

**SECOND EDITION**  
**EARLY CHILDHOOD**  
**EDUCATION**  
History, Philosophy and Experience

**CATHY NUTBROWN**  
and **PETER CLOUGH**



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi  
Singapore | Washington DC

# Part 1

## A Short History of Early Childhood Education

### The legacy of history

We begin this book with a short chronology of the developments in thinking and practice which have taken place in the history of early childhood education in the UK. We have identified key moments and key international figures in history who have, in different ways, influenced thinking, research, policy and practice in the development of education and care for the youngest children. In beginning with an overview of early years developments from the 1600s to present day we have created a foundation for the rest of the book with our view of the contributions of individual women and men who, in one way or another, made their distinctive mark on the development of early childhood education in the UK.

History is what humanity creates, and policy itself is *realised* by people; as Hesse (1939) reminds us, history helps to generate a concept of humanity. In the sense that people *are* the history-makers, early childhood educators make both history and policy, though in another sense the inheritance of history is something from which they stand apart and the impact of policy is something over which they may feel they have no control. But, as Merleau-Ponty (1962: ix) has it, ‘although we are born into a [pre-existing] world, we [yet] have the task of creating it...’

One of the aims of this book is to help readers to consider current policies and practices in early childhood education through the lens of history; it seeks to use history as a means of understanding present states and challenges of early childhood education, and as a tool for informing the shape of early childhood education in the future – that is, in our *own* lives and careers.

Of course, we could say that nothing is new, and ideas simply recur; perhaps most topical at the end of the twentieth century was the example of the planned re-introduction of 'Payment by Results', signalled in a DfEE Green Paper (DfEE, 1999), and, again, a trial of a new policy of Payment by Results was introduced in 2012<sup>1</sup> whereby Children's Centres were to be rewarded for the results they achieved in effective early intervention programmes and family support. This policy echoed the 'Payment by Results' in the Revised Code of 1862, where the notion of raising standards through the use of testing was introduced and teachers' pay was linked to the achievements of their pupils. This is not so much a case of history repeating itself but perhaps more of an example of how events, developments and ideas can rhyme, or chime, or echo over time.

This book is structured to encourage critical engagement with historical ideas and developments, reflecting on influences on early childhood education, issues of policy development and implementation, and the impact of research on policy. The development of early childhood education provision, and the key figures in that development, form the starting points for considering where early childhood education has come from and where present policies 'fit', or do not fit, with the lessons of history. The ways in which childhood has been constructed throughout recent history is also a topic which helps to inform the critique of policy which has moved from the central aim of 'nurturing childhood' to a situation where 'raising educational achievement' is the main goal. Central to this argument about the shift in priorities of policy in early childhood education and care is the change in language and the new terminologies imposed year after year upon early years provision.

Finally, we are aware that there is no single history; it needs always to be seen from multiple perspectives, viewed through different lenses. In understanding what has happened in the UK, it is important, too, to look at international developments in early childhood education and the many influences from figures throughout history working around the world.

### Early childhood education in the UK: a brief history

During the mid-1700s there were moves in political and social spheres to provide some form of education for young children. 'Monitorial' schools were set up from the end of the 1700s by the Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, and the New Lanark worksite elementary school was set up by Robert Owen in the early 1800s. The National Society was founded on 16 October 1811, its aim

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/delivery/surestart/a0076712/sure-start-children's-centres>

that the National Religion should be made the foundation of National Education, and should be the first and chief thing taught to the poor, according to the excellent Liturgy and Catechism provided by our Church.<sup>2</sup>

The National Society established a national system of education, supplemented by the State from 1870. In 2007 there were some 5,000 Church of England and Church in Wales schools (originally known as National Schools), most of which are primary schools, educating almost a million children. However, it was the protestant 'Evangelicals' who, through the Home and Colonial School Society (founded in 1836), had the insight to consider the development of schools for the youngest children and open 'infant schools'.

Thus, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries schools were being developed and systems devised and expanded, not only by religious organisations and benefactors, but also, of course, by the socially and politically motivated, who were driven, not by religious conviction but by a belief that the education of young children could contribute to the development of a better society. By 1862, the Revised Code was introduced whereby grants were awarded to elementary schools, depending upon the achievement of their pupils. Forster's Education Act of 1870 established school boards in areas where there was a lack of elementary school provision.

