.org.nz/home>.

⁷² Teaching and Learning Research Initiative, “Apply for Funding,” accessed July 21, 2017, <http://www.tlri.org.nz/apply-funding>.

⁷³ Keryn Davis and Sally Peters, “Moments of Wonder, Everyday Events: Children’s Working Theories in Action,” Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI), <http://www.tlri.org.nz/tlri-research/research-completed/ece-sector/moments-wonder-everyday-events-children%E2%80%99s-working>.

the government establish “a new, high-quality early childhood education innovation scheme.”⁷⁴ Despite the Taskforce rhetoric that “overall policy settings for early childhood education need to harness the skills, expertise and enthusiasm of all members of this diverse sector to improve early childhood education quality,”⁷⁵ parent-cooperative services were not included in this diversity. In a separate section of the report, the Taskforce also recommended that services that were not centre-based, or were not teacher-led, should not be eligible for the Service grants including “innovation grants, awarded competitively, as discussed in Essay 11: *Promoting an Innovative, Continuously Improving Sector*.”⁷⁶

Although the National government did not fully accept the Taskforce report’s recommendations, the “innovation scheme” was a recommendation that did have extra policy development. In 2015 the government set up the Teacher-Led Innovation Fund (TLIF) for the schooling sector:

The purpose of the Teacher-led Innovation Fund is to provide funding for groups of teachers to develop innovative practice in order to improve learning outcomes, particularly for Māori students, Pasifika students, those with special education needs and those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

This explanation of the scheme combined the problem representation of improving quality with the targeted, deficit discourse of the participation problem representation. The TLIF was extended to the ECEC sector in 2017, rather than setting up a separate ECEC scheme.⁷⁷ The issue for Playcentres was that the TLIF scheme eligibility was limited to “certified ECE teachers and kaiako in kōhanga reo holding Tohu Whakapakari,” which excluded teams of parents-as-educators working in Playcentres. This was confirmed by the Ministry of Education in response to my request for verification.⁷⁸ Whether the exclusion of Playcentres

⁷⁴ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 162.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 79–80.

⁷⁷ Ministry of Education, “Teacher-Led Innovation Fund Guide: ECE version,” <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/specific-initiatives/investing-in-educational-success/teacher-led-innovation-fund/information-to-help-your-application/#ece>.

⁷⁸ Teaching and Learning Research Initiative, Email to author, July 19, 2017.

from the TLIF is deliberate, or a side-effect of an administratively simple policy solution, it is difficult to say. However, it does show that the continuation of the discursive effects of the quality problem representation, where it is taken for granted that quality is equated with qualifications and with teachers. This example shows how policy based around these discourses marginalises Playcentres.

(Dis)continuities

This brief overview of ECEC policies implemented by the National government from 2008-17 shows that the problem representations embedded in the Taskforce report of 2011 were continued in the years after the Taskforce. The ECE Participation Programme initiatives focused on expanding services into areas where participation was low, and facilitating non-participating families to bring their children to ECEC services. The discursive effects of reinforcing formal ECEC as the only acceptable choice for young children's education and the deficit view of non-participating families, particularly Māori, Pasifika and low SES groups, continued to underlie the initiatives. This was alongside the benefits that came from government support and funding in these areas. Playcentres were involved in these initiatives, but not to a great extent. The discourses of the productive and independent adult meant that new services were more likely to be based on a teacher-led model, which "freed" parents to undertake paid employment. The BPS targets likewise reinforced the discourse of formal ECEC as essential, and the social obligations policy for beneficiaries emphasised the role of ECEC in supporting parental paid employment.

Yet there were also some discontinuities. In the BPS Refresh, the government moved away from an emphasis on the problem representation of participation. The problem representation was not dismissed entirely, becoming "business as usual" for the Ministry of Education, but it stopped being a major focus of cross-agency policy within the government.

Within the quality improvement problem representation, the role of funding has been debated, although very little has changed yet. A central idea that is being debated is whether funding should be based on the costs of providing a quality

service according to standardised measures such as the proportion of qualified teachers, or based on the costs of providing for the perceived needs of the particular children in the service. The former system reinforces the discourses of quality equalling qualifications and the parent/teacher divide, both of which are problematic for Playcentres, and the second system risks reinforcing the deficit view of those children and families labelled as “at risk” of failure.

The parent/teacher divide underlies another debate within the quality problem representation. The promotion of a professional, teacher-led ECEC sector resulted in the initial draft of the updated *Te Whāriki* marginalising parent-cooperative services through a lack of reference to parents-as-educators, and also resulted in Playcentres being excluded from the TLIF scheme for collaborative research. On the other hand, efforts have been made to specifically include Playcentres. These included the statement that any new funding system would include parent cooperatives, the definition of kaiako in the final version of *Te Whāriki* that included parents-as-educators, and the NZPF still being eligible to deliver government-funded PLD contracts.

In 2017 a new government was elected, creating an opportunity for advocacy; if the NZPF can articulate policy options to support both parent-cooperatives and teacher-led services to thrive. This would necessitate looking carefully at the problem representations of participation and quality, and suggesting alternative directions. That is the work of the next chapter.

Chapter Ten: Alternative problem representations

Carol Bacchi is explicit that the WPR approach to policy analysis has a social justice agenda. After the WPR analysis has identified problem representations, their development and effects, the next step is to propose new problem representations and policy based on this alternative thinking. The goal is “to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects.”¹

The goal of this chapter is to take a proactive, agentic approach and suggest alternatives that might benefit Playcentres. Any alternative problem representation and resulting policy will involve compromise. The suggestions presented in this chapter try to address the core purpose of Playcentres, that is, the support of parents with young children through providing opportunities to learn and grow alongside their children. This is encapsulated in the NZPF motto *Whānau tupu ngātahi – Families growing together*,² which is arguably what makes Playcentre “special” and gives the organisation its identity. However, the most politically acceptable compromise might be changes to the structure and organisation of the NZPF and affiliated Playcentres, even though many Playcentre members consider these aspects to be the identity of a Playcentre. Although Playcentre members say they want to “let our identity stand,” it may be necessary to consider which meaning of identity is important – parent support, or the network of independent parent cooperatives with a particular history and a branded name.

Two alternative policies are proposed in this chapter. The first is the establishment of community hubs centred on ECEC services, with a variety of co-located family

¹ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 44.

² NZPF website: <https://www.playcentre.org.nz/>.

services. This policy represents the problem to be solved as a need to support parenting, which is an alternative conceptualisation to the problem of a lack of participation in ECEC. The second policy proposed is the reintroduction of charters for ECEC services, along the line of the initial *Before Five* implementation. The alternative problem representation underlying this proposal is a need to develop a system of evaluation for ECEC services which takes into account what the community values and allows democratic input. This contrasts with current problem representation of standardising quality throughout the ECEC sector.

Each policy is presented using a framework of government policy levers, as articulated by Anne Meade.³ The three policy levers are regulations, funding and government involvement. After outlining the proposed policy, the possible implications for Playcentre are discussed.

The final section of the chapter addresses Bacchi's seventh question, which is about using the WPR approach on one's own problem representation. Bacchi warns, as researchers "we are immersed in the conceptual logics of our era and ... who we are ... is at least part shaped through the very problem representations we are trying to analyse."⁴ The policy suggestions I put forward in this chapter are based on problem representations which are influenced by my personal philosophy and values, as well as having been shaped by my experiences in Playcentre over many years. Bacchi's response to this unavoidable situation is to insist that the researcher examines and makes visible their own assumptions underlying the problem representations suggested, and also to consider possible effects of the suggested problem representations. That is the work of the final section of this chapter.

Parenting support for families with young children

The first proposal attempts to disrupt the problem representation of a lack of participation in formal ECEC, especially by Māori, Pasifika and low SES background

³ Minutes of 5th mtg, 7 Mar 2001, Meade, Papers Relating to Strategic Plan for ECE (iii), MS-Papers-10827-1.

⁴ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 19.

children. The alternative problem representation suggested has a focus on supporting parents in their role as *parents* rather than as workers or beneficiaries, or as *at risk* populations. This new problem representation is based on the assumption that parents and whānau will benefit from support as caregivers, particularly when their children are young, and that the government has some responsibility for providing this support for the overall benefit of society.

One potential benefit of basing policy on a problem representation of *lack of support for families* is that it could support children's right to be brought up in a family, as set out in Article 18 of UNCROC to which New Zealand is a signatory:

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents ... have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.
2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.⁵

The right of the child to be raised by their family encompasses the idea of care and education being inseparable in the early years, and places responsibility for education with the family, supported by the state. In this proposed problem representation, Article 18 would be prioritised over Articles 28 and 29 regarding education:

Article 28

States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

⁵ United Nations, UNCROC, 5.

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.⁶

Focusing on Article 18 would not mean that Articles 28 and 29 would be ignored, rather they would be adjuncts to the problem of supporting families and whānau with young children. To support families in a holistic way, it would be imperative that different social service agencies such as education, health and welfare all work together. This is the concept behind the Whānau Ora programme approach, although this programme is generally perceived to be focused on Māori and sometimes Pasifika families.⁷ In this new problem representation, it would be important that the services were universally available and not only targeted to families considered to be *vulnerable, at-risk* or *dysfunctional*. My advocacy for a universal approach is based on research findings that show greater uptake of services overall when the services are available to all, and treated as a right rather than a conditional grant.⁸

Community service hub approaches where services are co-located are one way to achieve this collaboration. These hubs have been shown to be valuable at breaking down barriers for those families most in need of support, by removing stigma and enabling a robust infrastructure to be in place.⁹

⁶ Ibid., 8–9.

⁷ Ministry of Health, "Whānau Ora Programme," May 2018, <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/whanau-ora-programme>; Te Puni Kokiri, "About Whānau Ora," <https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/whakamahia/whanau-ora/about-whanau-ora>.

⁸ The example of National Superannuation and the difference it made for elderly people is shown in St John, "Children at the Centre"; A universal approach to providing ECEC was advocated in OECD, *Starting Strong 2001* and May, "New Zealand"; Different attitudes to paid parental leave (as a right) and government supplements (a handout) shown Ella Kahu and Mandy Morgan, "Making Choices: Contradictions and Commonalities in the Valuing of Caring and Working by Government Policy and First Time Mothers," *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education* 11 (2008).

