MONOPOLY GAMES IN THE NURSERY

COMMUNITY, INEQUALITIES AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Carol Walden

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Note: the author credits Daniel Rigney's *The Matthew Effect* for the 'Monopoly game' metaphor used in this report.

'Children are our most valuable natural resource.'

 HERBERT HOOVER

'Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up.'

 GALATIANS 6:9
THE LIVING BIBLE

WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Zealand children who are members of low socio-economic households or who live in low socio-economic communities are accessing early childhood education (ECE) less than other New Zealand children. This lack of opportunity is despite Government programmes which heavily subsidise ECE attendance. The consequence of this results in children being less successful in their early years of school and opens the door to lifelong educational and economic disadvantage.

This document considers this issue with a view to identifying useful community development-based models that might address the continuing inequalities within, and emerging from, New Zealand's early childhood educational system.

The discussion in this document is guided by these questions:

> **What is the nature and source of current inequalities in New Zealand concerning access to early childhood education?**

> **What are some models of ECE intervention that may help reduce these inequalities?**

To guide this discussion, data from low socio-economic communities is used to discover the effect of relevant policies. Also, qualitative data is examined from interviews and surveys conducted at several urban and rural ECE providers.

Encouraging rational debate

Public debate around educational policy is often based on ideals of equality of access across socio-economic communities. However, the data examined in this document paints another picture—questioning the idea that the same approach will work for everyone. If educational outcomes are not equitable, there is a responsibility to work intentionally to reduce disadvantages in all our communities and to promote fairness at all levels of educational experience.

Advocating for policy that helps to eliminate poverty

This document analyses the fairness of policy toward the disadvantaged by determining if it is 'porous': whether it benefits those in low socio-economic groups. This idea is explored in greater detail to consider which social groups benefit most from policies. The key findings are that the ECE policy of twenty hours initially benefitted those in the education system who need it least—the high decile zones.[1] Also, the Tomorrow's Schools policy has limited success where resources are constrained by high levels of unemployment and economic deprivation.

Transforming lives through developing communities

Education occurs within communities and helps develop community strengths. For example, kōhanga reo cultivates greater numbers of Māori speakers within its proximity. Community-based ECE can also help develop local networks of support for families and individuals, which can result in positive changes in the home as family stresses are lessened by ECE community support systems.

Caring for people through providing social services

Involvement with families through education can bring social needs to the fore. Some learn about ECE provision through a local food bank or through other services such as budgeting, supervised access or counselling. ECE is well-geared to be part of a community service that provides holistic care for local residents.

The way forward for New Zealand

Education has been influenced by the marketisation of schools, which creates competition within communities and a virtual 'monopoly' for those already advantaged. In the wake of a tendency to individualism, competition and an inward focus on the family unit, children in low decile school communities may be overlooked.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Subsequent to the issues raised in this discussion document are the following recommendations:

1. That the Government needs to change from an emphasis on education as a commercial commodity to emphasising citizens' rights for equitable provision.

2. That the Government initiate ECE expenditure especially directed at the bottom socio-economic groups as a priority over high socio-economic groups, who have the economic means to access ECE independently of government subsidies.

CONTENTS

Nane Lockington-Marsters, with her daughters Angelique, 2, and Chrysta, 4, (front). Nane was worried that she wouldn't be able to afford early childhood care after Government funding changes. 15 September 2010.

Photo: APN/Kellie Blizard

1. INTRODUCTION

**New Zealand's education system:
the current situation**

New Zealanders believe in equal opportunity, but it is time to look closely at this notion. For example, sociologists argue there is a perpetuated myth that all can be socially mobile and everyone has equal opportunity to have a 'fair go' at reaping social rewards.

> **New Zealand is not the open socially-mobile society the common myth of everyone getting a 'fair go' suggests. The reproduction of privilege and disadvantage from generation to generation is sufficient to create different class cultures which have a determining effect on school outcomes.[2]**

The notion of 'fair go' is part of the New Zealand psyche to the degree that a television programme encapsulates this sense of justice. TVNZ claims it is one of New Zealand's 'longest running and best-rating programmes.'[3] In addition, the Human Rights Commissioner states that New Zealand prides itself on being a country where people get a 'fair go'.[4] Dr McGregor, the Commissioner, asks the rhetorical question, 'Don't we want a fair go for everyone?'

However, instead of a 'fair go' in education, sociologists suggest privilege is intergenerational and creates different cultural experiences that impact on educational outcomes. The intention of this report is to suggest a theory to explain why the social system perpetuates inequality and to suggest a model of how to redress this through education.

How can a 'fair go' for all children be promoted in schools starting from early childhood education?

Teaching professionals working in low decile rural school communities were invited as part of this study to reflect on issues in their communities. The findings from their reflections help construct part of the conclusion of this document. In addition, sociological theory is used to explore an explanation of why privilege and disadvantage may be reproduced from generation to generation.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work is used to construct a model of cultural reproduction. Bourdieu, who was influenced by a range of theorists including Wittgenstein, Levi-Strauss, Weber, Durkheim, Pascal and Althusser, tried to bring together seemingly opposed theoretical positions. For example, he explores the role of both social structure and individual agency in creating change. In addition, his definition of capital includes cultural, social and symbolic dimensions. His work has therefore been drawn upon in this study to widen an understanding of these factors in society. His ideas of cultural and social capital may help to explain the local context.

In addition to reflecting on social theory, community models may provide an understanding of current ECE practice and provision at a local level. In a discussion paper on low decile schools, Carpenter (2009) argues that since education was universalised in New Zealand in 1877, the low socio-economic status (SES) groups have been failed by the system.[5] There are claims that equality of opportunity has not delivered equitable results. Furthermore, some New Zealand educational sociologists

argue the policy reforms in the 1980s resulted in treating education as a trading commodity.[6] Central to this notion is the idea that private enterprise is superior to public ownership. However, scant attention is given to how disadvantaged groups are to freely choose in the context of the competitive marketing of education. It seems that emerging from the 1980s educational reforms are deep disparities between schools in high and low socio-economic communities. In an effort to verify this, data was gathered across four different locations to identify disadvantages and advantages within some New Zealand communities. Interviews and surveys were collected from low decile school areas in West Auckland and Northland. They include a faith-based ECE centre, a Mainly Music group, playgroups, kōhanga reo and playcentres. The fourth location is in a comparatively high socio-economic urban area on the North Shore, with a community house creche providing data.

Why education is not reducing inequality in society

The Ministry of Education has designated school deciles based on socio-economic indicators to demark school groupings. These social groupings are used to consider unequal access and outcomes in education. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu suggests that, inadvertently, penalties are given to the underprivileged and favours to the privileged in education.

> **To penalise the underprivileged and favour the most privileged the school has only to neglect, in its teaching methods and its criteria when making judgements, to take into account the cultural inequalities between children of different social classes. In other words, by treating all pupils, however unequal they may be in reality, as equal in rights and duties, the educational system is led to give its de facto sanction to initial cultural inequalities.[7]**

'Neglect' is defined as failure to consider how cultural inequalities create discrimination between socio-economic groups. This may occur in teaching and assessment methods and criteria. If cultural inequalities create penalties for the underprivileged, how can they be removed? How do policies inadvertently discriminate against the poor?

This is a political, legal and ethical issue. Durie (2001) points out that the Crown's legal responsibilities to indigenous people include suitable government policies and programmes.[8] Kōhanga reo is an example of an early childhood education model that since 1982 has sought to provide Māori education for children who may otherwise be neglected or discriminated against by the system because of cultural inequality. However, there are still neglected children in the system, with children from low socio-economic groups missing out on ECE. This creates cultural disadvantages for those already on the margins. In contrast, some of the high socio-economic groups access more than their share of government-funded educational provision, such as subsidised tertiary education.

Pathways to fairer educational policy

According to the Ministry of Education (2007), research indicates that the child who attends

high-quality ECE gains strong educational foundations—especially those from lower socio-economic groups.[9] However, this group have not been the main benefactors of the government subsidy that provided twenty hours with no compulsory fees for teacher-led ECE for those aged three and four years. Statistics show that ECE enrolments for Māori, Pasifika and children from low socio-economic backgrounds do not reflect the population growth for these groups. The reason for this includes the lack of facilities and resources in these areas.[10]

By mid 2009, the 20 hours policy had attracted over 90,000 enrolments with more than 80 percent of eligible ECE centres involved. From July 2010, three years after it was first implemented, the policy was extended to include playcentres and kōhanga reo.[11] Playcentres and kōhanga reo are strongly focused on family/whānau and the community. In the low decile school site where the research for this study was conducted, playcentres and kōhanga reo were the sole ECE providers in the area.

2. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This discussion document has been written to contribute to the debate in New Zealand surrounding increasing levels of child poverty and its connection to educational inequality. The issues emanating from current educational and social policy discourse are complex. The social groups in New Zealand that educationally achieve—using national qualifications as a benchmark—are advantaged by some clearly identifiable factors. These include family/whānau support, community resources, and the levels of personal, social and economic prosperity.