Simultaneously, there was pioneering work on the nature of curriculum for young children, with the Mundella Code of 1882 advocating 'enlightened' teaching of young children. Particular figures can be seen as distinctly influential in such 'curricular development' (though of course it would not have been known as such!); these include: Johann Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel, Rachel and Margaret McMillan, Maria Montessori, Charlotte Mason, Susan Isaacs and, more lately, Loris Malaguzzi and Chris Athey. All advocated ways of working with children which centred around the children themselves and where play was a central component of what was offered.

It was the development of industry which first prompted schooling for young children, and discussion about the age at which compulsory schooling should begin. The view was put forward in parliament during the enactment of Forster's Education Act (1870) that sending children to school a year earlier than other countries in Europe would give them some sort of advantage in educational achievement (Szretzer, 1964). Indeed, it was Mundella who, in an address to the 'National Education League' said: 'I ask you Englishmen and Englishwomen, are Austrian children to be educated before English children?' (Birmingham, 1869: 133). A further reason, put forward in the Hadow Report (1911) for supporting an early start to schooling was the desire to prevent

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.churchofengland.org/education/national-society>

childhood ill-health by the introduction of medical inspections of young children whilst at school. Legislation for the introduction of nursery schools for 2–5-year-olds was passed by Lloyd George's coalition government in 1918. However, the early start to compulsory schooling was paralleled by early leaving too, a view supported by the industrialists who needed young workers, as well as many families who needed their children to work to earn enough to put food on the table.

Later, during the First World War, with the need for mothers of younger children to work, the development of nursery education flourished. The following account of the setting up of nursery education in Sheffield is typical of many cities in the north of England.

The Development of Nursery Education in Sheffield has paralleled National trends. Nursery Education began in this country at the beginning of this [the twentieth] century at the instigation of people who were concerned about the plight of children in industrial cities: Sheffield children were typical of these. The social climate was such that by the late 1920s Sheffield was beginning to suffer in the Depression: unemployment was rife and poverty was very real. The then centre of the city buildings consisted of many terraced houses and factories, with little opportunity for the children to grow and develop in a healthy environment. In Scotland, Robert Owen had seen the necessity for young children to have good food, fresh air and rest in uncrowded conditions and started a nursery for his workers' children at the turn of the nineteenth century. Rachel and Margaret McMillan began their Nursery School in Deptford with the intention of providing an 'open-air' school for young children in 1913. This was the beginning of thinking that young children needed special provision.

Children from poorer areas were often under-nourished with poor skin and pale complexions: rickets were common. Colds, coughs and catarrh seemed to perpetuate. Clothing was inadequate and unattractive: there was very little colour in their lives. The children were often stitched into their clothes for winter. Flea bites, sore eyes and lack of sleep were common and infection was easily passed on. The local Women Councillors (in Sheffield) decided to fight for a nursery school and, although it was an uphill battle Denby Street Nursery School was opened in 1928 based on the McMillan open-shelter type. It was open from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm and holidays. There was practically no money, very little equipment and a skeleton staff.

The emphasis was on physical care. The children were fed, washed, rested and loved. The food was simple and plentiful – buttered rusks, dripping toast, hash stew, shepherd's pie, lentil roast, milk puddings, custard and fruit and steamed puddings. The nurse and doctor visited regularly. Cod liver oil was administered and children monitored for impetigo, rickets, poor eyesight, etc. School became a haven especially if children were from families living in only one room, although the schools were very careful not to usurp the home.

Outdoor play was robust and skilful as many of the children had played in the streets from a very young age. The imaginative play – particularly domestic

play – was very real. The children were independent, practical, capable and resilient, many having to be so from a very young age, especially if they came from a large family.

Sheffield Nursery Education grew slowly from its beginnings: there were only 4 nursery schools by 1939 when most children were evacuated or spent quite a lot of time in the air raid shelters after the outbreak of war. Nurseries did close at the beginning of the war but opened again in 1940 on a short-time basis because of the bombing campaign. Gradually the day became extended again as it was felt that children could catch up on sleep at the nursery and there was a need for the regular routine and stability it provided.