⁹ Robyn Munford et al., "Blending Whānau/Family Development, Parent Support and Early Childhood Education Programmes," *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* 32 (2007), <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj32/32-blending-whanau-family-development-parent-support-and-early-childhood-education-programmes-pages72-87.html>; <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj32/32-blending-whanau-family-development-parent-support-and-early-childhood-education-programmes-pages88-93.html>; OECD, *Starting Strong 2001*; Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation Stage 3*; Margy

Community service hubs in Aotearoa NZ

Community service hubs which include ECEC have been established in many places, both in Aotearoa NZ and overseas. Many of these initiatives in Aotearoa NZ have not had specific government support:

This notion of integrated services has not been common in Aotearoa New Zealand. A handful of community or family centres based around an early childhood centre have developed through local initiatives. Funding for these fledgling integrated services has come from the community or the ability of the people involved to manipulate current funding structures to support their aspirations.¹⁰

In contrast, the UK government has been particularly supportive of the integrated-services approach, especially with the *Sure Start/Children's Centres* initiatives.¹¹ The focus of the UK programmes has been combatting poverty, and they are seen as early intervention measures for disadvantaged families. A consultant from the OECD's Social Policy division commented on the lack of clear strategic focus with the Aotearoa NZ approach to integrated services, unlike in the UK:

New Zealand policy has also started to pilot various initiatives providing "early intervention support" to vulnerable and disadvantaged families. ... It is unclear what the strategic policy vision is that underlies these initiatives, but in the United Kingdom such initiatives have become a mainstream policy plank. Targeting family services in disadvantaged areas under the Sure Start initiative (which is superseded by the Children's Centres programme) is a cornerstone of anti-poverty policy in the United Kingdom.¹²

One of the pilot initiatives that the consultant referred to was the Parent Support and Development (PS&D) pilot project, which was based on these UK initiatives

Whalley and the Pen Green Centre Team, *Involving Parents in their Children's Learning: A Knowledge-Sharing Approach*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2017).

¹⁰ Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Margaret Carr, "An Affordance Network for Engagement: Increasing Parent and Family Agency in an Early Childhood Education Setting," *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 20, no. 2 (2012): 179, doi:10.1080/1350293X.2012.681130.

¹¹ Whalley and the Pen Green Centre Team, *Involving Parents in their Children's Learning*; Adema, "Towards Coherent Care and Education"; Clarkin-Phillips and Carr, "An Affordance Network for Engagement."

¹² Adema, "Towards Coherent Care and Education."

and was part of the strategies to meet the collaborative relationships goal of the SPECE.¹³

In 2006 the New Zealand government launched a new initiative around parent support and family engagement in early childhood education and established a pilot project of Parent Support and Development (PS&D). This was the first significant recognition by government of the potential for early childhood centres to collaborate and partner with other agencies to support parents. This pilot awarded three-year contracts to eight early childhood centres located in areas meeting the vulnerability indicators of the Ministry of Social Development.¹⁴

This was one community hub programme initiative that was supported by the government, although it was only a pilot project and was not extended throughout the country. The National government cut the funding for this project in 2009.

The Taskforce reviewed the literature on community hubs for its 2011 report, and distinguished between two different approaches. One approach was an ECEC service as a stand-alone service that enabled connections to wider support services, and the other approach had support services co-located and working collaboratively (at least in theory):

The ECE Taskforce views the community hub concept in two different ways – a community approach and an integrated service approach. The community approach is where the early childhood education setting is at the core of the community that it serves. This type of community hub actively engages with and supports families, and can act as both an advocate and a conduit for families to access external health and social services. The integrated service approach is where the external health, social and support services have a connection with an early childhood education setting. ... While the integrated service approach may not be

¹³ Donella Bellett, Meenaskshi Sankar, and Marinka Teague, "Early Childhood Education centre-based Parent Support and Development," <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/early-childhood-education-centred-based-parent-support-and-development-final-report/executive-summary>; Clarkin-Phillips and Carr, "An Affordance Network for Engagement"; Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips, "Connecting Curriculum and Policy to Assist Families' Aspirations," *Waikato Journal of Education* 17, no. 1 (2014), doi:10.15663/wje.v17i1.21.

¹⁴ Clarkin-Phillips, "Connecting Curriculum and Policy," 19.

feasible for all early childhood education services, the community approach is highly achievable.¹⁵

For both approaches, the ECEC service was seen as having responsibility not just for providing education for the children, but also for actively supporting families in a holistic sense. Examples of these types of services in Aotearoa NZ have been shown to be successful, and are often held up as exemplars of good ECEC practice. The PS&D project mentioned above produced good results, with an in-depth study of one Kindergarten showing the importance of a strengths-based approach despite being placed in a vulnerable community.¹⁶ The Taskforce presented two services as exemplar case studies of the community hub approach: Wycliffe Ngā Tamariki Kindergarten, which had been a COI, and Te Kōhanga Reo Mana Tamariki.¹⁷ A further example is from the evaluation of the Participation Programme, which noted four centres that were acting as effective community hubs:

Four centres were notable for their extensive networks ... Three services were bilingual or immersion in the home Pasifika language of families/whānau and English. Kauri centre was an iwi provider committed to Māori language, culture and identity. These integrated service hubs and the four services with a language and cultural focus were embedded in their communities through a network of relationships.¹⁸

A Playcentre example of a collaborative venture was highlighted on the Ministry of Education website as an exemplar:

Representatives from the local Playcentre, Parents Centre and Toy Library worked together to create a bright and beautiful new 'kids hub' in Gore. ... Ministry of Education ECE advisor in Otago Kurt Chisholm says the new facility is a wonderful addition to early learning in Gore. "It is a hub in the truest sense of the word, because it has come together from these three different groups, from the planning to the fundraising. It really is a genuine community project." The council has gifted the centre the long term lease of the land, and the [Gore Kids Charitable] Trust is fundraising to build the

¹⁵ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 89.

¹⁶ Clarkin-Phillips "Connecting Curriculum and Policy"; Clarkin-Phillips and Carr, "An Affordance Network for Engagement."

¹⁷ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 90–91.

¹⁸ Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation Stage 3*, 69.

playground, which will then be gifted to the community. “The Trust put a phenomenal amount of effort and energy into the project ...”¹⁹

This Gore Kids Hub example shows the willingness of communities to engage with a community hub idea, but also the amount of work that is required to make the concept a reality. Without government support, community hubs cannot become widespread, and would struggle to become established in lower SES areas where fundraising money is harder to come by.

Support for community hubs

Government support for establishing community hubs is a recommendation that has been made repeatedly, in policy and research reports. The SPECE set a strategy for the collaborative relationships goal to provide more integrated services, and the PS&D project arose out of that strategy. Clarkin-Phillips concluded from her study on the PS&D project that:

Early childhood centres offer a natural avenue for enhancing the ecological development of children and families. ... As Bronfenbrenner (2005) states: “Children need the consistent and reliable care of their parents and other adults, but to provide that care parents need the support of employers, schools and society as a whole” (p. 260). Therefore it is imperative that policies are developed and implemented that support everyday practices and take into account the ecological systems that encompass individuals.²⁰

The Taskforce also recommended that the government support the development of community hubs:

Our proposed community approach will be a new focus for some early childhood education teachers and leaders because research reveals that some teachers mistakenly view their role as, primarily, interacting with children. Early childhood teacher education may need to focus on the family and community aspect more than it currently does. ... Settings operating as community hubs require specific resources to carry out this role. We therefore recommend Government provides funding dedicated to ensuring

¹⁹ Ministry of Education, “A Shared Place to Play and Learn,” accessed August 18, 2017, <https://education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/government-education-initiatives/better-public-services/more-children-in-early-childhood-education/a-shared-place-to-play-and-learn/>.

²⁰ Clarkin-Phillips, “Connecting Curriculum and Policy,” 26.

appropriate community development allowing services to function well in this capacity.²¹

At much the same time as the Taskforce, a consultation paper was released by the government on developing policy for vulnerable children.²² Many submissions “suggested co-location of services, including using schools, early childhood centres and other community facilities as hubs.”²³ Randall, in her analysis of the social obligations policy that made ECEC compulsory for sole parent beneficiaries, recommended community hubs or integrated services as a better way of achieving the government objectives:

ECE engagement needs to be promoted through a positive model rather than sanctions. Government financial investment in integrated ECE services within local communities could aid families to overcome participation barriers and provide an ideal model for enabling families to access social services.²⁴

Further support for community hubs came from the evaluation of the Participation Programme:

TAP services were most responsive when they were connected to the local community through offering an integrated service with early childhood education alongside other family services, or where they held a hub of connections with community agencies and organisations. All but one TAP service provider interviewed did these things and this is what made them successful with priority families. ... There is not a prescribed approach, since family needs and local communities vary.²⁵

These quotes show the many calls to the government for support to establish community hubs, from a wide variety of contexts. Community hubs would be a suitable policy solution if the problem is represented as providing support to parents and families with young children. However, community hubs do not automatically provide opportunities for parents to be active educators of their

²¹ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, 93–94.

²² Ministry for Social Development, *The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children: Complete Summary of Submissions* (Wellington, NZ: Ministry for Social Development, 2012).

²³ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁴ Randall, “Impacts of ECE Social Obligations,” iii.

²⁵ Mitchell et al., *ECE Participation Programme Evaluation Stage 3*, 100.

children within the supportive environment of an ECEC centre, as a Playcentre would provide. There are some community hubs that do accommodate parents in this way. They are examples of “both/and” rather than “either/or” institutions.²⁶ Two community hubs that involve parents in this way will be briefly outlined here to demonstrate how these could work effectively in practice: Pen Green from England and Te Aroha Noa from Aotearoa NZ.

