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Early Childhood Educators' Experiences of the Ontario Full-Day Early Learning: Promises to Keep

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education degree in Education

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**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF THE ONTARIO FULL-DAY
EARLY LEARNING: PROMISES TO KEEP**

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Rose Walton

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of Western Ontario

London, Ontario, Canada

November 2013

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Abstract

School-based kindergarten is a place where Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and schooling practices meet and overlap. This initiative has resulted in many changes including a legislated partnership between Early Childhood Educators and kindergarten teachers under the umbrella of the Ontario Ministry of education. In classrooms, these two diversely positioned partners shared professional space within the context of the newly minted program. The purpose of my narrative case study was to learn about participants' experiences of a legislated partnership with a kindergarten teacher. Three early childhood educators employed by three different district school boards, I posed semi-structured interview questions and conducted a thematic analysis of their stories of practice (Creswell, 2009). Employing Positioning Theory (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999), I came to a deeper understanding of how ECEs position themselves discursively within an organization of change.

Keywords

Early Childhood Education and Care, Early Childhood Educator, interprofessional practices, hierarchy, marginalization, professional development, collective agreement, kindergarten, partnership, Positioning Theory.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Overview

School-based kindergarten is a place where Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and schooling practices meet and overlap. In Ontario, Full-day Kindergarten (FDK) is also a setting in which two historically marginalized female-intensive professional groups are being asked to work together to support children's learning. In each FDK classroom a primary teacher and early childhood educator (ECE) comprise a teaching partnership. The research project described in this thesis was a qualitative case study of the teacher-ECE partnership experience in FDK classrooms that employed stories told from the perspectives of ECE partners. Specifically I interviewed three ECEs about their experiences in FDK and conducted a thematic analysis of the stories of practice they told to me. The thesis will argue that some ECE teachers have been positioned as caretakers in the system while Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) certified teachers have been positioned as professionals with expertise in instruction and assessment. I claim that these two diversely positioned partners have been charged to negotiate ways to work together and they need support. In this first chapter I provide an overview of my study, outline its purpose, state the overarching research questions, and list key findings.

Study Purpose and Rationale

The Ontario Early Years Policy Framework (OEYPF) (Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), 2013a) is a newly minted initiative the outcomes of which have been keenly watched by other Canadian provinces and American states. Given that the success of the initiative will depend in part upon the emergent partnership between two groups, there is a need to research the partnership process. Partnerships have been well established in some other countries. In Norway for example, the care and education of young children is administered under the auspice of Children and Family Affairs, while Sweden addresses the needs of young children under their Ministry of Education (Alvestad & Samuelsson, 1999). The Ontario legislation provides an arena for cooperation between two professionals, but does not mandate collaborative practices. The purpose of my study was to understand how ECE teachers were managing this mandated partnership with the few guidelines available to them at the beginning of the FDK roll-out. Through a close examination of ECEs' stories of practice, I sought to better understand the social dynamics of collaborative partnerships in their classrooms from the perspective of one half of the partnership. As a learning coordinator holding Ontario College of Teachers' qualifications and working with both partners in my professional role, I wished to explore the role of the ECE teacher. Also, I felt a need to honour my own professional ethics by learning about the roles and responsibilities being enacted. Research literature on the topic of FDK in Ontario is limited, in part because the initiative is so new. I wished to understand the challenges as well as the benefits that resulted from two diversely positioned professionals sharing the same space. I also wanted to document

the ECEs' perspectives. My hope is that the study might open a space for professional dialogue and encourage ECEs and teachers to co-construct a shared professional space.

The Research Questions

The study was undertaken to answer a number of questions I had about professional work in a space of mandated collegiality. Specifically I aimed to address the following questions:

How is the legislated partnership between registered ECE teachers and certified teachers from the Ontario College of Teachers defined and represented in official texts pertaining to Ontario's full-day kindergarten programs and in ECE teachers' accounts of their partnership activities?

How are ECE teachers positioned within this discursively produced partnership?

What role(s) might different professional discourses play in the positioning?

What role(s) do differences in power and status play in the positioning?

These questions reflect my concerns as an early childhood educator and certified school teacher whose role now includes support for kindergarten teachers and their ECE partners. When the FDK initiative was announced I had many questions about the ways in which the implementation of FDK could provide opportunities for each group to have their voices heard. As a learning coordinator in a district school board, I wanted to support my colleagues and administrators in a time of transition. In order to support the ECEs' and teachers' work I needed to understand the roots of early childhood care and education. As a former Kindergarten teacher, I wanted to know what it felt like to be a

part of this transformation and how the roles and responsibilities played out in the classroom. What did ECEs and teachers do on a daily basis? Did they feel successful in their roles? The questions began to preoccupy me. In order to keep the study focused, I felt I had to make some decisions about the study and learn from the group I saw as least powerful. Preparing to conduct my study led me to consider the history of early childhood education in western countries.

Background

School-based early childhood programs have roots in a tradition that stretches as far back as the industrial revolution in Britain where infant schools in New Lanark, Scotland introduced the children of economically disadvantaged families to nursery education with a “propensity to learning by playing” (Prochner, 2009, p.2). During the industrial revolution in Britain and North America, the plight of mothers of young children who were employed in the factories and mills motivated industrialist philanthropists such as Robert Owen to establish infant schools. Under Owen and others, infant schools provided early education classes for children aged four to six. As the children progressed through the school system, the focus of their education turned to skill-based learning leading to future factory employment. Over time, similar schools were opened in the colonies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In spite of their concerns to better the lives of young children, the early philanthropists espoused a human capital perspective. They were educating children to be workers. Today many policy makers in member countries of the Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) such as Canada continue to take a human capital perspective toward ECEC services and program resourcing and ECEC is “part of human capital strategy for modern competitive countries” (Friendly & Prentice, 2009, p. 26). *The Early Years Study 3* puts it as follows.

The science of early development provides a framework to look beyond public works and incentives for the Big Three auto companies, to another important trio—preparing our future workforce, supporting parents to work or upgrade their skills and strengthening democratic communities. (McCain, Mustard, & McQuaig, 2011, p. 3)

Friendly and Prentice, (2009) also note that in Canada (with the exception of Quebec), the responsibility for education is assumed by the state, but the responsibility for child care is largely a private one. The before-and after-school care introduced as part of the FDK initiative is one attempt to ameliorate the problems faced by parents in accessing child care.

In Ontario, the recent re-alignment and redirection of funding and administration from isolated ministries involved in child care, health, welfare and education aims to provide integrated support services to families under the guidance of school districts and municipalities. The alignment of *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning, 2006) and the *Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten draft document* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b) aims to smooth the transition from early education and care settings to school settings. In spite of the government’s emphasis on integration of services, the topics of collaboration and

interprofessional practice have received scant attention from administrators. I began my inquiry by considering how the roles were laid out in the legislation:

Bill 242 Full-day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act 2010 (Bill 242) and Full-day Early Learning Kindergarten Draft 2010 program (OME, 2010b) mandated teachers and ECEs to cooperate with each other with respect to matters regarding the provision of junior kindergarten, and kindergarten and extended day programs.

Full-day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act 2010 (Bill 242): Section 16 of the Bill amends the Act by adding section 264.1.

Further to Bill 242:

16. The Act is amended by adding the following section:

Duty of teachers and designated early childhood educators to co-operate, etc.

264.1 (1) It is the duty of the following persons to co-ordinate the matters listed in subsection (2) and to co-operate with each other with respect to those matters:

1. Teachers.
2. Temporary teachers.
3. Designated early childhood educators.

4. Persons who, under the authority of a letter of permission, are appointed by a board to positions designated by the board as requiring an early childhood educator.

Bill 242 (2010) further stipulated the roles of the ECE and teacher:

The matters referred to in subsection (1) are:

1. Planning for and providing education to pupils in junior kindergarten and kindergarten.

2. Observing, monitoring and assessing the development of pupils in junior kindergarten and kindergarten.

3. Maintaining a healthy physical, emotional and social learning environment.

4. Communicating with families.

5. Performing all duties assigned to them by the principal with respect to junior kindergarten and kindergarten. Duties of teachers not limited.

(3) Nothing in this section limits any duties of teachers under this Act, including duties related to report cards, instruction, training and evaluation of the progress of pupils in junior kindergarten and kindergarten, the management of junior kindergarten and kindergarten classes, and the preparation of teaching plans.

Through the Curriculum Branch of the Ministry of Education, ECEs and teachers have direct access to the FDK document via the Ontario government's web site. The FDK document highlights the roles and responsibilities of the partners as follows:

Teachers are responsible for the long-term planning and organization of the program and the management of the Early Learning–Kindergarten classes. In addition, teachers are responsible for student learning; effective instruction; formative assessment (assessment for learning) and evaluation, based on the team's assessments of children's progress; and formal reporting and communication with families (OME, 2010b, p. 7).

Early childhood educators bring a focus on age-appropriate program planning to facilitate experiences that promote each child's physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social, and creative development and well-being, providing opportunities for them to contribute to formative assessment (assessment for learning) and evaluation of the children's learning. They are also responsible for implementing the integrated extended day. (OME, 2010b, p. 7)

To summarize the above information, Bill 242 provides a platform for understanding the roles and responsibilities of each partner. These two professionals are expected to:

- communicate with each other and their school community;
- develop strong and flexible relationships;
- integrate learning across a continuum of four and five year olds;
- co-construct and share common language;
- appreciate one another's backgrounds and how diverse backgrounds could; support young children's learning, growth and development;
- entrust a process of transformation as a collaborative team within the context of the Full-day Kindergarten program;
- negotiate the use of already existing resources.