Literature on the topic of community, inequalities and ECE is extensive. As a result, this document cannot effectively review all the theories, data or literature on the systemic issues that impact on a New Zealand child and their schooling experience. However, some theories may be helpful in understanding what may be perceived as systemic issues. In addition, Government educational data about ECE access and national educational qualification rates have been linked to demographic information.

The concerns raised in this document emanate from practitioners in the field who work in education. The data derives from interviews with twelve educators and 80 parental surveys. Participants in the study included early childhood educators working in the following ECE centres: playgroups, playcentres, a Mainly Music group, community creche, kōhanga reo and an early childhood education centre. The educators also include teachers in the following primary school roles: Reading Recovery,

junior school, a primary school principal, and a Kura Kaupapa Māori teacher. The teaching professionals have a wide range of experience in community education, including immersion unit teaching and early childhood education. Parent and caregiver surveys were conducted at Mainly Music, playgroups, Playcentre, a community house creche, an ECE centre and kōhanga reo.

3. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS DEBATE

In the past twenty-five years, as a result of New Zealand changing its economic and social policy approach, the need for social services has risen substantially. This is reflected in a wide range of social needs that impact on education. For example, Salvation Army emergency and social services overall report that they are up 22 per cent for all services in 2010 on 2009 and have provided 53,700 food parcels—which is a 15 per cent increase on 2009.[12] In 2009 the Ministry of Social Development shows in its social report measure that an estimated 650,000 (15 per cent) New Zealanders live in poverty.[13]

3.1 REFORMING SOCIETY

Social justice and the Matthew effect: drawing the chance card

A useful way of explaining why sometimes individuals, families and communities find it hard to gain a 'fair go' is through what is known as the 'Matthew effect'. American sociologist Robert Merton first introduced this concept to describe a widening gap between those whose advantages perpetuate further advantages, and those who disadvantages result in further disadvantage. Merton's insight is derived from his observations within a university context that certain initial advantages of individuals in the science faculty resulted in spiralling successes. He observed the gaps between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' tend to keep widening over time, unless it is interrupted in some way.

> The concept of cumulative advantage directs our attention to the ways in which … the gaps between the haves and the have-nots in science (as in other domains of social life) widen until dampened by countervailing processes.[14]

This idea of perpetuated educational advantage has been applied to literacy acquisition in primary school where a child entering school with literacy knowledge continues to achieve literacy advantage while those who enter without acquisitions continue to lag behind. It is a case of the literacy-rich getting richer and the literacy-poor getting poorer.[15]

This Matthew effect concept is useful to apply to this study on educational justice. It may help to identify ways to create greater equity in New Zealand schooling. Merton's term derives from the biblical reference in Matthew 25:29—that everyone who has shall have in abundance whereas those who have not shall have taken away that which they have. The Matthew effect has been likened to a Monopoly game: some succeed, while others face steadily diminishing resources.[16] It explains why those who have certain social goods seem to accumulate more. In contrast, at the other end of the socio-economic scale, those who live below the poverty line often find it difficult to become socially mobile.

> Matthew effects are not inevitable. Counterforces may be introduced into social systems to diminish or even reverse their more destructive consequences. This is where social policy comes into play. Policy initiatives may be introduced to limit the effects of self-perpetuating cycles of growing advantage and disadvantage, and to restrain the widening inequalities they produce.[17]

To reform society, social policy must be constructed to minimise the impact of the Matthew effect. There is a need to measure if social policy is creating a 'fair go' for everyone. There is a need to assess if the advantaged communities seize opportunities to establish further advantage by taking more than their share of the rewards at the exclusion of disadvantaged communities who continue to miss out.

Recent research uses the words 'porous' or 'insular' to measure the extent with which the Matthew effect permeates a system. Researchers conclude that 'porous systems tend to constrain cumulative advantage, while insulated systems give the Matthew Effect freer course.'[18] The terms 'porous' and 'insular' can be employed to gauge whether the benefits of New Zealand's national policies are contained largely in one socio-economic domain or, conversely, if they are diffused throughout.

The word 'porous' suggests the idea of very small space that permits passage in what would otherwise be a retentive structure. In contrast, the word 'insular' suggests a restricted self-contained environment. A rock may be porous. An island community may be insular. These images may be helpful in considering public policy. For example, there are some pertinent questions to consider:

- Is the policy enabling low socio-economic areas to succeed or is the success concentrated at the high end of the socio-economic spectrum?

- Is the policy isolated and removed from social need or specifically written to give those in social need a fair go?

- Is the policy culturally and ideologically restrictive so it inadvertently excludes or discriminates against low socio-economic communities?

- Which socio-economic group is the prime benefactor of the policy?

Cycles of disadvantage

The Matthew effect is cumulative. Advantage creates acquisition, which means greater acquisition and so on. However, disadvantages can also be perpetuated.

> **The accumulation of advantage works in a manner similar to the accumulation of compound interest in a bank account. If the interest on our principal is continually returned to principal, the interest earns interest, and our account grows ever more rapidly. What we have done is to create a positive feedback loop in which the account's output is amplified and returned to the account as new input. This basic feedback process is evident in many other facets of life as well.[19]**

The 'feedback loop' concept is vital to this discussion. Privilege and disadvantage is reproduced from generation to generation.[20] For example, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that privilege and disadvantage extends to a broadly defined cultural realm. He speaks of a cultural 'feedback loop', where knowledge, skills and values are successively replicated

down the family line. According to Bourdieu, children who possess the cultural knowledge of the dominant social group are more likely to succeed in the education system, and in wider society, than those who lack it. For Bourdieu, those without this cultural advantage are discriminated against in our present social system.

> **By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that it has what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.**[21]

To help understand how this idea of cultural reproduction is practised in society, a model has been created to show some typical stages. This document is too brief to provide greater context and analysis of this theory; however, it may be a starting place from which to consider the process of accumulating cultural capital through education.

Stages of cultural advantage

In the first stage of the model, cultural advantage is traded for academic qualifications. In the next stage, educational qualifications enable the advantaged to access a career. The third stage is when a career enables the acquisition of economic goods. The fourth stage is where the obtaining of economic goods permits social mobility, such as moving into a wealthier neighbourhood. Social mobility can be defined as the ability of an individual to move from one social position to another status.
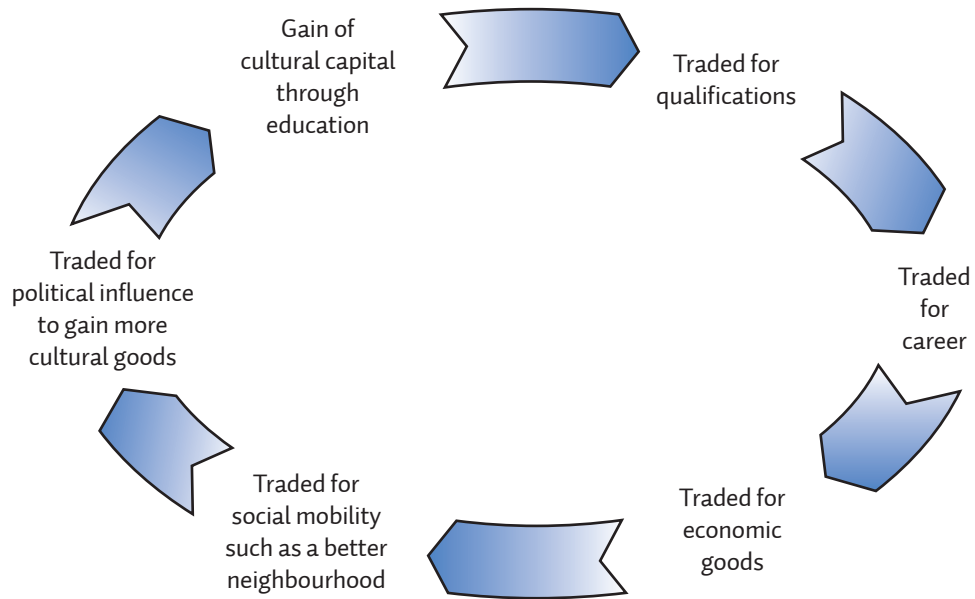
In the fifth stage, living in an affluent neighbourhood provides further family advantage, such as better amenities, a well-resourced local school and politically influential neighbours. At this point, the cycle will repeat, becoming more insular in each generational cycle. Self-interest will predominate unless efforts are made to deliberately include those outside the cycle of cultural advantage or unless others have a way of breaking in through such means as education (see **Figure 1**).

It is important to analyse data for evidence of how the Matthew effect impacts the socially disadvantaged. For example, which social group predominantly obtains national educational qualifications? Which social groups access ECE centres? The answers help determine whether educational policies are porous, or if in fact they are insular and merely reproduce cultural advantage from one generation to the next. Could the education system resemble a Monopoly game, with a growing segment of society facing steadily diminishing resources?

3.2 TRANSFORMING LIVES

While a cycle of advantage/disadvantage occurs on a social level, there may be an additional dynamic occurring on a psychological level. Some get caught in a negative cycle of personal failure. To understand this in the context of the Matthew effect, it is relevant to consider the cycles of success and failure more closely.