The war years did give an impetus to nursery education: there was some expansion because of the demand for married women in the labour force. The expansion of nursery education became a high priority and resources were found. For example in 1941 a new joint circular was sent out to set up special war nurseries financed by the Ministry of Health and the Maternity and Child Welfare Department. The full-time nurseries were open in some cases for 12–15 hours and only for children of working mothers. Part-time nurseries also gave priority to evacuated children and those of working mothers. The emphasis moved to include children's social and emotional needs.

Although the extension in provision of nursery education because of the pressures of war was considerable, compared with earlier years, it could not be regarded as 'spectacular' as only a very small proportion of the total child population in the age group were receiving some kind of nursery education. However, the war nurseries did much to popularise the idea of a nursery stage in education. In the emergency situation of the war, where married women were needed to work, the care of the children had been met by the nursery school. The idea that only mothers can look after children, lost its force during the war.

The 1944 Education Act implied that nursery education would become universal but the 50s and 60s marked a decline in state provision for a variety of reasons – economic pressures, demand for space and teachers for the over fives during the 'bulge' years. (Government) Circular 8/60 effectively stopped expansion until Addendum No. 2 in 1965 when a controlled expansion was allowed where this would increase the return to service of married women teachers.

In 1960, however, the Pre-school Playgroup Movement was formed, the lack of nursery places having given mothers the impetus to make their own provision. The continuous expansion of the movement and the commitment and dedication of those working in it has contributed significantly to greater awareness of the needs of the under fives.

Interest in the state provision of nursery education came to the fore once again when stimulated by the Plowden Report in 1967. It was recommended that nursery classes should be extended, and that an immediate start on building of new nursery schools should be made in 'educational priority areas': the idea being that good nursery schools could begin to offset the consequences of social deprivation. (Sheffield LEA, 1986: 2–3)

Denby Street Nursery School officially closed on 31 August 2003; the last roll had 84 boys and 83 girls on register. It is now a temporary car park, mostly used by fans of Sheffield United Football Club who play at Bramall Lane. The school was one of many to go by the wayside in times of reduced expenditure and 'rationalisation' of provision, and closures of other early years settings have continued in 2013.

Whilst nursery education was under development in England, there were parallels in Scotland. Following Robert Owen's initiatives, Nursery education began with voluntary contributions in the early 1900s through the commitment of those who saw the need to provide something particular for younger children:

At the beginning of the 20th century as people became more aware of social and physical conditions, public interest was directed to the welfare of children under five years old. The first nursery school in Scotland was opened in Edinburgh in 1903.

Edinburgh's Free Kindergarten was established in 1903. Miss Howden, infant headmistress at Milton House School in 1881, who was concerned at 'babies' accompanying siblings to school, left her savings to found the free kindergarten which started in Galloway's Entry, Canongate in 1903.

St Saviour's Child Garden was established in 1906 by Miss Lileen Hardy in co-operation with Canon Laurie, Rector of Old St Paul's Episcopal Church in the church's hall in Browns Close. (Hardy, 1999)

Thus, His Majesty's Inspector of Schools reported in 1913:

This school is a bright spot in a rather dark neighbourhood ... with two groups of about 20 children under 5 years of age. To these school lessons are not given. They engage in a variety of interesting kindergarten occupations and they learn to draw and sing. The rest of the time they spend taking care of pets, in attempts at gardening and in playing at housework. They mostly live in the open air and are obviously happy. Regular lessons in elementary subjects are given to those children whose ages are from 5-7 years. (City of Edinburgh/Early Education, 1999)

All such developments in early education had social and welfare issues at their heart, as fundamental concerns. These, combined with the effects of war years and a recognition of the needs of young children, fuelled the development of early education provision, where establishments set up to care for the physical needs of young children also began to develop ways of providing opportunities for young children to learn. The summary of the HMI report on St Saviour's School describes what many would recognise as elements of an appropriate curriculum for young children. Extended opening hours for working mothers was often normal practice and balancing children's needs was a central feature of many nursery establishments.

