



# Early Childhood Education in a democratic society: Lessons from New Zealand's policy approaches

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# This presentation



- The New Zealand context
- Introduction to New Zealand's ECE strategic plan
- Evidence of the impact of the ECE strategic plan



# New Zealand's policy reforms

Moving towards an integrated early childhood education system from birth to 6 years – in the vanguard of a wave of countries that embarked on education-based integration



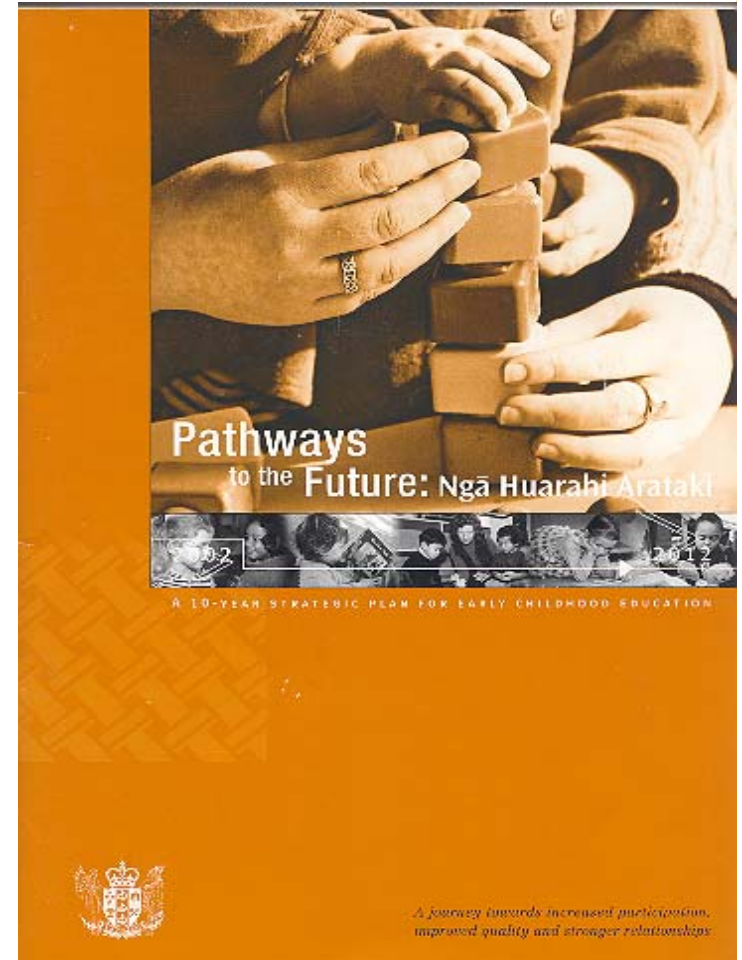
# Progressive integration

- 1986 – care and education services integrated within Department of Education
- 1988 – 3 year integrated teacher training
- 1989 – towards a common funding system
- 1991 – unions representing kindergarten and childcare amalgamated
- 1996 – Te Whāriki, ECE curriculum, birth to age 6
- 2002 – 10 year strategic plan for ECE

# *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki*

## **Government vision**

*For all children to have the opportunity to participate in quality early childhood education, no matter their circumstances*








# Strategic plan goals and supporting strategies

- Increase participation in quality ECE services
- Improve quality of ECE services
- Promote collaborative relationships

Four supporting strategies: reviewing regulations and funding, undertaking research, involving the sector in policy development



# Integrated evaluation 2004, 2006 and 2009

- Locality based
- Three time points
- Mixed method
- Four evaluation questions



# Evaluation questions

To what extent in what ways and how effectively has the plan:

- increased participation in ECE?
- improved the quality of ECE?
- facilitated the formation of collaborative relationships?
- supported parents' ability to engage in education and employment?