Figure 1: Reproduction of cultural capital: an insular model of education

Gain of
cultural capital
through
education

Traded for
qualifications

Traded
for
career

Traded for
economic
goods

Traded for
social mobility
such as a better
neighbourhood

Traded for
political influence
to gain more
cultural goods

Based on the ideas of Bourdieu

Figure 2: Cycles of success and failure

Recognised
achievements

Increased
feats

**Positive cycle
of success**

Healthy
self-esteem

Decreased
performance

Negative
attention

**Negative cycle
of failure**

Lack of
confidence

Based on the ideas of Kanter (2004)

Kanter, a professor of Harvard Business School, has explored winning and losing in sports and business.[22] She suggests that cycles of success lead to further success. To visualise this pattern, a model is used to show the feedback loops of success and failure. A positive cycle of social success includes healthy self-esteem and self-assurance resulting in a second stage of rewards and achievements. This evokes a third stage of increased feats, which creates greater success and self-esteem. A cycle of success thus self-perpetuates. On the other hand, there is a parallel negative cycle. An initial stage of lacking confidence results in a second stage of decreased performance, which creates a third stage of negative attention and greater decline in confidence, which results in further failure. This negative vicious cycle is pictured along with the positive counterpart (see **Figure 2**).

Theories of change: landing on go

Change can happen on many different levels. It is best explained by likening the process of change or transformation to the scientific concept of molecular elasticity. Objects have the capacity to change under pressure, and then revert to their original form and size when pressures on the object are removed. However, molecular structures can also be permanently changed. This change may be a positive or negative one.

In psychological theory, crisis can produce disequilibrium, which may in turn be a catalyst for personal and developmental growth, resulting in greater resourcefulness and maximised potential.[23] Psychoanalyst Erik

Erikson refers to a psychosocial crisis through life-stages which, if successfully developed, emerges as a virtue.[24] However, some do not successfully develop these virtues. Erikson suggests dichotomies that typify each crisis, such as an infant's crisis of developing trust versus mistrust or the young child's crisis of developing initiative versus guilt.

Developmental psychologist Abraham Maslow pictures change as hierarchical.[25] Individuals move through successive psychological stages until they reach the apex of the pyramid. At this stage a peak experience of transformation enables them to move from a stage of need to a higher stage of being. Individuals are then able to be fully functioning and productive members of society.

3.3 CARING FOR PEOPLE: GOING TO OLD KENT ROAD

Another aspect of the Matthew effect is the impact of altruism. A theory of care and altruism may be informed by ethical philosophy such as Comte,[26] who initially coined the word, or by moral theories in psychology such as those offered by Kohlberg[27] and Gilligan.[28] Caring for people denotes responsibility for others. This is a paradigm shift from a circular, insular model focused on generational advantage.

Instead of cultural capital, it may be appropriate to consider moral capital[29] as central to the ethics of caring for people. Moral capital involves building up a positive reputation that is respected and used as resource in the community to help others.

Political agents and institutions must be seen to serve and to stand for something apart from themselves, to achieve something beyond merely private ends. They must, in other words, establish a moral grounding. This they do by avowing their service to some set of fundamental values, principles and goals that find a resonant response in significant numbers of people. When such people judge the agent or institution to be both faithful and effective in serving those values and goals, they are likely to bestow some quantum of respect and approval that is of great political benefit to the receiver. This quantum is the agent's moral capital.[30]

Altruism can be effective in altering the dynamic of the Matthew effect.[31] Rigney explains that those who are advantaged sometimes choose to redistribute social goods to those who are disadvantaged. He defines altruism as giving without regarding the personal cost—a self-sacrificial action. In contrast, he compares this with 'enlightened self-interest' which anticipates a positive return in exchange for a charitable gesture. Rigney points out that regardless of motives, philanthropic aid is a key factor in redistributing advantages, thus reducing the ongoing impact of the Matthew effect in society.

In contrast with a circular insular model of education that reproduces cultural capital in society, a web-like model that provides a porous structure has been constructed. A network of community support for families based on altruism and an ethical position of caring
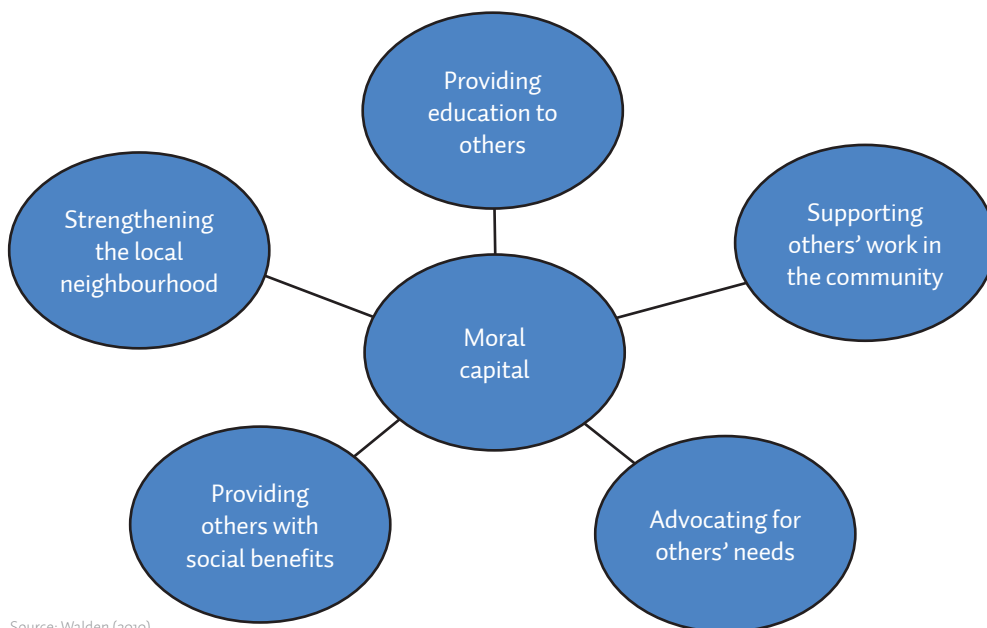
for people has the potential to redistribute advantages in society. This model (**Figure 3**) based on altruism is shown in opposition to the model of self-interest (**Figure 1**).

Instead of cultural capital, moral capital is central. Instead of a focus on personal qualifications, providing education to others is a priority. Instead of a preoccupation with a personal career, an emphasis is placed on supporting others' work in the community. Instead of a focus on acquiring increased economic goods, advocating for others' needs is given importance. Instead of an effort to gain social mobility to improve personal status, an emphasis is put on providing others with social benefits. Instead of seeking political influence to gain increased cultural goods, there is a primary interest in strengthening the local neighbourhood to increase their advantages. Practically, this may mean offering parenting classes to educate parents in successful behavioural management of their children. It may mean supporting working parents of preschoolers by offering them affordable community-based ECE. The local neighbourhood may be supported in their needs through the provision of food banks, counselling and budgeting. As a web, this model is inclusive. It can be reproduced across communities in need.

The model used to inform our national educational policy is important. If education's role is solely meeting the needs of individuals so they gain qualifications, a career, and social mobility, the educational policy is very successful

in some areas of New Zealand. However, other communities tell a different story. Statistics show the failings of an insular model of education that result in certain communities missing out on qualifications. For example, the Level 1 NCEA pass rate at the poorest 30 per cent of secondary schools is only two-thirds of that of the wealthiest 30 per cent of schools.[32] Furthermore, different urban areas can yield very different results. In Mangere Central, South Auckland, the 2006 Census shows 42.2 per cent of people fifteen years and over have no formal qualifications, compared with 20.3 per cent for the entire Auckland Region.[33] It is important to look carefully at such statistics and stories deriving from a variety of communities to analyse the models of education being used.

Figure 3: Reproduction of moral capital: a porous model of education.

Source: Walden (2010)

4. THE CURRENT SITUATION

> In terms of education, resources are an issue in a low decile school. In terms of social need, poverty is an issue.
>
> **READING RECOVERY TEACHER**
>
> Those without ECE take a whole year to learn the things learned at kōhanga or playcentre.
>
> **KŌHANGA TEACHER**

According to the Ministry of Education's website, the stated aim of its current policy and strategy efforts is to improve education for all New Zealanders. This includes 'building a world-leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century.'[34]

The language has changed since Peter Fraser's 1939 declaration that every person—regardless of academic ability, socio-economic status, or geographical location—has a citizen's right to a free education that best fits the individual.

> **Every person, whatever his [sic.] level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind to which he is best fitted, and to the full extent of his powers.[35]**

The Ministry of Education website statement (2010) cited in the first paragraph shows a change of emphasis since Fraser's 1939 statement. In education New Zealand has moved in its current policy emphasis from a focus on the individual to a focus on the system. The individual is now situated not in a geographical location (town or country) but in the context of a global framework. It is no longer an intended aim for the system to 'best fit' the individual, but for the individual to best fit the system with the necessary skills, knowledge and values.

Over fifty years on from Fraser's 1939 statement, the Charter Framework (1990) that evolved from the Picot Report (1988) gave responsibility to the board of trustees to ensure the school's policies and practices enable equitable outcomes for all. The Picot Report recommended restructuring the education system through administrative reforms that were thought to be advantageous to society, the economy, and equitable for unprivileged social groups.