In preparing to undertake my study, I also reviewed literature pertaining to interprofessional practices which are defined as situations in which "two or more professionals learn from each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care"

(Liaksos, Frigas, Antypas, Zikos, Diomidous & Midas, 2009, p. S43). Historically, law, medicine, education and social work have highly visible hierarchical structures. Yet within these hierarchies, partnerships are encouraged and supported. Many partnerships already exist within school, medical, social and legal institutions and among professions.

Interprofessional education has been demonstrated in clinical contexts to enhance interprofessional collaboration, patient care, and health outcomes. With curriculum design, teaching methods, and educational strategies in faculty development, it is possible to enhance the impact of IPE [Interprofessional Education] in clinical contexts. (Silver & Leslie, 2009, p. 172)

Partnerships among teachers are not a new phenomenon. Teacher-librarians partnered with classroom teachers to provide a space for planning and instruction as partners within their roles in schools (Gross & Kientz, 1999). However, partnerships between teachers and other non-OCT certified educators present challenges to both groups. Moreover, the teacher-librarians' partnerships with classroom teachers are short term and contingent on topics and planning time.

Case studies of interprofessional partnerships can be found in health care, psychology, and social work literature as well as teacher librarianship. They have examined collaborative practices among individuals acting in various roles in schools, health care and even large scale organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO). Studies have looked strategically at such elements as motivation, sustainability and trust within hierarchies. These elements coupled with understanding the roles and

responsibilities of the associated fields provide a backdrop against which to investigate interprofessional practices.

Through professional learning opportunities a common language, core beliefs and vision might enhance collaboration in smaller systems. In teacher preparation institutions Kluth and Straut (2003) contended that pre-service teachers needed opportunities to practice collaborative work within the context of their placements as well as within the faculties of education. They note, “Decision-making, communication and planning” (Kluth & Straut, 2003, p. 228) between pre-service, in-class teachers and the faculties of education were shared responsibilities as collaborative teaching partners at the local level.

Significance of the Study

The study is both personally significant and significant to researchers and practitioners in the field. As a learning coordinator with a district school board, I work directly with partners in FDK. As a former Kindergarten educator in the system, I aimed to open a dialogic space for discussing roles and responsibilities. The study will also contribute to the body of research on collaborative practices in educational settings. Opening the space for dialogue around the term ‘partnership’ and how it may influence the roles and responsibilities of these two professionals, educators, administrators and community (partners) agencies may help the professional community to define partnerships within the FDK context.

Overview of the Study: Data Collection and Analysis

I conceptualized the problem area for my study as the interactional space in which teachers and ECEs work together in ways defined by the partnership legislation and shaped by the setting of the FDK classroom. I employed a case study approach. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 253) describe a case study approach as an action, event or phenomena within a bounded system such as a school. It examines a present day problem such as the relationship of ECEs and teachers in a real life scenario. My case study aimed to bring a story to life by sharing some experiences of people and authentic situations with whom the reader can relate.

The primary sources of data for the study were semi-structured interviews with three ECE teachers employed in FDK classrooms. My goal was to glean “[n]ew insights into the ways things are and into the kinds of relationships that exist among participants in the study” (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009, p. 427). In order to extrapolate the richness of their work, open-ended questions were directed toward daily events of significance to the participants. I attempted to remain neutral and reported on the dialogue rather than interpretations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Following the interviews, I identified themes that cut across the three interviews. I identified four broad themes: communication barriers between partners, hierarchies, differential valuing of roles and responsibilities and people, and professional learning opportunities. Marginalization within the hierarchical structure was an overarching theme that was woven throughout the stories.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Where partnerships are supported in trusting and respectful relationships, the skills of the two professional groups do not need to be positioned in competing ways but can indeed be seen as complementary. It is my hope that as the partnership evolves and educators engage in meaningful dialogue they will learn from one another. This study provided a platform to allow ECE participants' voices to be heard and to begin transparent discussions of collaborative practices, collective agreements and professional learning opportunities. Telling their stories of practice allowed the ECEs to stitch together their experiences as relatively coherent stories.

Like all studies, my study has limitations. A small group of participants cannot be representative of the overall population of Early Childhood Educators in a system. Moreover, the number of registered Early Childhood Educators in the province of Ontario according to the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario was difficult to ascertain. The point of view of teachers was not represented in the case study. The partners of the participants were not contacted and thus their stories were not represented in the data. However, I believe the study can contribute to educators' awareness of a new employee group entering an innovative program space. As ECEs continue to bring their funds of professional knowledge to early years' classrooms, the potential for early primary classrooms to transform instructional practices and focus on the child may bring primary education back to its roots in ECE.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. In Chapter One, I introduced the study, its purpose and research questions. Chapter Two provides a review of relevant research literature and an overview of the recent developments for ECEC in the province of Ontario. It details the partnership and the diverse positioning of education and child care. Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework of the study which is informed by Positioning Theory and outlines the research methods, ethical issues and potential limitations. In Chapter Four I describe the participants, and present the data using thematic categories. Chapter Five presents and discusses my findings and concludes by offering some implications for practice and for research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

In 2010 the province of Ontario introduced FDK as a part of its Early Learning Framework to be phased in over the course of five years. The 2010 draft program document (OME, 2010b) outlines twenty recommendations to address children's overall achievement in social/emotional, cognitive and physical well-being. It extols the principles of accessibility, equity and accountability with schools acting as hubs for health, welfare and education services. One of the recommendations specifically highlights a legislated partnership between Registered Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) certified teachers. Such partnerships exist in other countries as well as Canada. In Europe, for example, they often incorporate the skills of a variety of professions from education, health care and social work and are supported by funding models and professional education.

In this chapter I describe how the legislated partnership between ECEs and kindergarten teachers is defined and represented in official texts published by the Ontario government and how ECEs are positioned in that literature. In order to better understand and draw attention to some issues of power and privilege that dominated my participants' stories of practice, I reviewed literature that outlines recent developments in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Ontario and beyond. I also discuss multiprofessional and interprofessional practices. I draw primarily on research and

scholarly literature from health and social work as I found limited research that examines ECEs and kindergarten teachers as partners. The chapter also discusses the ECE professional community as a marginalized and female-intensive workforce and concludes by examining relevant issues related to professionalization.

ECEC Policies: Recent Developments

Education and child care in Canada have traditionally been isolated from one another and except in Quebec, services and programs for families with young children have been fragmented (Friendly, 2008; Cleveland, Corter, Pelletier, Collier, Bertrand & Jamieson, 2006). Within the OME literature and in particular the K-12 curriculum documents, subject areas are isolated and expectations statements tend to be subject-based. The front matter of each curriculum document speaks of integration; the FDK program document (OME, 2010b) differs from the curriculum documents by stating a vision of the child and the role of the child's community as well as the roles and responsibilities of educators, administrators and the community.

The partnership envisioned by the Ontario government has roots in policy initiatives that were introduced during the 1990s. The Conservative provincial government led by Mike Harris commissioned the *Early Years Study* (McCain & Mustard, 1999) with a focus on early childhood programs in community-based settings such as the Ontario Early Years Centres. Unfortunately, the *Early Years Study* did not talk much about professionals' perspectives or about child care advocacy (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). However, Toronto's Toronto First Duty (TFD) family centres initiated partnerships between professionals employed by City of Toronto and those employed by

Toronto District School Board (McCain, Mustard, & McCuaig, 2011). From 2002 to 2005 five TFD sites set out to model how isolated services could partner to provide seamless integration of services. Challenges experienced by TFD “included issues related to professional turf, funding, staffing, leadership turnover, and working without system support across sectors that were siloed at higher levels of government” (Pelletier, 2012, p. 377). This was not surprising as the partners tended to bring diverse professional visions to their practice and often worked in parallel. However, TFD led the way for changes in public policy with respect to accessible and seamless education and child care for families in Ontario.

The current teaching partnerships in FDK classrooms began with the commission of a report entitled *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario* (Pascal, 2009).

The Early Learning Program for 4-and 5-year-old children should be staffed by teams of certified teachers and registered early childhood educators (ECEs). Local flexibility should be possible, but two “non-negotiable” essentials must always be included: educators skilled at applying child development knowledge and a strong and effective parent engagement strategy. (Pascal, 2009, p. 34)

According to Pascal (2009), teachers and ECEs are now working together in teams to deliver a play-based, junior and senior kindergarten program. More recently *The Ontario Early Years Policy Framework* (2013a) outlines an extensive system to address the needs of young children and their families. The framework addresses before and after school care led by ECEs and delivered by district school boards and licensed child care

providers. The new policy framework recognizes the education background of all its employees, pay equity and labour relations (Friendly, 2008). A policy framework is key to the overall success of FDK as is noted by the authors of *Early Years Study 3*.

Integrating education and care is not an incremental process. On their own, partnership protocols and stakeholders tables intended to better coordinate services often entrench the status quo. System-making requires a paradigm shift in our understanding of the real circumstances in which young children live and actions to match. There is room for improvement in every jurisdiction. (McCain, Mustard, & McCuaig, 2011, p. 83).