## Foundation stones: some key figures whose work has influenced thinking and development of provision for young children

The following section outlines some of the politicians, social pioneers and educationalists who in different ways contributed to the development of early education in the UK. Table 1.1 provides a brief summary (in chronological order by date of birth) of some of the women and men who influenced these developments in the UK, up to recent times. This summary helps to identify ‘key moments’ in particular periods of history, and the links between the work of a number of individuals and the development of policies. It is not a comprehensive summary, but serves to provide an indicative ‘archaeology’ behind current UK practices.

**Table 1.1** Some influential figures and key events in the development of Early Education in the UK, up to the present day

Name	Summary of achievements
Jan Amos Comenius 1592–1670	In 1631 published <i>The School of Infancy</i> focusing on the early years of a child’s education and in particular on education by mothers within the home. In 1658 his <i>Orbis Sensualium Pictus</i> , the first picture book for children, was published.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1712–1778	In 1762 published <i>Emile</i> which expounded his view for a universal system of education through the experience of the child Emile.
J.H. Pestalozzi 1746–1827	In 1780 published <i>Leonard and Gertrude: A Book for the People</i> in which he set out a view of education as central to the regeneration of a community. He wrote: ‘The school ought really to stand in closest connection with the life of the home’. He believed that mothers should be educated sufficiently to teach their children at home.
Robert Owen 1771–1858	Mill owner in New Lanark, Scotland. In 1816 established schools for children of his workers. Schools were for children under 12 years with particular emphasis on the infant school. James Buchanan was the first teacher in the New Lanark school, exemplifying Owen’s ideals of kindness, activity and co-operation.
Joshua Watson 1771–1855	A retired wine merchant and government contractor during the Napoleonic Wars, he was once referred to by Bishop Lloyd of Oxford as ‘the best layman in England’. He was an influential Church of England figure in the nineteenth century, and one of the founders of The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in 1811.

(Continued)



Table 1.1 (Continued)

Name	Summary of achievements
Joseph Lancaster 1778–1838	One of the founders of mass education for the poor in the industrial age and pioneer of the Monitorial school system. In 1798 set up the Borough Road School using the system of monitors to teach them. Supported by other Quakers, the system spread and 826 British schools were established by 1851. Borough Road also became the earliest teacher training institution.
Friedrich Froebel 1782–1852	In 1826 published <i>The Education of Man</i> in which he argues for the importance of play in education. Froebel's ideas became influential in Britain around the mid-nineteenth century.
James Buchanan 1784–1857	In 1814 worked with Robert Owen in New Lanark to run the infant school. Though reported not to have been a good manager, he enjoyed working with children using methods that reflected 'progressive' infant school work.
Samuel Wilderspin 1791–1866	In 1820, after meeting James Buchanan, took charge of the new Quaker Street Infant School in Spitalfields.
Elizabeth Mayo 1793–1865	In 1829, wrote <i>Lessons with Objects</i> which claimed that by arranging and classifying objects and discovering their qualities the child would be stimulated to learn. This influenced elementary education throughout the rest of nineteenth century, including some rote learning.
William Ewart 1798–1869	In 1850 successfully introduced a Bill to establish free public libraries supported from local rates.
Sir James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth 1804–1877	1839–40 established a training college at Battersea which became the model for nineteenth-century training of elementary school teachers.
Robert Lowe 1811–1892	Introduced the Revised Code in 1862 which included the introduction of 'Payment by Results' whereby grants to elementary schools were based principally upon pupils' performance in annual examinations in reading, writing and arithmetic. Payment by Results continued for 35 years until 1899.
Charles Dickens 1812–1870	Through his novels he drew attention to the poor social conditions which affected children and the importance of education.
Emily Anne Eliza Shirreff 1814–1897	Campaigning for the education of girls and women. In 1875 became president of the Froebel Society (founded in 1874). She emphasised the importance of the proper training of kindergarten teachers.
William Edward Forster 1818–1886	The 1870 Elementary Education Act established school boards in areas where there was a lack of elementary school provision.