Pen Green, England

The Pen Green centre is located in Corby, a city that was built around steelwork factories which then closed in the 1970s. This caused massive unemployment and consequent economic and social problems.²⁷ The local authorities established a community hub in 1983, centred on an ECEC service, to support families with young children. A local action group campaigned against the centre which they saw as being for problem families; however, work by the centre staff, particularly the director Margy Whalley, convinced local families that this would be a centre for the whole community. Part of that commitment has been the involvement of parents as educators and researchers in the centre, right from its establishment. Over the years, the centre has won numerous awards, published research, expanded significantly, and evolved as the local and national policies changed. It has been an *Early Excellence* centre, a *Sure Start* centre, and now a *Children’s Centre*. Each of these designations has brought extra funding and support for the centre.²⁸

The philosophy of the Pen Green centre has always been to recognise parents as “their child’s first educators,” “their child’s primary educators,” or “their child’s most consistent educators.”²⁹ Therefore parent education and support have always been provided through the ECEC centre(s) and through the multidisciplinary team that the ECEC staff work in. Staff also encourage parents

²⁶ Anne Meade, Keynote to ECE Special Interest Group, NZARE 2017.

²⁷ “Corby,” in *Wikipedia*, accessed August 5, 2017, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corby>.

²⁸ Whalley and the Pen Green Centre Team, *Involving Parents in their Children’s Learning*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, e.g., xv, 7, 11, 14.

to participate at the ECEC centre, often working directly with the children, and are supported and trained to do this education role. Some parents become employed at the centre as educators, or in other roles:

It is not insignificant that at all times in the centre's history more than 50 per cent of staff working in the setting have started their learning journeys as parents who have volunteered, taken on training and become workers in the setting where their children were also being educated and cared for.³⁰

Pen Green, therefore, is an example of a successful community hub that involves parents in a similar way to Playcentres, as well as having a core of employed professional staff. There are some policy supports that can be identified as contributing to this success. One is the local authority and government support and funding, which means that parents and families do not have to spend the bulk of their time and energy in fundraising and navigating the bureaucratic system. The secure funding and non-profit status of the centre has also resulted in staff being paid well, having high levels of qualifications, and being given non-contact time for important work such as home visits and dialogue with parents. Having funding for more than what might be considered the basic running of the centre has been extremely important to what they have been able to achieve, and this extra funding has often come from specific government programmes such as *Sure Start*.³¹

Another important feature of the success of Pen Green is that the provision was planned and supported by the local authorities (which are responsible for education in the UK). This meant that the centre could expand sufficiently to benefit from the economy of scale which comes from being a large organisation. It also meant that there was enough security of support to take the time to properly consult with their community on new initiatives. Pen Green has shown that it is possible to be large enough to be sustainable, and still allow democratic participation in the decision making.

³⁰ Ibid., 7.

³¹ Ibid.

Te Aroha Noa, Aotearoa NZ

Te Aroha Noa family services centre is located in Highbury, a suburb in the city of Palmerston North, in the lower central North Island. Highbury has had a reputation for social problems, especially in the early years of Te Aroha Noa's history.³² The original centre was based around counselling services set up by a local church in the late 1980s.³³ During the 1990s, Te Aroha Noa also ran a playgroup, prior to setting up a fully licensed ECEC centre in 2003-04, co-located with other social services. Like Pen Green, Te Aroha Noa has won numerous awards for its work, conducted research and hosted students for training purposes (both ECEC teacher and social work students). Unlike Pen Green, the centre has not attracted additional government funding or support. For example, Te Aroha Noa was not chosen as one of the centres for the PS&D pilot.³⁴

The expansion into ECEC services was a response to the lack of services in the area. A Kindergarten had operated in Highbury since 1971.³⁵ There had also been a Playcentre in the suburb since 1963, but this shifted premises in 1980 to a neighbouring suburb, and subsequently closed in 2001.³⁶ It appears that the Playcentre model of a parent cooperative without paid staff support was not a model that was workable in these suburbs with high levels of social and economic struggles.

³² Lisa Knight, "Highbury's dark past is history, community is heart of Palmerston North suburb," *Manawatu Standard*, July 2, 2015, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/69862148/highburys-dark-past-is-history-community-is-heart-of-palmerston-north-suburb>; Marae TV, "Highbury, Palmerston North's toughest Neighbourhood: They've Found a New Way of Fighting for Change," December 5, 2010.

³³ The information in this section comes from these two papers and information gathered during a visit to Te Aroha Noa in July 2017, which included interviews with several staff members. Kathryn Handley et al., *The Spinafex Effect: Developing a Theory of Change for Communities*, Innovative Practice Fund no. 4 (Wellington, NZ: Families Commission, 2009); Munford et al., "Blending Whānau/Family Development."

³⁴ Munford et al., "Blending Whānau/Family Development."

³⁵ Patricia Lockhart, P.M. Varcoe, and Maureen Ryan, *Kindergartens in New Zealand 1889-1975*, (Dunedin, NZ: NZ Free Kindergarten Union, 1975).

³⁶ Stover, *Good Clean Fun*, 232; The Community Archive, "Westbrook Playcentre: Catalogue entry," <http://thecommunityarchive.org.nz/node/72582/description>; Ministry of Education, "Cancellation of Licence for an Early Childhood Centre: Westbrook Playcentre," <https://gazette.govt.nz/notice/id/2001-go4819>.

Te Aroha Noa ECEC centre has always had a model of parent engagement and involvement, which was seen as necessary for developing the trust needed within a community with a history of low trust in authorities.³⁷ When the playgroup transitioned to a licensed ECEC centre, parents were encouraged to continue to attend alongside their children, and it was compulsory for parents to attend with children under the age of three years. This is still the system at this centre in 2017, although Te Aroha Noa has recently opened an adjoining centre where children under three can be left in care. Further, since the beginning of the older children's centre, interested parents were invited to become part of the educational team. This entailed a commitment to being at the centre for two rostered sessions of 9 am – 1 pm, attending two planning meetings per ten-week term, and attending weekly training sessions. The parent educators today are still volunteers, although when interested parents enrol as a student teacher at a tertiary institution, they are paid for one of their sessions. In 2017, funding for the parent educators' sessions and training programme came from the centre's ECEC funding, and sometimes from employed staff's generosity.³⁸

Some of the difficulties that Te Aroha Noa faces are around policy settings, particularly for funding. Te Aroha Noa attempts to blend the social services offered, to provide a wrap-around service for families. However, government funding for different types of education and social services is provided separately, from different government budgets. The tertiary education budget funds education towards ECEC qualifications, and also a minimal amount for Adult and Community Education, and the Ministry for Social Development funds parenting education programmes. Further, since the ECEC services have stable government funding, they do not apply for grants, in order to make it easier for the other services at Te Aroha Noa to access grant funding. This closes off another revenue stream for the ECEC services to use for such things as parent education.

³⁷ Handley et al., *The Spinafex Effect*.

³⁸ For example, a staff member might supply the morning tea for a training event, without reimbursement.

The silo nature of funding has affected the NZPF as well. The NZPF has accessed, or tried to access, all of the education sources for their parent-education programme at various times, and it has necessitated a large amount of work to meet eligibility and accountability requirements for the different government agencies. This situation would not be achievable for stand-alone centres, and government-supported programmes such as the PS&D project are rare and have not been sustained.

Another policy setting that works against Te Aroha Noa's blended approach is the differing rules and regulations for parent-led and teacher-led ECEC services. Whilst these differences were developed originally to accommodate the parent-cooperative model, this policy has created a binary that does not accommodate a service that wishes to blend the two approaches. Being a teacher-led service gives Te Aroha Noa access to higher funding rates, but also makes it subject to rules that assume a strict demarcation between teachers and parents. If the 100% qualified teacher requirement is reinstated by the current government, Te Aroha Noa would be in the same position as it was last decade, where parent educators might not be able to be accommodated.³⁹ Parent educators are currently fully part of the teaching team, and some are partially paid. For this to continue, regulations and funding need to support this concept.

Policy proposal: Community hubs with parent involvement

These two case studies show that community hubs, based around ECEC centres which involve parents-as-educators, can be successful. Community hubs arranged in this way are based on the problem representation of holistic family support, particularly for families with young children. I am proposing that this model could be considered for extending throughout the country, for the benefit of all families including those who wish to be the "hands-on" educators of their children.

A diagram of the proposed model is shown in figure 9, below. The centre would be a family and whānau community hub, with a number of services co-located or

³⁹ Munford et al., "Blending Whānau/Family Development."

located within a short walk of the main hub. The exact mix of services would be determined according to the communities' needs. However, as the hub is primarily to support families with young children, it would be anticipated that an ECEC centre would be the core of the hub. The ECEC centre would have employed staff, including qualified teachers. Parents and whānau would be welcome to stay at the centre with their children if they wished, and those who were interested could apply to join the teaching team as one of the parent educators. The government would support the centre with advice and routine monitoring through the Education Review Office (ERO), as happens now.