> **The board of trustees will ensure that the school's policies and practices seek to achieve equitable outcomes for students of both sexes, for rural and urban students; for all students irrespective of their religious, ethnic, cultural, social, family and class backgrounds, and irrespective of their ability or disability.[36]**

There has been an important paradigm shift in education since the 1980s. According to this quote, the school is expected to achieve equitable outcomes, despite inequitable local resources. Peters, Marshall and Massey (1994) argue the outcome of this paradigm shift in educational policy is the heavy influence of economic and fiscal decisions and the 'ideology of enterprise'. Teaching professionals implement policies that originate 'elsewhere in the system'. Consequently, Peters et al advise going beyond

'unmasking ideology' to affirm 'a shared set of values of a community … the envisioning of new meanings that give direction to social change.'[37] This is part of the impetus of this discussion document—to give careful thought to the implications of present educational policy influenced by an ideology of economic enterprise at the expense of the disadvantaged. The present ideology effectively equips some New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century. However, as Fraser's quote shows, location needs to be considered—the discrepancy between 'town and country' resources. For example, compare Mangere Central's 42.2 per cent of people fifteen years and over without any formal qualifications to Remuera West's 7.3 per cent.[38] Compare the median income for those 15 and over: $17,800 in Mangere Central to $40,100 in Remuera West. Compare the unemployment rate: 12.4 per cent in Mangere Central to 3.6 per cent in Remuera West.[39] Educational policy based on the ideology of enterprise may fail to take into account the inequitable resources between communities.

A second possible educational policy flaw emerges from inequitable budget priorities given to educating the young. The Government's investment in early childhood education next year will total $1.3 billion.[40] However, despite a reference to a 'cost blow-out'[41] the New Zealand Government spends half the OECD average on children aged 0 to 5 years.[42] This lack of financial commitment to ECE by the Government is not synchronised with the policy intent of building a world-leading education system for all New

Zealanders. This document intends to make visible the importance of ECE investment beyond the ideology of enterprise to shared values of social justice and change.

PRESENT ECE POLICY

The present Government funding model for ECE includes: operating subsidies, modest capital grants through a discretionary grants scheme, equity funding, an annual top-up for isolated services, and the 20 hours' ECE subsidy. The Government has several current items on its ECE agenda. These include:

- improving the connection between parents and ECE providers
- encouraging ECE centres to meet the educational needs of the community
- seeking local support to help manage ECE centres
- recruiting educators through scholarships, especially in areas lacking qualified staff.[43]

Help with funding for equipment, resources and staffing has been offered to community-based ECE centres that are getting started. Five year olds and those attending playcentres and kōhanga reo have recently been included in the ECE 20 hours' policy.[44]

However, the current policy agenda indicates potential barriers to ECE access in some communities. These include: parental or community disconnection, lack of management skills or qualified staff, and a lack of community resources and initiative to develop ECE facilities. In addition, McNaughton, a University of

Auckland professor in education, points out parents like to select a centre that adheres to parenting values that reflect their own.[45] Cultural compatibility may be an issue, as well as the availability of a place at a centre, and resources to access it. For example, from 1990 to 2009 there has been a 60 per cent increase in the number of ECE enrolments. In 1990 there were 110,073 children enrolled; in 2009 the figure had risen to 180,910.[46] However, there is substantially less participation in the lower socio-economic areas. Only 82 per cent of new entrants from the lowest decile primary schools have previously attended ECE services compared to 99 per cent in the highest decile schools.[47]

There are also variations in services. There are many ECE models in New Zealand: some are parent directed, others are teacher-led; some are mainstream, others are based on kaupapa Māori; some are community-based, others are commercially driven. The scope raises questions about the overall quality and educational standard of ECE provision. Helen May, an education professor at Otago, expresses concern that the interests of children, in providing them with quality education and care, may become secondary to the interests of others.[48] For example, parents may seek the most affordable ECE. On the other hand, educators in a centre are interested in a competitive wage. ECE businesses want to maximise profits to make the centre commercially viable. Each of these factors is highly influenced by an economic paradigm that embraces a market approach to education.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ECE ACCESS

It could be argued that socio-economic conditions help to determine educational outcomes in New Zealand and, therefore, it may be useful to look at some of these factors more closely. White, Gunston, Salmond, Atkinson and Crampton (2006) have identified nine indicators of deprivation in the Atlas of Socioeconomic Deprivation in New Zealand. These may be useful to construct an understanding of social and material factors that may impinge upon equal access to education in New Zealand.

The nine variables used to construct the New Zealand Index of Deprivation include:

- receiving a means-tested benefit
- living in households with income below a certain threshold
- lack of home ownership
- a single-parent family
- unemployment
- lacking any qualifications
- living in overcrowded households
- lack of access to a telephone
- lack of access to a car [49]

These deprivation factors are determined in relation to the context in which the individual lives[50] and are important in how they impact educational experiences. For example, in communities where income is low, schools have scant local funds available for education. Where families do not live in their own homes, children may move from school to school

as their families shift around in search of affordable housing. Single-parent families are under further emotional, physical and financial stresses without the support of a partner to share responsibilities. Unemployment adds to low levels of income and may require frequent geographical relocation in quest of work. Lack of qualifications makes gaining a job difficult. Household overcrowding may result in health issues. In addition, lack of a telephone disadvantages those looking for work. Owning a car is too costly for some. Accessing non-compulsory education such as ECE may be a low priority in this social context.

In addition to the visible or more obvious disadvantages cited above, a community may suffer hidden factors that impinge on well-being. These may include social structures that result in inequalities, discrimination and exclusion.[51] Some of these may impact negatively on the acquisition of social capital.[52] Deficits in any of the domains in the Index of Deprivation (income, home ownership, support, employment, qualifications, living space, communication

> "We have a breakfast club at school for children without breakfast. There are also housing issues. There is high unemployment. This impacts fundraising. We don't have fees. If there are events, teachers help subsidize kids because they can't afford to go otherwise. Young people have to leave the area to get a job.
>
> **READING RECOVERY TEACHER**

and transport) may place an individual at a social networking disadvantage. Lack of adequate income places social limits on what is affordable. Unemployment socially restricts the support of workmates. Lack of transport and communication tools such as a telephone limits social contact with friends and relatives. Any of these may restrict the building of social capital in an already disadvantaged community and push families into the margins of society.

WHO IS DEPRIVED? DEMOGRAPHICS OF OUR RESEARCH COMMUNITIES

The research for this study was conducted at four locations:

- a decile two school community in a rural Northland area. A playcentre, kōhanga reo, kura, a mainstream area school, and a primary school were involved in the study.

- a decile nine school community in an urban North Shore, Auckland area. A community house was involved in the study.

- a decile three school community in West Auckland. A Mainly Music group and a playgroup were involved in the study.

- a decile two school community in West Auckland. An early childhood education centre and playgroup, as well as a local kōhanga reo were involved in the study.

The rural community in this research is one of the poorest in New Zealand. In addition to this decile two Northland community, this study also features three urban school communities: deciles two, three and nine. Demographical

information is provided in Table 1 from New Zealand census information. A discussion of this information below will allow a profile of the four areas to emerge.

Age of the population

The lower decile school zones in West Auckland have a younger population under 15 years (23 and 28 per cent) than the North Shore area (17.7 per cent) and nationally (21.5 per cent).

Work and income

Statistically, there is more unemployment in the Northland school zone (12.7 per cent), compared to the North Shore school community (3.1 per cent) and nationally (5.1 per cent).[53] In addition, in the Northland community only 6.2 per cent of those over fifteen have an income over $50,000 compared to 32.7 per cent in the North Shore community and 18 per cent nationally. In contrast, twice as many fifteen years and over in the Northland community have an annual income of $20,000 or less (66.9 per cent) as the North Shore community (33.8 per cent). Nationally, the figure stands at 43.2 per cent. There is also a significant discrepancy between the median incomes for people fifteen years and over in the Northland community ($14,000) and those living in the North Shore community ($33,600). Nationally, the median income is $24,400. These figures indicate significant difference in economic resources between New Zealand communities.

Families and housing

There are more one-parent-with-children families in the Northland community (31.6 per cent) than the North Shore community (10.8 per cent) and nationally (18.1 per cent). Interestingly, there is about 8 per cent less homeownership in the North Shore community than the Northland community—perhaps because the median sale price between the two communities is higher in the North Shore by approximately $210,000.[54]

Communications

Internet access in the Northland community is low (37.2 per cent) compared to 76.2 per cent in the North Shore community and 60.5 per cent nationally. In the Northland community 12.6 per cent have no access to the phone, net or fax compared to 2.0 per cent nationally.

