

The Future for Children’s Early Care and Education: Proceedings of the National Forum 2008

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Announcing a National Forum...

The Future for Children's Early Care and Education

A Policy, Research and Practice Forum to be held 11 Feb 2008,
Auditorium, National Library of NZ, Wellington

At the beginning of the year and in an election year this forum will offer an excellent opportunity for politicians, officials, policy advisers, analysts, researchers, parents/step parents/guardians, early childhood leaders and practitioners to get together, ask questions and critically consider what we want for our children and how to achieve it.

The provision of non-parental childcare/early childhood education is closely linked to economic development and is a big issue in times of a labour shortage. The focus of current early childhood policy is on increasing the supply of childcare services and hours as a way to raise levels of women's labour force participation. But can supply drive demand and to what point? What are the consequences for children?

At the last election early childhood education became a major issue with promises from Labour of 20 hours free childcare for parents with children between 3 and 5 years, and other promises from National being hotly debated.

Today we are seeing the final steps being taken toward all types of childcare services becoming more fully part of the state education system under the direction of government. For example, the idea is promoted to parents and service providers that it's better for children to spend more time in formal education from a younger age with registered teachers. Services that provide government funded 20 hours free early childhood education can not charge fees but can require parents to pay optional charges and engage in fundraising as schools do.

With change happening quickly and with early childhood public policy likely to have a significant impact on the kind of people children will become and on the generations to follow - have we stopped to consider what is best for children?

What are the best conditions for children's care and learning from birth to school starting age? How can we best improve children's experiences within early childhood services? In asking these questions we must also think about the extent that the care, learning and teaching of young children should be the responsibility of institutions. And who decides?

This forum will feature presentations by speakers from a variety of areas and perspectives. Audience questions to the speakers and discussion will be an important part of the programme. Politicians will be invited to present their party's views and reply to the questions, concerns, and challenges discussed during the day.

About the Organiser: Childforum is an independent research organisation led by educational expert, researcher and mother of 5 children, Dr Sarah Farquhar. Childforum incorporates the NZ Early Childhood Research Network, providing support and information to over 1,000 members nationally and overseas. Childforum publishes the leading NZ Research in ECE academic journal, organises research conferences, and provides advice and information to individuals and organisations. Childforum is known for taking a lead on identifying and promoting issues of importance to the wellbeing of young children.

The Future for Children's Early Care and Education
Monday 11 Feb 2008, National Library of NZ, Wellington

Programme

10.00am	Opening Address: Investing in Early Childhood Education	Hon Chris Carter (Minister of Education, NZ Labour Party)
10.15am	Welcome and a speedy outline of some Leading Issues and Questions for the Forum	Dr Sarah Farquhar (Childforum and the NZECR Network)
10.30am	Early Childhood Education and Care under the United Kingdom's Labour Government: Tensions and Contradictions	Eva Lloyd (Reader in Early Childhood at the University of East London)
11.00am	Questions and Discussion	
11.10am	How Best to Address the Needs of Children At-Risk including the Benefits of Home-Visiting	Professor David Fergusson (Exec Director and Founder of the Christchurch Health & Development Study, University of Otago)
11.40am	Questions and Discussion	
11.50am	Reflections on the Morning's Discussion in the Context of Children's Rights, Present and Future Wellbeing	Deborah Morris-Travers (Project Manager, Every Child Counts)
12.00noon	Quick Lunch	
12.30pm	Beyond talk of Quality Early Childhood Education and Care to What Matters for Children. Screening of " <i>what you want to know about early child care and education</i> "	Dr Sarah Farquhar Video clips may be viewed online at http://www.childforum.com
1.10pm	Questioning Contemporary Arrangements within Early Childhood Centres	Dr Margaret Brennan (Senior Lecturer, Victoria University)
1.30pm	Views and Opinions of Parents with their First Child (1mth – 2 yrs) on Family Leisure	David Lamb (Senior Lecturer, Lincoln University)
Discussion: Parents' Choices and Family Requirements	The Rewards of Integrating Work and Being a Full-time Dad	Scott Lancaster (Father and director of DIYFather.com)
	A Mother's View and Decisions on Childcare/ECE Arrangements	Anna Dunn (Mother and G.P)
	'Choices Offered, Choices Chosen': Exploring Participation in Pacific Early Childhood Centres	Pauline Luafutu-Simpson (Lecturer, Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa New Zealand Childcare Association)
2.30pm	Afternoon tea	
3.00pm	Parent Support through Early Childhood Centre Networks	Dr Avril Thesing (Senior Lecturer, University of Auckland)
3.15pm	Supported Playgroups and Use of Schools as a Site to Deliver Services to Children 0-5 and Link Families to their Community	Dianne Jackson (Executive Director, Connect Child & Family Services, New South Wales)
3.30pm	Towards a Cross-Sector Approach to Improving Environments in Centres	Mike Bedford (Wellington Regional Public Health)
3.45pm	Questions and Discussion	
4.00pm – 5pm Policy Hour *	Judy Turner Talks	Judy Turner, MP (Deputy Leader, United Future)
	Paula Bennett Talks	Paula Bennett, MP (Spokesperson Early Childhood, National)
	Dr Paul Hutchison Talks	Dr Paul Hutchison, MP (National)
	Discussion and MPs Closing Comments	

Apologies and Best Wishes from: Dr Pita Sharples, Te Ururoa Flavell, Hon Steve Chadwick, Metiria Turei, Katherine Rich, Hon Tau Henare, Ron Mark and Dr Jackie Blue.

Investing in Early Childhood Education

Hon Chris Carter
Minister of Education

Speech Notes

- Sarah, thank you for inviting me to open today's forum, The Future for Children's Early Care and Education. And welcome to you all.
- Forums and conferences, such as this, are fantastic opportunities to discuss where we are, and where we are going. I believe the more we discuss and debate the things we are doing, and how they are working, the more likely it is we will deliver world-leading early childhood education to future generations.
- In 2002 the sector set a vision for our children's early childhood education under the ten year strategic plan Ngā Huarahi Arataki; Pathways to the Future. This plan signalled a huge investment from the sector and the government to ensure all kiwis would have the opportunity to take part in high quality early childhood education, through a diverse range of services.
- One important aspect of the sector is the diverse choices. Nowadays children can learn alongside their parents at parent-led services such as playcentres; at home in an educational supervised environment; in multicultural settings such as kohānga reo and pasifika services; in centres with various educational philosophies, such as Montessori and Rudolf Steiner. Plus children can attend at times that suit their family's lifestyle.
- One of the goals of this government is to create more choices for all New Zealanders to achieve personal, family and financial goals while at the same time they care for families and loved ones. By supporting education, we are supporting this goal and helping families around the country.
- 2007 saw the birth of a major policy to encourage more children to take part in early childhood education - 20 hours Free ECE. By reducing the cost barrier to families, we wanted more children to benefit from quality early childhood education for up to 20 hours a week. And they are, in their thousands.
- Statistics NZ reported in the September 2007 quarter that the price parents pay for early childhood education fell 32% and attributed this to the start of Free ECE.
- Free ECE also gives parents more choice about how their children take part in early childhood education. Anecdotally, I hear some parents are taking up study to improve their career paths, and some are returning to work, while others are reducing their hours of work so they can spend more time with younger children.
- Some early childhood education services have also found Free ECE has given them more choices about how they operate. In talking with some services, they tell me they no longer need to fundraise for the basics as the increased funding is covering a larger portion of their operating costs. Instead they are able to focus their fundraising for new equipment and resources or to provide additional services.
- So far, 76 percent of eligible teacher-led services are offering Free ECE. Also, 45 kohānga reo came on board late last year. This has seen over seventy nine thousand enrolments in Free ECE, and the number continues to grow.
- Late last year, the Ministry of Education began a study of the early effects of Free ECE by surveying a sample of services. The Ministry is also working with NZ Playcentre Federation to understand the early effects of Free ECE on Playcentre. These studies will gather information on the early implementation of 20 Hours Free that may lead to fine tuning of operational policy settings. I am looking forward to these findings mid way through 2008, so we can continue to ensure this initiative keeps benefiting all our families.

- This year we will see a new regulatory framework come into play for all early childhood education services. This will provide an integrated system that prescribes important regulatory requirements for today, as well as setting expectations for future quality improvements to teaching and learning.
- It will also improve the quality of ECE services by focussing on specific regulatory requirements important to quality teaching and learning outcomes, such as qualified and registered teachers and gazetting a curriculum for early childhood education.
- This framework has been developed with a great deal of discussion with, and input from, the sector. The new framework will provide a better integrated and clearer system so services know how the regulations can be met in a number of early childhood settings, with detailed criteria and best practice examples. The regulations will come into force in 2008, and while I haven't made a decision about the final arrangements, I will announce them as soon as I can to give the sector time to prepare.
- Quality early childhood education, whether parent or teacher-led, home-based or centre-based, is the first step towards children gaining skills to base their future learning and development on. Through the new regulatory framework we can assure parents that no matter what type of education they choose for their child, they will receive a quality education.
- The benefits of early childhood education are wider than just the individual child. It can influence how parents interact with and support their child's learning. It can stretch further still to their friends, families and communities.
- In 2008 one of New Zealand's longest standing choices for early childhood education celebrates 60 years of helping young children learn with their parents. The New Zealand Playcentre Federation and its many members have helped thousands of children develop and grow with their parents.
- The government acknowledges the importance of our Playcentres for families and communities. One way we supported them was increasing funding by extra \$4 million in 2006 over the following four years. This money is to ensure they are more financially sustainable and help reduce the time Playcentre volunteers currently need to spend on administration, so they can spend more time in the programme with children.
- Last year, we devoted more funding to Kohānga Reo. With nearly \$14m over the next four years we are supporting them to provide children's early learning immersed in the world of te reo me onga tikanga. This funding will go towards employing kaiako to teach in te reo Māori and support rural kōhanga reo.
- Significant effort and funding has gone into professionalising early childhood education as a whole. People are more aware of how significant the early years of their child's development are. This has required much closer links between services and government agencies and has resulted in programmes such as centre-based Parent Support and Development, Playcentre's SPACE programme, Promoting Participation Project, Parents as First Teachers, SKIP and Team Up campaigns.
- More and more, educating our youngest kiwis is seen as a highly skilled occupation. This has a lot to do with the sector's commitment to professional development. Many people in the sector feel that professional development and Kei Tua o te Pae, the Early Childhood exemplars make a positive difference to how children learn and grow.
- Centres of Innovation have also been a great tool in sharing innovative practice over the past four years. This has been a brilliant way for research and teaching to learn from each other and continually look for new and better ways of working with our young people.
- And then there are all the initiatives to help people gain early childhood teaching qualifications. While we fund services for the cost of employing registered teachers, there are also scholarships and grants available to help with study costs.
- Students have the choice of studying in most regions and in a variety of settings. They can attend polytechnics, universities or centre-based teacher education providers.
- This investment has seen the number of registered early childhood teachers in education and care services grow from just over 39% in 2002, to 54% in 2007. This feeds directly into the Teacher

Registration Targets to improve quality ECE, which is one of the sector's long term quality goals under the Strategic Plan.

