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**Title:** Te Tirohanga Whakamuri, te Anga Whakamua: Past Locus - Future focus

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***Objectives or purposes of the research –***

The project was designed so as to explore, from the perspectives of key people instrumental to the change, the rapid expansion and growth of early childhood education in New Zealand during the period 1985-2005. This paper focuses on the methodology for the study: a key premise of which was to produce data for analysis that would generate complex, multi-layered and thick description of key moments in this twenty-year period. Our approach sought to document varied and multiple accounts of important factors that have worked to produce the early childhood field as it is presently found. The problems and possibilities of this approach is what will be fore-grounded in this paper.

***Theoretical framework –***

A discourse analysis through collaborative and parallel storytelling.

***Methodology/ Research Design –***

The project was qualitative in design and conducted within a research frame that was informed by kaupapa Māori and Western social history traditions. Our paper seeks to theorise the coming together of these perspectives and to describe the tensions and solutions found, as such it focuses on the methodology of the study. As a project of early childhood education that sought to make ordinary people the subject of history in their own terms, the design and methodology of the project needed to be both community based and communal. We will discuss this approach and describe significant principles that guided our work, including: our belief in people power – ie., empowerment to define research parameters and outcomes; and a desire to resist what Magnusson (2003) called 'the singularization of history'. The blend of microhistory and kaupapa Māori research in the design of the project incorporated core Māori concepts of *aroha ki te tangata*, *kanohi kitea*, *titiro*, *whakarongo*, *kōrero*, *manaakitanga*, *ngakau mahaki* as we worked with multiple participants over a weekend hui to generate rich data for later analysis and future learning.

***Significance of the work –***

Coming together with participants in July 2010, we sought to study a period of rapid expansion and change in early childhood education in New Zealand. Having reflected on our own parallel histories in early childhood education, we as a research team and as colleagues and contemporaries, found ourselves wondering and worrying about the future of our field. This provided the catalyst for the project: we theorised that by charting key early childhood education histories, we would be better equipped to help chart our futures as we begin to encounter a significantly shifting political and policy context. The deconstruction of some key

notions – *'policy'*, *'professionalism'* and *'progress'* – in the context of the global marketisation of education can often give clues as to how best to respond to future directions. The lucidity of expertise, the extent of application and the exploration of perspectives in a daring qualitative research project which draws on the collaborations of key players will provoke a diversity of response. We welcome that. The minute we start to generalise or simplify complexities through laying bare some of the components of struggle we may provoke resistance. We welcome that. But when we delve into the archives of the mind via collaborative and parallel storying, the interesting weaving together of the general and the particular, of the tribal with the national, of the colonial with the postcolonial, of the practical with the political, it is both revealing and frustrating; and we welcome that.