## Universal funding and participation in ECE

- Government expenditure increased almost four fold
- New funding system based on cost drivers in 2005
- 20 hours “free” ECE for 3 and 4 year-olds in 2007



## Enhanced responsiveness of services

- Many of the sessional services increased or adapted hours to better meet needs of families and attract higher funding
- Yet still high levels of children attending more than one ECE service – 28% in this study – and more for parents in paid work or study

# Use of more than one ECE service while parents working/studying in 2006 and 2009

Year	One ECE service only %	Two services %	Three services %	Four or more services %
2006 (n=353)	37	34	22	7
2009 (n=313)	49	33	14	4



## Increased participation

- Increase in hours of attendance of 3 and 4 year-old children
- *20 hours ECE* contributed to parental decisions to use ECE
- ECE more affordable

## 20 hours ECE and decision to participate in ECE by annual family income (n=559)

20 hours ECE the reason to send child to ECE	< \$30k (n=106) %	\$30-49k (n=100) %	\$50-69k (n=102) %	\$70-89k (n=93) %	\$90k> (n=95) %	Not sure of income (n=63) %	Total (n=559) %
Yes	30*	17	15	14	9	17	17
No	47	59	66	68	64	59	60
No response	23	24	20	18	26	24	22



## Parent views

*It is great to know that my child is able to get the education that she needs without having to find the money to pay for it. If I had to pay I would probably not have taken her to kindy. Living is way too expensive these days.*






**But no right to access an ECE place**

People with existing bookings assumed they could increase their bookings to the '20' hours—when actually there was no new space available (manager)

**Exemplifies critical importance of planning**



## Some centres increased fees outside 20 hours

- This has made no difference to saving. It [is] actually costing us more because our ECE increased their rates. So it is now costing us a lot more—RIDICULOUS!!
- Nothing as [corporate chain] centres charge \$17 per day and don't let you share your 20 hours with any other ECE. When my daughter was 2 we paid \$22 a day, now 3-yr-olds [with 20 hours ECE] pay \$45 per day. So they bully you into using your ECE 20 hours at [corporate chain] exclusively .....
- Not a lot as the fee structuring changed with the introduction of ECE.



# Children families and communities as participants

## Four curriculum principles

- Empowerment- Whakamana
- Holistic development – Kotahitanga
- Family and community – Whānau tangata
- Relationships – Ngā hononga