Name	Summary of achievements
Anthony John Mundella 1825–1897	Member of the Hadow Committee and responsible with Lord Spencer for the Mundella Act which became known as the Education Act of 1880 and which introduced universal compulsory education in England.
Sir William Hart Dyke 1837–1931	The ‘Mundella’ Code of 1882 encouraged ‘enlightened’ teaching methods in schools and allowed for a variety of subjects in the curriculum.  Played a leading part in promoting and distributing the 1890 Education Code which paved the way for the ending of the system of ‘Payment by Results’.  In 1891 introduced the Free Education Bill which opened up the way to providing free elementary education to children.
Sir James Crichton-Brown 1840–1938	In 1884 as Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education investigated cases of alleged ‘overpressure’ in London schools caused by the demands of the Mundella Code.
Charlotte Mason 1842–1923	Headmistress of one of England’s first infant schools at 22 years of age. Pestalozzi-trained, she started the first infant school in the country and championed home education and play as being as important as lessons, with the key phrase ‘Education is an atmosphere’.
Edmond Gore Alexander Holmes 1850–1936	In 1911 published <i>‘What Is and What Might Be: A Study of Education in General and Elementary Education in Particular’</i> . This book condemned the formal, systematised, examination-ridden education system and advocated co-operation, self-expression and activity methods.  Holmes also, importantly, criticised the system of ‘Payment by Results’.
Mary Augusta Ward (Mrs Humphry) 1851–1920	In 1890 founded a centre for social work, Bible teaching and ‘children’s play hours’ at Gordon Square, London. The ‘Children’s Play Hours’ scheme led to the establishment of recreational centres for London children. The Centre transferred to Tavistock Square in 1897 and became the Passmore Edwards Settlement. In 1898 Mary Ward began a scheme for ‘crippled’ children which contributed to the general recognition of the need for special resources and provision for some children.
Edward Parnell Culverwell 1855–1931	In 1913 published: <i>The Montessorian Principles and Practice</i> advocating modern, Montessorian teaching methods and thus introducing the method to the UK.
Sigmund Freud 1856–1939	Developed an approach to psychoanalysis which provided a way of interpreting the behaviour of young children.

(Continued)

Table 1.1 (Continued)

Name	Summary of achievements
John Dewey 1859–1952	Promoted progressive and child-centred education through teaching based on integrated learning through projects rather than discrete subjects.
Rachel McMillan 1859–1917	In 1913 established the Rachel McMillan Open Air Nursery School in London, based on her ideas about pre-school education, with a large garden incorporating shelters and other outdoor facilities. She focused particularly on work with children from slum areas.
Margaret McMillan 1860–1931	In 1899 Margaret McMillan participated in one of the first medical inspections of children under government auspices. In 1902 she campaigned successfully for school medical inspections. In 1913, with her sister Rachel she established Camp schools and a nursery school. She established the Rachel McMillan Training College in memory of her sister in 1930.
Catherine Isabella Dodd 1860–1932	In 1902 opened an experimental elementary school and kindergarten based on new teaching methods.
Dame Maude Agnes Lawrence 1864–1933	School inspector and administrator. Became Chief Woman Inspector in 1905 when the Woman Inspectorate was set up. The six women, at first, inspected the education of very young children and girls in elementary schools, mainly in domestic subjects.
Maria Montessori 1870–1952	In 1907 opened, in Rome, the first House of Childhood, for children living in tenement housing aged between 3 and 7 years. Montessori's work emphasised the importance of children's environments. She developed successful methods of working with children described as 'mentally defective'.
Edith Mary Deverell 1872–1937	In 1900 appointed to the Inspectorate. Joined five other women inspectors who were inspecting girls' and infants' departments in elementary schools.  Campaigned to secure the interest and co-operation of parents in the work of the school.
Melanie Klein 1882–1960	Psychoanalyst who employed 'free [therapeutic] play' techniques with children. In 1932 published <i>The Psycho-Analysis of Children</i> . A pioneer of knowledge of the 'mental life' of infant children and an important influence on general attitudes to young children.
Alexander Sutherland Neill 1883–1973	In 1924 A.S. Neill founded his own school in Lyme Regis, which on moving to Suffolk became known as the famous 'Summerhill School', based on radically liberal, humanist and child-centred principles.