> " There is a culture of being unemployed for years and years—parents and grandparents. Some have been here too long and have accepted it. Kids may not be motivated to move on. They hang around, rather than leaving to get qualifications and apprenticeships.
>
> **NEW ENTRANT TEACHER** "

> " Whānau are encouraged to have a go and make decisions. The kids may not be motivated at home. It gives them more scope for extension. They aren't watching their parents drink. ECE is as important as school. It makes such a difference. If parents are here in the kōhanga they learn parenting skills —not smacking and yelling.
>
> **KŌHANGA TEACHER** "

Table 1: Cards in the community chest: demographics of the study area[55]

	Decile 2 Rural	Decile 9 urban	Decile 3 urban	Decile 2 urban
People in this place	2,610	4,005	6,195	4,026
Age – under 15	27.7 %	17.7 %	28.5 %	23.5 %
European population	42.1 %	74.2 %	51.3 %	50.8 %
Maori population	68.3 %	5.0 %	16.2 %	16.3 %
Pacifc peoples	2.0 %	1.9 %	27.7 %	23.7 %
Asian	0.8 %	12.8 %	13.8 %	16.1 %
Maori speakers	29.6 %	1.2 %	4.4 %	4.0 %
Post-school qualifications (15 years and over)	28.6 %	53.5 %	33.0 %	28.2 %
No formal qualifications (15 years and over)	41.7 %	10.9 %	29.5 %	32.5 %
Unemployment rate (15 years and over)	12.7 %	3.1 %	7.8 %	7.9 %
Annual income of $20,000 or less 15 years and over)	66.9 %	33.8 %	43.1 %	48.2 %
Annual income of more than $50,000 (15 years and over)	6.2 %	32.7 %	12.3 %	11.2 %
Median income (15 years and over)	$14,000	$33,600	$24,300	$21,100
One parent with children families	31.6 %	10.8 %	29.5 %	28.7 %
No access to telephone, internet, fax	12.6 %	0.6 %	2.7 %	2.1 %
Internet access	37.2 %	76.2 %	57.2 %	50.1 %
Own dwelling	58.7 %	50.4 %	53.9 %	51.7 %

Education

In the North Shore community, over half the population aged fifteen years and over have post-school qualifications (53.5 per cent). Nationally, the figure is lower (39.9 per cent). However, the three disadvantaged communities are below this figure (28 to 33 per cent). In addition, only 10.9 per cent of those fifteen years and over in the North Shore community have no formal qualifications, while the national figure stands at 25.0 per cent. The low decile school communities range from 29 to 41 per cent who are missing out on any formal qualifications.

Cultural diversity

The North Shore community has a higher European population (74.2 per cent) compared to the national level (67.6 per cent). The Northland community has a high Māori population (68.3 per cent) compared to the national level of 14.6 per cent. The other two communities have a much larger Pasifika population (23.7 and 27.7 per cent) than the national figure (6.9 per cent). All three urban areas in the study have a large Asian population (12.8, 13.8 and 16.1 per cent) compared to the national average (9.2 per cent).

The Northland low decile school community has a large number of Māori speakers (29.6 per cent), especially compared to the North Shore (1.2 per cent). Nationally, 4.1 per cent of the population are Māori speakers. There is a kōhanga reo in the Northland community, as well as a Kura and an immersion unit, which are vital to maintaining and revitalising the language.

> **❝**
>
> Whānau get training to upskill them in te reo. They learn the Māori way of early childhood, the kaupapa (Māori ideology). They are able to think beyond their own house. We provide lots of benefits for the community. We are the foundation to the kura. the tamariki come from here. Our children will become role models in the commuity with their knowledge of tikanga (customs) of the marae, karakia and mihi. Learning our language is empowering whānau and tamariki.
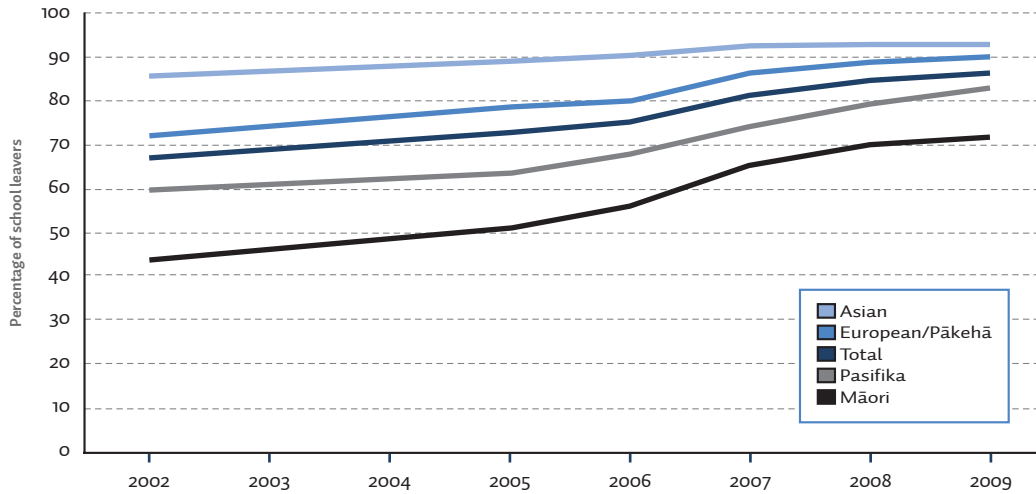>
> **KŌHANGA TEACHER**
>
> **❞**

These demographics are useful for identifying social groups comprising an area. Consequently, it may be helpful to look at achievement of qualifications by ethnic groups in the context of this discussion of disadvantages in education.

Achievement of qualifications by ethnic group
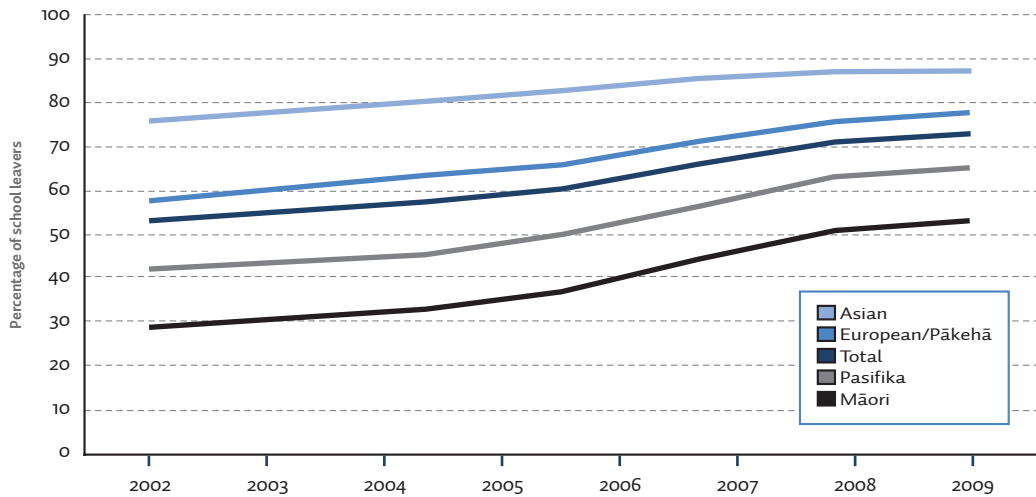
Statistics show Māori are less likely to achieve in our system than some other ethnic groups. For example, in 2009 there was 21.2 per cent difference between European/Pākehā (87.1 per cent) and Māori achievement (65.9 per cent) of NCEA level 1.[56] In 2009 there was a 26.7 per cent difference between European/Pākehā (74.6%) and Māori (47.9%) achievement in gaining NCEA level 2.

Figure 5: Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above, by ethnic group (2002 to 2009)

Source: Education Counts, 2010

Figure 6: Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above, by ethnic group (2003 to 2009)

Source: Education Counts (2010)

Achievement of qualifications by school decile levels

In addition to the ethnic social group differences in achievement levels, statistics show that low decile school communities have less opportunity for gaining qualifications (see Table 2). For example, in 2007 there was a 28 per cent difference between achievement levels in National Qualification Framework Level One qualifications for low decile (one to three) schools and the high decile schools. There is also a gap in Level 2 achievements. In 2007 this difference between the low and high decile schools was 32 per cent. The difference in outcome is also apparent with Level 3 achievements. At Year 13, a low decile school child has about half the likelihood of achieving the qualifications that the high school decile child obtains. This is a strong indicator of the

> Some have emotional problems. The husband beats up the wife. The kids have emotional baggage to juggle on top of learning. Some have nothing in the house. There is a mattress in one room. The children have a poor night's sleep. They learn despite it. Some lack interest in learning. They are disrespectful and won't learn. They have a lack of respect for themselves. Parents have been unemployed too long and are putting the negativity they feel as parents on themselves. They may be doing a good job, but they put that negativity on the children.
> **NEW ENTRANT TEACHER**

lack of equity between school deciles and the opportunity to gain the educational rewards of our school system. It is clearly harder to succeed in a low decile school community.

> Food is an issue. There is a huge culture of drinking. The local community support trust gives out food parcels to referrals from WINZ. The family may get one because Mum or Dad has drunk the benefit money and kids are without food. I have a loaf of bread, peanut butter and jam in the class. When families are isolated, they see it as a norm not to have food.
> **NEW ENTRANT TEACHER**

Decile-related achievement differences [in NCEA] are evident across all year levels, with 48 per cent of students at low-decile schools, 63 per cent of students at medium-decile schools and 74 per cent of students at high-decile schools having attained NCEA Level 1 by the end of Year 11 [in 2007]. The differences diminished by the end of Year 13, by which time the percentages were 66, 77 and 83 respectively [in 2009].[57]

Access to tertiary

If equity is measured against the equal ability of high and low decile schools to gain the educational and economic rewards of society, then access to tertiary may be a useful indicator of whether the system is fair. Using such an indicator we find clear evidence of inequality.