- The second target came into force on 31 December 2007. This means all teacher-led, centre-based services need half of the teaching staff required by regulation to be ECE qualified teachers, leading to registration. Most services have been working towards this target since the Plan came into effect and have achieved it.
- There are some regions which have difficulty attracting teachers. To support more services recruit and retain staff, the ministry has widened its definition of these "hard to staff" regions. This means Maori immersion and Pasifika services nationwide, and all teacher-led services in Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu-Wanganui, Marlborough and West Coast (South Island) can apply for a variety of international and national relocation grants and return-to-teaching allowances to help services hire qualified, registered teachers. I would strongly encourage any service which is worried about the 50% requirement to talk to their local office of the ministry to find out about the range of initiatives available.
- The government is committed to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to take part in education and to providing choice about how they take part in it. Last year we invested over \$9,869 million in education across the board. Government spending on our youngest children's education has more than doubled from \$284 million in 1997 to \$767 million in 2007.
- Government's investment in early childhood education supports our goals of security and opportunity for families young and old, by building strong learning foundations for more young New Zealanders; and its economic transformation goals by making it easier for parents to balance their parenting with work or higher education.
- By empowering our children through education are giving them an attitude to learning that will give them more choice about what their future will be. And by doing this we will have a generation who will be able to lead our society's continual growth and development into the future. Investing in our children's future means we are investing in our country's future.
- Thank you for your time today. I hope the rest of the day provides interesting points for discussion. Go well.

Welcome to the Forum and an Outline of some Leading Issues and Questions

**Sarah Farquhar
Childforum Research**

Welcome and Greetings ... You'll see from the name badges that a great range of organisations and interests are represented here today:

- Parents
- Representatives from home and centre-based early childhood organisations,
- Teachers
- Training providers
- Academics
- Education consultants
- Children's Commission
- Families Commission
- Ministry of Education
- Department of Labour
- City of Manukau Education Trust
- Great Potentials Foundation
- Ministry of Social Development
- Wellington City Councils
- District Health Boards
- Save the Children
- The Treasury
- NZEI Te Rui Roa
- Father and Child Trust
- Education Review Office
- Ministry of Women's Affairs
- Plunket
- Salvation Army
- UNICEF
- Parliamentary researchers and MPs

Today's presentations and discussions will bring out a variety of views and values. I don't expect to agree with everything that each presenter will say, and neither are you likely to.

Traditionally early childhood services operated in partnership with families. Services developed in response to parent and child needs. Today that partnership with families has largely been replaced by government control of the early childhood sector.

So policy has a far greater and a very significant impact now on the lives of young children. Since this is the case, bringing research, practice and our experience into thinking more critically and analytically about early childhood policy is important.

Overconfidence in policy to deliver for children when it has not been properly reviewed and evaluated for its effects on children is a big mistake. The tight labour market, for example, has revealed deficiencies in trying to raise the quality of staff and their work through teacher qualification.

The care and education of children under 5 is a very emotive issue.

And, it is a very political one (as this clever cartoon by Tom Scott shows so well)



Our herd instinct and desire to believe what ever positive things we are told can blind us to the risks. For example we are told that as more early childhood centres sign up to provide 20 hours free ECE this will benefit children – but we are not told how exactly or given balanced information on the risks and benefits.

Early childhood public policy emphasises the following:

- Intensive and regular participation in quality early childhood education delivers the strongest benefits for children in education later in life.
- Early childhood education is the first stepping-stone on the path to lifelong learning.
- When we announced the 20 hours free policy in Budget 2004 we saw it as the next logical extension of the free 12 to 15 hours a week provided at kindergartens ... we are now in a position to extend the 20 hours per week free policy to all licensed teacher-led services.
- Teacher qualifications are a key factor in delivering quality early childhood education for children
- The government is taking an active approach to managing the early childhood education network (*Labour's early childhood education policy statement, 2005*)

Is this to be the future for children's early care and education?

What kind of childhood do we want our children to have during their early years?

Is "quality" early childhood education **the magic bullet** to raising children's academic and social outcomes and increasing women's participation in paid work that it is made out to be?

Or, do we need a broader child-care strategy than 20 hours Free ECE, with a basket of options to encourage family-tailored care decisions for children and parents at different stages and times?

A lot of public money is going into getting children into early childhood education with registered teachers and for longer hours. This is argued to be important for children's educational and social success and for freeing parents to engage in paid work. Take for example, the amount paid directly to an early childhood service for each hour that a child is enrolled for.

A Sample of Hourly Funding Rates		
All day services with 100% registered teachers	Over 2s Not Free ECE	Free ECE funding 4 – 5 year olds
	\$6.41an hour per child	\$10.89 an hour
Part-day services with 100% teachers	Over 2s Not Free ECE	Free ECE funding 4 – 5 year olds
	\$5.36 an hour per child	\$6.53 an hour
<p>All day services with 100% registered teachers that provide Free ECE receive \$4.48 an hour more. Fees charged to parents in many services were more than \$4. hr before the introduction of Free ECE. Cost savings for parents by capping fees appears to have been successful at least in the short term. BUT Consequences for children's experiences, standard of care and range and quality of activities, and the effects of relying more and more on parents' donations of time and money have not been considered.</p>		

The difference in Free ECE funding all-day vs part is \$4.36 – thus a big financial incentive for services to structure session hours so parents must accept longer hours if they are to get a place.
Total Government/tax payer spend on ECE - \$770 million for 2007-08

Spending has come before the questions have been properly considered of:

- “What are the best conditions for children’s early care and learning?”
- “How can we best provide these conditions?”

Why does this matter?

I’ll share a small selection of reasons by way of direct quotes from various sources.

The Dominion Post, March 2007 “Creche Cow”. In July at least \$100 million extra will be dumped into early childhood education, the aim being to get kids learning earlier and mums and dads back to work. Already, big business and other agencies are scrambling to grab a share, and going head-to-head with traditional kindergartens.

Southland Times, April 2007 (Mother’s name), 30, cleaner ... became angry with the boy when he failed to complete his homework. She used the child’s folder to hit him across the arms and used her open hand to hit him across the buttocks. The woman and her husband were looking after five children aged seven years and under. Both Collins and her husband were working fulltime. “Your actions were likely of a tired and over-pressured parent going too far in correcting a loved but likely troublesome little boy”, Judge Noble said.

NZ Herald, October 2007 Ms Humphries took on the job of managing director of the women’s retail clothing chain 15 months ago, when her baby was only three months old. At the time she could not have imagined giving it all up, she admits. “I don’t think you ever think about it when you’re as career-oriented as I am ... It’s the most difficult decision of my life ... It’s my dream job, but I really want to be an influence in my daughter’s life. I’ve hardly spent two seconds with her”

NZ Herald, March 2005 If the effect is simply to substitute paid for unpaid work such as childcare, there might be an effect on measured GDP, but the real effect on the economy might be overestimated. Put more simply, taking care of children is a valuable thing to do whether it is paid (and, therefore reflected in GDP statistics) or not.

Marlborough Express, 2007 A school principal who is retiring has delivered a broadside at parents, saying they should stop putting their careers ahead of their children and using schools as a babysitting service.

The Dominion Post, May 2006 Toddlers using aggressive and bullying behaviour are causing problems at childcare centres, with staff saying they lack training to handle the trouble-makers.

NZ Herald, July 2007 Auckland gets the biggest share of a \$10 million funding boost to help meet the shortfall of preschool places but locals are already questioning if the planned centres are in the right areas ... Mangere East Family Services Centre director ... said the focus on Mangere seemed bizarre. He said the two new and one growing centre in the area were likely to struggle to sustain roles and find qualified staff.

The Dominion Post, Sept 2007 A Teachers’ union is calling for urgent air quality testing at dozens of Auckland schools following revelations a daycare centre can’t open because

of poor air quality. The Jump and Jive centre has space for 150 children and was opened by Prime Minister Helen Clark six months ago

McPherson, 2006, Families Commission report There is a belief that more should be done by government so that mothers have the choice to stay at home and care for their own children rather than only be offered assistance with childcare. Mothers in this study believe babies up a year old, and to a lesser extent children aged up to 3, are best cared for primarily by parents rather than full-time childcare. Some kind of ECE is beneficial to children from the age of 3 years, but part-time rather than full-time is still preferred. There has been a shift in the concept of what it means to be a good mother – being a good mother is compatible with also doing paid work. Children still come first, but this does not require the mother's constant presence ... Fathers/partners were crucial to enabling mothers to do paid work ... other family members especially grandmothers played an important role.

Experienced early childhood professionals are getting worried, as an excerpt from one of the many letters received in response to the organisation of this forum explains:

I am beginning to regret all the marching and balloon blowing I did in the 70s and 80s to get childcare and education under the same wing and for government to support us. This industrialisation of childcare is not what I thought would happen to our children

I think, and possibly in being at this forum you think this too, that we may be at a critical turning point in the direction of early childhood policy in NZ.

Today's forum is about looking at the direction we are heading in children's early care and education. And it will be important to keep this discussion going.

Early Childhood Education and Care under the UK's Labour Government: Tensions and Contradictions

Eva Lloyd
University of East London

ABSTRACT: The UK Labour Government's national childcare and family support strategies were aimed from the start at improving mothers' labour market participation and children's future educational achievements. As such they constitute a key component of its child poverty agenda. Evidence is growing, though, that the choice of a mixed market economy as the vehicle to deliver early childhood and family support provision, has led to separate 'markets' for the poor and the better off, while contributing insufficiently to reducing child poverty.

POWER POINT SLIDES

After 18 years in opposition, the Labour Government assumed office in 1997.

Labour administrations to date: 1997-2001, 2001-2005; 2005 onwards.

'Third Way' politics positioned 'New' Labour as a centre-left party rather than a democratic socialist party.

Continuities with the past

New Labour operated within Conservative spending limits, at least for the first two years.

New Labour continued Conservative neo-liberal approach to welfare and education policies by encouraging welfare, health and education 'markets'.

New Labour continued targeted policies including means-tested benefits, and separate service systems for the poor and better-off.

Breaks with the past

Much higher profile for children. Integration of administrative responsibilities for childcare and education within Department for Education and Skills.

HM Treasury sets public service delivery and quality targets in biennial Spending Reviews.

Devolution: 4 Acts in 1998. For education and social welfare matters now separate jurisdictions in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland; (already were for criminal justice in Scotland and Northern Ireland). London gets its own Assembly.

Three key policy drivers

Public sector reform aims to create a sustainable welfare state via the mixed economy of welfare.

- 'Rights and responsibilities' and 'welfare to work' agendas. Women encouraged to join the workforce, lone mothers in particular.
- 'Education, education, education': boosting educational performance in the interests of the knowledge-based economy.
- Eliminating child poverty: 1 in 3 children are living below the poverty line in 1997.

The position in 1997

- Labour inherited a fragmented early childhood service system:
- Uneven publicly funded early education for 3 and 4 year olds, primarily in Labour local authorities.
- Over 50% of 4 year olds in primary schools, most 3 year olds in private pre-schools/playgroups.
- Publicly funded childcare for 'at risk' children and some disadvantaged children only.
- For others full cost day nursery or family daycare in the private and not-for-profit sectors.

The 1998 National Childcare Strategy

- Free early education entitlement for 3 + 4 year olds: 12.5 hours weekly for 33 weeks annually.
- Early education grant: a supply-side subsidy to private and not-for-profit settings, provided the early years curriculum is used.
- Pump-priming funding, a short-term supply-side subsidy to encourage the set up of childcare businesses to provide school-age and 'wrap-around' childcare and care for children under 3.
- Tax credits, a demand-side subsidy, to help parents who are employed over 16 hours buy registered childcare.

Other pertinent developments

- Introduction of a national minimum wage, ensuring better pay for early childhood practitioners.
- Sure Start initiative to provide family support services for children aged 3 and under growing up in disadvantaged areas. From 2003 Sure Start Local Programmes also deliver childcare.
- More support for the training of the childcare workforce, still largely unqualified.
- Introduction of national minimum quality standards for childcare, regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Ofsted.

Tensions and contradictions

Interface problems between free early education and 'wrap-around' childcare for 3/4 year olds.

Childcare sustainability problems in poor areas, once supply-side subsidies are phased out.

Parents prefer informal, and thus unregistered, care for their youngest children, aged 0 to 3.

Tax credits problematic: overpayments clawed back, forcing low-paid parents into debt.

