

Abstract

Crossing the Rubicon – what are we planning for in Early Childhood Education?

Strategy is a word that has had an increased currency in recent years. It is a word that is used in organisational studies to set out the primacy of good business decision-making, in foretelling risk and opportunity. It has been used by government in policy documents, where medium and long-term goals are set out, for example the New Zealand government's policy document *Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education – pathways to the future*.

Michel Foucault's methodology of genealogy is used in this study to trace the origins of the term strategy, its use in organisational studies, and its relevance to education, specifically Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. The study by Richard Whipp into the effectiveness of strategic planning is also used to problematise such a term as an oxymoron.

The study problematises some naturalised assumption of the image of people, of time, and of analysts' reflexivity. It asks about the use of terms that originated in military lexicon, but are now seen as good business practices. However, traces of the original military intent remain in terms such as manoeuvres, strategy, target, plan and risk. Foucault inverted the phrase that politics is war by any other means, as institutions centralised control, and set up supervision of populations, and collected statistics to plot changed patterns. This paper examines some of the tracery that remains in such use of governmental language, and asks if this is the most appropriate lexicon for education.