The roles and responsibilities of the teaching partners are laid out specifically in the Ontario government's Bill 242, section 16 (242.1).

This section requires teachers and early childhood educators to cooperate with each other with respect to matters regarding provision of junior kindergarten and kindergarten. The full day learning program will require collaboration among teachers and ECEs to provide high quality and effective play-based education to support enhanced learning and cognitive, emotional and social development of children. Implementing full day early learning will require strong partnerships under a provincial framework. (Bill 242, p.4)

Full-day Early Learning Kindergarten Draft (OME, 2010b) and *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* (Best Start Panel on Early Learning, 2007c) frame the roles and responsibilities of teaching partners. ECEs are described as reflective practitioners who “use an emotionally warm and positive approach which lead to constructive behaviour in children ... reflective thinking and empathy have their roots in

early relationships, where emotions are shared, communicated and expressed” (p. 14).

The Early Learning Full-day Kindergarten Draft Version (OME, 2010b) focuses on academic expectations rather than the social emotional relationships between the teachers and children. A recent evaluation study entitled: *A Meta-Perspective on the Evaluation of Full-Day Kindergarten during the First Two Years of Implementation* (OME, 2013c) reviewed many elements of the FDK program in Ontario including the FDK teaching partnership. The study suggested that the team was providing children with a program that met their needs and that practices in which the team engaged were collegial. However, the authors noted that roles and responsibilities outlined in the introduction to the report were not providing an accessible framework for all educator teams; some teams required continued clarification of the roles and responsibilities in order for children to benefit from the program. Overall, the study found that the two professionals in the classroom were not fully engaging their knowledge and expertise as a team.

Research on Professional Partnerships

There is evidence in research literature from human services professions that bringing together two professions to cooperate and share roles and responsibilities necessitates an interprofessional approach to partnership. An interprofessional partnership has been defined as a context in which “two or more professionals learn from each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care” (Liakos, Frigas, Antypas, Zikos, Diomidous & Midas, 2009, p. S43). As co-workers develop partnerships they may engage in collegial conversations followed by confrontations of different points of view which can lead to communication of commonalities and finally to cooperative practices that produce collaborative knowledge (Wilford & Doyle 2006). Drawing on ‘stories of

school' (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009) provided by ECE professionals, this study explored, from the perspective of the three participating ECEs, some barriers and supports to interprofessional practices in ECEs' partnerships with teachers.

The topic of interprofessional practice has been highlighted in the literature of health, social care and education institutions as an organizational, collaborative framework that improves services for users of the services. The aim of interprofessional practice or partnerships in the fields of health and social care is to provide integrated patient care that employs the knowledge and communication skills of professionals from diverse backgrounds. The fields of health care and social care readily identify interprofessional practice/partnerships as beneficial to overall integrated or multi-disciplinary patient care. At the same time, there is a recognition that interprofessional work can be challenging. MacIntosh and McCormick (2001) observe that “[i]ntersectoral partnerships are complex and all partners need to develop skills in negotiating and networking in order to become effective partners. When partners have succeeded in forming intersectoral partnerships, essential health care needs are addressed and all partners experience growth and development (p. 548).”

There is evidence that the promotion of interprofessional education in the health sector frames possibilities for other professional groups to learn from each other (Liaskosis, Frigas, Antypas, Zikos, Diomidous & Mantas, 2009, p. S43). Liaskosis et al states that various organizations create multiple levels of communication within their work environments in order to share information. As organizations grow and change, opportunities to exchange information and share the daily work of interprofessionals in a partnership, the roles and responsibilities may converge or live parallel lives. However,

barriers to communication may arise from lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the partnership. Moreover, assumptions about the nature of one's work may be influenced by structures.

Interprofessional practices are easier to create when professionals share some basic assumptions about the nature of the task: for example, when health and social work share principles and elements in their daily work with patients and one another as professionals. Yet hierarchical structures in an institution or profession can lead to a breakdown in collaborative practices. As professionals come together to discuss strategies, professional identities and boundaries are illuminated. Teams may come together to share information with respect to patient care, but the day to day work in the field is still viewed as parallel interactions with 'expertise' in one area in order to get the work done. "Building effective partnerships is time-consuming, resource intensive, and very difficult. Many partnerships encounter great obstacles while attempting to establish good working relationships between partners, create viable plans, and implement interventions" (Weiss & Doyle, 2002, p. 684).

Collaborative practices vary and are dependent on the organizational structures and the assigned tasks (Millward & Jefferies, 2001). Education is a large hierarchical organization. Its very nature sets the stage for power imbalances. ECEs must be transparent in order for their roles and responsibilities to be validated. Limited research in the area of partners in school settings is available therefore it is imperative to draw on other professional groups. Collaborative practices vary in health care environments and are dependent upon the organization and the tasks themselves (Millward & Jefferies, 2001). Therefore, within the health care field, professionals work in tandem, relaying

pertinent information while still belonging to their own professional groups. These pathways of knowing and communicating have been defined by McCallin (2001) and D'Amour, Ferrada-Videla, San Martin-Rodriguez and Beaulieu (2005) as multidisciplinary teamwork. Within the team, each professional identifies with a professional group and traditional hierarchies are not necessarily problematic (Bleakley, 2006). Interprofessional practice is more challenging since “[i]n a more integral and collegial approach to collaboration, known as interdisciplinary teamwork, personnel work together, developing collegial team work processes (Collin, Valleala, Herranen, & Paloniemi, 2012, p. 282).”

Improved patient care as an overall goal was the focus of a study by Silver and Leslie (2009). Providing medical students with effective models in their student clinical work proved effective in transforming the level of care for patients. However, challenges were inherent in the model as the number of ‘best practice’ teams was limited. As teams ebb and flow in the field of health care, other teams form to provide the supports necessary to achieve goals and fill gaps. As practitioners interact with one another their work is redefined to meet the demands of their increasing roles.

Carlsson, Ehnfors and Ehrenberg (2010) support the implementation and continuity of interprofessional practices as a vehicle for promoting teamwork and continuity of care of stroke patients. Straddling a variety of institutional caregivers in hospitals and elder care, the researchers undertook a study of multi-disciplinary teams in the transfer of information as demonstrated in note-taking by multiple team members. Written documentation remained the responsibility of nursing care while physiotherapists’ notes were limited in scope and number. Overall plans for care were

largely unstructured and the language of all team members lacked specificity. The study found that creating a common language base as a communication strategy may provide a working framework for communication and transference of knowledge and skills and ultimately influence overall patient care.

In a special issue of: *Journal of Interprofessional Care* (Sheehan, Robertson & Ormond, 2007) highlighted the significance of language among professionals. They noted that shared definitions and understandings are held by professionals from a variety of fields including education. Manor-Binyamini (2007) studied the meaning of key words and the role of language between psychiatrists and educators charged with the responsibility of planning for special education students. The researchers found educators and psychiatrists work overlapped to a certain degree but their understanding of one another's positions was based on the professional jargon each group used. "The study found that professionals from different disciplines use different languages, which may hinder effective interprofessional teamwork (p. 41)." The study argued that demystifying the language surrounding multi-disciplinary teamwork in order to understand plans is one place to begin dialogue. As professionals unpack the knowledge and language of a field, a variety of entry points, new perspectives and plans may be entertained. Through continued dialogue and a ground swell of collaborative processes as working models of multi-disciplinary role development, professionals may be encouraged to think critically of the learning opportunities posed by professional issues.

There is evidence that cross-professional sharing of knowledge in health care fails to look at the barriers created by a hierarchy in the existing relationships of colleagues (Zwarenstein & Reeves, 2006). Collaborative practices that include communication and

language development are lauded as fundamental practices to enhance overall patient safety. In a study by Rice, Zwarenstein, Conn, Kenaszchuk, Russell, and Reeves (2010), an intervention was designed to address the issues of communication and collaboration in general internal medicine. Each discipline introduced their role and profession to a collaborative caregiver around the care of a mutual patient. Phrasing questions with the intent of receiving feedback around patient care did not provide the anticipated outcomes of collaborative practices by multi-disciplinary groups. Modelling of interprofessional practices was limited in the fast paced, impersonal clinical setting and staff did little to scaffold the learning of effective communication and transference of knowledge and skills.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes a need to explore an evolving definition of interprofessional education and care as a mechanism of safe, timely and efficient health care practices in multi-disciplinary teamwork. It states that “collaborative practice in health care occurs when multiple health workers provide comprehensive services by working together synergistically along with patients, their families, carers and communities to deliver the highest quality of care across settings” (Mickan, Hoffman, & Nasmith, 2010, p. 494). As teams foster collaborative care and planning, patient satisfaction, better use of limited resources and duplication of services, collaborative decision-making with patients and consistent coordination of care, the WHO is starting to identify the commonalities among collaborative practices (Mickan, Hoffman, & Nasmith, 2010). Operational factors such as support and shared governance of responsibilities provided opportunities for multi-disciplinary teams to grow respectfully and equitably. “[C]lear policy and expectations, regular patterns of communication and supervision are

vital in creating functional teams of health care workers” (Mickan, Hoffman, & Nasmith, p. 499) since the knowledge and skills of traditional professions and careers must be “co-created” (Skaerbaek, 2010, p. 579). Ironically, as each profession redefines roles and the knowledge inherent in these roles, work practices mandated by legislation may actually create barriers. “Those in power define and determine reality, conceptualization to which others need to adjust to if they are to be acknowledged by society” (Skaerbaek, 2010, p. 580). Moreover, within a clinical setting a hierarchy of knowledge, skills and aspirations is well established. Members of a team must be represented in a variety of contexts in order for their roles and responsibilities to be validated and communicated to the stakeholders -including patients.