Sure Start programmes fail to reach most disadvantaged children, Black and minority ethnic communities and children with disabilities and/or special educational needs. (*Kazimirski et al. in press; Lloyd, forthcoming*)

Refocusing early childhood policies

During the second Labour administration:

- The Child Poverty Review (*HM Treasury, 2004a*) advocates greater convergence between the child poverty and national childcare strategy.
- A National Audit Office review (*NAO, 2004*) identifies a lack of progress in accessibility, choice, affordability, quality and sustainability of childcare and early education provision.
- The 10-Year Strategy for Childcare (*HM Treasury, 2004b*) addresses these issues and announces new developments.

What happened next?

- Commitment to mixed economy of childcare reaffirmed in the 2006 Childcare Act.
- Childcare staff recruitment and 'churn' increasingly problematic.
- Day nursery occupancy rates of 75% insufficient for financial viability.
- Rapid consolidation among for-profit providers benefits the corporate childcare sector, which increased seven-fold since 1997.
- Steep increase in childcare costs: more than twice the rate of inflation in 2007.
- Mothers' employment rates static between 1994 and 2004: this trend continues.

Implications of early childhood policies under Labour

Early childhood policies under Labour have impacted on childcare cost, quality and sector status (*Penn, 2007*). This affects the experiences of: children, parents, providers and practitioners, and policymakers

Childcare costs in 2007

Annual cost in England of a typical nursery place for 50 hours a week for a child aged two or under in 2007: £8,268.00 - equivalent approximately to \$21,267.18 New Zealand dollars (*Daycare Trust, 2008*)

The Childcare Affordability Programme is devised by the London Development Agency to help parents with the even higher costs of childcare in the capital.

Ofsted reports that in England in 2006/07:

- 54% of all childcare and early education inspected was 'good'; 3% was outstanding. This was 4 % less than the 61% who achieved this rating in 2005/06. (*Ofsted, 2007: 6, fig. 2*)
- Quality in private early childhood settings used by the UK's Millennium Cohort children was lower than in the state or not-for-profit sector. (*Mather, Syla and Joshi, 2007*)

In 2006 the private sector in England delivered:

- 65% of full group childcare provision; 17% of full group childcare in Children's Centres targeted at poorer families; 44% of full, sessional and out-of-school group childcare provision combined.

This compared with: 42% delivered by the private not-for-profit sector; and 13% by the state sector. The UK corporate childcare sector has grown seven-fold since 1997

Recent developments in the UK suggest that:

- The mixed economy of childcare promotes social segregation and hinders poor children's access to quality early childhood education and care.
- Consolidation in the undercapitalised childcare market removes parental choice and increases pressure for deregulation.
- The Government has misread the attitudes of parents towards non-parental care in the very early years, when informal care is preferred.
- The government has underestimated parents' interest in the value of publicly funded early education for their 3 and 4 year old children.

Some ways forward?

- Under the Work and Families Act 2006, women are entitled to 26 weeks paid maternity leave and 26 weeks unpaid additional leave. *The additional leave should be paid.*
- The Government should reconsider the operation and impact of the mixed economy of childcare.

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The Early Start Home Visitation Programme

David M Fergusson
University of Otago

POWER POINT SLIDES

The Development of the Early Start Organisation

In the early 1990's there was growing concern in New Zealand about a series of issues relating to the health and wellbeing of children and young persons. These issues included: child abuse; youth suicide; truancy; school behaviours and juvenile crime.

The Foundation of Early Start

The foundation of Early Start can be traced back to a meeting in 1993 between the Christchurch Health and Development Study and the Family Help Trust (FHT). The FHT had been using methods of home visitation to work with prisoner families.

At this meeting it was proposed that the work of the FHT should be extended to conduct a pilot study of the benefits of home visitation with at risk families.

The group was successful in attracting initial seeding funding from the Canterbury Trustbank Community Trust.

Forming the Consortium

It soon became apparent that to develop the programme would require co-operation from a range of community groups. As a result of this, a Consortium of providers came together to develop the Early Start programme. These providers included:

- The Christchurch Health & Development Study.
- The Family Help Trust.
- The Royal New Zealand Plunket Society.
- The Pegasus GP group.
- Māori representatives.

OVERVIEW OF EARLY START PROGRAMME

1. Client Recruitment: Client families are enrolled in the service following referrals from Plunket Nurses. (Plunket Nurses are community nurses who see in the region of 95% of children within 6 weeks of birth).

2. Needs Assessment: All families enrolled in the programme are involved in a one month "probationary" period. This provides Early Start with an opportunity to conduct an in depth assessment of family needs and for clinical families to learn about the service.

3. Service Provision: Following the needs assessment phase, families are enrolled in the service. All families enter the service receiving level 1 home visitation (1 visit per week) and progress to level 4 home visitation (1 visit per 3 months). Service provision may last for up to 5 years.

Family support workers

Services to client families were provided by Family Support Workers (FSWs).

FSWs had training in either nursing or social work and also participated in a 5 week training course.

Each FSW has a client load of 15-20 families (depending on level of family need).

Key areas of service provision

Child Health: To ensure that all children receive adequate well child care and timely visits for morbidity.

Child Protection: To ensure that all children are not exposed to neglectful or abusive home environments.

Parenting: To assist, advise and empower parents in areas relating to parenting problems and parenting skills.

Parental Wellbeing: To assist parents in addressing mental health and other issues that may affect family wellbeing

Family Economic Wellbeing: To provide families with advice and support in addressing family budgeting and related matters.

Crisis Support: To provide families with advice and support during medical, financial, legal or other crises.

Evaluation

Parallel to the development of Early Start, systematic processes were put in place to evaluate the programme. The evaluation process involved 2 stages:

Pilot Study: In the first stage of the evaluation a pilot study of 55 families enrolled in the programme was conducted. The overall aims of the pilot study were:

- To assess the feasibility of setting up a home visitation service.
- To examine possible benefits of the programme for families.
- To examine client satisfaction.

Randomised Trial: In the second stage of the evaluation, a randomised trial was conducted in which 220 families receiving the service were contrasted with a control series of 220 families not receiving the service. The aims of the randomised trial were to examine the extent to which children and families receiving the service showed benefits when compared to the control series.

Major conclusions from pilot study

Client identification methods produced an acceptable level (79%) of programme participation.

It was possible to deliver a programme of family support to at risk families.

There were clear programme benefits in areas involving “new learning” including: child health care; parenting; the management of maternal depression.

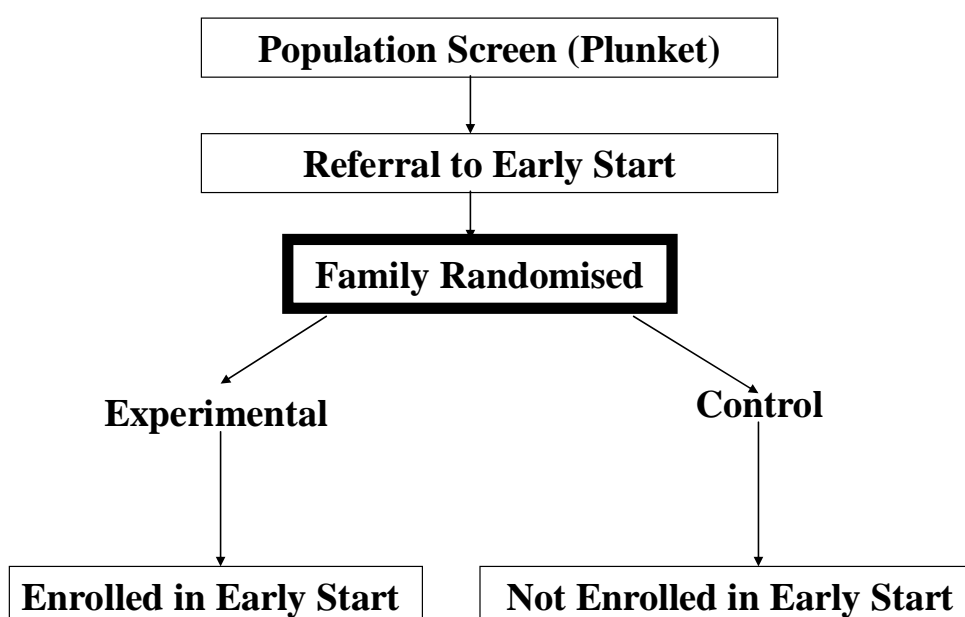
The programme was less successful in addressing such issues as parental substance use, family conflict, and depressed family living standards.

The great majority (over 90%) of programme participants felt the programme was worthwhile, helpful and culturally appropriate.

The randomised trial

The second stage of the evaluation involved a randomised trial in which 220 children and their families receiving Early Start were contrasted with a randomly assigned series of 223 children and families not receiving the service.

OVERVIEW OF RECRUITMENT PROCESS



CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES AT POINT OF ENROLMENT

	Experimental	Control
<u>Social Background</u>		
Mean age of mother	24.5	24.4
% Mother lacked educational qualifications	68.9	67.3
% Mother of Maori ethnicity	25.5	27.5
% Single parent family	63.8	63.5
% Pregnancy unplanned	76.0	76.3

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CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES AT POINT OF ENROLMENT (Cont)

	Experimental	Control
<u>Maternal Childhood</u>		
% Raised in single parent family	56.1	50.2
% Interparental assault	29.6	34.6
% Child abuse	36.7	37.0
% Mother ran away from home	42.9	49.3
% Teenage alcohol problems	20.4	19.4
% In trouble with Police	33.2	34.1

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CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES AT POINT OF ENROLMENT (Cont)

	Experimental	Control
<u>Family Features</u>		
% Welfare dependent	88.8	90.1
Mean family income (\$ per week)	344	342
% Family in debt (excl. mortgage)	42.4	52.6
% Assaulted by partner	34.2	25.0

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HEALTH OUTCOMES

Measure	Controls (N = 207)	Early Start (N = 184)	p
Mean number of GP visits (0-36 months)	20.7	23.4	<.05
% Up to date with immunization (0-36 months)	91.9	92.5	.83
% Up to date with well-child checks (0-36 months)	30.1	41.9	<.05
% Attended hospital for accident/injury or accidental poisoning (0-36 months)	26.3	17.5	<.05
% Enrolled with dental nurse/dentist at 36 months	62.8	72.3	<.05

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PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE CONTACTS

Measure	Controls (N = 207)	Early Start (N = 184)	p
Mean duration of early childhood education, months (0-36 months)	13.6	16.4	<.05
Mean number of community service contacts (0-36 months)	7.7	8.7	<.01

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CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Measure	Controls (N = 207)	Early Start (N = 184)	p
% Parental report of severe physical assault (0-36 months)	11.7	4.4	<.01
% In contact with agencies for child abuse or neglect (0-36 months)	21.3	19.6	.39

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EFFECTS ON HOSPITALISATION FOR ABUSE/NEGLECT

Controls			Early Start		
<u>Child</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Perpetrator</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Perpetrator</u>
1	Serious parental neglect	Both parents	1	Table thrown at child, head injury	Father
2	Shake injury	Mother	2	Concern over care of child	Mother
3	Serious bruising on bottom	Father			
4	Facial bruising	Father			
5	Head butted, concussed	Father			

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CHILD BEHAVIOURAL ADJUSTMENT

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Controls</u> (N = 207)	<u>Early Start</u> (N = 184)	<u>p</u>
Mean externalizing score (36 months)	10.08	9.91	<.07
Mean internalizing score (36 months)	10.12	9.86	<.01
Mean total behavior score (36 months)	10.11	9.87	<.05

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Effects for Maori and non-Maori

Comparison of results for Māori and Non Māori families showed Early Start had similar benefits for both groups: if anything programme outcomes were slightly better for Māori.