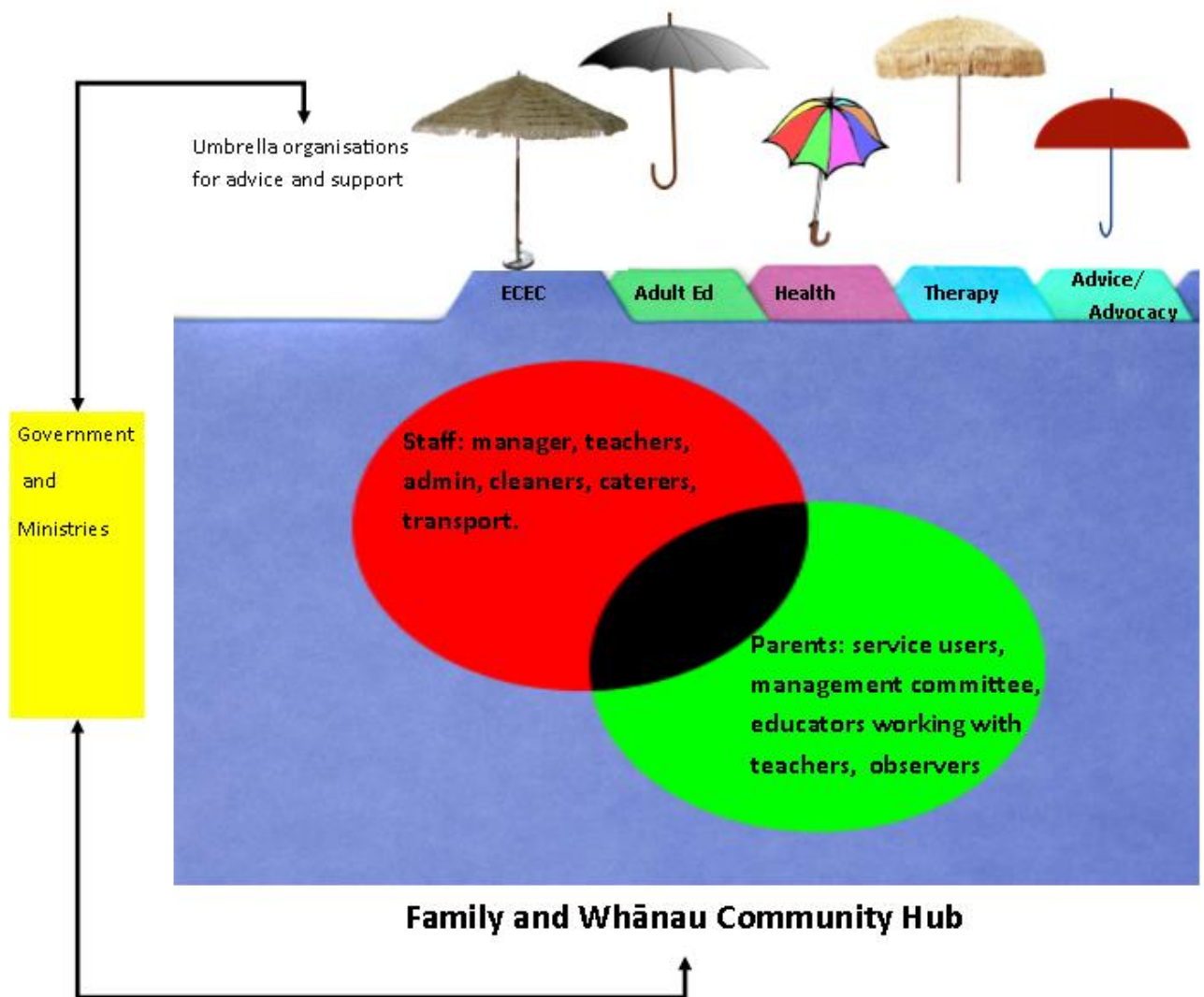


Figure 9. Proposed Integrated Service Model with parents-as-educators.

Tabbed folder image from http://www.freeimageslive.co.uk/free_stock_image/tab-folder-background-jpg. Other images from Openclipart and Wikimedia

Each of the services in the hub would be affiliated with an umbrella organisation or professional body, which would provide support and advice. The umbrella organisations could also be a mechanism for sharing resources, as the NZPF currently does with its property and equity funds. The government would work directly with these umbrella organisations when setting policy, and these organisations might also act as financial agents for their affiliated centres, for example, to distribute bulk funding grants. The umbrella organisations may choose to provide professional development and NZQA-accredited education programmes.

Policy that could support this model is set out here under the three policy levers of regulation, funding and government involvement.

Regulation

The number of registered teachers required in a centre should be kept at 80%. The remaining 20% may consist of parents or whānau, student teachers, or qualified teachers. Parents who are on the teaching team would be required to undertake a minimum of the National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care, Level 3. ECEC services would also be expected to provide general education for the parents at the centre, to meet the needs of that community.

Funding

The funding subsidy could stay with the current mix of per-child and per-place funding, or it could move to a system based only on per-child funding, so long as the small centre top-up remained in place. The funding rate, however, would need to be raised to include paying for support from the umbrella organisations through a levy or subscription, and the provision of some parent education. The funding rate would be unaffected by whether the service operated with 100% qualified teachers, or a mix of teachers, students and parents, in order not to discourage using parents-as-educators.

The National Certificate in ECEC Level 3 would be fees-free for parents and whānau who have joined a centre teaching team. The Certificate would be gained from enrolling at an approved tertiary institution, which could be an external institution or part of the umbrella organisation to which the centre is affiliated.

Funding would need to be made available for the Ministry of Education to be able to support the establishment and ongoing collaboration of these integrated hubs.

Government involvement

There is a role for government in the coordination, planning and establishment of integrated community hubs, to ensure that all families have access to services and that hubs are sustainable.

There would also be a role for the government in supporting both centres and umbrella organisations with advice, monitoring through the ERO, and provision of PLD. A particular requirement for this model is that everyone in the ECEC services and their umbrella organisations needs to become familiar with working as a cooperative, with the messiness that this entails in terms of involving everyone in decision making. PLD would need to be provided to encourage this way of working, which is wider than the concept of professional leadership that has been a topic for the ECEC PLD contracts.

Implications for Playcentres

This proposal is quite radical: Playcentres would not be immediately obvious as Playcentres, as they would look like most other ECEC services with their mix of teachers and parents-as-educators, and parents and whānau often present at the centre. Rather than Playcentre having a separate identity to the rest of the ECEC sector, this proposal would see the teacher-led services taking on parents-as-educators and a more intensive parent-education role.

The difference from most current Playcentres is that the onus for sustaining the centre would not be placed on parent volunteers, but on employed staff. Administration and bureaucratic requirements – so hated by Playcentre volunteers – would be dealt with by employed staff. Professional teachers would provide continuity of personnel and knowledge as the parent group ebbs and flows around

them. New parents would not be pressured into working to ensure the centre remained open, but instead could spend time getting acquainted with the centre and making decisions about how involved they would like to become. Any parent who needed to step back for a time because of personal or family circumstances would be able to do so without feeling guilty about letting the centre and other families down. This ability to prioritise self and family over the centre's needs is what our Playcentre tūpuna, our predecessors, tell us used to happen at Playcentres, but it has slowly been eroded.⁴⁰

A benefit of this model is that it could accommodate those parents and whānau who are currently not catered for within Playcentres, yet still hold open the opportunities for parent education, support and involvement for those whānau. As families expand, there are different needs and circumstances. Parents take up employment, or leave it; new babies arrive, older children look for more stimulation; children and other family members get diagnosed with a condition which was not previously obvious; partnerships form and break up. At Playcentres currently, there is little option to step back fully for a time, so the usual option is for the family to leave. Alternatively, there are some parents who find more time to become involved and would benefit from participation in a Playcentre, but might decide their children are better to stay at their current ECEC service than transfer to a Playcentre. The proposed model is designed to accommodate different levels of involvement, at different times, as families make decisions as to what is best for them. I believe that such an adaptation is necessary if the kaupapa (purpose, philosophy) of parents-as-educators is to be continued.

While clearly this view may be controversial, I argue that adaptation to the changing political and social environment is necessary for the longevity of organisations. The longevity of Playcentre has in part been because of how the organisation has responded to changing conditions in the past, and continues to do so. For example, in 2017, the NZPF dissolved the associations in a move that

⁴⁰ Morna Haist, "The Business of Leadership," *Playcentre Journal* 135 (2009); Manning, Woodhams and Howsan "Emergent Leadership in Playcentre"; McDonald, *Working and Learning*; Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

has changed the fundamental structure of the organisation that has been in place since 1948. Changes to charity legislation, increased administration requirements for both ECEC and tertiary education, and changing enrolment patterns are some of the environmental factors that have prompted this restructuring.

This proposal is for a further change. It would require Playcentre people to be less protective about the organisation as a separate entity in the ECEC sector and its perceived point of difference from other services. The focus of the proposal is on the main kaupapa of Playcentre: *Whānau tupu ngātahi – Families growing together*. In this proposed model, parents and whānau would still be supported as educators of their children, both in formal and informal ways. Both children and adults would still get the benefit of shared experiences that have the potential to generate long-lasting friendships and social networks. Parent education, and other supports for parents in their parenting role, would still be provided. The difference would be that the dividing line between parent cooperatives and teacher-led services would be blurred, and if this model became the predominant form of ECEC, the dividing line would disappear.

Changing the language of evaluation

The second problem representation presents an alternative to the problem representation of a lack of baseline quality in ECEC services. The current system uses the concept of quality to evaluate children's experience of ECEC services, in an attempt to ensure that the experience is beneficial and not harmful for them. Yet the concept of quality is based on modernist values of control and standardisation, where the choices and voices of the parents and the staff in the ECEC services can struggle to be heard. Further, the measurement of quality, often through proxy measures such as the qualifications of teachers, has not proved to be straightforward or beneficial for Playcentre.

Quality is only one tool for evaluating ECEC services and deciding what needs to be maintained or improved. According to Dahlberg et al., "there are other ways of talking about what is important to us, ways that are more democratic and

dialogic in assumption, value and practice.”⁴¹ These other “democratic and dialogic” ways of evaluating ECEC services would allow the community to set goals that are meaningful to them, including those goals that do not align with a government focus on human capital development.

An alternative problem representation to raising quality in ECEC services is to seek other systems of evaluating ECEC services which would allow more democratic input by the communities surrounding ECEC services, and allow local variance in the goals and evaluation of services. Such systems are termed different “languages of evaluation” by Dahlberg et al.⁴² The approach of listening to and involving a community in an ECEC service through reciprocal dialogue is well established as good practice. Whalley, Director of the Pen Green centre in the UK, calls it co-constructing the services with the children and families,⁴³ illustrating the sharing of power and local decision making that is characteristic of Pen Green. In Aotearoa NZ, it has also been shown that ECEC communities of learners which view children, families and communities as active participants in the ECEC services result in better democratic practice.⁴⁴

Democratic practice is not something that happens automatically, but needs to be supported and encouraged, as the NZPF and Playcentres have found out over the years.⁴⁵ A framework is useful to encourage democratic practice, rather than expecting services and their communities to transition to a new system of working without a supporting structure. Therefore, the proposal here is to reintroduce the negotiated charters that were introduced with the *Before Five* reforms, but dropped soon after in favour of a set of standardised statements. A number of

⁴¹ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*, x.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Whalley and the Pen Green Centre Team, *Involving Parents in their Children's Learning*, 9.

⁴⁴ Linda Mitchell, “Enquiring Teachers and Democratic Politics: Transformations in New Zealand’s Early Childhood Education Landscape,” *Early Years* 31, no. 3 (2011), doi:10.1080/09575146.2011.588787; van Wijk and Wilton Playcentre members, “Wilton Playcentre”; Cherrington, “Shifting Landscape.”