Glen (2001) states the conflicting role between health and social care professionals are unclear. Each partnership has its own interpretation of policies and mandates. Within the context of partnerships, each professional makes his/her own contributions. Reeves (2009), review interprofessional education activities through the lens of implementation and design forms of industry growth. Practices within interdisciplinary contexts of health and education, continues beyond formal education and focuses on skills, attributes and knowledge experienced within a learning community in the field. Reflecting on submissions of interprofessional studies, Reeves (2009) contends practice and education as synonymous entities may be a barrier in understanding collaborative partnerships. McLaney, Strathern, Johnson and Allen-Ackley (2010) created a mock scenario in which multi-disciplinary teams were engaged in a process of dialoguing about patient care using a variety of documentation strategies. As tiered teams including public affairs, management and on-the-floor care providers

engaged in interprofessional education, planning and development of strategies they were provided with support from senior administrators. The researchers recommended that terms and conditions of work need to be defined by the partners.

Relatively little research on interprofessional practice has taken place in school settings. In one study Margison and Shore (2009) describe interprofessional relationships between school psychologists and health care professionals as requiring collaborative practices to meet the demands of special education students. In an ongoing school-based study, Ng and her colleagues are currently exploring the work of school-based teams in meeting the healthcare needs of children with specific health needs (see e.g. Ng, Stooke, Reagan, Hibbert, Schryer, & Lingard, 2013). Through learning communities, new and experienced teachers have been found to be trained to be resilient to change. Nevin, Thousand and Villa (2009) reviewed related literature about teacher collaboration with social agencies in planning, team teaching and discuss the benefits of collaboratively developing curriculum to address diverse populations in schools.

In elementary schools, partnerships between general classroom teachers, teacher-librarians and specialist teachers are expected but require ongoing advocacy. Such partnerships can be fraught with difficulties. For example, Mitchell (2001) found that partnerships between art teachers in schools and artists in residence were highly competitive and not collaborative. Doiron (1999) studied the roles of teacher librarians and teachers and found four common elements in their roles: instruction, curriculum development, budget management and advocacy programs. Doiron notes that the role of the teacher librarian was a supporting role in the school.

The push toward teacher collaboration in schools gained momentum from DuFour's (2004) work on professional learning communities (PLCs) in schools. According to DuFour, PLCs facilitate deep dialogue and learning. The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning.

Professional Learning Communities are discussed by the OME (2007d) in a monograph. During a six-year period, the PLCs focused on elementary schools, then secondary schools. Divisions within schools were brought together to look at student work and began the process of developing strategies, instructional practices and common assessments for the division as a collective. PLCs were voluntary in Ontario. However, release time was provided to teachers in order to comply with collective agreements. Cowan (2005) found that PLCs appeared to enhance teacher autonomy through collaboration, but were still under the authority and decision making power of the school administrator. It is important to note that PLCs were funded for grades 1-12.

Another example of professional collaboration in schooling can be found in the relationships between student teachers and mentors. There is evidence that associate teachers and student teachers can develop positive partnerships (Lobman & Ryan, 2008). A number of studies examine the reciprocity of teaching and learning between associate and student teachers as well as first year teachers with mentors (Glazier, 2009; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Moran, Abbott & Clark, 2009; James & Mc Cormick, 2009; Timoštšuk

& Ugaste, 2010). Indeed, it has been found that an education context provides student teachers and professionals with opportunities to discuss beliefs (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009).

For ECEs and teachers, common beliefs about care and education could provide a foundation for collaborative practices. On the other hand, isolated and fragmented services such as in the case of those demonstrated by Head Start may create confusion. Lobman and Ryan (2008) studied system reform changes in New Jersey and concluded that change was a complicated process due to the division of labour, lack of teacher expertise and conflicting agendas.

Looking to other countries' policies may shed light on the possibilities for partnerships in Ontario's FDK programs. As preschool education is becoming a national focus in the United States, coordination of services has become a priority. Equitable and accessible education and higher quality of care are associated with innovations in pre-service and in-service education of pre-school teachers (Lobman & Ryan, 2008). As noted in the previous chapter, some European countries have long addressed issues of partnership through policies. Norway aligns the care of young children under the auspice of a Ministry of Children and Family Affairs while Sweden addresses needs of young children through the Ministry of Education (Alvestead & Samuelsson, 1999).

The United Kingdom is in the process of re-evaluating and redefining the skills and knowledge required for interprofessional health care. Copnell (2010) investigated the competency-based career framework of health care workers' knowledge and skills as a modernization mechanism. The goal is that such competencies may address the future

needs of an aging and evolving population. However, Copnell proposes that changes to the career framework may erode specialized roles in the field of medicine.

Amey, Eddy and Campbell (2010) discuss requirements of effective partnerships from the standpoint of resource allocation and outcomes at the college level. Partnerships are determined by the skills, education and training in an organizational framework of Partnership Capital as described by Amey et al. with explicit expression of a common good. The collective good of the community must be perceived as 'win-win' for all its participants.

ECEC as a Female-Intensive Profession

As the previous section shows, partnership is a social accomplishment complicated by issues of power. In ECE the gendered nature of the work and the related fact that much of the front line work of ECEC has traditionally been carried out by women are important sources of power inequities. ECE is a female-intensive profession. With the advent of the industrial revolution in Europe and North America, women's representation in the labour force began to rise, but for a long time, it rose only in professions such as education and other human services. The intensive concentration of women in Early Childhood Education and Care is still reflected in the low economic status of the profession and future employment prospects for its professionals. "In 2007 the Conservative government cut federal funds 'dedicated to creating equality for women' for many women's and advocacy groups so that by 2008 child care movement organizations were struggling to stay afloat" (Langford, Prentice, Albanese, Summers, Messina-Goertzen & Richardson, 2013, p. 302).

In North America achieving equity in the workplace has been tough and efforts are often accompanied by conflict and struggle. Women's issues with respect to child care are deemed to be 'a woman's world.' Public policy sets forth an implicit message that child care is under the protection of women as an identified group of stakeholders. "Strangely this protection of early childhood teaching as women's work seems to be acceptable in public policy and it has often been spoken about by leaders within the early childhood profession as something to be proud of" (Farquhar, Cablk, Buckingham, Bulter & Ballantyne, 2006, p. IV).

Dillabough and Acker (2002) take up the representation of women as caretakers in the education field. Identification of women as caretakers is in relation to patriarchal notions of males positioning themselves in leadership and decision-making roles in education, economics and culture positions women as less powerful and privileged than men in the field of education. Women are increasingly aware of such challenges. Recently Langford (2007) found that some young women are not motivated to enter the field of early childhood education due to cultural ideologies of women as caretakers. Langford draws on the work of Walkerdine (1990), who (as cited in Langford, 2007, p. 334) argued that ECEs and primary teachers were responsible for the care and construction of children becoming rational and well-adjusted individuals. This notion of care builds on the ideology of ECEs and primary teachers as nurturing caregivers. Langford contends modern educators are not pivotal to education reform in a market-based economy and therefore are open to exploitive interpretations of their roles and responsibilities.

In the pre-service ECE text, *Essentials of Early Childhood Education*, Gestwicki and Bertrand (2003) detail the struggles of predominantly females in the field of early childhood education as a marginalized group. Low wages coupled with high staff turnover and inordinate numbers leaving the field were among the list of challenges faced by the ECEC system. Gable, Rothrauff, Thornburg and Mauzy (2007) state that many factors influence instability in the child care workforce including inequitable wage compensation and education or professional learning opportunities. The length of time ECEs remained in the field were attributed the following factors: “marital status, professional experience, education level, membership in a professional organization, and enrollment in professional development activities” (Holochwost, DeMott, Buell, & Yannetta, 2009, p. 230). In contrast, ECEs who perceive they cannot engage employment elsewhere remain in child care longer. As more and more women enter the labour market, Ackerman (2005) contends gender biases are not removed in terms of pay equity and career advancement. ECEs continue to identify themselves as low wage earners with limited possibilities.

ECEs and Teachers: Roles and Identities

The Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators established in 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers (1997) are independent governing bodies regulating standards of practice. ECE has roots established in a profession of care while teaching is rooted in instructional practices and assessment. The emergence of separate governing bodies positions ECEs in contrast to teachers in Ontario. Friendly (2008) outlines the qualifications of teachers and ECEs in Canada. Teachers are required to have a four year university degree and one year at a faculty of education. Their degree does not have to be

related to early childhood studies. In contrast, an ECE classroom can be staffed by an educator who has no qualifications in the field, but it must have one educator in the room with an ECE diploma which requires professional preparation in 2-year college diploma programs (Langford, 2007). Johnson and Mathien (1998) found that in such situations “staff would learn from each other (p. 48).” Cleveland, Corter, Pelletier, Collier, Bertrand & Jamieson (2006) found that although ECEs and teachers share a common knowledge base, parents perceived kindergarten to be an important milestone in their children’s education and looked forward to this day of academic learning. Parents believed teachers taught while ECEs provided care.