Other outcomes

While Early Start was related to improved child outcomes in the areas of health, preschool education, parenting, child abuse and neglect and child behaviour, the programme was not effective in other areas including:

1. Maternal Health: contraception; pregnancy; depression; substance use.
2. Family Functioning: family violence; parental separation; family change; residential mobility.
3. Family Economic Circumstances: welfare dependence; income; debt; living standards.
4. Family Stress: relationship conflict; problems with law; problems with health.

Major Conclusions

1. Early Start had small but pervasive benefits for child health, preschool education, utilisation of services, parenting, child abuse and behavioural adjustment.
2. Early Start had no detectable impact on maternal health, family functioning, family economic circumstances, and family stress.
3. Programme benefits were similar for Māori and non Māori.

The role of home visiting in early intervention

While the preceding results show the potential benefits of Home Visiting programmes, it is clear that these programmes are only one component of a multi compartment strategy focussed on improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups. Other important components include:

- The provision of parenting programmes such as Triple P or Incredible Years
- The development of centre based interventions along the lines of the Perry Preschool Projects
- Greater investments in the training and recruitment of staff in the preschool sector.

Questioning Contemporary Arrangements within Early Childhood Centres

Margaret Brennan
Victoria University of Wellington

POWER POINT SLIDES

Serious attention must be paid to the concrete social, physical and political structures in which persons (both children and adults) develop.

Brennan, M. (2005). *"They just want to be with us." Young children learning to live the culture. A post-Vygotskian analysis of young children's enculturation into a childcare setting.* Unpublished doctorate thesis, Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington, New Zealand.

Young children are cared for in environments that by their very physical structure suggest that they need separate and special attention apart from adult activities.

Brennan, M. (2005). *"They just want to be with us." Young children learning to live the culture. A post-Vygotskian analysis of young children's enculturation into a childcare setting.* Unpublished doctorate thesis, Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington, New Zealand.

Many activities in the childcare setting are initiated and controlled by adults yet other areas of mature adult life are completely closed off or absent, and this situation creates difficulties for children and their teachers.

Brennan, M. (2005). *"They just want to be with us." Young children learning to live the culture. A post-Vygotskian analysis of young children's enculturation into a childcare setting.* Unpublished doctorate thesis, Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington, New Zealand.

A costly set of beliefs and discourse that awards young children special rights and status yet perpetuate practices that position young children and their teachers as apart from their social communities.

Brennan, M. (2005). *"They just want to be with us." Young children learning to live the culture. A post-Vygotskian analysis of young children's enculturation into a childcare setting.* Unpublished doctorate thesis, Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington, New Zealand.

One of the most powerful variations in children's lives in different cultural communities is the extent to which they are allowed to 'participate in' and 'observe' adult activities.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Children do not require or desire this exclusive attention. Children do not want to be excluded from the adult's world.

And when teachers are excluded...the potential for 'centre neurosis' ...

Brennan, M. (2005). "*They just want to be with us.*" *Young children learning to live the culture. A post-Vygotskian analysis of young children's enculturation into a childcare setting.* Unpublished doctorate thesis, Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington, New Zealand.

In the name of socio-culturalism - early childhood discourse and practice remains secular, credit-based, and child-centred.

Brennan, M. (2005). "*They just want to be with us.*" *Young children learning to live the culture. A post-Vygotskian analysis of young children's enculturation into a childcare setting.* Unpublished doctorate thesis, Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington, New Zealand.

How do we reconnect young children and their teachers with the adult community?

Brennan, M. (2005). "*They just want to be with us.*" *Young children learning to live the culture. A post-Vygotskian analysis of young children's enculturation into a childcare setting.* Unpublished doctorate thesis, Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington, New Zealand.

Please note that this presentation is a summary of the following article: Brennan, M. (2007). "Beyond child care – how else could we do this? Socio-cultural reflections on the structural and cultural arrangements of contemporary, Western child care". *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, (32)1.

Choices Offered, Choices Chosen' – Exploring Participation in Pasifika Early Childhood Centres

Pauline Luafutu-Simpson

ABSTRACT: In view of the persistent under-participation of Pasifika in ECE, the government has sought to encourage growth in this area. This research explores the rationale that underpinned the choices made by a group of NZ born Samoan parents in Christchurch with respect to accessing Pasifika early childhood centres (PECCs). As first and second generation New Zealand born Samoans, the participants exemplify the effects of trans-generation changes in attitudes and values between themselves and their migrant parents. Furthermore, some participants and many of their children are of multi-ethnic heritage, which reflects the changing face of Pasifika people in Aotearoa/New Zealand. An analysis of their responses provides insights into whether or not the recent and current policies that target Pasifika parents in fact address the needs of parents of multi-ethnic heritage and different socio-economic backgrounds and education attainment levels.

Introduction

My Masters thesis focused on the choices that are out there for NZ born Pacific in particular Samoan Kiwis. One of the main difficulties in exploring Pasifika issues is of course the fact that we are not a homogenous group, so while there are similarities in our cultural journeys there is just as much diversity even within individual specific ethnic groups. Therefore I am not representing any views other than my own experiences and the 16 participants of my research. Further my study was conducted in Christchurch whose Pasifika population is significantly less than here in Auckland and can be argued, influenced more heavily by a predominately European population base. However, it could be equally argued that because of the limited visible identity of Pasifika down south many of us strive that much harder to affirm our identity in various ways. For example it is ironic that it is from Christchurch that some of our own Pasifika stories began to emerge in earnest from the likes of Pacific underground and such. It is within this context I discuss my research.

Language is really important. I want him to know his roots and identity because although I understand [Samoan] and can read it I'm not as confident in holding a conversation and I would really like [child] to be confident in his language. Family is really important and cultural values are important to be passed on to him. **I mean I want him to be a strong voice in his generation.** It's been hard for my parents and it's hard for our generation, how much harder will it be for him in the future. (Interviewee – 1st generation NZ -born Samoan).

... they look down on us (young NZ born parents), and I was half-caste and Maori too and I feel that it seems half-caste Maoris are worse than being half-caste Pakeha. Just going to Nanas church I felt different... stares of people, whispers, didn't feel good enough. I couldn't understand language ...but I thought the women judged me as Nan's naughty daughters' child... I always say to my kids you are Samoan. I don't want people to look at my kids and think immediately, oh yes Maori, which is why I like them to go to Nana's place cause no-one lives in a house like Nana's with all the family pictures on the wall with the lei's and the pictures of Jesus you know... (Interviewee 2nd generation Samoan/Maori).

My thesis topic was somewhat fuelled by the speeches of the Minister of Education at the time – Trevor Mallard. He came to a Pacific community meeting in Christchurch to tell us of the good things that the new Labour party was going to do to help increase the levels of achievement of Pasifika within the education system. Three of those strategies were to:

1. Increase Pasifika children's participation in ECE;

2. Increase the number of Pasifika ECE centres around the country by way of making available a bigger pool of funding that Pacific communities could apply to; and
3. Improve the quality of ECE by way of encouraging and demanding more qualified and skilled educators.

For early childhood educators that have long known the value of good early childhood experiences including education, it was an encouraging indication that the government was really beginning to acknowledge this and to invest in this sector more strategically. However there were a few questions that remained unresolved for me.

My cynicism was probably fuelled by hearing many unfulfilled promises over the years. I questioned much.

- Was the Ministry now saying that achievement for Pasifika would improve significantly by increasing Pasifika early-childhood services?
- Had there been any longitudinal research into the effectiveness of Pacific ECE centres'?
- How was the transition of children from PECCS to Primary happening?
- Was there continuity of learning and language occurring?

The Ministry's research documents themselves recommend that a stock-take of services and research into effectiveness be carried out before policies or interventions are proposed (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau 2002, p. 42). This echoes the view of another Pasifika researcher Ana Pasikale, who stated as early as 1996:

In spite of this lack of data, policy makers claiming to incorporate the interests of Pasifika peoples continue to develop and implement mainstream policies. While acknowledging the good intentions of policy makers, development of policy with insufficient and/or inaccurate data has several consequences...The inability to measure the effectiveness of interventions, other than in qualitative terms, and the lack of adequate indicators to demonstrate the value for money, are but two consequences... Experience shows that in this process, issues important to Pacific Island people are often lost or subsumed into mainstream issues and/or further marginalized. (Pasikale, 1996, p. 15)

At the time I was involved in establishing and delivering a Pasifika Young Parents Support service under the umbrella of a mainstream service. The Pasifika teenage parents I encountered in my work were a world away from some of the Pasifika parents I worked alongside and engaged with in the more 'traditional' Pasifika communities. Many of the teenage parents I encountered were often second generation NZ born Samoans, of mixed ethnicities, daughters of teenage parents themselves, often second and third generation beneficiaries, had not finished high school, and commonly alienated from the more visible traditional Pasifika communities. As we worked with these young parents it became clear to us that there was a clear advantage in being a Pacific service under the umbrella of a bigger mainstream organisation. It gave our clients a more comfortable 'choice'. A lot of our clients would not easily consider accessing a Pasifika service although they did not always feel comfortable accessing a mainstream service neither – consequently they did not access many services full stop. This included early childhood centres.

Knowing and working with these dynamics, and then listening to the Minister's proposals, I felt a sense of frustration for the clients that I worked with: Would simply increasing the number of PECCs help them participate more in ECE? If there was a sector not accessing early childhood centres in general it was this sector. Their voices needed to be represented somewhere. A research proposal thus began to take shape.

This research was therefore based on the premise that if participation in ECE is thought to improve life-chances, and Pasifika participation rates continue to lag behind those of other children, then an analysis of the rationale that underpins Pasifika parents' choices with respect to engagement was required. Identifying the factors that influence parental choice is fundamental to better understanding what factors determine choice and how these factors should be incorporated into social policy formation. This thesis speaks to Pasikale's (1996, pp. 17-18) statement that:

...information is required that offers insights into why, despite a decade of interventions, Pacific Island learners in New Zealand still achieve poor academic results, still have lower levels of skills and still lower employment participation results.

A number of government policies designed to address the continued low achievement rate of Pasifika students in education such as the Ministry of Education's "Promoting ECE Participation Project" implemented in May 2001 was directed at increasing participation rates of Pasifika children in Early Childhood. Other initiatives such as ECE Participation also target Pasifika in the setting aside of a separate Pacific pool of discretionary funds to be used to assist Pacific community ECE services such as the building of new PECCs and improving existing PECC facilities. These initiatives are argued to contribute to improving the overall social and economic status of Pasifika people and have resulted in increased institutional resources and support of Pasifika early childhood provisions.

When this study began in 2001 there was a paucity of research that acknowledged the changing face of Pasifika identity and the ramifications of such a phenomenon. However, recent research has begun to recognise changes in the cultural and ethnic mix of the population in Aotearoa/New Zealand and acknowledge the rise of dual and mixed ethnicities within the Pasifika population. In their report on policy implications for multi-ethnic communities, Boston, Callister and Wolf (2005, p. 39) acknowledge the changing face of the ethnic mix within particular ethnic groupings:

The *study* also examines how much more complex, and ultimately more diverse, measures of ethnicity could be used when exploring causes of, or at least associations with, disadvantage. The ethnicity study illustrates that the rise of a complex multi-ethnic New Zealand provides some challenges for the collectors of official statistics and the design of social policy, including policies aimed at helping overcome disadvantage...

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) (2003, p. 14) has also acknowledged the emergence of second generation Pasifika peoples whose links to traditional cultures are not strong and has resulted in "a loss or weakening of Pacific identity, particularly for those of mixed marriages, who increasingly do not identify as Pacific." The MPIA report acknowledges the implications that this may have for the preservation of culture, language, Pasifika identity and Pasifika values. The emergence of new research by Pasifika and non-Pasifika academics which identifies specific issues that surround this changing face, adds weight to the voices that continue to reinforce the need for policy analysts to closely examine and carefully consider the implications of state policies for future Pasifika generations.