Table 2: Achievement in Senior School Assessment* by School Decile, 2005-2007

	Year 11 Students Achieving an NQF Qualification			Year 12 Students Achieving an NQF Qualification at Level 2 or Above			Year 13 Students Achieving an NQF Qualification at Level 3 or Above		
Per cent per year	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Low (deciles 1–3)	39	46	48	42	48	49	27	29	34
Medium (deciles 4–7)	57	60	63	61	63	65	48	50	51
High (deciles 8–10)	74	75	76	74	77	76	63	65	66

Source: Statistics New Zealand

According to Ministry of Education analysis, there is a strong connection between school decile levels and access to tertiary.

> There is a clear correlation between quintile (the socio-economic mix of the last school the student attended) and the percentage of school leavers going directly to tertiary education. Schools in the highest quintile (deciles nine and 10) draw their students from communities with the lowest degree of socio-economic disadvantage. Out of the 20-year-old students from quintile five schools, 63 per cent have made a transition to tertiary. This is a stark contrast to the 36 per cent of 20-year-old students who studied in a quintile one school.[58]

According to the OECD (2010), New Zealanders without qualifications in 2008 had an unemployment rate 42 per cent higher than those with school qualifications, and 63 per cent higher than those with a bachelor degree or higher. In addition, the OECD reported that

"

It is easy to figure out by talking to children if they have had ECE by their levels of good stimulation and skills.

For example, one boy in the class had not had adequate parental interaction. He was from a broken home. He had speech difficulties and no socialisation skills. He was like a two-year-old with no coordination. At seven, he is still catching up to the new entrants' level. It is unfair to them. It holds them back. If all the children are at a good stage but one comes in with nothing, it changes the dynamics of the classroom and makes the workload harder. They have to learn all the basics—colours, shapes—the things they should have.

ECE triggers memory skills, stimulates the brain, so they are ready to learn. The majority of those with no ECE stay behind and need one-to-one to pull them up. They struggle to be average.

KURA TEACHER

"

unemployment rates for those with a tertiary education were at 4 per cent on average across OECD countries during the recession, but for those without completed secondary education unemployment rates were above 9 per cent.[59]

Children living in poorer communities are likely to experience the same poor earning potential of their parents. Statistically, those in high decile school zones are more likely to access subsidised Government education from ECE to tertiary. Many in low school decile communities access significantly less Government money for their education. An OECD report recommends that the Government spend more on younger disadvantaged children. It further suggests a stronger policy focus on child poverty and points out the gaps in education between the top and bottom performers.[60]

EXPLANATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Educational disadvantage is tied into how schools are now governed and funded. According to New Zealand policy sociologist Martin Thrupp, unless there is a deliberate intention to advocate for the disadvantaged groups in society, they will continue to miss out on social, economic, educational and human resources. He argues the middle class (parents, teaching professionals, academics and politicians) will protect their own self-interests concerning their families, careers and constituents unless they are provoked into a social justice concern for the children who need a fair system to provide them with educational advantage. He cites John Dewey who challenges the community to want

for all its children that which it would want for its own.[61]

Alan Johnson, Senior Social Policy Analyst for The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, shows there is no point in offering opportunity without providing access—or the opportunity is mere tokenism.[62] He argues that Maharey's (2007) description of the 20 hours' free early childhood education as a 'watershed policy … the most significant expansion of the education system since the rollout of free secondary education by the first Labour government in the 1930s' is inaccurate due to the discrepancy between the offer of a subsidy and the opportunity to utilise it. For example, in 1938 students were granted the right to attend secondary school and the schools had the mandate to accept them. However, this situation is not occurring in the 20 hours policy because the State is less directly involved in owning and providing the ECE service. More commonly, it provides operational funding or in some cases capital funding to community-based and private sector ECE.

Some communities obviously have greater resources to pay extra fees, which is attractive to commercially-owned centres intent on making a profit. These same communities also have the infrastructure to sustain community-based centres. Consequently, inequalities of provision occur from one neighbourhood to the next—with disadvantaged areas primarily suffering neglect. For example, 2006 figures show a significantly lower rate of access in Manukau (44 per cent) to that of Wellington City

(77 per cent). In addition, disadvantaged suburbs such as Mangere, Manurewa, Porirua East and Massey have even fewer places available for access. This is because, as Johnson suggests, demand subsidies such as the 20 hours policy depend on a market response to deliver the service. As a result, the level of provision relates to the level of profit. Alternatively, supply subsidies or regulation allows the Government to monitor the provision of services in communities through financial, governance and managerial support. Johnson concludes his discussion with the following:

> While the comparison between the 20 hours free initiative and the educational reforms of the 1930s may not be entirely accurate there is still something quite bold in the Government's intention here. Perhaps for the first time Government has acknowledged that all New Zealand children should have access to early childhood education and that this access should be seen as an entitlement rather than an optional extra available to some children and not others.

> The evidence of the value of early childhood education for the future educational success of children is quite compelling and the existing inequalities in access to this early education are clear and incontrovertible. The challenge for this and future Governments is to provide policies and budgets which address these inequalities by focusing on the real problems of supply in poor communities.

SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION

The Matthew effect has clearly created a system of inequity where much policy has become insular, especially since the introduction of the Tomorrow's School policy. The subsequent emphasis on the marketisation of education has resulted in a user-pays approach to education that has seen low socio-economic areas pushed into the margins——as those with the cultural capital continue to perpetuate their advantages. The inequities in our education system are not providing a fair go for all: current policies clearly advantage some communities in New Zealand over others.

5. DOES THE PRESENT PARADIGM WORK FOR ALL?

THE ECE LANDSCAPE IN NEW ZEALAND: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND SOCIAL HISTORY

This chapter looks at community-based providers in education and places these in a social history context. It includes Barnados, kindergartens, kōhanga reo, playcentres, playgroups and Mainly Music. In addition, this chapter includes the perspective of parents and educational professionals working in this field.

Two ECE providers today entered the field of early childhood education in recognition of social need. In 1866 Dr. Thomas Barnado established a charitable work to help orphaned children in the East End of London through creating children's homes. Later, the emphasis changed to fostering and adopting children. Barnardos began its work in New Zealand in 1969.[63] Its current role is to advocate for children and young persons in the area of abuse, poverty and discrimination. In New Zealand this includes the following services: family counselling, foster and group homes, domestic violence and family support programmes, advocacy for children, Parents as First Teachers, Home Intervention Programme for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY), home-based care, and early learning centres.

Kindergartens, based on the ideas of Frobel, began in Dunedin in 1889 for those three and four years of age in response to the 'waifs and strays' in the neighbourhood.[64] The first one, attached to a church, had 60 children enrolled. In 1906 one began in Wellington, and in 1908 Auckland formed an association to train students and establish free kindergartens. Christchurch did

likewise in 1911. Kindergartens now comprise 30 per cent of teacher-led ECE services in New Zealand. After kōhanga reo, kindergartens have the highest percentage (18 per cent) of Māori children attending an ECE service, and at eight per cent, the highest percentage of Pasifika children. Kindergartens are in both urban communities in this study. There are no kindergartens in the rural community studied.

Another community based model is kōhanga reo. It began in 1981[65] and has an objective of immersing Māori children in their language with whānau as teachers. This has a certificate course for teachers and workers. The impetus for Māori immersion schools originated in response to Benton's (1979) research that suggested the decline of Te Reo.[66] The kōhanga reo programmes are based on Māori pedagogy as a model for ECE. There are kōhanga reo in three of the four places in this study.

Playcentres are a parent-led New Zealand cooperative started in the 1940s with a play-based, child-centred pedagogy.[67] The centres offer a diploma in ECE and adult education to parents. There are playcentres in each place in this study.

Playgroups are based in community facilities to provide social opportunities for parents, whānau and caregivers to interact with each other and their children. Government funding helps to meet basic costs such as equipment and the rent. Training is given from the Ministry of Education. Playgroups are located in the urban communities in this study.

Mainly Music is a faith-based programme for preschool children who take part in learning songs, actions, and rhymes along with parents or caregivers. There is one group operating in the decile three West Auckland community in this study.

HOW DOES ECE HELP CHILDREN?

The purpose of ECE is to provide a foundation for lifelong learning. ECE's origins in New Zealand, beginning with the establishment of the first kindergarten in Dunedin in 1889, signalled the desire to create an advantage for children who would have otherwise been disadvantaged by social circumstances.

For this study, six preschool and junior primary school teachers from the Northland school community were interviewed. In addition, across the four communities in the study, educators were interviewed who work with playgroups, Mainly Music, playcentres, a community crèche, kōhanga reo, and an early childhood education centre. Twelve interviews were conducted in total and ranged from 30 minutes to an hour in length. Standard questions were used to obtain the participants' ideas on education in their community.