⁴⁵ Manning, *Democracy meets Rangatiratanga*; Robbie Burke, *Making Consensus Work: Decisions That All Can Live With* (Auckland, NZ: New Zealand Playcentre Federation, 2011); Stover, “The Debate Continues”, 59.

ECEC policy commenters have argued that the greatest value in the negotiated charter concept was in the democratic negotiation process, more so than the exact form or content of the resulting documents.⁴⁶

Negotiated charters

Charters for each ECEC service were introduced with *Education to be More*. This report explained the charter concept:

10.2.1 The charter will act as a two-way "contract": between the service and its community (the parents/whānau); and between the service and the government. It will set out the objectives of the service, within the government's overall national guidelines for early childhood.

10.2.2 The charter, then, is the meeting point between community needs and national standards for early childhood services. It provides the opportunity for parents and community members to clearly identify early childhood needs as they see them and to design a service to meet those needs.⁴⁷

The recommendation was accepted by government in the *Before Five* policy. Accordingly, all ECEC services from 1989 started the process of developing a charter in consultation with parents and whānau, staff and management. This was done under intense time pressure as the implementation timeframe for the new administration system was supposed to be around twelve months. The national guidelines in the distinctive purple folder, necessary for the charter writing, were delivered to centres in August 1989 (although they continued to be altered for some time afterwards).⁴⁸ The Ministry of Education, which would be approving the charters, began operations in October 1989. Funding for chartered services started at the beginning of 1990. Charters were originally due to be finalised by 1

⁴⁶ Sarah-Eve Farquhar, "A 'Purple People-Eater' or Quality Assurance Mechanism? The 1989/90 Early Childhood Centre Charter Requirements: Paper presented to the Fifth Early Childhood Convention, Dunedin, September 1991" (1991), files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED341506.pdf; May, *Politics in the Playground*; Anne Meade and Carmen Dalli, "Review of the Early Childhood Sector," *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* 1 (1992).

⁴⁷ ECCE Working Group, *Education to be More*, 50.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Education, *Early Childhood Management Handbook*; *Before Five* newsletter, Sept 1989, Department of Education, *Education Gazette*.

July 1990, but legislation for licensing (which had to happen prior to chartering) was not passed until September 1990. The deadline for charters was extended (more than once) and then, in December 1990, the national guidelines, and therefore negotiated charters, were superseded by the *Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices* (DOPs).⁴⁹

Commentators were critical of the replacement of negotiated charters with the DOPs, seeing it as a wasted opportunity to encourage democratic dialogue within the ECEC services. May reflected that:

The process of signing an agreement to implement the objectives became easier to administer, but the experiment of a dynamic engagement among parents, communities, staff, management and the government was lost.⁵⁰

Meade and Dalli were also of the opinion that one of the principal values of the charters that had been lost was the involvement of the ECEC service and its community in the process of "designing their service" as had been envisaged by *Education to be More*:

A further strong criticism of the DOPs is that it has undermined the value of the process of writing charters. This process was intended to be, and often has been, the enormous strength of charters... Many people's reactions changed in 1991: charters became a bureaucratic nuisance rather than a constructive tool for growth and development ... Clearly, therefore, the way the Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices has been introduced has undermined local 'ownership'. We have heard examples where Ministry liaison officers have gone in with a Statement and said to centre staff, "Don't worry about your charter, just sign that you will do what it says."⁵¹

Some ECEC services had struggled with the consultation required for the charter-writing process, especially if such consultation was not part of the culture of the centre. Playcentres were well used to the democratic process and already had practices in place for consultation on issues.⁵² Therefore, despite the time

⁴⁹ May, *Politics in the Playground*; Farquhar, "Purple People-Eater."

⁵⁰ May, *Politics in the Playground*, 217.

⁵¹ Meade and Dalli, "Review of ECE Sector" 1992, 119.

⁵² Farquhar, "Purple People-Eater."

pressures and added workloads, many Playcentres found the process of charter writing beneficial. At the 1990 NZPF conference, associations reported on:

... the positive effects felt in most playcentres of the charter writing process and of how, in facing the challenges of the Before Five policies, there had been considerable stress on centres and associations but also unity and support for each other in coping with them.⁵³

The concept of negotiated charters, then, was not inherently problematic or unwelcomed by the ECEC sector. The difficulties encountered stemmed from the implementation process. Sarah Farquhar concluded from her study of the implementation of charters in ECEC that:

centres needed more time, less pressure, more advisory and resource support, and greater freedom to examine and articulate in their charters how they define quality and aim to provide it.⁵⁴

Since that time, quality initiatives have taken a different direction. The first DOPs were published in 1990, and were revised in 1996. The revised DOPs were based on the new early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*.⁵⁵ When the new regulatory system was implemented in 2009, *Te Whāriki* was effectively enshrined in legislation as a requirement for ECEC services, and the DOPs were superseded.⁵⁶ *Te Whāriki*, as noted in the last chapter, has been recently updated, with a national consultation process. However, despite the relative consensus that has produced the updated *Te Whāriki*, the curriculum still needs to be implemented at a local level, by each individual service. *Te Whāriki* is deliberately broad so that services can weave their own curriculum, yet it does not provide practical support for the democratic dialogue that involves parents and whānau as a negotiated charter would. The proposal to reinstate the chartering process, as envisaged in *Education to be More*, would support that dialogue.

⁵³ *Playcentre Journal* Editor, "Conference: Before Five Issues Dominant."

⁵⁴ Farquhar, "Purple People-Eater," 4.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum*, 1996.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Education, "Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008: Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework," <http://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/licensing-and-regulations/the-regulatory-framework-for-ece/licensing-criteria/centre-based-ece-services/>.

Policy proposal: Reintroduce ECEC charters

The proposal is to make negotiating a charter a requirement for every licensed ECEC service. As originally intended, this would be a two-way contract, between the service and its community, and between the service and the government. The process of developing the charter would need to be democratic, in that those people affected by the charter would be the ones discussing it, developing it, and reviewing it every five years. The charters would set out the aims of the service, and the ways in which *Te Whāriki* is to be woven within that service. The Ministry of Education would support the process, as Sarah Farquhar recommended,⁵⁷ with an emphasis on the democratic process of encouraging participation from all those with an interest in the service.

Regulation

Charters would be compulsory for a licensed service, and encouraged for a non-licensed one. This would be legislated, with non-legislative guidelines and *Te Whāriki* as supporting documentation (as with the current regulations and criteria).⁵⁸

Funding

There would be no extra funding for being chartered, since every licensed centre would require a charter. There would, however, be funding for the chartering process, including Ministry advice and support to develop charters, to approve them and to encourage review at regular intervals.

Government involvement

The government could provide PLD for centres to negotiate their charters, which would take the form of a facilitator who could not only facilitate the process but also develop the services' abilities to work as communities of learners, whānau and staff together. This is a slightly different perspective to "working with families," which has assumptions of expert teachers working to upskill parents and whānau.

⁵⁷ Farquhar, "Purple People-Eater."

⁵⁸ Ministry of Education, "Licensing Criteria for ECEC Services 2008."

As in Playcentre philosophy, the adage “all are experts, all are learners” would be applied.⁵⁹

When the ERO audit the service, they would use a service’s unique charter, with the aims and practices that are of value to that service’s community, as a tool for evaluation.

Implications for Playcentres

Negotiating a charter would be as beneficial for Playcentres as for other services. Operating democratically, engaging and involving everyone, listening and compromising – these are all skills that need to be practised to become effective. With established cultures of involvement, Playcentres are well placed to undertake this negotiation, but this does not imply that it would be easy. Playcentres would need support and advice just as other types of services would, although this may be best delivered through the Playcentre PLD contract facilitators. The major benefit for Playcentres at a policy level is that a negotiated charter could continue the aims of supporting parents as educators of their children, and wider parent support, in a formalised way that would be recognised and accepted by the government. The Ministry of Education and the ERO would evaluate Playcentres against their own model, and not against an external model that has been chosen to represent the best practice, as was the case in the Taskforce report. Recognition of Playcentre’s particular philosophies and practices is something that the NZPF has argued for over many years. Charters could be a way of gaining that recognition.

Reflexive analysis

This chapter has proposed two alternatives to the current dominant problem representations of participation and quality: holistic support for families with young children, and democratic participation in the evaluation of ECEC services. However, no analyst stands outside of the discourses of their era, and all are

⁵⁹ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*.

shaped in part by these discourses and the subsequent problem representations in policy.⁶⁰ This is why Bacchi cautions that:

We have to accept that, as researchers, we have work to do in ensuring that we do not simply buy into certain problem representations without reflecting on their origins, purposes and effects.⁶¹

This final section of the chapter briefly attends to this injunction, by discussing the underlying assumptions and theories of the alternative problem representations, some background of these assumptions, and some potential effects.

Sociocultural theories of development

The first alternative problem representation is that a way should be found for supporting families with young children in a holistic manner. This is based on the concept that learning and development in the early years occurs at all times and not just when a child attends an ECEC service. Therefore, supporting and educating the parents and whānau, who are the primary educators of children, is as important as supporting and educating the ECEC teachers.

This holistic concept broadens the concept of early education that is contained in the problem representation of participation, and is based on sociocultural and ecological theories of development.⁶² The concept of healthy families and whānau being necessary for optimal child development also has roots in Māori and Pasifika theories of health, wellbeing and development.⁶³ These theories are currently influential in the disciplines of education (especially ECEC), and other social

⁶⁰ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶² E.g., Urie Bronfenbrenner, *Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Wendy Drewery and Lise Claiborne, *Human Development: Family, Place, Culture*, 2nd ed. (North Ryde, Australia: McGraw-Hill Australia, 2014); Rogoff, *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*.

⁶³ E.g., Mason Durie, *Whaiora: Maori Health Development*, 2nd ed. (Auckland, NZ: Oxford University Press, 1998); Rangimarie Rose Pere, *Te Wheke: A Celebration of Infinite Wisdom* (Gisborne, NZ: Ao Ako Global Learning New Zealand, 1991); Fuimaono K. Pulotu-Endemann, "Fonofale Model of Health," www.hauora.co.nz/~hpforum/resources/Fonofalemodelexplanation.pdf.

services such as health and social work.⁶⁴ They have become prominent as awareness of the impact of society and culture on people's lives has grown.