Cultural influences shape the identities of ECEs and early primary teachers. Langford (2007) found that ECEs identify themselves as a group through modes of communication that reflected their identity as professionals as well as their cultural heritage. Langford (2007) suggests teacher candidates from diverse racial and ethno-cultural backgrounds identified their role within the context of their cultural backgrounds while white teachers identified themselves through the lens of pedagogy. Do ECEs question their identification within a group of professionals based on race and culture or are they norming their roles based on gender bias? ECE and teacher candidates have their own personal biases and this may not influence group identity.

Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) looked at the overall understanding of the process of professional identities of teachers in pre-service programs. They defined identity as an “ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one’s own values and experiences. Becoming a teacher involves, in essence, the (trans)formation of the teacher identity, a process described by Sachs (2001a) as being

open, negotiated and shifting” (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 220). Within the context of education and care, there are ebbs and flows as educators define their evolving roles from student to pre-service educator and finally educator.

Supporting the development and care of young children is a political and social responsibility for the state, but professionals in the field of early education and care need to reflect on their belief systems too. Berthelsen and Brownlee (2007) studied the beliefs of teacher roles. Drawing on the work of Entwistle, Skinner, Entwistle and Orr (as cited in Berthelsen and Brownlee, 2007, p. 349), they describe teachers’ theories of roles as intuitive in nature and therefore is not evidence-based. They state that a teacher knowledge base is foundational and is based on personal experiences. The power of personal experience impacts the work of ECEs as nurturers and educators.

Professionalization of Early Childhood Educators

During the past decade the ECEC community has been discussing issues such as the nature of and need for high quality early childhood care and education programs and the need for an educated workforce in order to improve the outcomes of young children later in life. For example, the *Early Years Study 3* and other sources that list determinants of quality make reference to training in early childhood development (McCain, Mustard, McQuaig, 2011; Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Melhuish, Taggart, & Elliot, 2005; Moss, Dahlberg & Pence (2007). Moss and Dahlberg’s (2008) understandings of quality are influenced by ECEs delivering a service that is directly related to future student success. They argue that understanding quality beyond an economic construct requires ECEs and teachers to “[s]tep back further and understand such discourses as being, in

turn, the product of a specific paradigm, a mindset for understanding the world and our position in it” (p. 5). They argue that quality cannot be standardized due to countries having different values and traditions. Moss (2000) argues that Denmark, France, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden and the United States are countries having different understandings of the definition of ECEC. Vrinioti (2013) too found various interpretations of quality child care and education. “[D]ifferent approaches and traditions of staff training in different countries, the conceptions and understanding of preschool pedagogy also differ” (p.152). But whatever view of quality policy makers adopt, the result of all this attention from policy makers is that the face of the ECEC workforce is changing and with it the qualifications needed by ECEs. Meeting the needs of a diverse population of children requires professional development opportunities in the private sector and in public education (Vrinioti, 2013).

The requirements for ECE accreditation varies across international settings. The United States’ National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) began the discussion of professionalization and the accreditation process to enhance the quality and status of the American early childhood teaching profession in the late 1970s (Seefeldt, 1988). In the United States teacher accreditation and certification has deep roots in college and university education as well as teacher training in state and church institutions. Teacher competence was not limited to teaching but also included parent engagement and legislative lobbying (Seefeldt, 1988).

The field of early childhood education and care in Australia has experienced a major restructuring in recent years, yet professionalization and regulation of the field does not necessarily result in better conditions for ECEs. Historically in Australia, ECEs

were not qualified teachers and parental perceptions of care and education reflected the well-worn hierarchical differences between teachers and ECEs already discussed. Consequently, recruiting university trained educators for pre-school services was challenging. ECEs are a marginalized group due to poor wages, labour conditions and descending professional status. “This longstanding pay and status differentiation exists despite early childhood teachers having to work in an extensive regulatory environment in which they are responsible for meeting up to 86 legal, statutory and other regulatory requirements” (Fenech, Waniganayake & Fleet, 2009, p. 202). Fenech et al. further outline how government policies in Australia marginalize ECEs by creating barriers to better working conditions due to registration (accreditation) policies barring them from attaining employment in schools rather than child care facilities. The New South Wales (NSW) Institute of Teachers does not include ECEC teachers in their mandates and thus ECEs employed outside of compulsory education institutions are not included in the legislated provisions. The exclusionary practices of NSW Institute of Teachers leads me to inquire, how do one’s beliefs about roles influence the discussion of marginalization of women in ECEC?

Rosemberg (2003) looked at the overall preschool education of Brazilian children and found ECE teachers were an extension of domestic care and were highly undervalued and paid. Many ECE educators were women working in home care and antiquated schools with limited training, education and funding resulting in poor pay and marginalization of a female intensive group.

In Scandinavian countries teacher preparation programs are evolving. Sweden has developed its preschool education to provide for children from one to five years of age.

More than half of all preschool teachers hold a university degree with specialization in early child development. Although, many preschool teachers hold specific qualifications their partners in the room hold vocational qualifications (Kuisma & Sandberg, 2008). Professionalization was defined by one of the respondents in the Kuisma and Sandberg study as, “One practises the profession in a competent, objective and ethically respectable way” (Kuisma & Sandberg, 2008, p. 189). The study found the teachers were able to implement their programs from theory to practice and collaborate with parents and other staff members. Finland has seen preschool teachers move from a place of integrated care and learning to a focus on education in their preschool programs. This is supported by the move of preschool teachers who now hold university degrees with a specific focus on child development or applied science to master’s degrees being held by teachers in the classroom. Many child care directors hold these qualifications (Einarsdottir, 2013).

Cochran (2011) investigated a balance of theoretical background and practical experiences in ECE teacher preparation programs. Cochran concluded that “[i]n general, European teacher preparation programs are built on a solid education and field-relevant knowledge base, along with a significant amount of practical experience” (Cochran, 2011, p. 70). There are many reasons for programs to be in transition in European countries including human capital arguments about the positive influence of early childhood education on the economy and future well-being of children. High quality programs have been linked to professionalizing ECEs in order to provide equal opportunities for children.

In the UK, instituting a policy to raise the standards for caregivers in publicly funded institutions set the stage for tensions between groups who had specialized

knowledge and status. Poor wages and misunderstandings about ECE roles and status continue to plague the system. Women are a marginalized group within child care and they continue to suffer poor wages, job instability and powerlessness (Roberts-Holmes, 2013).

In Ontario the Association of Early Childhood Educators (AECEO) spent almost twenty years advocating for a professional regulatory board which resulted in the enactment of the Early Childhood Educators Act 2007. The College of Early Childhood Educators was born to establish and support ECEs as they transition through the changing qualifications and accreditations in the province. The AECEO undertook a discussion about high quality professional learning opportunities and have invited members to respond to the paper. Flanagan, Beach and Varmuza (2013) conducted a survey entitled: *You Bet We Still Care!* In 2012, ECE participants responded to many survey questions but of particular importance to this study, 87.9% of respondents had participated in professional development in the past twelve months. “Program staff reported that the main reason for participating in professional development was to keep current in their field” (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2013, p. 9). Ninety percent of child care directors held some form of post-secondary qualifications including 66% held college qualifications and 20% held university degrees (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2013, p. 11). The study continued to survey improvements and found employers provided opportunities for staff to be mentored or receive training. Wages were directly linked to education. ECEs that held a college diploma on average received \$16.88/hour or \$17.20 for a related ECE university degree. A low percentage of respondents belonged to any form of organized labour and those who reported belonging

to a union noted their median wages to be \$20.11 per hour. Benefit packages were interesting as well with respect to professional development plans. Fewer staff in 2012 than in earlier survey in 1998 reported access to: paid preparation time, written job descriptions, financial assistance for professional development and paid release time for professional development (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2013). The responses to the questions of professional development incentives were two-fold. Employers provided wage incentives while the employees engaged in professional development for professional reasons. At the present time, the College of Early Childhood Educators is developing an accountability system that includes a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, mandated by the profession of ECEs and has yet to define professional learning opportunities for its members. The College is proposing a continuous professional learning framework for its registered members.

According to the *Early Years Policy Framework's* (OME, 2013a) guiding principles: high quality programs and services include staff and professional learning opportunities. “[E]arly years professionals must be knowledgeable, responsive, and reflective, and continuous professional learning opportunities should be encouraged” (OME, 2013, p.7). Vandebroek, Peeters and Bouverne-De Bie (2013) reviewed a situation in France whereby ECEs were not accredited and this lack of accreditation was experienced in lower wages, poor working conditions, and lack of access to professional learning opportunities. Inequitable wages and professional learning opportunities lead to instability in the workforce (Gable, Rothrauff, Thornburg & Mauzy, 2007). Langford (2007) argued teachers and ECEs did not concede to notions of a market-based economy and therefore have been rendered to the role of caregiver. With fewer workplace

opportunities to expand skill sets for employees in private sector child cares, ECEs were seeking personal or individual opportunities, hoping to change their futures. In doing so the door was opened to certification and accreditation. ECEs have historically been relegated to caregiving with low wages and poor working conditions.