> ❝
> ECE helps with langauge. A speech therapist said some of our kids are at the level of a three year old in oral expression.
> **READING RECOVERY TEACHER** ❞

The Northland educators gave the following feedback on how they think ECE helps children:

> '**They learn Te Reo (Māori language), good behaviour, counting, recognising letters, and sounds. They shoot away at school.**'
> KŌHANGA TEACHER

> '**They learn creativity, physical skills, painting and the alphabet.**'
> PLAYCENTRE LEADER

> '**They learn coordination and cognitive skills.**' KURA TEACHER

> '**It extends the child's thinking, helps them concentrate.**'
> JUNIOR SCHOOL TEACHER

> '**They become more independent, used to structure.**'
> NEW ENTRANT TEACHER

Included in the data are 80 written parental surveys. These were anonymous. Two questions relate to demographics (local school and ethnic group). Approximately six open and closed questions were given, and were followed by five rating scale questions using a one-to-five written response.

> ❝
> At ECE children learn coordination and cognitive skills. Those who don't have ECE often have social issues and can't relate to others—they lack problem-solving skills.
> **KURA TEACHER** ❞

> "
> Through ECE involvement, parents find out how children learn and see positive ways to bring up kids. The centre's knowledge and experience with children has to have a positive spin off.
>
> **NEW ENTRANT TEACHER**
> "

> "
> Any child who doesn't attend ECE is disadvantaged. Most who attend the kura have had ECE but about 20 per cent of those in the immersion unit would not have had ECE consistently.
>
> **KURA TEACHER**
> "

> "
> We looked at opening an ECE centre at the school because we identified about 60 children in the wider geographical area not attending ECE. There is nothing for working parents. Students at the polytech have to bring their children to class. There is a lack of childcare for staff at the hospital and school.
>
> **PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**
> "

> "
> The kaumātua and kuia support the kōhanga and come to our hui. They are the backbone of us.
>
> **KŌHANGA TEACHER**
> "

In the Northland community, parents at the local playcentre and kōhanga reo gave some of the following written responses of how ECE benefits their children:

'Helps my children to make friends.'

'Stimulates his thinking and playing.'

'Educates him in Te Reo Māori.'

'Learns boundaries.'

'Learns to share and play with others.'

Parents of children attending a West Auckland early learning centre in a decile two area also helped with survey data. They rated the following statements to indicate what they felt was the main benefit derived from their child's attendance. The statements were the following:

'ECE helps our children learn new skills.'

'Helps us learn new parenting ideas.'

'Helps us develop new friends.'

'I feel more confident as a parent because of the centre/programme.'

'I feel more connected in the community because of the centre.'

Parents strongly agreed the centre helps their children learn new skills. Parents of children attending a Mainly Music group and playgroup in a West Auckland decile three school community also agreed strongly that skill development is the primary advantage gained from the ECE experience.

In addition to finding out that the primary advantage from ECE attendance for children is to help them gain important skills, the study also sought to find out how ECE helps families.

HOW DOES ECE HELP FAMILIES?

Teaching professionals in the Northland interview talked about the many ways ECE help families in low socio-economic areas. These are some of their ideas:

- gives parents a social network
- gives opportunities to do educational courses and first aid training
- provides parents with a necessary break, allows them to go to work, and helps them educate their children
- enables parents to access learning resources in a child-friendly environment
- allows parents a different perspective on their child

Parents in this same community gave feedback in their written survey on how ECE helps them:

'It's great for social interaction, support and for learning skills.'

'I am doing training through them [kōhanga].'

'Provides lots of learning and language activities.'

A playgroup in a West Auckland decile two school community responded to rating scale statements about the advantages of attending the playgroup. They reported that developing friendships is the prime benefit in attending, followed by skill development for the child. The social support and relationships are important reasons why families get involved in ECE.

HOW DOES ECE HELP TO DEVELOP A CONNECTION IN THE COMMUNITY?

Teaching professionals in the Northland community offered ideas of how ECE helps to develop a connection with the community:

'They learn as an adult and parent. They bond with others. Kōhanga involves immersion [in Te Reo]. They train to be teachers. They come out of their shell. They no longer fear coming into the school grounds and asking the teacher questions. They share their skills. They develop confidence.' KURA TEACHER

'Some ECE centres reach out to the community for help. They have get-togethers.' PLAYCENTRE LEADER

'The building is a place we can access. We help other playcentres as well.' PLAYCENTRE LEADER

Parents in this rural Northland area agreed that ECE helps the children develop a community connection through friendships.

In addition, the educators talked about some disadvantages in their community concerning educational provision. Disadvantages included the following:

- lack of childcare and ECE provision
- lack of ECE attendance
- lack of support agencies for new parents

In addition, they identified two barriers to ECE access and to educational advantage in this community:

> " The community pulled together to look at programmes outside school hours. Young children were on the street. Who could provide what? What could we start immediately at minimal funding if we all pull together? We started horse riding for those five to seventeen years. It is booming. Without it there would be more problems in the community.
>
> **PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

> " [A strength is] the pulling together, working together, at the marae and throughout the community. There is a lot of support for whānau. Everyone has friends with friends who can help. There is collective work. There is a sense of reciprocity one for another where the old people may be invited for kai (food) and we go to a tangi (funeral) as one whole. There is diversity, with different types of people feeding into the kids. All have strengths.
>
> **KURA TEACHER**

> " It is harder for agencies to have the time allocated to come to our area. It takes more effort to get what we need. It isn't right there.
>
> **JUNIOR SCHOOL TEACHER**

The cost of childcare, with subsidies being dependent on the age of the child.

The distance of travel and the cost of a Warrant of Fitness and a Driver's Licence.

There are strengths in the community, which the teaching professionals readily identified :

There is a positive sense of community support.

Children know their neighbours through local community events. When they start school, they already know some of the older children and the teachers.

There is opportunity to be a part of small community groups.

The lifestyle is sustainable.

The Māori and Pākehā work together as one people. Pākehā are invited onto the marae for courses and events.

The teaching professionals were asked what might help to increase educational opportunities in their community. Various responses were given:

- provide day care for those wanting to work.

- provide kindergartens to help those struggling with the formal approach to education found at primary school. For example, a new entrant teacher said, 'Some come in [to school as if they're only] three years old.'

- provide motivation to attend because most children attending the kura went to the kōhanga because Te Reo is a prerequisite.

- increase job opportunities, as some families have experienced years of unemployment,

with the disadvantages affecting grandparents and parents in the community.

- provide additional help with funding for ECE wages. A kōhanga teacher said, 'The wages for the kōhanga are paid from ECE funding, and therefore have to be minimal, and as a result the kōhanga has to depend on volunteer work.'

- provide greater access to support agencies.

- keep ECE benchmarks consistent so the local primary school can establish ECE on site for the 60 children missing out.

- help with affordable housing to provide stability for impoverished families living in unsuitable temporary situations.

- fund programmes that teach parents about early language development and how to access suitable library books for their children. For example, parents could benefit from training on how to support their children in gaining literacy skills. They could benefit from learning about the importance of reading stories, saying rhymes and singing songs with the children. This kind of knowledge cannot be assumed.

SUMMARY—WHY THE PRESENT PARADIGM DOES NOT WORK FOR ALL

This section shows the experiences of those who live in low socio-economic communities. ECE businesses are attracted to areas where they can gain an acceptable profit margin. This formula of ECE provision will not work in areas with high poverty levels and irregular ECE attendance. If a commercial paradigm is unlikely to work then pathways need to be forged from discourse that is congruent with the lived experiences of the local community.

> The kaumātua and kuia are community strengths. Brothers and sisters are strengths. The beautiful natural environment is a strength.
> **KŌHANGA TEACHER**

> Programmes like 'Parents as First Teachers' never got here. If programmes like that are offered both the school and family benefits. Once the child is school-aged it is too late.
> **NEW ENTRANT TEACHER**

> Pay parents to come to ECE with their children so they can learn with their children and go home with the kaupapa. That way they will live it and grow up with their children.
> **KŌHANGA TEACHER**

6. ALTERNATIVE MODELS

COMMUNITY-BUILDING APPROACHES TO ECE

This discussion paper shows a need to rethink the trend where low decile school communities continue to miss out on the same educational opportunities as wealthier communities. A New Zealand policy sociologist suggests creating contextual frameworks to reveal educational inequalities, and to help with creating fairer distribution of resources, advice and support.[68]

This section examines two actual models of ECE provision with the potential to provide positive support to local families in low decile school communities. One represents an approach contributing to family well-being through social services work that includes ECE provision. The other stems from a faith-based perspective of helping people through a community church.

> "
> There are a couple of three year olds who are "P" babies. WINZ comes to the centre once a week to help parents needing help. We have an addiction programme we can direct people to —the bridge.
>
> A couple of children are under special education and the early intervention programme. We helped a dad with two young boys. He was at the end of his rope. He had no money, but [taking advantage of the present subsidy] he got them into the centre.
>
> **ECE CENTRE MANAGER**
> "

While there may be overlap between the two models, they will be discussed separately to distinguish between the strengths and roles of both. This section will also look at a decile nine school zone community house to reflect on variations in community needs. It will conclude with a comparative and evaluative look at present policy.

