The way forward – Strengthening the advocate-activist early childhood profession and teachers’ professional identities

NZARE Conference 2018
Māui Taumata Rau – Celebrating Transformative Educational Research
CONTENT

• An overview of doctoral research
• Discourses and teachers professional identities – Complexities and contradictions
• The way towards the advocate-activist early childhood profession and teachers’ professional identities
1. How have teachers' professional identities been constructed in ECE policies and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last two decades?

2. How have discourses in policies and practice constructed teachers' professional identities, and what are their effects?

3. What identities are accepted, rejected and negotiated in teachers’ specific institutional contexts, and why?
METHODOLOGY

1. Discourse-analysis of policy text

2. Focus groups with teachers, professional leaders and managers

3. Individual Interview
“Teachers’ professional identities provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society and negotiate their experience and the sense that is made of that experience” (Sachs, 2005, p. 15).
SHIFTING DIRECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

1996 to 2009

- Increasing participation of all children in quality ECE services
- ECE as a universal right – 20 Hours Free ECE
- Improving teachers’ status and professionalism
- Strengthening collaborative relationships

2010 to 2017

- ECE for ‘priority learners’
- Lowering targets for the percentage of qualified ECE teachers
- TAP Grants available to both for-profit and not-for-profit services
- Privatisation and marketisation leading to competition and division of the sector
SHIFTING DISCOURSES AND IDENTITIES

UNIVERSAL APPROACH
TARGETED AND INTERVENTIONIST APPROACH TO ECE
DEMOCRATIC PROFESSIONALISM
MANAGERIAL PROFESSIONALISM

DEMOCRACY
Advocate-activists
Teacher-saviours
VULNERABILITY
TEACHER
ECONOMIC INVESTMENT
Teacher-entrepreneurs
ENTERPRISE
“... Before, we were able to focus on what is best for children and whānau, to give honest assessment of children’s learning.... now we are forced to do what is best for the business ... and to keep families in our centre ...”
(Amy, a professional leader)

“... there are so many centres in this area and not many children... we are forced to compete with others.... what is happening is the erosion of what we see as quality [e.g. free access, all qualified teachers, curriculum based on range of philosophies and play, less academic focus] ...”
(Sandra, a kindergarten teacher)
Where Do We Go from Here?

Strengthening the advocate-activist early childhood profession and teachers’ professional identities
A WAY FORWARD …

- Understanding ‘a bigger picture’, the purpose of education and roles of teachers
- Regenerating democratic professionalism, strengthening alliance-building and reinforcing the sense of belonging to the professional teaching community
- Empowering collective actions and participatory decision-making through unionization of the sector
- Consistent and adequate state support to the sector is the key
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead
Thanks!

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REFERENCES