How do approaches to professional learning affect the status of workers? Pirard and Barbier (2012) described three forms of training and teaching culture: teaching culture as knowledge transmission, training culture as new skills applied to other contexts that is hierarchal in nature and culture of professionalization as competencies developed in context whereby action-research and mentoring are present. Drawing on the concepts of teaching culture as the transmission of knowledge and training, Urban (2008) speaks of ECEs as caring individuals while belonging to regulatory systems of accountability. In this context of regulation “[p]ractitioners are increasingly being told what to do, what works and what counts” (p. 139). ECE students attend post-secondary programs that are regulated by standards of professional practice by the college. Professional standards that include access to specific information are introduced and monitored in order for the students to gain access to a specific knowledge base in the program. Qualifications are determined and access to the college is determined by prerequisites in order to maintain control and dissemination of materials and resources used in the field. The regulatory body has power over access to information and the types of information disseminated creating a hierarchy. In contrast, in a study of military personnel involved in early childhood education training, Ackerman (2007) looked at various entry points to the field of ECEC providing on-going training for personnel with a variety of backgrounds. The training sessions would indicate prerequisites and provide opportunities for new hires to

visit and observe trained colleagues. Although training was on-going and purposeful, the number of mandatory hours of attendance was still the overriding criterion of accreditation.

Despite the literature linking qualifications of ECEs to high quality programs and student outcomes, national policies for ECEC do not exist in Canada or the United States. Policies vary from province to province: “[T]here are no national minimum professional requirements for preschool teachers, resulting in tremendous variation in the training and experience that professionals in various parts of the country bring to the classroom” (McMullen, Elicker, Wang, Erdiller, Lee, Lin & Sun, 2005, p. 453). ECEC pre-service programs continue to be fragmented across the United States as the needs of children and a diverse population continue to grow. Lack of consistent program guidelines for state-run pre-service programs was also cited by Lim, Maxwell, Able-Boonen and Zimmerc, (2010). The question raised by this situation is: If a national policy does not exist for the minimum of professional training of ECEs, then how will they fair with diverse populations of children in their care?

Frameworks, guidelines and varied experiences of pre-service and experienced educators may be the driving force in changing practices. Pre-service teacher education programs in Canada and the United States provide training and opportunities to practice theories in practicums in diverse schools. Lim, Maxwell, Able-Boonen and Zimmerc (2010) outlined a framework of building relationships, governance/legislation and professional associations as elements that may influence the work of the students as a lack of resources determines the context in which they practice. Pirard (2011) suggests the use of frameworks as the singular guiding force of change in practice is not enough.

Continuous support of educators as they transition their thinking and beliefs is tantamount to their success. “[W]hat is needed rather is a continual reframing, a constant process of redefining and evaluating interactive quality, implying that standards should be continually reformulated and educational projects continually redefined” (Pirard, 2011, p. 264). Drawing on policy guidelines as well as the practical experiences of the educators, policy-makers can develop frameworks with multi-disciplines as a culture of professionalization emerges.

What does it mean to be a professional Early Childhood Educator in the context of FDK? Sockett (as cited in Pitman, 2012, p. 133) writes, “Professionalism is the manner of conduct within an occupation. It refers to how members integrate their obligations with their practical and theoretical knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality and contractual relationship with their various clients” (p. 133). It may also be useful to examine research from the UK where nursery workers have been encouraged to professionalize. According to Osgood (2010), it is the policymakers and media who do not understand ECEC and are defining the role of nursery workers narrowly.

Multiple studies have suggested that ECEs acquire specialized knowledge related to child development and qualifications of high standards in order to support their work with young children. In Ontario Early Childhood Educators must be registered with the College of ECEs and therefore maintain their qualifications as part of public records. They become powerless to change the definition of professionalism imposed by the college and must follow political guidelines associated with their profession.

As ECEs struggle to have their professional voice heard, Harwood, Klopper, Osayen and Vanderlee (2013) undertook a study to better understand the professionalism of ECEs in Ontario, South Africa and Nigeria. Three common themes were evident in defining professionalism as: complex, transformational in nature and self-knowledge. ECEs have established 'foothold' in the field of care and knowledge. Policy makers and regulatory bodies continue to employ standards while professional judgment takes a back seat to performance and accountability in order to comply with the standards. Osgood (2006) studied the evolution of professionalism in the field and found ECEs were disengaging in order to comply with the rhetoric. "The increased state regulation and top-down policy prescription represents a direct challenge to 'professionalism from within'" (p. 191). Collaborative practices and working relationships inherent in early years' settings are being eroded by standards of practice and throwing ECEs into the volcano of individualisation as described by Osgood whereby each person is for herself.

Defining professionalism has been challenging for many researchers from a multitude of countries. Professionalism was conceptualized by Oberhuemer (2005) and referred by Vrinoti (2013) to be a reflective practice by professionals.

Meta-cognitive ability as critical reflection upon the conditions under which professional knowledge is applied, a coherent body of knowledge, diagnostic competence, research competence, an 'ethical code of the discipline,' competence to cooperate with all the partners of their role set on equal terms, fulfilling thus the requirements of a 'democratic professionalism' (p. 153)

Oberhuemer (2005) contends professionalism distances the professional from the people it wishes to embrace, namely parents and children. As ECEs interact with families and children, key characteristics come into play as educators engage in the process of supporting families and children through attentive listening skills and purposeful communication practices as a part of reciprocal teaching and learning. As reflective practitioners, “[t]he knowledge base which informs professional action, democratic professionalism presupposes an awareness of 'multiple ways of knowing', an understanding that knowledge is in fact contestable. It requires a willingness and ability to reflect on one's own taken-for-granted beliefs” (p. 14). As the role of ECEs evolve, so likely will the pedagogy of early childhood education in FDK. ECEs are being asked to engage in deep conversations around partnerships with teachers as well as parents and children as they co-construct the learning and teaching environment of the Ontario FDK classroom and community.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I described how the legislated partnership between ECEs and kindergarten teachers was defined and represented in official texts published by the Ontario government and how ECEs were positioned in the literature. The partnership is largely defined through official texts published by the Ontario Ministry of Education. To better understand the position of ECEs in the education context I reviewed recent policy developments in Ontario and abroad. ECEs in Toronto First Duty (TFD) centers provided a backdrop of fragmented services and protectionism. However, TFD led the way for

changes in the system with the launch of *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario* (Pascal, 2009). Pascal recommended changes to the system including the partnership of ECEs and teachers in a FDK program that was later supported with the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework* (OME, 2013a).

As teaching partners working in FDK, ECEs share instructional roles and responsibilities with their teaching partners. There is limited literature with respect to educational partnerships, although informal partnerships have long existed. The area I wished to address was the interactional space between ECEs and teachers. As they formed their legislated partnerships, the need for collective practices was clear.

I looked at the literature as it related to roles and identities and professionalization. The Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators was established in 2007 following the Ontario College of Teachers as a governing professional organization. These two independent governing bodies regulate the standards of practice. High quality programs have been organized to support the growth and development of children in the twenty-first century as it relates to future outcomes. In order to develop better programs, educators are attending post-secondary and additional qualification programs to meet the needs of young children. As educators with designations or accreditation, ECEs' identities are evolving. Understanding one's identity within organizational change is given meaning through a storyline. Themes emerged about ECEs' stories related issues within the context of school and their partnerships.

Chapter Three

The Study

Introduction

My study took the form of a qualitative case study of the teacher-ECE partnership experience in Ontario's full-day early learning Kindergarten (FDK) classrooms. The study was designed to understand the relationship between early childhood educators (ECEs) and their teaching partners. My main interest was the shared professional space occupied by these two professionals within the context of the newly minted program. I conducted three qualitative interviews with early childhood educators employed in FDK classrooms and conducted a thematic analysis of the stories of practice they told to me. I had hoped to interview more ECEs. However, recruiting participants was a long process. I experienced little success for almost a year when finally a superintendent from another district school board heard of my study and introduced me to a potential ECE participant. This was the beginning of a rich and interesting dialogue that introduced me to two more participants. Before describing the study itself, I provide an overview of its conceptual framework. I then present an overview of case study methodology and detail the methods I undertook to carry out my study.

Conceptual Framework: Positioning Theory

The issues I wished to understand were related to people, their stories and social realities and the context of an evolving system in Ontario's education system. As I prepared to undertake my study, I wanted to have a greater understanding of organizational change and how workers understand their identities within the context of

the changes. I was drawn to positioning theory (van Langenhove and Harré, 1999), a set of ideas that were introduced in the social sciences in the 1980s. Positioning theory was first connected with work on gender differences by Hollway (1984). It has also been employed extensively in marketing where strategies are sometimes used to communicate positive and distinctive representations of products. Applying this communication concept of appealing to identities, van Langenhove and Harré (1999) contend that people take positions that present a certain identity or portray certain aspects of an identity within a particular context or scenario. One of their key observations is highly relevant to my study: “Generally speaking positions are relational, in that for one to be positioned as powerful others must be positioned as powerless” (p.1). The position of the ECEs in FDK was in relation to their teaching partner. If one is positioned as powerful then the other is not.

Positioning is often storied. As people talk about their positioning within a situation, they give meaning to a storyline and create a deeper understanding of their behavior in relation to others in the story. Positions are relational processes of interaction between individuals within the story lines and speech acts that underpin positioning (van Langenhove & Harre, 1999). Hence, positioning can be understood as the discursive construction of personal narrations. These are used to construct the actions of an individual in a way which is intelligible to the self and others. In addition, they create a space in which members participating in the conversation occupy a series of specific positions (Tirado & Galvez, 2007, p. 11).