CARING FOR PEOPLE THROUGH ECE

The first actual model of ECE provision is part of a holistic approach that seeks to help families within the community—spiritually, physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially. The following services are provided to those in need:

- a playgroup for parents of pre-schoolers to create a social network
- a food bank
- counselling

> "
> We have the facilities to help. We can book parents in for budgeting help, we run parenting courses, we help parents with intergrating back into the workforce by helping with references. When they do voluntary work at playgroup it helps to build their confidence [for job hunting].
>
> We like to know [needs] so we can help, before the problem gets too big for the parent. We show parents how to interact with children.
>
> **PLAYGROUP COORDINATOR**
> "

- budgeting
- second-hand furniture and clothes
- WINZ on site
- an addiction programme
- special education and early intervention programme for special needs children
- supervised access for children to maintain contact in a safe environment with family members with whom they are separated

Some enter the ECE and then require further social assistance. Others come to the social services facility for assistance and then learn about the ECE.

An example of this model of ECE provision is an early learning centre in a West Auckland decile two school community. It began providing childcare for parents and caregivers while they attended courses in cooking or parenting. From there, in recognition of a community need, it developed into an early childhood care and education centre. It supports working and non-working parents, and helps them with their child's transition to school.

Parents are conscious of care. Here are some example testimonies from parents:

> ECE has 'genuine care'.
>
> Parents 'know the child is cared for and loved'.
>
> 'We are able to leave our child in a loving and supportive centre and feel confident our child is being cared for and learning new skills.'

Parents report using the following social services:

- food grants
- WINZ help
- child-supervised access visits
- second-hand shop
- food bank
- mentoring

> "
> If we see parents punching their child and are finding parenting skills difficult, we come alongside to offer support such as teaching positive touch through songs—how to show love through touch. We might point them to parenting courses.
>
> For some, it is their only time to get out of the house and have adult conversations. It's a place for parents and young children to meet together. We aim to foster children's learning and development through the music programme and a range of activities.
>
> We help them deal with things. Some have used counselling. We show parents how to play with kids. We step in and guide where we can. They are part of our church family, in our building, and their needs are met through this. They feel valued and affirmed as parents.
>
> **MAINLY MUSIC AND PLAYGROUP LEADER**
> "

> "[There are] lots of very capable parents who are taking breaks from professional careers and offer a lot as volunteers to local groups such as Plunket.
> **PARENT INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY HOUSE CRECHE**

> "Parents are very supportive of us. They care about their children's education. They worry about it. They want the very best. They are supportive of each other because of their classes and groups.
>
> Businesses develop from the [community house] classes. For example, one attended a patchwork class and makes t-shirts with applique fronts that she sells on the internet. The staff feel appreciated and loved.
> **COMMUNITY HOUSE CRECHE MANAGER**

> "Fees are designed to be low. We are a centre that aims [to provide for low socio-economic families]. All the teachers believe every child deserves ECE regardless of where parents are at [financially]. It is not [the childrens'] fault if parents can't afford it.
> **ECE CENTRE MANAGER**

The playgroup has a social worker to assist with needs such as dealing with depression or finding successful coping strategies. New immigrants connect with local families in the community.

ECE TRANSFORMING LIVES

The second model of ECE seeks to transform the lives of children and their parents. It uses Mainly Music and a playgroup to support families in a West Auckland decile three community, and is linked to a community church. Positive behaviour management techniques are modelled, and adults are encouraged to participate with their children and take an interest in their play.

Parents report on how this helps the family:

- increases child's social skills and confidence
- provides opportunities [for families] to make new friends and socialise
- provides parental 'time out'
- provides parenting support
- helps the child's listening skills
- helps develop the child's musical and kinaesthetic competency
- helps develop the child's coordination
- provides a sense of value

> "Without the subsidy, they would be on the street otherwise. Young working parents can't afford daycare.
> **URBAN KŌHANGA TEACHER**

ANOTHER COMMUNITY ECE MODEL

Another way of investigating social issues is by looking at the issues of those who, within the model of cultural capital suggested earlier in this discussion piece, are healthily placed. This is to highlight some of the capabilities within a North Shore decile nine school zone and to reflect on the levels of need that vary considerably across communities within one city in New Zealand.

A community house crèche worker in this decile nine school zone articulates how they help parents with preschoolers.

While the children are in the community crèche, parents use the time for various purposes. It includes the following list:

- providing social interaction (for example, going out for coffee with friends)
- taking community house courses, walking groups, budgeting courses, cake decorating
- volunteering in the local community
- attending personal appointments

The community crèche helps parents in the following way:

- providing a place of belonging within the community
- providing an opportunity to make friends
- giving parents a chance for some 'time out' from the demands of childcare
- providing a sense of 'extended family'
- learning parenting skills
- nurturing 'fragile' parents needing emotional support

- helping parents cultivate new skills through providing opportunities for volunteering and building their confidence
- encouraging parents to take an active role in committee work which they might later use in other ways in the community such as on a board of trustees at their local school
- encouraging parents to use their professional abilities to help the community, such as tutoring at the local primary school

SUMMARY

There are alternative approaches for delivering ECE. The market approach has been very successful in the more well-to-do communities where parents have taken advantage of Government subsidises in order to move back into the workforce or to develop businesses that they can operate from home. Additionally, in ECE there is plenty of consumer choice and, with steadily increasing numbers of qualified ECE staff, the professional quality is also improving.

However, it is clear the benefits of some policies have failed to trickle down to the group most disadvantaged. This is because of the complexities of the social structure around which these communities function. As a result, there needs to be some intentional work at the grassroots level of low decile school communities enabling positive pathways for all to access quality ECE.

CONCLUSION

THE WAY TO PLAY A FAIR GAME

Within ECE there is clearly a wide range of service. Parents and professionals comment alike on the many benefits derived through ECE. These include cognitive stimulation as well as the social benefits for both the child and the family in connecting families with the wider community. Children are reportedly better prepared for the learning and social challenges of primary education.

The challenge of ECE is to provide the developing child with holistic education and care during these first vital years. As part of this challenge ECE must also play a role in helping to support functional family environments.

As the findings in this study show, the range of ECE services in a community vary considerably. While I have focused on some community models, commercial provision of ECE continues to increase due to the ongoing needs of working parents. Community ECE may be formal or informal, though there is increasing formality in structure and greater numbers of qualified staff. Kindergartens and other education/care centres continue to rise in enrolment numbers.

Policy analyst Johnson[69] suggests the present increase in commercial ECE centres is the consequence of labour market changes and public policy outcomes, whereby inadequate Government foresight to provide capital resulted in a dependency on private sources for ECE and subsequent increased fees to recoup expenditure. To defray costs, centres have been established in economically viable communities and as a result there has been an uneven distribution of facilities. Johnson views the outcome as ironic:

> The irony here is that this mal-distribution of ECE provision is undermining the stated intent of policies which promote greater access to ECE opportunities. Such policies are normally predicated either on improving educational outcomes for those children most at risk of educational failure in primary and secondary schools or on improving mothers' ability to participate in the labour market by providing them with reliable (and subsidised) childcare. Children most at risk of educational failure and women with the lowest rates of labour force participation are more likely to live in the same communities most poorly provided with ECE services.

> The shift of demand (if it is happening) may eventually result in the decline of choice as the capacity of the informal, unlicensed and parent/whānau-based providers declines. Most likely any collapse of such capacity will impact more on poor and isolated communities which don't have the resources or scale to support unsubsidised and small scale providers.

The findings in this discussion show the important role that community-based ECE has in linking families with holistic social services. In addition, parents can be supported and encouraged in their parenting role through informal mentoring.

Mumford, Sanders, Maden and Maden advocate a community development model of ECE and

argue for a strengths-based approach that calls forth coping mechanisms embedded in the family or cultural group. This includes discourses around resiliency and the acknowledgement that families are the experts of their own lives. Mumford et al. suggest the following community-based model:

> **Internationally, the combination of early childhood education and parent support and whānau/family development initiatives are recognised as having the potential to improve child outcomes and overall whānau/family well-being … There is increasing interest in finding innovative ways of delivering parent support and education programmes that improve family functioning and reduce the levels of child maltreatment. Early childhood education is considered to be a key setting where parent support and development can be effectively undertaken.[70]**

Community development models of ECE clearly support and nurture families.

In this discussion document, we have looked at community-based ECE provision and identified issues that perpetuate educational disadvantage. We have also profiled several communities and a range of ECE services. Included in the discussion is a focus on developing and sustaining education in communities that endure a complexity of social need.

The social invisibility of the disadvantaged means they may be overlooked in policy provision from one generation to the next. However, we need to ensure that there is opportunity for all to start at the same place of 'Go' in the Monopoly games in the nursery.

The following recommendations are in response to the issues raised in this discussion document:

1. That the Government needs to change from an emphasis on education as a commercial commodity to emphasising citizens' rights for equitable provision.

2. That the Government initiate ECE expenditure especially directed at the bottom socio-economic groups as a priority over high socio-economic groups, who have the economic means to access ECE independently of government subsidies.

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