There have been a number of influences driving this awareness. Scholarly activity has included Vygotsky's work being translated in the 1960s,⁶⁵ Bronfenbrenner's theoretical work in America and his influential visit to Aotearoa NZ in the 1970s,⁶⁶ and the work of Māori (such as Pere⁶⁷ and Durie⁶⁸) and Pasifika (such as Pulotu-Endemann⁶⁹) scholars in more recent years. Simultaneously, awareness of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* has grown, which has led to greater knowledge amongst policy makers, educators and scholars of the obligations of social policy towards Māori as indigenous people. There has also been a general societal increase in knowledge about Māori values and beliefs. The importance of families and whānau for people's wellbeing has been emphasised through these sociocultural and indigenous theories, which have been influential in my own thinking.

These theories are in contrast to the economics theory of human capital development which has been prominent in the government approach to social policy over the last three decades, as discussed in this thesis. The alternative proposal of community hubs seeks to replace the binary of the productive/non-productive parent by valuing the work that parents do in raising children and focusing on supporting parents in their role as carers and educators. This includes providing ECEC services so that parents can participate in paid employment alongside other objectives.

A potential discursive effect of this problem representation, and the proposal for integrated services with parent involvement, could be a shift in focus from identifying people by their ethnicities and assigning them labels such as *at risk*.

⁶⁴ E.g., Ministry of Education, "The New Zealand Curriculum," <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum>; Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki* 2017; Dianne Wepa, ed., *Cultural Safety in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶⁵ Drewery and Claiborne, *Human Development*.

⁶⁶ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

⁶⁷ Pere, *Te Wheke*.

⁶⁸ Durie, *Whaiora*.

⁶⁹ Pulotu-Endemann, "Fonofale."

The shift would be towards identifying the characteristics of the local community that the community hub would be serving. This has the potential to require analysis that does not rely on cultural stereotypes, as the cultural demographics of a community would only be one aspect for consideration in designing the services. There are already services that focus on the strengths of a community rather than the deficit (the case study of Te Aroha Noa is one example), and I would argue that the alternative problem representation has more potential to support this work than the problem representation of increasing participation.

Deliberative democracy

The second alternative problem representation is that a different mode of evaluating ECEC services should be used instead of the problematic concept of quality. This alternative problem representation makes the assumptions that local variation is acceptable, and that the best results will come from democratic participation in the decision making of the ECEC service, within socially accepted limits. The concept of democracy here is not simply “rule by the majority” or a process of voting,⁷⁰ but rather the deeper, deliberative, pluralist and agonistic democracy promoted by writers such as Olssen, Codd and O’Neill,⁷¹ Mouffe,⁷² Young,⁷³ Dahlberg et al.,⁷⁴ and Bromell.⁷⁵ The concept of democracy is deeply embedded in the operation and structure of Playcentres,⁷⁶ so policy based on democratic principles is likely to be congruent with Playcentre philosophy.

⁷⁰ Olssen, Codd and O’Neill, *Education Policy*; Robert K. Shaw, “The Nature of Democratic Decision Making and the Democratic Panacea,” *Policy Futures in Education* 9, no. 1 (2011), doi:10.2304/pfie.2011.9.1.123.

⁷¹ Olssen, Codd and O’Neill, *Education Policy*.

⁷² Chantal Mouffe, *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London: Verso, 1992); Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, Thinking in action (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁷³ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). doi:10.1093/0198297556.001.0001.

⁷⁴ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*; Gunilla Dahlberg and Peter Moss, *Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education*, Contesting Early Childhood series (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2005).

⁷⁵ David Bromell, “Diversity and Democracy,” *Policy Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2009).

⁷⁶ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*; Manning, “Democracy meets Rangatiratanga”; Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

A potential benefit of a problem representation based on democratic decision making of ECEC staff and parents together, is the breaking down of power imbalances between teachers and parents. Working together to elucidate the aims of the service would be a collective effort that ideally would allow people to be seen for their strengths, instead of being subjectivised as parent or a teacher and therefore assigned a certain set of knowledges and skills. A well-functioning democratic organisation has the potential to allow people to take up more complex subject positions.

The ideals of democracy need support if they are to be achieved. David Bromell suggests that democracy can be a forum where:

interests can and should be shaped and reshaped by processes of public debate and consensus-building which allow collective interests and identities (the common good) to emerge and to prevail.⁷⁷

He also acknowledges that this forum can be ineffective as it can be:

taken over by minority (and quite unrepresentative) voices simply because, for whatever reason, they have the motivation and make the time ... It can also drag decision making down to the lowest common denominator and entrench the status quo.⁷⁸

To avoid this negative lived effect of the alternative problem representation based on democracy, there would need to be active education in how deliberative democracy works. There would also need to be an acceptance of a pluralist approach that can accommodate different groups' points of view without the need to resort to individualism, assimilation or domination by the largest or more vocal group.⁷⁹ These are lessons that have been learnt by the NZPF over the years, and continue to be a subject for negotiation. For example, Lex Grey has spoken of the difficulties of educating people in Playcentre in truly democratic practices:

Playcentre in Auckland at the start of the '50s aimed to be a democratic movement ... Playcentre suffered accordingly with much in-fighting because very little of what we experienced was democratic. Families were not, for

⁷⁷ Bromell, "Diversity and Democracy" 34.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Burke, *Making Consensus Work*; Manning, "Democracy meets Rangatiratanga."

the large part, democratic; schools were certainly not democratic; government was not.⁸⁰

Later, in the 1990s, the organisation struggled to accommodate a Tiriti-based democratic structure, finding that time and education were necessary components for change.⁸¹ For deeper democratic practice to develop in ECEC services, then this “democracy in education” needs to be accompanied by “education for democracy,” as John Dewey discussed almost a century ago.⁸²

Policy to include Playcentres

To summarise, there have been two dominant problem representations in ECEC policy over the last two decades, that of needing to increase both participation in formal ECEC and the baseline quality of services. This study has examined the effects of these problem representations on Playcentres, and found that much of the policy has had negative effects and resulted in an increasing separation of Playcentres from the rest of the ECEC sector.

The alternative problem representations proposed in this chapter aim to disrupt those dominant problem representations, and the policy suggestions arising from these alternatives are designed to benefit Playcentres. To replace the problem representation of participation, the alternative suggested is a problem representation of needing to support families and whānau in a holistic way, which includes parents being the educators of their young children. This would be achieved through supporting the establishment of integrated-services community hubs, where parents could participate in the ECEC centre as educators if they chose to do so. Policy would support the philosophy of parent and whānau involvement, and a culture of ongoing parent education. The alternative problem representation is based on sociocultural, ecological and indigenous theories of

⁸⁰ Lex Grey, as cited in Stover, “The Debate Continues: Adult Education in Playcentre,” 59.

⁸¹ Manning, “Democracy meets Rangatiratanga.”

⁸² Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, *Education Policy*.

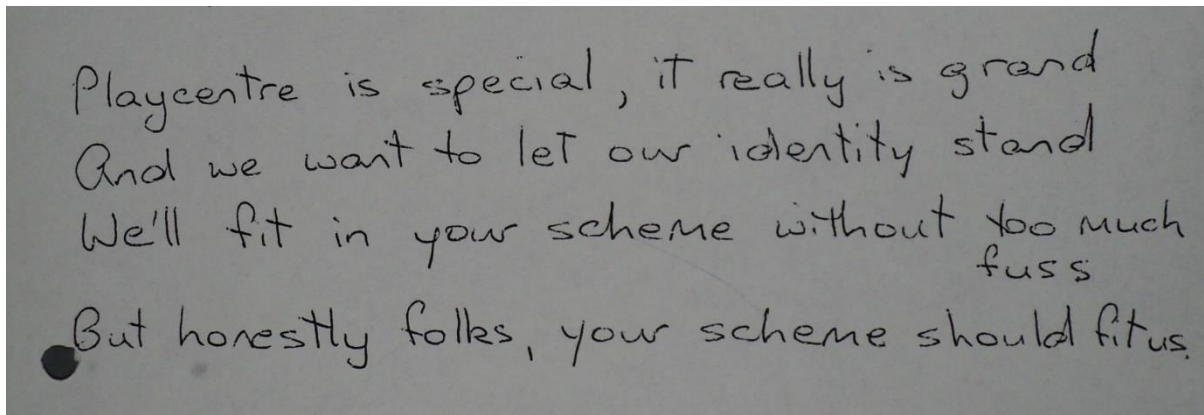
learning, development and wellbeing, instead of the economics HCT basis of the current participation problem representation.

To replace the problem representation of quality, the alternative proposed is a different system of evaluating the effectiveness of the ECEC service, through the reintroduction of negotiated two-way charters. These charters would be agreements involving whānau, the service and the government, take account of local community needs and conditions, and would encourage democratic participation in the decision making of the service. Deliberative democracy as a theory and a practice underlies this alternative problem representation, in contrast to the standardisation and certainty associated with the concept of quality.

To achieve sustained social change, activists and the government need to coincide in their language and objectives.⁸³ These policy suggestions have been selected because they have been previously trialled in various places and found to be successful, as discussed in this chapter. Lessons learnt on how to implement these suggestions are available for the government and policy makers. Further, the suggestions are able to be implemented within the current ECEC system in Aotearoa NZ. For Playcentres, it would mean yet more changes, but would result in keeping the kaupapa of *Whānau tupu ngātahi – Families growing together* and of democratic control of services whilst once again becoming a mainstream ECEC service. This would be a beneficial and worthwhile aim for Playcentres.

⁸³ May, "Blue Skies."

Chapter Eleven: Playcentre is special



"Playcentre is special" was the start of a stanza in a poem entitled *Purple Poetry*, written by an anonymous writer in September 1989 as the NZ Playcentre Federation (NZPF) attempted to come to terms with the *Before Five* reforms.¹ This phrase was chosen as the title for this thesis because it captures the feeling of so many of those who have participated in Playcentre: the idea that Playcentre is special to them, and special in the wider ECEC community because of its emphasis on parent education and parents-as-educators. However, policy changes over the last three decades or so have worked to marginalise Playcentres, despite a rhetoric of maintaining diversity in the sector. My aim in this study was to find ways of resisting this marginalisation.