Teenage Pasifika parents and solo parents are examples of under-researched factions of the Pasifika community. Issues pertaining to teenage and solo parents include stigmatisation by not only mainstream society but also from the deeply religious Pasifika communities. Intra-group stigmatisation can, as noted by Hall, Stevens, Meleis and Ibrahim (1994, p. 27), exacerbate cultural identity problems. While these 'factions' are generally included in Pasifika statistics, given the dearth of research about this growing sector of the Pasifika community, questions must be raised as to whether their unique needs are adequately addressed within the context of current service provision. Moreover, the effects of intra-group stigmatisation must be acknowledged by Pasifika leaders and communities, so that the interventions and strategies they promote and support incorporate the needs of different factions of their specific communities, including those that differ by generation, gender, or age.

Findings

Factors that accommodated participation in PECCs included secure cultural, social, human and financial capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Parents' cultural capital was based on their close associations with traditional churches, and having strong and secure relationships with their own Samoan parents. This reinforced a sense of cultural belonging and identity. Parents with secure levels of human, financial and social capital, demonstrated by post-compulsory education; middle-class income levels; maturity at the time of conception; and stable marital relationships, appeared more able to make informed choices.

Conversely, deficit levels of social, economic and cultural capital presented barriers to participation in PECCs. Parents who lacked affiliations with traditional churches and Pasifika communities and were immature at the age of conception, (particularly teenage parents who were premature school leavers with low income levels), were less able to consciously prioritise the needs of their children. These parents' childhood environments commonly lacked stability and/or good role models in parenting practices, which served to normalise familial dysfunction and presented obstacles to healthy identity formation processes.

Human ecology theory and other ecological and sociocultural theories, together with Pasifika epistemologies provided a conceptual framework to analyse how parenting styles and ethnic identity working in partnership, influence and shape children's world view, impacting in the child's micro-system and influencing how relationships are then formed and viewed in the outer systems. Furthermore, we see through this model how factors in the macro and exo system then encroach upon the child's development through the different levels in the system. Structural barriers in the form of institutions, policies and regulations cannot be underestimated in the way they affect people at all levels and make contestation for valid 'spaces' to develop positively, all the more hazardous.

This study clearly showed that the need to maintain and strengthen local Christchurch PECCs' remains vital in strengthening language acquisition and cultural values. Moreover, this study has highlighted that PECCs' remain essential in developing a strong and secure identity for Pasifika children. For the more mono-cultural environments such as Christchurch, opportunities for parents to enrich their children in positive cultural experiences are all the more crucial. Accordingly it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that other innovative strategies are required to include/ embrace the more isolated and marginalised families on the peripheries to access services that are relevant and effective in facilitating opportunities for growth.

This research highlights the diversity that exists within the NZ-born Samoan sector of our Pasifika communities and accentuates the need for multi-faceted interventions to address multi-faceted and changing needs of parents within these communities. It is important to acknowledge the power that parents exert in facilitating positive change and progress for themselves and their children. This can happen more effectively when appropriate opportunities; resources and information are made available to ensure that all parents can make more informed choices. Notwithstanding economic factors and policy directives, Pasifika communities themselves need to embrace the expanding diversity that challenges our ability to unite and form a more collective and strengthened voice advocating for effective services and interventions not only for today but for the future of our grandchildren. What we need is more understanding and acceptance, when we fail or refuse to do so, we do so at our own peril. Herman Hesse wrote:

Every age, every culture, every custom and tradition has its own strength, its beauties and ugliness; ...Now there are times when a whole generation is caught... between two ages, two modes of life, with the consequence that it loses all power to understand itself (Herman Hesse, Steppenwolf cited in Cox 1999, p. 125).

The need to foster awareness at this point of our history in Aotearoa today is made even more urgent.

Finally, this research argues that if policies and strategies aimed at furthering and supporting progress for Pasifika, do not acknowledge, consult, advocate and include the more marginalised sector of our communities, the high profiling of a few visible and successful Pasifika celebrities together with an increasingly 'browner' middle class, will continue to mask the realities of the most vulnerable in our Pasifika communities.

Ia mana le galuega o le a fa'afeagai ma e o lo'o galulue i lenei matagaluega taua ma ia lalaga le vaa o manuia ae fulifao le sa o mala. Ia manuia la'asaga mo lenei fonotaga ae ola sou leo soifua.

A Mother's View and Decisions on Childcare/ECE

Anna Dunn

General Practitioner,

Army Officer and

Mum to Philippa



Factors influencing Childcare/Pre-School Choices

1. Financial
2. Privileged position, planned prior to mortgage commitments
3. Social expectations, professional responsibilities
4. Parents responsibility - ultimate teacher
5. Family vs Personal Choice
6. Older educated parents, our values (Stay at home parents), lack of local family support, Husband (cancer survivor!), Fertility issues
7. Flexibility
8. Lack of interruption to working day
9. Accessibility/ Availability other support groups available - coffee/PIN, music, church, gym groups etc

WHATS BEST FOR US/ Our Daughter

Diversity of experiences in early years, everyday learning opportunities

In-Home Childcare (It was husbands 2nd choice!).

1. Choice of agency
2. Experienced Nanny
3. One on one childcare
4. Community activities
5. Sleep in own bed, own routine
6. Infection/sickness aspect



In-Home Childcare

Benefits

- routine
- ability to get to work
- established relationship/ trust
- my daughter is in her own environment
- daughters wellness
- household rules apply!

Less desirable issues

- Cost
- Employer/Employee issues
- Nanny unexpected sickness



Playcentre

We started out at SPACE group. Moved onto Playcentre

Community Based

Ability to leave daughter - 2.5 years

Parental responsibility for child's education

Parental ability to gain qualifications

Parental commitment

Cost, fundraising



Kindergarten

Start generally just before 3 yrs

Frees up parent

Teacher provided

Cost - can be covered by 20hrs scheme. Fundraising needed



Further Issues

Current governmental policies and financial pressures drive or favour both parents to work

Minimising family time (not just a 5 day working week anymore)

More communal based childcare

Decreased extended family support

Parenting skills and discipline eroded from within

Generation of the 'Woman can do everything' vs later fertility vs professional development

Stay at home Mum vs Part time vs Full time

- Handing over responsibility
- Caught between the different worlds



Unpaid/Unrecognised work of the Caregiver in society

- Providing help at childcare/ECE facilities, collectors for community and voluntary organisations
- Previous skills utilised in and by community groups

What about further incentives for supporting the parent/caregiver beyond the postnatal period??

Researching Family Leisure: The Views and Opinions of Couples with Young Children

David Lamb
Lincoln University, NZ

Introduction

The origins of this study developed mainly from my experience as a 'new' parent and the impact, this significant life event has had on my 'own' family life and leisure. More recently having been part of an antenatal group, I had the opportunity to meet with a range of people with a young child and gained a useful insight into how their lives had changed since the news of a 'new' arrival. The antenatal group still meets once a month, where we discuss a range of issues including how our family life and leisure has and continues to be challenged by the arrival of a 'new' child/sibling. For most of the parents/partners I have spoken to, it appears that childbirth has had many positive and negative effects on parents/partners individually and collectively in terms of time and access to leisure opportunities.

Aims of the Study

The aim of this research study was to investigate the nature of leisure activities and experiences for both partners in heterosexual relationships for families with young children in the Christchurch region (4mths-2 years). Participants for the research study were sought through contacts at a range of day care centres and antenatal groups within Christchurch. The central focus of the study was on childbirth, as a key life event and a specific phase of family life. This is an under-developed area of research as previous approaches have tended to concentrate on all phases of family life, rather than on specific periods such as early childhood.

The emphasis of this study was on parenthood, an important time in our lives when key life changes can have a marked and dramatic effect on the nature of leisure for all family members. Therefore, a key objective of the study was to research how other, similar families experienced leisure and how this particular life event and period had impacted upon them. Secondly given that different family members are likely to perceive the composition of family life and leisure in different ways, I was mindful of the fact that the views and opinions of both parents/partners were equally valuable.

Family Leisure Research

Although there has been a keen interest in family research generally, it is only in the last ten years that the focus has been on leisure and the family. Consequently leisure practitioners and researchers are only just beginning to realise the important role of leisure in family life, according to (Kelly, 1994; Kay, 1998; Shaw, 1992 and 1997).

One of the first studies to focus on family life and leisure was the research undertaken by Rapaport and Rapaport in 1975. Their study of the family life cycle highlighted the importance of different life stages and their influence on the nature of leisure activity and experience. There is still a substantial amount of work to be undertaken and progressed in focussing on all types of family forms and specific life events that impact upon family life and consequently the nature of family leisure. Zabriskie and McCormick, (1999), suggests we need to look at different types of families such as lone parents, interracial families, families with disabled children and families with 'at risk' adolescents. Due to the time and resources available, this research will focus on one specific group (new parents) within a defined area (Christchurch) and utilise an exploratory technique (focus group method).

Many previous studies on family leisure have tended to focus their analysis exclusively on ascertaining the views of women's role in family leisure. I would argue, it is equally important to ascertain the views of significant others such as male partners. Green et al (1986) similarly realised that women should not be

arbitrarily separated from their social milieu and that men's perceptions can also have a crucial role to play in discovering and understanding family life and leisure. I am interested in discovering the mechanisms and dynamics of family life and the role and function that significant others and partners play in leisure. Central to this research was how such processes outlined above, impacted upon the experience of leisure for 'new mums and dads', for the key stages after childbirth.

Framing the Research Questions

From the literature review, I developed a range of questions, some of which are contextual. The literature on family life and leisure suggests that gender has a significant impact upon the nature of male and female experience of leisure in the family and the extent of freedom, choice and opportunity. The literature, also suggest that fathers/male partners, experience much greater freedom, choice and less constraints compared to mothers/female partners. Therefore, it was important to seek the views and opinions of both partners in the family, by utilising a research tool that allowed all research participants to have a 'voice'.

Research Participants

For the purposes of this research, only heterosexual couples were included in the focus group sample. Some sensitivity was shown in ensuring that the reason for concentrating on heterosexual couples was not viewed as sexually discriminatory by couples with same sex orientation. The focus group sample was selected randomly, from a number of antenatal groups, childcare early education centres and preschool centres in Christchurch. Research participants were identified at different stages, post childbirth with their first child aged, between 4 months and 2 years. Participants were aged between their early 20's to early 30's in this research group.

Methodology

Group interviews or focus groups involving women and their partners at the post pregnancy stage were used in this study. Using this methodology was useful in a number of ways by, giving familiarity with the research audience, establishing rapport with the research participants and helped me penetrate, the often superficial levels that exist between researcher and research participants. The questions and topics for discussion in the focus groups were sourced from, a review of family based and leisure literature and from a range of informal discussions with families in a number of different settings.

The focus group consisted of seven heterosexual couples (14 individuals) and the discussion lasted for 90 minutes. The focus group was digitally recorded and analysed using NVIVO qualitative analysis software, to identify the key themes that emerged.

By using this qualitative method, I was able to gain a richer appreciation of their experiences and what was important to them. This technique has been described by Tolich and Davidson, (1999, p. 121), as an "excellent method for creating new ideas". The focus group had advantages over individual interviews in producing a richness of data for further exploration. A number of topics were discussed informally at the focus group stage and discussion of these topics will help determine the future direction of this research study. As a result of the focus group study, there are now a number of lines of enquiry that I intend to research at a later stage.

Emerging Themes of the Research

Although the research topic was on notions of family leisure, something quite different emerged from the research. The key themes that arose had generic implications for both parenting and family life, which both have an important bearing on the quality and quantity of family leisure and personal leisure.