Zelle (2009) contends that positioning theory has the “potential to bridge the analytical gap between people, institutions and societies” (p. 2). As I began to explore

the organizational changes in the Ontario education system with the introduction of FDK and the partnership of ECEs and teachers in Kindergarten classrooms, the ideas supported my growing understanding of individuals' identities within the new organizational structure. People are not passive recipients of information about their positioning and that they perceive and interpret the world from multiple lenses. Interactions are fluid and dynamic in nature. People's interactions or positions construct images, metaphors and storylines are negotiable within the context of a structure or interaction (Tirado & Galvez, 2007). Individuals may not agree with their positioning and conflict may be evident between the participants.

Positioning theory also allows a researcher to uncover the modes of positioning for individuals who share a professional space. Zelle (2009), for example, brings multiple positioning modes to light from the work of Harre and van Langenhove (1999) including first, second or third positioning, performative and accountive positioning, moral and personal positioning, self and other positioning, and tacit and intentional positioning. For the purposes of this study, I focused on first order positioning which 'frames how we act and interact with one another in conversation' (Glazier, 2009, p. 827). The ECEs and teachers were expected to interact with one another to support young children in the classroom. They communicated on a surface level to fulfill their roles and I assumed that each pair had certain implied expectations of their roles.

Moral positioning is also relevant to my study. Zelle describes moral positioning as being "constituted by any attempt to make reference to one's role, and the rights and duties that come with it, within a group or society" (Zelle, 2009, p. 4). I posed questions to learn about the routine sequence of daily activities, focusing on the work in relation to

the teaching partner's work. The roles and responsibilities were brought to life by ECEs descriptions of their daily work through personal stories. "Personal positioning is what makes one's moral position more dynamic" (Glazier, 2009, p. 827).

My original goal for the study was to tease out some common themes from ECEs' stories and weave together a research story of the partnership relationship using their voices. Although the analysis falls short of this goal, positioning theory has helped me to understand how the contexts of organizational change can influence relationships among the people directly affected by the changes. It also allowed me to focus on the stories of each of the individuals and set the stories alongside one another.

To sum up - there are three major facets of positioning theory. These facets are: positions taken by the participants, their individual stories and the speech acts of the participants as triangulation of Positioning Theory (Zelle, 2009). The roles and responsibilities as understood by the ECEs in FDK set the boundaries of the study while responses to interview questions related to their daily work. The position of a participant may change and thus send the storyline in a new direction. Positioning theory is a dynamic theory of change just like the participants who wove stories of their evolving roles and responsibilities in relation to their partners in positions of power and thus their own positions of powerlessness.

Narrative Case Study Methodology

My study employed a qualitative case study methodology (Creswell, 2007). A case study as described by Creswell is the study of a phenomenon within a bounded system such as a partnership. My intention was to conduct a narrative case study.

Narrative case studies (Gay, Mills, & Airasion, 2009) explore ways in which individuals tell the stories of their experiences. They detail the nature of a problem and its implications or consequence and are often focused on an event, a small group or an individual. The goal is to share a passion for the problem with the reader and impassion the reader to ask similar questions to the researcher and ensuing solutions or ignite further questions. The purpose of my study was to learn about participants' experiences of a legislated partnership with a kindergarten teacher. I conceptualized the problem area for my study as the interactional space in which teachers and ECEs worked together in ways defined by the Ontario government's partnership legislation, Bill 242 and the setting of the FDK classroom. As noted in the introductory chapter, my study asked the questions:

How is the legislated partnership between ECE teachers and certified teachers from the Ontario College of Teachers defined and represented in official texts pertaining to Ontario's Full-day Kindergarten programs and ECE teachers' accounts of their partnership activities?

How are ECE teachers positioned within this discursively produced partnership?

What role(s) might different professional discourses play in the positioning?

What role(s) do differences in power and status play in the positioning?

Situating Myself in the Study

I hold a teaching degree and completed a number of Early Childhood diploma course credits from a local college institution. As a learning coordinator in a district school board, I wished to understand the relationship of the ECE-- teacher partnership in

the FDK initiative. My professional work with ECE-teacher partners is on-going and I hope to use what I learned in my study to support their collaborative efforts.

In my everyday professional work, I began to question the roles and responsibilities of the ECE and teaching partners as outlined in the legislation. The concept of mandated/legislated partnerships that were deemed ‘cooperative’ versus collaborative intrigued me. My belief system came under scrutiny as I strongly support the notion of collaboration and the goal that two diversely positioned professionals can share the best of what they know and can do to support young children. I had waited my whole career to see this idea catch fire. Yet I wondered if collaboration was something one could mandate and whether relationships were born of trust and understanding. This is where my research journey began.

Methods

The primary source of data for the study was a set of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with three ECEs employed in an Ontario-based, FDK classrooms. I did not conduct research in the district that employs me, but recruited participants employed by three other Ontario school boards. Participants were not known to one another. Their identities and locations were not revealed to anyone and all participants’ comments and responses were anonymized on documents related to the research, including this thesis. In this document I employ a pseudonym for each participant.

In order to invite participants, I sent an approved UWO ethics protocol to two Ontario district school boards. I obtained permission to contact school administrators to invite participants, but did not succeed in recruiting anyone this way. Unfortunately,

even speaking personally with school administrators to acquire permission and introduce the study did not prove fruitful. A chance meeting with a superintendent of one school board at a Ministry of Education workshop proved most helpful for recruiting participants. The superintendent learned of my research project and said, “I have someone who wants to talk to you.” This is how I met and spoke with Mary who is one of the participants. I then sent the ethics proposal to her district school board and received approval to invite her participation. I met Amina at a multi-board workshop that she attended with her teaching partner. Upon hearing of my research project and with the encouragement of her teaching partner, she contacted me and asked to be interviewed. Talia was the third participant. She found out about my proposed research from a colleague and also contacted me to say that she wished to be interviewed about her work. While three participants and a convenience sample do not constitute an adequate sample from which to generalize findings, the in-depth interviews do present a range of positive and negative perspectives.

I conducted an in-depth, semi-structured interview with each participant (for a list of questions, see Appendix A). In order to extrapolate the richness of their daily work, open-ended questions directed discussions toward daily events of significance to the participants and illuminated the nature of the partnerships with their respective Kindergarten teacher partners. Several open-ended questions were intended to tease out stories about routine daily work. The ECE participants had told me of their daily agendas and I referred to them to ask about what they did and what their teaching partner did at various times throughout the day. Reviewing daily schedules of their work provided important contextual information.

All interviews were conducted by telephone. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were reminded of the purpose and intent of the research project and my interest in their frank and open responses. I followed the scripted questions, but allowed myself to stop and ask questions for clarification. I attempted to remain non-judgmental about responses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) and did not enter the conversation when a participant indicated a wish for affirmation. For example when Talia talked about the length of the morning, she asked, “You know what I mean?” I tried to be supportive yet refrained from commenting. Talia asked for confirmation of her daily schedule which we had already established earlier in the conversation. I wished for the participants to engage in the conversation with few barriers to express what they thought, observed and felt about their work. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Each participant’s transcript was then member checked. That is, each participant was invited to correct and/or delete any part of their transcript that they did not wish me to use. I also conducted a follow up interview with Mary in order to gain greater insight into her stories.

A secondary source of data was the official Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) documents related to Bill 242 and the Bill itself. I also examined public domain documents such as government press releases from 2009 until the fall of 2010. In particular I examined the *Full-day Early Learning Kindergarten draft document* (OME, 2010b). My purpose in studying these documents was primarily to be informed about the government’s stated intentions, but I also examined them to ascertain how ECEs and teachers were described and positioned. Using these recently released documents and semi-structured ‘how and why’ questions based on a contemporary phenomenon (Yin,

2003) e.g. partnerships in FDK, I began to sort the data by themes using Creswell's framework.

Figure 1 shows Creswell's framework for coding a case study (Creswell, 2009, p. 172). I used the framework to guide my thinking about the case I was studying although it felt a lot messier than the diagram suggests.