# Strategic plan policy initiatives

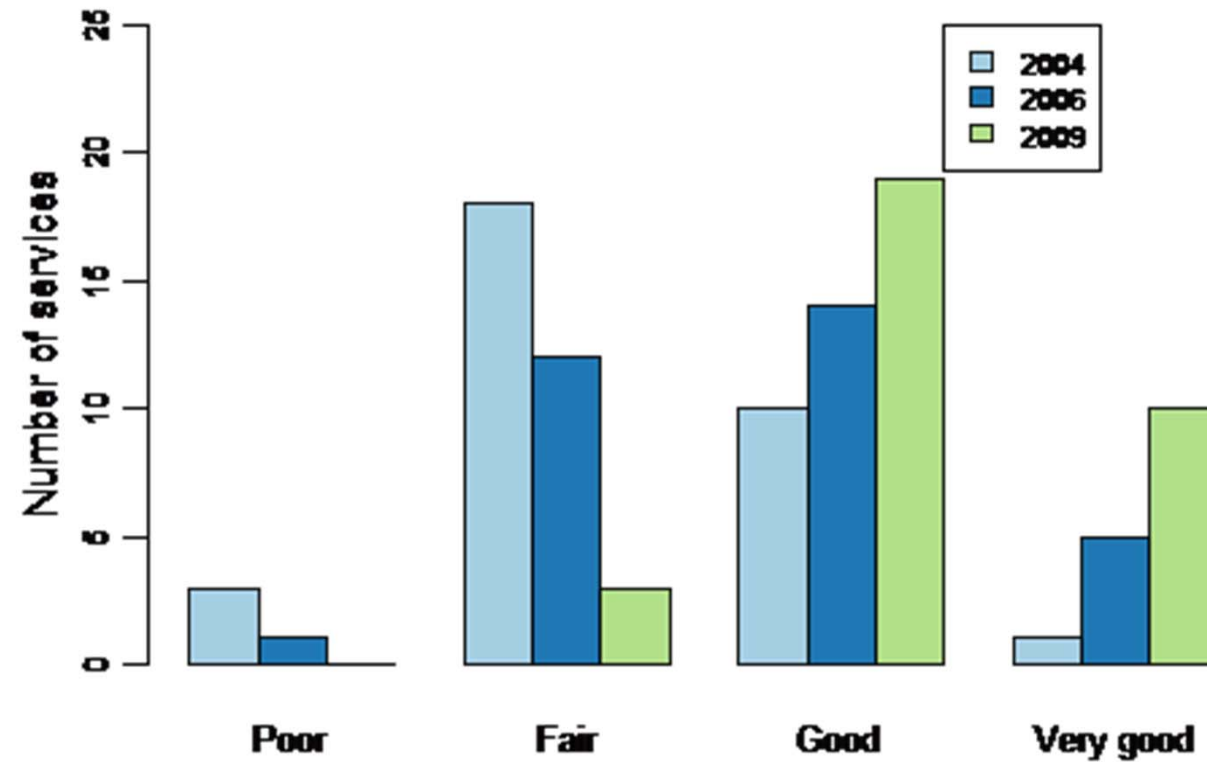
## Professional resources

- Assessment resources
- ICT strategy
- Self review resources

## Professional capabilities

- Professional development
- Teacher registration targets (100% registered teachers by 2012) and incentives
- Centres of Innovation

# Assessment practice ratings 2004, 2006 to 2009



The shifts in teachers' assessment practices were mirrored by shifts in parents' involvement in assessment and planning



Parent participation in  
assessment and  
planning

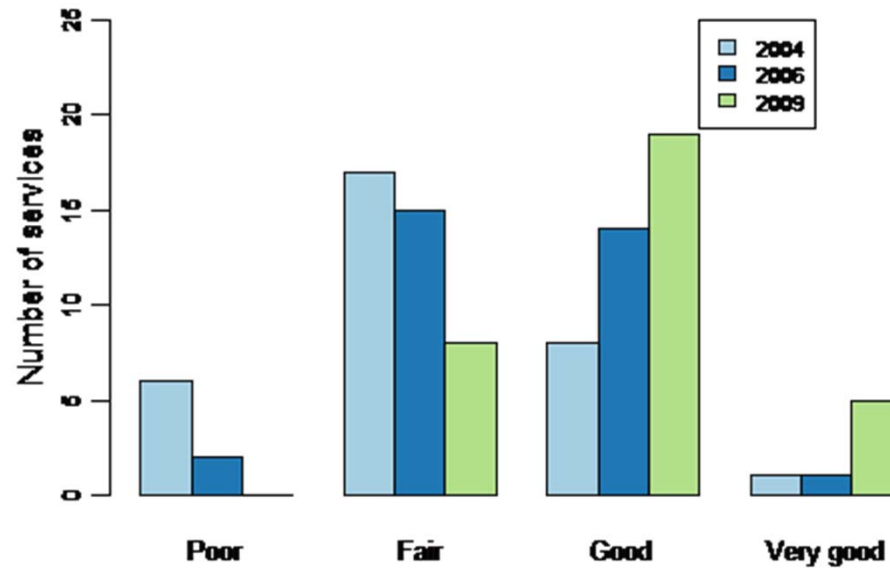
2004 – 36%

2006 – 47%

2009 – 60%




# Understanding Te Whāriki ratings 2004, 2006, and 2009





## Registered teachers (national figures)

- 2004 - 37.3 % registered
- 2006 - 56.4 percent
- 2009 – 64% registered
- 2011 – 69% registered



In 2009, positive shifts in *overall quality* were apparent. Overall “good” and “very good” quality was sustained or strengthened between 2006 and 2009 in 22 of the study services (69 percent).

These gains were associated with the uptake of training and professional development opportunities emerging from the strategic plan.



# Coherence of policy initiatives

The key points of difference between services that were low quality and services of consistently high quality, were the proportion of qualified and registered teachers, the range and depth of professional development engaged in and management support for teachers/educators to develop professionally.



## Early childhood centres as democratic communities

This coherent set of initiatives was key to the shifts that have occurred in New Zealand's ECE pedagogical landscape towards more open and democratic ECE provision. Benefits came from policies that were universally available and coherently organised around an understanding of children, families and communities as participants.

# References

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