Name	Summary of achievements
Susan Sutherland Isaacs 1885–1948	In 1924–1927 established the Malting House School, Cambridge, with a curriculum and pedagogy designed to further the <i>individual</i> development of children. Author of several books which included observations and reflections of children at the Malting House School. (Thus an early <i>systematic</i> researcher.)
Henry Caldwell Cook 1886–1939	In 1917 published <i>The Play Way, an Essay in Educational Method</i> . He believed that the existing school system hampered ‘true’ education, arguing (as Dewey was to) that: ‘Proficiency and learning come not from reading and listening but from action, from doing and from experience’.
Marion Richardson 1892–1946	Mostly influential as Inspector for Art during the 1930s in London. Influenced the teaching of handwriting during the late 1930s, with the publication <i>Writing and Writing Patterns</i> (1935) which influenced the teaching of handwriting in primary schools.
Louis Christian Schiller 1895–1976	Her Majesty’s Inspector of Schools, promoted child-centred learning and education through the arts. Worked closely with Robin Tanner running courses for serving teachers.
Lev Vygotsky 1896–1934	Psychologist and educational theorist best known for his emphasis on learning as an act of social interaction and his theory of the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’.
Donald Woods Winnicott 1896–1971	A paediatrician and psychoanalyst who developed a framework of human emotional development which supports the development of environments and practices to enable children to develop as secure and emotionally ‘whole’ human beings.
Jean Piaget 1896–1980	Psychologist who put forward stages of cognitive development which informed practice in early years teaching. Corresponded with Susan Isaacs.
Sir Fred Joyce Schonell 1900–1969	Most renowned for influence on primary school methods of teaching, in particular, approaches to teaching children with learning difficulties. In 1944 wrote the <i>Happy Venture</i> reading scheme and developed the reading test named after him.
Erik Erikson 1902–1994	Psychologist and psychoanalyst, his theory of human development prompted the development of early childhood programmes which supported healthy social and emotional development.
Sir James Pitman 1901–1985	Inventor of the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ita) a simplified format to aid learning of reading which was in vogue in some schools during the 1960s but which did not become universally established infant teaching practice.

(Continued)

Table 1.1 (Continued)

Name	Summary of achievements
Carl Rogers 1902–1987	Psychologist and psychotherapist who put forward an approach to education which was based on reciprocal relationships between children and between children and their teachers.
Burrhus Frederick Skinner 1904–1990	Psychologist who developed theory of behaviourism which promoted a system of learning which involved a 'stimulus-response' approach in order to modify undesirable behaviour.
Robin Tanner 1904–1988	Promoted the arts in education and ran courses for teachers, with Christian Schiller, at the Institute of Education in London.
John Bowlby 1907–1990	Psychoanalyst renowned for his 'attachment' theory.
Sir Alec Clegg 1909–1986	Chief Education Officer of the West Riding 1945–1974. Clegg emphasised the importance of creativity in all educational processes, made key contributions to teachers' in-service education (INSET) and to the organisation and curricula of schools. He made an extensive collection of children's artwork from West Riding schools from the 1930s to 1974 and expounded the importance of creativity.
Sir John Hubert Newsom 1910–1971	Like Clegg, a pioneer of the systematic development of school needs and processes. In 1963 Chair of the Central Advisory Council on education which produced the Newsom Report – <i>Half Our Future</i> – reporting on the education of 'average and below average' children. Deputy Chair of the Central Advisory Council, Children and their Primary Schools which produced <i>The Plowden Report</i> (1968) and wrote several books, including <i>Willingly to School</i> (1944), <i>The Education of Girls</i> (1948) and <i>The Child at School</i> (1950).
Loris Malaguzzi 1920–1994	Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach to preschool education. Famously championed children's rights in education and the 'hundred languages of childhood'.
Chris Athey 1924–2011	Director of the Froebel Early Childhood Project which identified 'Schematic Theory' as a way of understanding children's learning. Advocate of parents and professional educators sharing pedagogic knowledge.