The study used the framework of Carol Bacchi's *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (WPR) approach,² which enabled the thesis to present both historical and policy analysis. This analysis addresses a lacuna in the literature, which is the impact of ECEC policy changes from the 1980s on parent cooperatives, and specifically on Playcentres. The majority of current literature analyses the historical policy changes from the perspective of teacher-led services, which

¹ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

² Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*.

operate with a different philosophy to Playcentres with respect to the role of parents-as-educators.

This concluding chapter summarises the historical narratives presented in this thesis, emphasising the themes of accommodation and resistance, individualism and collaborative working, and the influence of HCT on government interest in ECEC. The second section then summarises the alternative problem representations that have been offered as ways of disrupting the current dominant problem representations. The final section of this conclusion offers a comment on the future of Playcentre as an organisation.

The Playcentre narratives

The catalyst for this study was the release of the Early Childhood Education Taskforce report in 2011, which recommended excluding Playcentres from mainstream ECEC funding and support.³ This became the starting point and practical text for the WPR analysis. Two major problem representations were identified in the Taskforce report: a lack of participation in ECEC, and a variable and low bottom-line standard of quality in ECEC services. These problem representations have evolved over time, and there have been specific effects on Playcentres. These effects cannot be categorised simply as “good” or “bad” as the lived, discursive and subjectification effects have been more nuanced and complex. Further, the NZPF has been both proactive and reactive in the changing policy environment. The narratives presented here start from the late 1980s, just before the educational administration system in Aotearoa NZ was radically changed by the fourth Labour government.

Before Five

In the late 1980s, during the “age of equity” as Helen May has categorised it,⁴ the problem representation was mainly concerned with access for children who were missing out on ECEC and for women who needed childcare, that is, equity for

³ ECE Taskforce, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*.

⁴ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

children and for women. The discourses surrounding government support to provide more ECEC places focused on women's rights (according to feminists and childcare advocates) and children's education (according to the political rationale).⁵ Government acceptance of responsibility for ECEC support was a major advocacy achievement of the *Before Five* changes, especially as the neoliberal politics of the time favoured less government intervention in education and positioned non-compulsory education (both ECEC and tertiary) as a private good that should be paid for by the users.⁶

At the same time, ECEC advocates were pushing for greater government regulation of quality. Kindergartens, Playcentres and Ngā Kōhanga Reo had the support of umbrella organisations that set standards for the education of the teachers/supervisors/kaiako in their centres, and in some cases provided that training. Other features such as adult-child ratios, equipment and pedagogy were guided by a mix of the philosophies and practices established by the umbrella organisations and government regulations. Independent childcare and other services did not necessarily have access to such umbrella organisational guidelines, and therefore childcare advocates looked to government regulations to provide support for these features of quality.

For the NZPF, it was a time when Playcentre's values and practices were being questioned to a greater extent than any time previously in its history. The practice of parents-as-educators and of group supervision needed to be defended.⁷ The equivalence of the Playcentre training with other training was debated in many different places.⁸ The concept of democratic practice within the NZPF was being internally questioned from the viewpoint of biculturalism.⁹ Even the idea that all that was needed to create a Playcentre was a community hall and parent

⁵ Meade, "Foot in the Door."

⁶ Stuart, "Cradle and All"; Devine, *Education and Public Choice*.

⁷ Chapman, "Needs of Children First."

⁸ NZPF, *Circulars, Reports and Notes*, MS-Papers-6410-04.

⁹ Manning, "Democracy meets Rangatiratanga."

enthusiasm¹⁰ was questioned with the introduction of new property standards. In most areas of policy Playcentres conformed to the new regime of more regulations and greater accountability in return for increased funding, through writing charters, property upgrades, fulfilling licensing requirements and paperwork. As the poem at the beginning of this chapter said, “we’ll fit in your scheme without too much fuss.”¹¹ In some policy areas, there was resistance. The NZPF gained an exception to continue to have parents-as-educators instead of pre-service trained teachers – as in the above poem, “but honestly folks, your scheme should fit us.” In a further resistance, the NZPF designed a new scheme to internally redistribute funding across the organisation, specifically to support smaller and more isolated Playcentres. This was a collective response to the neoliberal individualism underpinning the new administration system, which treated each Playcentre as an individual unit and allocated funds based almost solely on enrolment numbers.

The fourth National government of the 1990s continued the changes initiated by the previous government, although with a more conservative and authoritarian approach.¹² The idea of human capital development was now part of educational policy discourse, although the government did not see non-compulsory education as a state responsibility so ECEC funding was kept to a minimum. The promotion of quality in ECEC became reduced to minimum standards, in an effort to contain costs both to the government and to the providers of ECEC. For Playcentres there were mixed effects. Funding for small Playcentres was insufficient, but these centres were supported by the collective approach of shared funds. Accommodation by the government was made so that Playcentres could access quality funding from 1996. However, the policy settings, of only one rate for the whole centre in any given week, meant that very few Playcentres were eligible because of the variability in supervision teams throughout the week. On the

¹⁰ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*; Stover, *Good Clean Fun*.

¹¹ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Subject files: Before Five folder, 97-030-10.

¹² Wendy Larner, “Neoliberalism?” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21, no. 5 (2003), doi:10.1068/d2105ed.

positive side, Playcentres became eligible for the higher under-two-year old funding in 1997, which benefited many centres.

Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education

The political approach softened in the early 2000s, as OECD countries and other major governments around the world embraced third way politics. In this modified neoliberal approach, ECEC was still seen as contributing to the development of an individual's human capital, but was no longer considered a drain on government expenses and an unrecovered cost. Instead, ECEC was considered the first step on the educational pathway to future economic productivity, and a wise and cost-effective investment of government funds. This was a relatively new idea in the early 2000s and not accepted widely, leading to criticism of the government as a "nanny state" in the lead-up to 2005 election.¹³

The problem representation of a lack of participation in ECEC was reified in the Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education (SPECE) in 2002,¹⁴ although it had been a policy objective for both the National and Labour parties since the late 1990s. Access to ECEC was no longer sufficient; participation was the new measure of success. If the social investment approach to education was to work, it was necessary to ensure those at risk of "failing" at school participated in ECEC to provide a good start to education, and the ECEC services needed to be effective. The SPECE working party drew on the discourse of human rights to avoid making ECEC compulsory, but positioned ECEC as a beneficial activity that all families would choose if the barriers such as information, finance, transport and cultural inappropriateness were removed. The economics and social investment discourses worked to position "good" parents as those who took their children to ECEC in order to shape the productive citizens of the future.¹⁵

¹³ May, *Politics in the Playground*.

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*.

¹⁵ Phillip Brown and Hugh Lauder, "Education, globalization and economic development," *Journal of Education Policy* 11, no. 1 (1996), doi:10.1080/0268093960110101; Devine, *Education and Public Choice*; Duhn, "The Making of Global Citizens"; Lightfoot-Rueda and Peach, *Global Perspectives*.

The rationale for government investment in ECEC in the decade of the 2000s also included developing the human capital of parents, specifically providing childcare to enable parents (mothers) to participate in paid employment. The women's emancipation discourse underpinning *Education to be More* in 1988 had been transformed into women's right to employment, and in some contexts, women's duty to be economic productive. This discourse was silent on the value of women being a parent,¹⁶ and silent on men's responsibilities as parents. Promoting the value of parenting, for all genders and for its own sake, was a feature of Playcentre discourse, and therefore the NZPF was increasingly positioned as contra to mainstream ECEC policy.

This outsider positioning for Playcentre took the form of exclusion from many of the initiatives in the 2000s, as the policies were not designed to apply to parent cooperatives. Although the policy makers appeared willing to accommodate Playcentres, definite policies that fitted with the problem representations of participation and quality were elusive. The *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services* research¹⁷ took four years to be completed and released, and despite the objective being to provide a basis for policy making, no new policy arose from the findings. During the time that the government and the NZPF were waiting for the findings of the research, the funding and regulation reviews signalled by the SPECE had been undertaken. The funding review resulted in a cost-driver approach to funding with the *20 Hours Free ECE* policy. Playcentres were excluded because their costs, measured in monetary terms, were low. The government tried to mitigate the negative reaction from Playcentres by emphasising that parents could still leave their children at other ECEC services, as well as attending a Playcentre. Such a message misunderstood the motivation of parents attending Playcentres, and the philosophy of valuing parents as involved educators of their young children.

The philosophy of parents-as-educators was a non-negotiable aspect of Playcentres. This conflicted with the increasing professionalisation of the ECEC

¹⁶ Kahu and Morgan, "Women as Mothers and Workers"; Kahu and Morgan, "Making Choices."

¹⁷ Mitchell et al., *Quality in Parent/Whānau-Led Services*.

workforce, through the policies of the SPECE. Quality of ECEC services became increasing conflated with the qualifications of the teachers, and the proportions of qualified teachers in the service. The SPECE reified the division between teacher-led services and parent cooperatives, a division originally intended to benefit Playcentres but which was, in the 2000s, increasingly used to exclude them. The response from the NZPF was that using parents-as-educators in Playcentres could still result in quality ECEC, and this was based on the strength of a collaborative supervision approach instead of a focus on individual knowledge.¹⁸ The problem representation of quality, however, demanded measurable inputs and guaranteed outcomes, and the Playcentre collaborative approach did not lend itself to that sort of measurement. Playcentres operate as communities of learners that are always in a state of becoming, and not static entities that can be assigned a quality rating which encapsulates the whole centre for more than a short period of time. The value of Playcentres is in the learning process, which is difficult to measure.

The pressure of standardisation and of professionalisation of the sector led to renewed debates in the NZPF about the purpose and philosophy of Playcentres. This was an attempt to define which aspects of government policy could be accommodated within Playcentre philosophy, and which aspects the NZPF should resist. Rather than articulating what Playcentre was *not*, the NZPF sought to articulate what it *was*, and what was important to the organisation. The history project for the NZPF's 40th anniversary in 1998 held this distillation of Playcentre philosophy, along with a task for the future:

Playcentre successfully demonstrated that parents can take responsibility for the education of their children. That idea is still a powerful one. The challenge as we approach the 21st century is to hold on to that idea ... As Lex Grey wrote in the 1960s, "Playcentre has only one magic quality about it - the enthusiasm of parents for the welfare of their children. The rest is sound common sense." The challenge of the 1990s is to hold on to that magic. And to discover what "sound common sense" looks like in the 21st century. ¹⁹

¹⁸ Woodhams and Manning, "Playcentre as a Professional System."