Lack of Time

All couples reported that, since the birth of their child time, 'time' had simply disappeared. Quality family time was difficult to access and determine and the lack of time in many cases had made them more acutely aware of the lack of time. However, some of the couples were now making much better use of their time, by planning the use of their time and generally being more resourceful. One young mum in early 20's mentioned that all spare time, was now taken up with all the tasks associated with being a 'new' mum. If she had the opportunity to leave the house, it was always with her child, normally as a couple to visit friends or relatives. In essence her choice in the use of her time like many other mums was now severely restricted. Prioritising the use of available time was a common theme amongst research participants, as one male parent simply noted, it's such a pity, but that's life.

Parenting ideologies and realities

Many parents reported that ideologies about parenting were often very different to the experienced reality. Most of the couples, mentioned that the role of a parent was a wide and challenging one. They described parenting as a stressful and challenging experience, but also that it was fun and very rewarding, especially when receiving instant gratification from their child. Some of the parents felt undervalued by society and many commented that their employers completely misunderstood the demands that being a parent had put on them.

Responsibilities of parenthood in coupled relationships impacted upon lifestyle in a number of different ways. One older male partner was forceful in responding during the focus group discussion that, it had been really difficult for him and his partner to find time for each other since the baby arrived. The experience had restricted them in so many different ways, that they did not envisage before the birth of their child. They both had friends with young children, but the arrival of their son was quite a shock in terms of how demanding and difficult it was. Since the birth of their child they both felt tired all the time and as a result had little energy to engage in active leisure pursuits. However, like other couples they now prioritized their available time better, but still this left little time for themselves for freely chosen activities.

One couple had a very young child (6 months), so this meant they both had to give up their training for triathlons. They like other couples described this as a compromise of becoming a 'new' parent. Nearly all couples said they took their parenting duties very seriously and valued the role and importance of parenting. One young mum (child 8 months) had to reluctantly curb her own leisure interest, primarily due to the demands of her child and husband. She added that she was comfortable with the compromises she had to make as a consequence. Most couples were of the opinion, that childhood duties were serious and demanded a great deal of attention and time.

Many of the mothers argued, that being a responsible parent was about caring and putting the needs of your child first and foremost. She explained, there was no compromise, you either do it well or suffer the consequences. When asked to explain what they meant by 'consequences', one older female participant (aged 34) alluded to later life problems associated with misbehavior due to lack of 'good' parenting. This prompted an interesting discussion centered about what the group thought was good parenting practice. The general summary of which, re-iterated quality family time from earlier discussions. Some couples mourned the death of their leisure for a good cause, the needs of their child. Most participants were adamant that as parents, they had to prioritise their child duties and take responsibility for their child's future".

Looking after older children was viewed as less taxing and resulted in fewer problems, when compared to looking after younger children, especially in the first six months after birth. For all the couples, available time for leisure had to be worked around the needs of the child.

Many parents access to time was now controlled by their child's sleeping patterns or when they needed feeding or changing. In reality parents had to work everything around them all the time, so sometimes when parents planned something, things could change, which often resulted in frustration, as planning time out for leisure or for oneself had taken a lot of energy. Forward planning to account for parental

responsibilities was a useful strategy to plan 'couple time' without children. However, problems arose for some couples who had no support network of friends or family to baby-sit their child. Without any established support network, going out as a couple in the evening was no longer possible. For many, this resulted in some spare time used around the home due to financial restrictions or the lack of disposable income to pay for baby sitters. Some parents lacked any network of friends or family to help with childcare, so the child went with them everywhere.

One couple who had many family members living nearby were more fortunate than other couples, as both their parents babysat for them regularly and other family members were available anytime at short notice. However, they had to plan in advance as both their parents babysat for their other grand kids and they had to wait their turn. For others couples, availability of 'unpaid babysitters', was not an option, as some couples had few friends or family members living nearby or if they knew people they felt cheeky asking them to baby-sit.

Shortage of available time, post birth for most couples came as an unwelcome consequence and quite a shock. Many did plan to have a child, but could never have realized how most of their time would be taken up with their child. For a number of couples, the experience of parenthood was very full on, due to the demands of childcare, they described as endless. Many found it difficult to make decisions, concerned with the welfare of their child, as the experience brought with it many unforeseen challenges. Making the right decisions about their child was difficult as many had no prior or personal experience of parenting. For many it was hard thinking about what to do next, as they did not expect parenting involved making, so many different decisions. Some reported that, nothing really prepared them for being a parent, other than the real experience of being a mum or dad. They just had to deal with it, there and then. Couples adopted a range of strategies to deal with the unknown, in order to better manage their time. Some were more focused in making better use of their time as they had no choice, as there was less time now.

Working at home had enabled one couple who worked in academia to better manage their time, in dedicating time off for each other from their child, but at the same time giving them what they described as "quality time" with their child. In effect, choosing to work from home had freed up time for personal leisure, but also meant more time spent with their child. The importance of family time was echoed by a number of couples, also as important, for their child's future development. Arranging couple time for some couples had seriously dented their own leisure pursuits as the needs of the baby came first.

Couple time

Couple time for most respondents since the birth of their child/children was now considered a luxury, rather than a divine 'right'. For many couples, time together without the child, rarely materialized. Any available time was now used for domestic and childcare responsibilities. Many couples reported that their circle of friends had dwindled, since the birth of their child as they did not see their friends on a regular basis. Since childbirth, most of their friends were now connected with their ante natal group. This was confirmed by a number of mums, who emphasized the importance of their ante natal coffee group for contact with the outside world.

For many, members of their ante-natal group had become their best friends. They saw each other once every other week for an afternoon, for a good chat, where the kids could play with each other and they could then have, some adult time. For mothers, this time was very important as others involved in the group shared a mutual understanding about the frustrations and unpredictability of this new kind of lifestyle as a parent. Often, couple time was planned but equally didn't materialize due to the demands of the child, particularly for those parents with young babies.

Mums reported feeling tired all the time, this had implications for the nature of leisure they now engaged in, which tended to be activities that could be easily organized in a relatively short space of time and often involved more passive forms of leisure, such as watching TV or going for a coffee with friends.

'New' Demands on Time

Free time for many couples, was now a concept that many could not relate to, since the arrival of their child. In order to have any meaning, most fathers associated time available as an antithesis to paid work. However, any available time left after work for one male partner now meant helping the wife with the baby or entertaining the baby, while his wife made dinner. This left no time for anything else, except slumping out in front of the TV, once the baby had been put to bed. So although this time was work free, it was obligated to necessary duties associated with being a father.

Making effective use of time was a key strategy and priority for many couples in order to make best use of scarce time. One older couple in their early 30's had managed to negotiate, plan and manage their time to account for work time, leisure time and baby time. A typical day for one male partner involved, doing exercises in the morning before his wife or child awoke. He would then he set off for work and at lunchtime, he would fit in a short run. When he arrived home after work, he helped his wife with bathing, entertaining and changing the baby. He really enjoyed the contact with the baby and his wife gained some relief after spending all day with the baby. Organizing their day into discernable blocks of time for specific purposes, such as leisure time, work time and baby time, enabled this couple to make better use of the available time they had.

Baby time was also important for a number of other couples, but this meant reduced time committed to other activities, for example leisure. For one couple who used to travel regularly before the baby arrived, this meant reduced travel overseas. Before their child was born, they'd had 4-5 holidays a year. However, since the birth of their son, they soon realized their priorities had now changed and that the situation was now different. Their central life focus had now become, their responsibilities concerned with their son. Although, time with their son was personally rewarding for them both and they loved the time when they were all together, they were unsure whether this could be deemed as leisure. However, they enjoyed this time and for them it was important family time together. For most other couples, decisions regarding family leisure were mostly determined by the male.

The female members of the group then spent time collectively discussing the merits and pitfalls of the many playgrounds they had visited. Playgrounds were considered a wonderful resource for family activity as they were free and readily available and frequented regularly by all the mothers and their child, but only infrequently by the father and the child and if so, only at weekends.

Most mothers had great difficulty relating to the concept of leisure, it was an idea that many could associate with on an individual basis pre birth, but post birth most of them noticed that personal leisure had virtually disappeared. In essence, for many of the women free time was not really free, but primarily determined by the needs of their child and to a lesser extent, the needs of their partners.

The unpredictability of baby sleep and feed patterns also meant that, planning for personal leisure was often wasted time, as invariably it didn't materialise. In reality the free time never became available and was swallowed up by the demands of parenthood.

Changing Leisure Patterns and Contexts

In terms of access and opportunity for leisure, some couples were more resourceful than others. In nearly all cases the males were more likely to continue their leisure habits post the birth of their child, but for females this was quite rare. Only in the case of one female participant, was she able to retain some elements of her pre birth leisure lifestyle and this was only after six months after the birth of her child. However, there were some positive signs of shared leisure, where couples went walking together or took their child swimming or cycling, once their baby could hold their heads upright by themselves. In reality for many women, their own personal time was eaten up by the demands and challenges associated with mothering duties or servicing their partner's leisure.

Personal leisure for many of the respondents, following the arrival of their child, had become constrained in terms of the time available for leisure, which further restricted the range and frequency of engagement in

leisure activities. For one female involvement in activities she undertook alone was considered leisure, whereas spending time with her family was definitely not. At this point it was interesting to note that other mothers disagreed and responded by asking the question, "surely going out with your family and visiting friends or going for a walk or drive is fun and therefore, leisure?" The lady in question responded, that she agreed family time could be fun, but for her it was still not leisure. She expanded on this and commented that before her baby was born, she'd had more control over her free time in terms of what she chose to do with it. 'Me time' was important, as she needed a break from her family, for it to be leisure. She enjoyed exercise, as it helped her relax and feel good again. Other mothers at this point mourned the lack of exercise and the lack of 'my' space and time, without the family. The notion of freedom was a key element for the majority of the group, when describing leisure, especially for mothers.

For most respondents leisure was about enjoyment, it did not really matter where and when leisure took place. An important distinction between family leisure and personal leisure emerged during the research. For most participants, personal leisure was about what they did for themselves, whereas family leisure was different, as it meant their own personal time and space was limited. So a clear distinction between personal leisure and collective forms of leisure, such as family leisure emerged.

Developing the Research

The next stage of the research is to repeat the methodology with a number of pre birth couples using the same research tool (focus group). Once the findings of both groups are fully analysed and the themes further developed, I will conduct a number of in-depth interviews. Interviews will be conducted with couples from the pre birth stage and post birth stage and involve interviewing individuals from both these groups alone and as a couple, utilising the themes that emerge from the focus groups as the lines of questioning.

Future Directions for Family Leisure Research

A review of the literature has indicated that to engage fully with the research audience, qualitative research methods utilising focus groups and interviews will be better suited to this area of research. There is a lack of research that links the wider context of the family to leisure and few researchers have considered the importance of leisure as a social activity. The satisfactions, outcomes and benefits of leisure for different family members require further investigation. The key catalyst for change such as dual career families, more working women and change in family structure, need further research. The increasing fluidity and diversity of family forms and resultant leisure experiences and justifies future research on family leisure. A more interdisciplinary approach is required with a voice for all family members.

Further study is needed on family leisure, in particular on key life stages of family life. There are numerous dimensions of family leisure to study which include "marital style; family life stages; family decision making and their inter relationships; more sophisticated conceptualisations and methodological approaches" (Keller et al, 1991, p. 98). Presently research undertaken by leisure theorists on family life has demonstrated the important role that leisure can play in family life and relationships. In order to better understand family life, leisure research needs to firstly seek an explanation for the differences and similarities between men and women at the individual, inter-actional (relationships) and institutional (reward and sanctions) levels. The limited perspective we have on family life has led to a lack of understanding of gendered roles, further compounded by a lack of research on male perspectives of family life and leisure in terms of their role, attitude and behaviour. It seems there is still a large gap between what is known and what we need to know.