## Into the twenty-first century: twenty-five years of policy change

### Understanding recent history: 1988–2013

When we look back over these last few years, it seems that the slow and fitful development of early childhood education in the UK is now central to educational and social change. There has been something of an explosion of activity, a burgeoning of initiatives, interest and resources. Thus in the last 25 years alone, from 1988 to 2013, there have been at least 25 major new policies (an average of one per year) which, apart from their individual effects, have, as a whole, changed the shape and status of Early Childhood Education and Care almost beyond recognition. A few years ago a teacher told us:

It's odd, I started teaching in 1988 and I've been looking back at old files and things and clearing out planning sheets, class lists, those kinds of things. Looking back I found myself plotting these 20 years almost exactly in terms of a policy a year!

A brief survey of this period reveals how policy changes have involved early childhood educators in the following:

- implementing the National Curriculum and subsequent revisions
- rigorous and (sometimes) stressful inspection processes
- implementation of the Children Act 1989
- interpretation of expected 'desirable outcomes' of nursery education
- implementing new codes of practice for the identification of children with Special Educational Needs
- implementing changes in relation to national assessment of children on entry to school, known as 'Baseline Assessment'
- the National Childcare Strategy in 1998
- working, during the 1990s, with diminishing resources followed by high-profile, funded activity and increasing expectations during the early 2000s and savage cuts to public spending and progressive closure of provision since 2011, whilst policy continued to claim progress on quality
- working with diminishing support and limited opportunities for professional development followed by expectations of further qualifications and funded professional development
- grappling with issues affecting the teaching of 4-year-olds in school
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs)
- working within a developing network of diversity of provision and Early Years Child Care Partnerships
- implementing aspects of the National Literacy Strategy

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

- implementing aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy
- implementing the new Foundation Stage curriculum developed from government guidance
- transforming the Foundation Stage from policy to practice
- implementing the Foundation Stage Profile
- *The Ten Year Childcare Strategy 2004*
- implementing the Birth to Three Matters Framework
- establishment of the Children's Workforce Development Council (2006)
- implementing the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (2007)
- acquiring Early Years Professional Status
- review of The Early Years Foundation Stage (Tickell, 2011) and implementation of the revised EYFS (2012)
- review of Early Years and Childcare Qualifications (Nutbrown Review, 2012)
- launch of the Childcare Commission<sup>3</sup> (DfE and DWP, 2012)
- provision for 40% of the most vulnerable 2-year-olds in England<sup>4</sup>
- new policies announced in 'More Great Childcare' (DfE, 2012)
- new assessment policy announced (2013)

It is important to remember that this list is by no means exhaustive and, of course, is supplemented by other social and educational policies which have – equally if less directly – impacted on the culture, structure and status of early childhood education and care. As well as these demanding policy shifts, recent years have seen the establishment of what might be called a new recognition for the early childhood workforce with:

- unprecedented government investment followed by unprecedented spending cuts
- professional development opportunities (and expectations)
- networks of support
- expectation of further qualifications of some staff working with children from birth to five.

## Into the future, learning from the past

Learning from the past is one way of trying to ensure that new policies and investment do not repeat the mistakes of previous generations but,

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/a00211918/childcare-commission>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/delivery/free%20entitlement%20to%20early%20education/a0070230/eigel>

of course, history shows that it is not that simple! We shall come to this later in the book where we examine the ways in which influential people and their actions contributed to the history and development of early childhood education the UK and how this has helped to shape present-day policy and practice and serves to locate current experience within a history of ideas, beliefs and values. However, throughout the book it will become apparent that policy-makers do not always learn from the past and, as we shall see, ideas sometimes seem to return, are sometimes re-invented and appear in 'new clothes' but nevertheless bear a distinctly familiar shape (even if bringing new intentions).

The point of this examination of the work and thinking of people who have contributed to the development of early childhood education, is to try to understand how the most useful ideas can be drawn upon and developed. There is no 'history for the sake of history' here, rather a reflection on some of the lessons which might be learned in order to try to understand the present state of early childhood education and how it has come to be what it is.

## Suggestions for further reading

- Giardiello, P. (2013) *Pioneers in Early Childhood Education: the roots and legacies of Rachel and Margaret McMillan, Maria Montessori and Susan Isaacs*. London: Routledge.
- Selbie, P. and Clough, P. (2005) 'Talking early childhood education fictional enquiry with historical figures', *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 3(2) 115–26.