¹⁹ Stover, "The History and Significance of the Playcentre Movement," 19.

During the 2000s, the NZPF spent several years developing a vision statement and a set of bicultural philosophy statements.²⁰ Although the philosophy statements included references to such things as the value of play and respectful democratic practices, the vision statement centred on supporting parents and families in their parenting journey:

Whānau tupu ngātahi: Families growing together

Playcentre is a family organisation where:

- we empower adults and children to work, play, learn and grow together
- we honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and celebrate people's uniqueness
- we value and affirm parents as the first and best educators of their children

so that whānau are strengthened and communities enriched.²¹

The two statements of philosophy are remarkably similar, despite being written ten years apart, the first by a single (but knowledgeable) Playcentre person and the other as a result of a widespread consultation process. The core of the philosophy was identified as the empowerment of parents, and through them, the learning and development of children.

The ECE Taskforce and beyond

The Taskforce report was produced in the environment of a new National government. The government favoured a social investment approach of supporting ECEC for the purposes of human capital development of children and of parents. This was combined with financial restraint, and attempting to maximise the cost-benefit ratio of the expenditure by tight targeting of expenditure to specific population groups, and the use of defined measures and data monitoring to assess outcomes. The problem representations of a lack of participation and a lack of quality suited this approach. The Taskforce's

²⁰ New Zealand Playcentre Federation, "Philosophy."

²¹ Ibid.

recommendations for ensuring the desired human capital outcomes included excluding Playcentres, as Playcentres could not be regulated, standardised and controlled in the same way as teacher-led services. The NZPF publicly resisted this exclusion, and were nominally successful. However, without a change in problem representations, and without alternative policy recommendations, there was no overall change in the direction of policy. Policy initiatives since the Taskforce have been a mix of accommodating the Playcentre approach, as in the final version of the updated *Te Whāriki* and the inclusion of parents-as-educators in the definition of kaiako, and excluding Playcentres, as in the extension of the Teacher-Led Innovation Fund to ECEC which is only accessible by teams of registered teachers.

The NZPF is currently restructuring in order to adapt to the policy environment and position the organisation for the future. This thesis has presented some new alternatives for the NZPF to consider. The alternatives present a tension between promoting the sustainability of the parent-cooperative model in the current Playcentre form and therefore remaining on the margins, or becoming more integrated with other services yet trying to retain the core philosophy of *Whānau tupu ngātahi – Families growing together*. The poem at the beginning of this chapter expressed the desire to “let our identity stand,” yet this thesis is suggesting that the NZPF could benefit from discussing what identity will be sustainable in the future.

Policy for Playcentre

This thesis proposes two alternative policy directions, aimed at disrupting the problem representations of participation and quality. The first proposal is to replace the problem representation of “a lack of participation in ECEC” with “a lack of holistic support for families with young children.” This problem representation takes into account the multiple goals of families, many of which are not encompassed in a problem representation focused on human capital development. The specific policy suggestion is to support the establishment of integrated service community hubs, centred on ECEC services. Regulations would allow for and encourage parents to be involved in a variety of ways, depending on their

circumstances and preferences, and this involvement would include the option of being supported as educators at the service. Parent and family support and development would be as important as children's care and education, both through the co-located services and through the ECEC service itself. This alternative problem representation and policy suggestion is underpinned by sociocultural theories of learning and development, and Māori and Pasifika models of holistic health and wellbeing. It is also underpinned by the key philosophical ideas of the NZPF.

The second proposal is an alternative to the problem representation of quality as the language of evaluation, to ensure that ECEC services are beneficial and meeting the needs of the community. The proposed problem representation is for a "democratic and dialogic"²² process for setting goals and evaluating the effectiveness of ECEC services. The specific policy would be the reintroduction of the two-way chartering process that was briefly trialled in 1989-90 as part of the *Before Five* reforms. These charters were negotiated between the service and their community of families, and between the service and the Ministry of Education. This policy, and the problem representation it contains, replaces the current emphasis on human capital development which underpins the quality problem representation with an emphasis on democratic participation and decision making. The language of democracy is one with which Playcentre parents are familiar, and it would allow for the local autonomy and variation that Playcentres thrive on.

The future of Playcentre

Early Childhood Education and Care policy has marginalised Playcentres over the last three decades. This thesis seeks to resist that marginalisation in several ways. One resistance is to provide some historical context for future policy making, specifically a context that includes the perspectives of Playcentre parents. Another resistance is to proactively suggest policies based on alternative problem representations, which may benefit Playcentres more than the problem

²² Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in ECEC*.

representations that have been dominant in policy for some decades. The suggestions address the lack of specific policy proposals for parent cooperatives which has been evident since the turn of the century. The proposals encapsulate the core values of Playcentre: supporting families to grow together, alongside democratic practices as a model of operating.²³

There is likely to be counter-resistance to the proposals from a number of areas. After all, the proposals are suggesting that Playcentres would evolve from their current form, and that general ECEC centres become more like Playcentres. This would be problematic to those who hold strongly to Playcentre having a separate identity, as expressed in the poem above. Further, the proposal suggests modifying the ECEC sector's call to reinstate regulations for 100% qualified teachers in ECEC services. The ideas of quality and the need for 100% qualified teachers in services are strongly aligned within the ECEC sector, to the point of being a taken-for-granted "truth." Therefore, the proposal for 80% qualified teachers as the norm is likely to generate criticism from within the ECEC sector.

However, these proposals are presented as ideas for discussion, not as policy proposals that have already been worked out in fine detail, which must be accepted in total or not at all. It will take time and discussion for these ideas to be seriously considered. This is necessary, if real social change is to occur. The template for social change, according to May and Meade,²⁴ is to have a clear message, a collective voice, and an opportunity for change. The new Labour-led government elected in 2017 could create that opportunity for change. To take advantage of this, the NZPF needs to articulate their policy wish list, and negotiate this with the rest of the ECEC sector. The next step is therefore to take these proposals, and the research that backs them, to the NZPF and the wider ECEC sector for consideration. In true democratic style, this means that these proposals may be refined, modified or used to generate different proposals. That is how it

²³ Densem and Chapman, *Learning Together the Playcentre Way*.

²⁴ May, "Minding, Working, Teaching"; Meade, "Foot in the Door."

should be. Democracy requires openness to the viewpoints of others in order to negotiate both/and, win-win compromises.²⁵

I look forward to entering the democratic forum, following in the footsteps of Playcentre tūpuna, walking alongside the Playcentre parents of today, and creating footsteps for those who will come after us.

²⁵ Meade, presentation to NZARE ECE Special Interest Group, December 2017.

Appendix I: WPR questions

1. **What's the 'problem'** (e.g. 'problem gamblers', 'drug use/abuse', domestic violence, global warming, health inequalities, terrorism, etc.) **represented to be in a specific policy or policies?** See what the policy proposes and 'read off' the implied 'problem' from this proposal.
2. **What presuppositions and assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?** This question involves a form of Foucauldian *archaeology*, identifying underlying conceptual logics and political rationalities in specific policies. Identify key concepts, binaries, and categories. Think beyond national and/or cultural boundaries to address this question.
3. **How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?** This question involves a form of Foucauldian *genealogy*, focusing on the practices and processes that led to the dominance of this problem representation (or of these problem representations).
4. **What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?** Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently? Cross-cultural comparisons and comparisons of problem representation over time (see Question 3) will be useful here, alongside the discourses analysis conducted in Question 2.
5. **What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?** Consider three kinds of effects: discursive effects, subjectification effects, lived effects. Include effects due to dividing practices. The following sub-questions will assist here: What is likely to change with this representation of the 'problem'? What is likely to stay the same? Who is likely to benefit from this representation of the 'problem'? Who is likely to be harmed? How does the attribution of responsibility for the 'problem' affect those so targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to 'blame'?
6. **How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?** Consider past and current challenges to this representation of the 'problem'. Consider the discursive resources available for re-problematism.

Apply this list of questions to your own problem representations. This stage of the analysis requires a form of reflexivity, which involves subjecting the grounding assumptions in one's own problem representations to critical scrutiny.¹

¹ Bacchi, *Analysing Policy*, 48.

Appendix II: Research permission

-----Original Message-----

From: Veronica Pitt [mailto:veronica.pitt@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, 31 January 2013 8:57 a.m.

To: suzanne.manning@paradise.net.nz

Cc: Desileeanne Walker; Claire Rumble; sue easther; NZPF Secretary

Subject: PhD Research proposal - Manning

Kia ora Suzanne,

Thank you for submitting your proposal for research within Playcentre.

The Research Advisory Group is pleased to advise that we have approved your proposal, and are happy for you to access New Zealand Playcentre Federation minutes.

We would like to emphasise that this is on condition of anonymity of names as outlined in your proposal, and also anonymity of individual Playcentres and Associations, unless you receive written permission from them to name them specifically.

We also have an offer of help with any kaupapa Maaori perspectives if you would find this useful!

We look forward to seeing the results of your research and hearing presentations as it progresses.

regards,

Veronica Pitt

on behalf of

Research Advisory Group

NZ Playcentre Federation

No virus found in this message.

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Version: 2013.0.2890 / Virus Database: 2639/6066 - Release Date: 01/29/13

Playcentre

New Zealand Playcentre Federation
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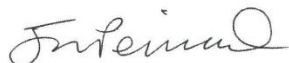
30 May 2013

Jocelyn Chalmers
National Library of NZ Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa
Corner of Molesworth and Aitken Streets
Thorndon
Wellington

Dear Jocelyn

This letter is to confirm that Suzanne Manning has permission from the New Zealand Playcentre Federation to access the full collection of New Zealand Playcentre Federation archives held at the National Library and the Alexander Turnbull Library/Tapuhi.

Yours sincerely



Jane Percival
Secretary



www.Playcentre.org.nz

“Whānau tupu ngātahi – families growing together”

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