The family leisure literature has tended to be dominated by challenges faced by mothers as workers and providers of childcare. New avenues of family leisure research are vital to produce knowledge on which to base future provision. One important area of work is to understand better the changing composition of the family as it becomes increasingly diverse and more complex, which results in more diverse leisure interests and expectations. Kelly (1997) believes there is a bright future for family research related to leisure.

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Supporting Parents through Early Childhood Centre Networks

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Introduction

Parents need support to be confident, happy and effective in their role because parenting is not necessarily an inbuilt capacity and is only successful when combined with positive attitudes about self through empathetic relationships with others.

Early childhood services should be more valued for the ideal opportunities they represent for parent education and support, beyond their purposes for infants. In the absence of an education sector for parents, services have the advantage of operating in naturally occurring local networks where early years' development is a focus. Not only is this pertinent knowledge but it is socially embedded and available when child driven needs promote high motivation for parent learning.

The close association between parent and child amalgamates their needs to such a degree that early childhood centres represent real possibilities for serving both purposes, excluding the need for devising separate programmes.

Supporting parents to fulfil their role effectively provides excellence for children as well as parents.

The following remarks are based upon research conducted through interviews (expressing the perspectives of both teachers and parents) in four different early childhood services (three teacher-led, one parent-led).

What is Support?

As a construct, the meaning of support varies according to individual perceptions.

Participant group	Definitions of support	Beliefs regarding the nature of support	Beliefs regarding support transmission
Parents	Emotional wellbeing Knowledge	Active/socially driven process Wide spectrum information to meet parenting, personal, child needs	Gained through relationships/contribution within centre community Alertness to pertinent fragments of information constructing a unique repertoire of knowledge for each individual
Teachers	Knowledge	Passive reception of a narrow spectrum of information in the form of formal parent education to meet child needs	Prerogative of teachers through: Professional advice Written information Packages of non-contextual educational knowledge

The different perspectives and definitions of parents and teachers

The different support definitions of parents and teachers had implications for its effectiveness

Not unexpectedly parents and teachers had different definitions of support. But of more concern was their ideas remained un-reconciled due to low levels of social co-operation practiced in centres.

Consequently:

- As decision making was unmodified by parent influence, support was established according to the teachers' model as a passive process (something teachers "gave" to parents) through directives, advice and formal parent education.
- Parents had to explore ways of gaining support in environments not always conducive to the establishment of relationships and making an active contribution

What prompted the low levels of power sharing that impacted adversely upon parent support?

Teachers' leadership style stemmed from attitudes formulated through:

- Difficulties implementing the intent of Te Whariki/early childhood policies with regard to parent involvement in practice
- Perplexity about teachers' actual role with parents
- A child focused philosophy and workload that excluded secondary goals
- A lack of trained knowledge about facilitation of adults (not an automatic response)
- Problems recognising/interpreting the inferred equality within the concept of "partnerships with parents"
- Perceived tension between trained knowledge and lay information in a professional context
- Concerns that involving parents challenges teacher authority, jeopardising programmes
- A traditional view of adult learning/non transference of child learning principles
- A lack of deep communication with parents that convinced teachers parents had something valuable to offer in a professional programme
- A belief that peer relationships between parents constituted "companionship" rather than support, for which centres were not responsible

What were the effects of teachers' attitudes on parent support in centres?

Effects for parents:

- Receipt of overwhelming volumes of written information as opposed to "small manageable pieces" with options for discussion and feedback
- Inability to gain teachers' attention and time for more in-depth discussion when required
- Lack of deep communication with teachers where their views were really considered/acted upon
- Lack of parent space/times to meet other parents either informally or formally/recognition of peer role in their support
- Minimal opportunities to contribute beyond teacher directed/often menial roles
- Absence from teacher organised/dominated parent education sessions
- What were the effects of teachers' attitudes on parent support in centres?

Effects for teachers:

- Perplexity over parents' apparent lack of attention/response to their written communications
- Concern over parents' lack of interest in/attendance at educational seminars
- Difficulties with parents' preference for discussion over written directives
- Puzzlement over parents' extreme enthusiasm for social functions
- Distressed that their understanding of parents' needs/"real" views were limited
- Sense of inadequacy/low satisfaction in working with parents

If the formal processes in centre programmes were inhibiting, how did parents gain effective support?

Formal programmed support within early childhood centre programmes only represented one aspect of the complex social systems in operation.

As support was ultimately dependent upon relationships the existence of these, at different levels, within the *informal* networks of the centre were ultimately the mainstay of the community.

(Whilst teachers were warm and empathetic to parents and knew they helped them incidentally particularly through the common experience of parenthood they dismissed these encounters as too insignificant to be valuable in comparison with formally planned educational programmes).

Why were the informal networks so successful at activating support?

Informal networks fulfilled all the requirements of effective support by providing a "good fit" between individual parents and their particular needs through:

- Opportunities to build relationships/professional/intimate/peripheral
- Opportunities to gain information from both professionals and peers
- Constant availability of help, warmth and empathy at crucial moments
- Opportunities to contribute to centre life according to individual capacity/style
- Self monitored amount and type of help tailored to individual needs
- Providing succinct, authentic, timely scraps of information
- Providing progressive information to meet child driven needs (same stage cohorts)

Informal support was so reinforcing for parents it:

- Was the main criterion upon which they chose/elected to remain in a centre
- Motivated them to be opportunists in finding creative ways of meeting, devising meaningful contributions, patronising social functions/fundraising/joining committees to increase its effects despite any constraints.

What are the implications of these findings concerning the importance of early childhood centres as networks of support?

The most effective parent support resides in early childhood services as a consequence of informal social processes. This is due to their individual responsiveness to parents' requirements in gaining mastery and fulfilment over incremental child driven needs that detached, formal, planned programmes cannot easily achieve.

As the needs of children and their parents are so enmeshed early childhood programmes represent a real advantage in precluding the need for separate programmes for each.

Concerns that informal processes are more effective than formal ones intentionally devised by teachers as professionals with access to policy, need to be addressed.

Evidence suggests there is potential for both the incidence and quality of parent support to be immeasurably increased by improved recognition of the factors necessary for its promotion.

What recommendations can be made to increase parent support in early childhood centres?

Policy needs to recognise:

- Facilitating parents is not an automatic response from having expertise with children
- Teachers need training to feel confident/understand their role with parents as well as to recognise it as a professional aspect of their role
- Practical support is necessary for teachers to implement socially co-operative practices in centres and communicate more effectively with parents

Teachers need to:

- Be congratulated for the incidental sensitive help and support they give to parents
- Redefine support from a parent's perspective, recognising it as an active process
- Acknowledge centres have a responsibility to provide opportunities for network building
- Acknowledge support as a product of the whole community networks, not just teachers
- Find ways parents can contribute in self defining roles
- Accept parents' sharing the workload
- Find ways of countering the effects different service structures automatically impose

Implementing recommendations

As teachers already showed great skill and sensitivity in supporting parents informally it is to be expected that this would naturally increase with improved insight as to its value and processes.

However, research needs to be done to provide more in-depth information about parents' perspectives because these are not uniform. As well, finding ways to support teachers to act upon this information (improving the translation of theory into practice) is just as important. One of the reasons behind teachers' choice of formal parent education as support for parents was because it provided them with "concrete practices" to follow.

How can informal processes become "formalised" to increase the incidence of supportive/educational opportunities for parents in early childhood centres?

Through teachers' professional social support. Whilst "informal" measures may infer nebulous concepts they are highly predictable (enrolment; separation and transitions) and can be translated into routine strategies that give parents a forum to access support:

- Being warm, welcoming, offering sustained help for parents to familiarise
- Focused listening, answering parent initiated questions, giving feedback on what parents may have seen/read/want to discuss concerning centre practices
- Setting up informal/frequent/accessible discussion groups where parents are involved in organisation/choice of topic/times/places chosen to meet
- Capitalising on parents' natural "same stage needs" groupings for learning opportunities, as in visits to school
- Mediation role
- Prompting role

What can be done to increase the incidence of supportive/educational opportunities for parents in early childhood centres?

In recognition of peer and extended network support in centres: Once a parent is established in the centre these constitute *the most used relationships*. Teacher facilitation of peer/network support includes:

- Initially introducing parents to their peers (same stage/empathetic parents) so experienced parents share induction of new parents
- Provision of permanent parent space/parent organised/adult facilities in centre
- Initiation of frequent parent involved/organised social functions
- Engagement of extended community service personnel for parent discussion
- Holding regular informal meetings to discuss centre programme/current issues inviting parent contribution with decision making
- Sharing collective workload with parents (e.g. social functions, newsletters, fundraising) that include opportunities for self determination.
- Facilitating parent confidence in new knowledge by having parents set up and supervise activities, take the lead in discussion, share own ideas in the group

In Conclusion

Responsiveness to individual, incremental needs makes informal support a most effective and efficient provision for parents. But “informal” does not mean “left to chance”.

To maximise the potential of both informal and formal parent support in early childhood centres there needs to be:

- A *planned* approach to “capitalise” upon incidental learning and support opportunities.
- A climate of increased *social co-operation* in centres beyond tokenism that really *involves* parents in *meaningful roles* as an untapped source of energy that is tantamount to their support.

Supported Playgroups and School-Centred Community Hubs: Linking Children, Families and Communities

Dianne Jackson
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POWER POINT SLIDES

Connect Child and Family Services

Medium sized NGO servicing 3 local government areas west of Sydney

Broad range of centre-based and outreach early intervention and prevention programs for children 0-6yrs and their families, particularly those from disadvantaged and marginalised communities

Focus on embedding targeted strategies within mainstream contexts

Plays a major role in the broader development of an integrated system of service delivery for children and families in the Blue Mountains

Supported Playgroups

Connect uses the supported playgroup model extensively in its service delivery. The model provides a two-generational program that supports children and their parents together.

Supported playgroups:

- Are facilitated by early childhood teachers or community workers
- Promote early childhood development through the provision of quality early learning experiences
- Facilitate strong social networks through which parents can access information, resources and other specialist services
- Increase parent's knowledge of child development and positive parenting skills and;
- Provide opportunities for the early identification of developmental problems or family issues

Katoomba North Public School

'Play and Chat'

(funded by the NSW Department of Community Services)

'Play and Chat' operates in the school playground and is facilitated by an early childhood teacher and an assistant



Development of School-Centred Community Hubs

- 'Play and Chat' has been used as a seeding activity for the development of hubs in schools
- In NSW schools are the first point of universal access for families with young children
- A range of activities are delivered from the hub but conceptually a hub is about more than delivering programs, it is about integrating the service system so 'no door is the wrong door'
- Initially 'Play and Chat' within a school is the 'centre' of the hub, over time the hub's 'centre' becomes school
- Development guided by a steering committee of key stakeholders
- Strong emphasis on linking the service network and sharing resources – focus on using existing resources more effectively, rather than depending on increased resources

What we know so far....

- Supported playgroups are an effective 'soft entry point' for families, particularly hard to engage families
- Outcomes depend on the quality of facilitation – ideally a combination of child development knowledge + family work skills
- Playgroups should include strategies to link group members to other parts of their community – natural mechanism if operated within hub
- Working with families within the school environment acts as a 'natural' transition to school strategy for children and their parents and builds relationships between families and school staff before they formally enter the school system

Finally...'As above, so below



The Need for a Cross-Sector Approach to Improving Environments in Early Childhood Centres

Mike Bedford

POWER POINT SLIDES

Problems

- Future focus on the role of children
- Blinded to the risk
- 'Crèche Cow'
- Industrialisation of Childcare/ECE

Societal Change

AGE		% Change	% Change
	2006	1995 - 2006	2002 - 2006
Under 1	9,304	30.9%	10.8%
1 Year	24,993	52.8%	14.9%
2 Years	37,743	35.7%	10.2%
3 Years	53,870	11.7%	4.6%
4 Years	56,502	-2.6%	-1.2%
5 Years	2,042	8.3%	10.1%
TOTAL	184,454	15.7%	5.4%

36% of children enrolled in early childhood centres are under 2 years

Societal Impact

- By age 4 years, 90-95% of children are involved in some form of Early Childhood Education Service.
- Early Childhood Education Services will affect 90-95% of NZ's popln as they pass through age 4 yrs

Challenges

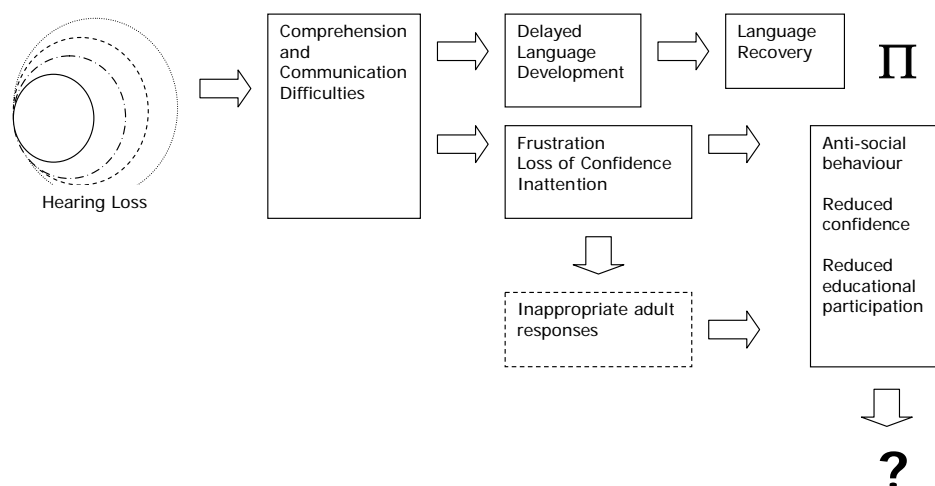
- High enteric and respiratory disease rates
- Higher risk for OME and developmental and sociological consequences
- Risk of emotional neglect and lack of attachment (brain development as well as socialization)
- Poor minimum space ratios – statutory overcrowding
- Adverse commercial pressure – 'child dollars per m2'
- RMA and District Plan conditions that ignore children (or worse)
- Complex sector – no training for the public health workforce for these settings
- Failure to acknowledge scale – 3,500 – 4,000 ECE Centres affecting about 180,000 children at any point in time, and 90-95% of all children before they reach 5 yrs old
- Very little national coordination in relation to health or sociological issues

Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTI) and Glue Ear

For children in *full time* attendance.

- % of all 31% of all URTI among day-care attendees were described as attributable to day-care attendance.
- 66 ear infections among full time attendees were described as attributable to day-care attendance.

Consequences of Hearing Loss



Gastroenteritis

Early childhood centres are high risk for:

- Giardia
- Cryptosporidium
- Rotavirus
- Norovirus

Outbreaks are very common, affecting children, parents, siblings and teachers, and sometimes whole communities, but most go unreported.

Cost of Illness

A 1998 estimate of the cost of Early Childhood Centre attributable, non vaccine-preventable communicable diseases in New Zealand was between \$20 million and \$50 million per year. (Based on data from the United States and New Zealand).

The comparable (and more recent) figure for drinking water is \$15 million

Communicable Disease Priorities for Action 2002-2006

The whole document contains only three very minor references to early childhood centres.

Early childhood centres are:

- Not mentioned at all in relation to respiratory infections
- Not mentioned under 'the environment and infectious disease'.

Early childhood centres are given a brief mention (referred to as 'crèches') in a table under "health and disability care institutions" in relation to hand washing.

Legislated Overcrowding?

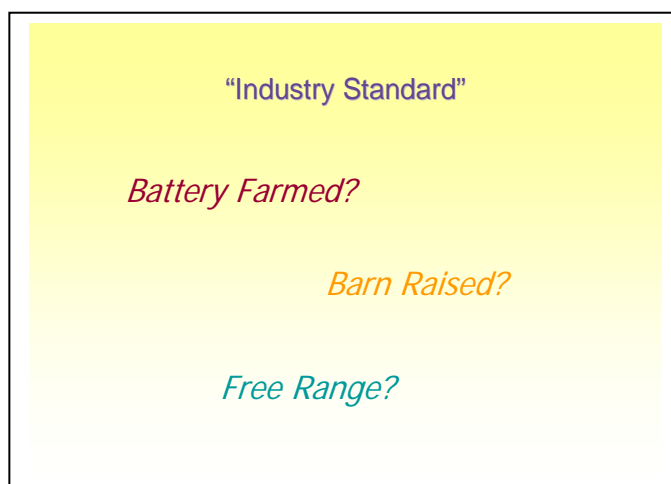
The minimum indoor space requirement per child under New Zealand legislation is 2.5m² per child, roughly equating to 25 children and 8-10 adults in a 3-bedroom house (75m² activity space clear of furniture and fittings).

	New Zealand	NSW	Victoria
Inside	2.5	3.25	3.3
Outside	5	7	7
Total	7.5	10.25	10.3

Design Issues

Design often focuses on activities, rather than psychological or emotional needs.

Tired or stressed staff will find it harder to provide for the emotional needs of children.



Kiwi Kids are Weetbix Kids?

The Advertising Statement

"[The Centre] encourages children to learn through ... art ... outside play, earth and sand, water play, construction, drama, role play, outings, science and nature...".

Reality

"They [the babies and toddlers] will just have to put up with safety surface, won't they."

Behind the Soundproof Fence – Children Shouldn't be Seen or Heard

All windows and doors to be kept closed on three sides of the building during session times, including the exits to the outside play area.

This was the second residentially-zoned Centre in a few months in the Wellington Region to have Resource Consent conditions so onerous that the Ministry of Education would not grant a licence without changes to the conditions.

Locations of choice are now in commercial and industrial areas.

Where Do ECE Environments and Communities Fit in Public Health?

Current one of nine miscellaneous health topics in 'Public Health Regulatory' that includes

- A Sewage Works Subsidy Scheme
- Clandestine Drug Labs
- Public Health Engineering

Perhaps... 'child health' would be more appropriate?

2004 Child and Youth Health Tool Kit

"... the settings in which children live, play and work (i.e. homes, schools, communities and society) have a profound impact on health.

The environment for pre-school years is assumed to be 'home'...

"All children and young people make life-cycle transitions

- the largest being birth and the rapid growth of infancy
- followed by toddlerhood and preschool years (home)
- middle childhood (primary school)
- adolescence (secondary education)..."

Nowhere in the 100 or so pages are early childhood centres recognised as having an impact on health.

Positives

- *Te Whāriki* curriculum a great health promotion model
- Trained early childhood teachers
- Considerable scope for practical, cost-effective gains in policy, design and organisational linkage
- Very receptive child and adult 'audience'
- Gains available in disease prevention, ear health, physical development, breastfeeding and nutrition, emotional development and socialisation, and reduction in adult injuries and stress

RPH ECC Programme

- Approx 450 Early Childhood Education Services
- DHBs
- About 40 associated organisations

Design and practices for:

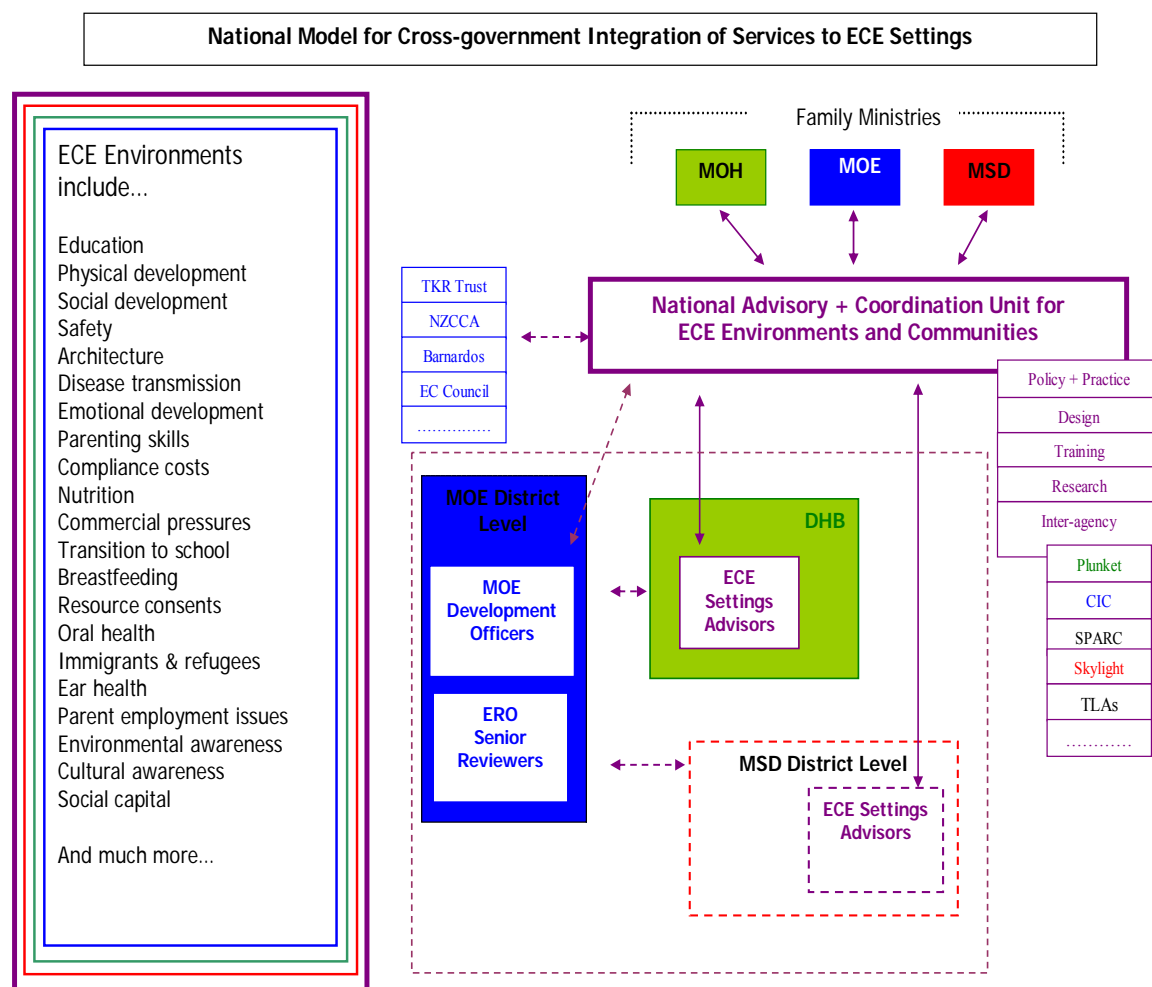
- physical and emotional health, and education
- healthy, competent and confident living, and good family and community relationships

Disease prevention and injury prevention. Team' of two

Environments for Child Development

Improving child development will occur by improving the environments in which children grow up...

The fact that health, well-being and competence all have essentially the same principal determinants means that the aims of a wide variety of government departments can be met through cross-sector action for child development. (*The Early Years Project, Centre for Community Child Health, Melbourne*)



National Advisory + Coordination Unit for ECE Environments and Communities

This proposed approach establishes a body (rather than an agreement or protocol) that:

- Sees Health and Education and MSD representatives working together in the same expert national coordination team.
- Embeds education sector knowledge and expertise in DHB programme delivery and other community level offices such as CYFS.
- Informs the Ministry of Education on child development and education based health and social policy for early childhood environments.