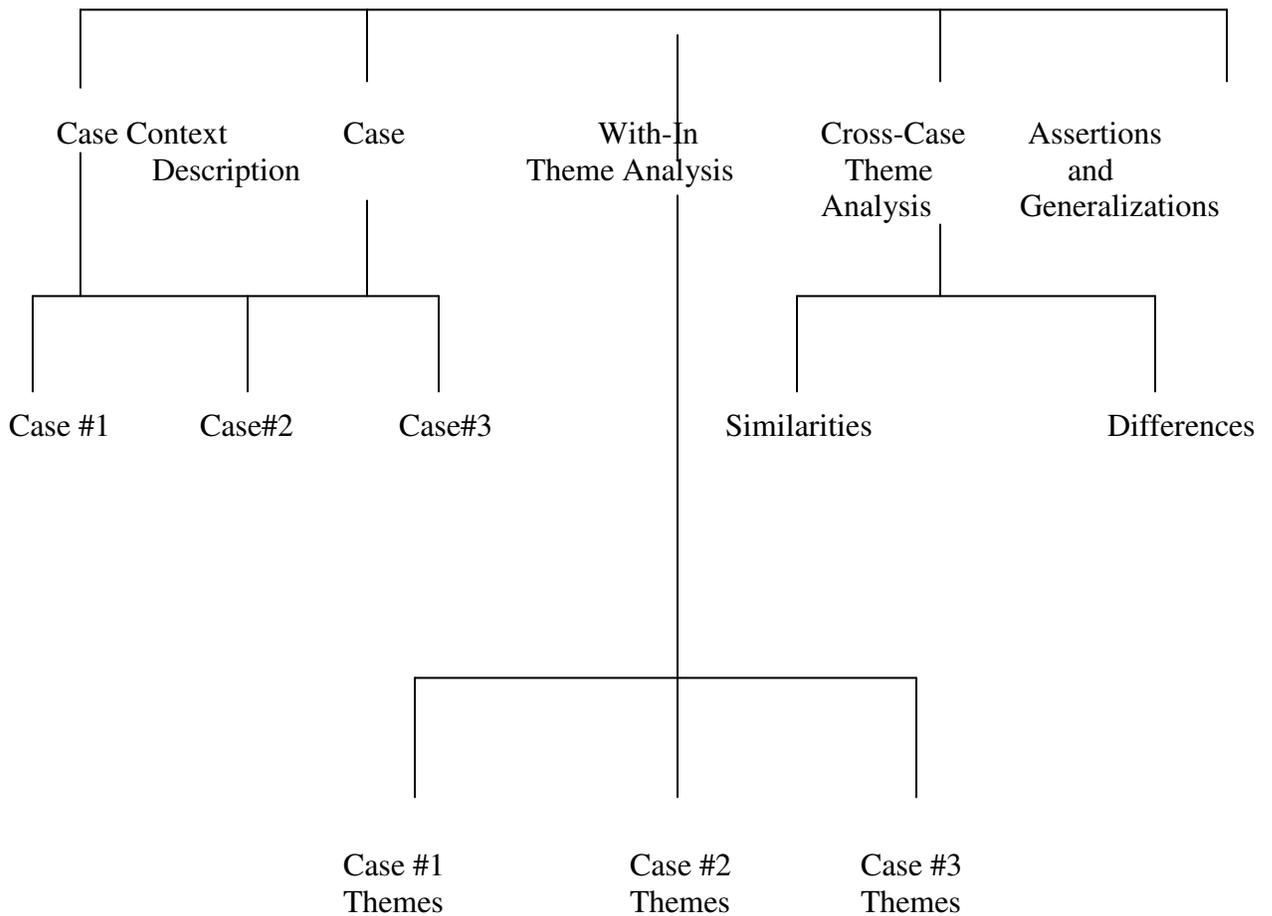


Figure 1: Creswell's In-depth Portrait of Cases

Thematic analysis allows the researcher to analyze data based on the personal and social interactions of the participants reflecting on past and present work within their role in the classroom (Creswell, 2009). I plotted the data on a schedule of each participants' routine work day so that I could visually compare the responses. I also analyzed the interview transcripts thematically. That is, I began by reviewing the questions I had posed to the participants and grouped responses according to them. I then grouped the data around types of practices: professional development, interprofessional education practices, problem-solving strategies, collaborative practices, communication, and decision-making practices. I placed these categories on a grid and identified key anecdotes or stories from the interviews that directly corresponded with the categories. However, a number of comments that seemed important to the participants did not fit well into these categories. Rather they pointed to issues that I saw as related to hierarchies and marginalization, respect and trust, and the blurring of professional roles. As I read and re-read the participants' stories, I began to identify commonalities among them too.

I also reviewed Creswell's Plot Analysis Model (2007, p. 170). This framework allowed me to think about the process of forming partnerships. How were the ECEs positioning themselves in relation to their teaching partners?

Plot – how something is constructed				
Participants as actors	Setting of the partnership as an interactive, social space	Problem or question: How do people who are diversely situated in Ontario's Full Day Early Learning - Kindergarten classrooms negotiate collegial partnerships?	Inference about actions of the participants based on their stories events in the classroom	Implications and recommendations

Figure 2: Plot Analysis Model (adapted from John Creswell, 2007)

These frameworks i.e., how something is constructed, do not support researchers to identify causes or make predictions (Creswell, 2007), but they supported my efforts to gain greater understandings. Also, as Riessman (1993, p. 3) has observed, “Respondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society” Looking at participants’ stories provided the impetus for discussion of marginalized professionals with common goals and beliefs.

Trustworthiness of the Findings

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe trustworthiness of findings in qualitative research in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The credibility of my study lies in the faithful representation of the data. Qualitative research also provides opportunities for the researcher and the participants to reflect on data. For example, I approached one participant a second time to gather additional data and for clarification. I often checked my understanding during interviews by paraphrasing the participants’ statements and to minimize the number of inferences and assumptions being made. Later, the participants were encouraged to read the texts of their interviews, make

comments, provide clarification and feedback. Because the participants and I worked in similar contexts, we understood each other's technical vocabulary quite well.

Trustworthiness was also addressed by discussing details of the setting that were familiar to the researcher as well as the participants. Reflecting on the stories of ECEs, retelling their stories and illuminating emerging themes, both researcher and participants developed understanding and had opportunities to refine perspectives on the issues.

Confirmability is demonstrated when findings emerge from the data and are not presumptions in nature. Originally, I did not assign a topic until I looked closely at the data. The stories varied in scope, attitude of each participant about the topics and feelings about the partnership experience from one participant to another. Sweeping predictions and generalizations were not the intent of the analysis. Rather, fostering a sense of understanding of a partnership and coming to a greater understanding of the barriers and supports of a partnership was the focus of this inquiry.

Ethical Issues

As a researcher privileged by my role as a leader in my school board, I aimed to frame questions that allowed the participants to respond freely, unencumbered by education jargon, politics and social influences. I struggled with asking questions about my current profession of teaching, but wanted to be open to the participants' stories. Within the context of the review, emotional and social data emerged as the participants told their stories. But I only got a snapshot. "Meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively and

imperfectly” (Reisman, 1993, p. 15). Each of the participants told their own story of their partnership in relation to their teaching partner from their own perspective.

Limitations

In this section I discuss some potential limitations to my study. Specifically I discuss language use, credibility, sample size and my role as an educator.

Language constructs influence the researcher as well as participants and readers. Moreover, personal biases may be reflected in a researcher’s writing (Creswell, 2007). In the process of question formation, piloting the questions through an outside group may have alleviated some bias or miscommunication caused by choice of language. It was my intention to represent the data with few inferences, but my positioning as an insider in education may have rendered some inferential thinking invisible to me.

The credibility of the participants is not verifiable, but I provided opportunities for each participant to reflect on their responses and I brought to the table what I assumed was their frank perspective rather than a representation of a model of partnerships influenced by media, policy and social boundaries. However, it is possible that my social, political and educational biases may have influenced the responses to questions and thus hampered the overall findings of the project. Providing readers with a well-developed background of each of the participants and relevant context, the reader was able to draw out similarities and apply them to other contexts.

A small group of participants cannot represent the overall population of ECEs in a system. However, a case study allowed me to dig deeper in order to understand the work of ECEs in classrooms in Ontario. I was able to take an in-depth look at the daily events

of ECEs within the context of the FDK classroom. I was able to position myself within the real life context of ECEs. In essence, the smaller sample size allowed the voices of the ECEs to be heard.

Finally, as a Learning Coordinator sharing the same professional space, I felt conflicted about the data I was collecting and analyzing. Within my professional role, there is an implicit understanding of perceived power and privilege which I am not comfortable with and thus I put pressure on myself not to assume a role of authority. I wished to honor participants' work and I hope that I have been at least partially successful in representing their authentic voices.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I described a narrative case study as a study of phenomena within a bounded system such as partnerships of ECEs working in Full-day Kindergarten (Creswell 2007). Positioning theory (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999), was intended to help me arrive at a deep understanding of how ECEs position themselves discursively within a new initiative. Using semi structured interviews and open-ended questions; I aimed to learn about the participants' daily work routines as well as events of significance to them. I wanted their stories to be heard.

Chapter Four

The Interview Data

Introduction

As the literature review shows, the idea of a partnership between ECEs and teachers mirrors partnerships initiated in Ontario's health care and social work fields over the past two decades. Influenced by goals of better care and fiscal responsibility, a strategic plan had been implemented to position two or more professionals in teams who would advocate for better patient care through improved communication channels and accountability. The literature review also shows that the quality of a professional partnership depends on many factors. In this chapter I examine the stories that three ECEs told to me about their experiences in FDK classrooms. I present excerpts from the interview data organized into the following six thematic categories:

- Contractual issues
- The professional hierarchy
- Marginalization
- Interprofessional practices
- Barriers to communication
- Professional knowledge
- Professional learning opportunities

As I present these data, I will aim to show how the themes overlap and how they are interrelated. I begin by presenting a brief portrait of each participant. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to a presentation of data related to each theme.

The Participants

As I mentioned, it took much longer than I expected to find three ECEs who wished to be interviewed about FDK. In the end, I was able to recruit three female ECE practitioners employed by three different school districts. The participants did not know each other and they never met during the study. Each of them was hired for the first year of implementation of FDK and they were all registered with the Association of Early Childhood Educators in Ontario. Each had experience working with young children in a child care setting before joining the staff of a school district. I refer to each of them using their pseudonyms: Talia, Amina, and Mary.

Talia was a former educational assistant (EA) who had supported a small group of children with identified educational needs. Now, as an ECE, she was partnered with the same teacher she had previously assisted. Their school was closing due to low enrollment and the teachers and students were moving to another school community. She expressed concern about possible changes in the new school such as the possibility that it would not feel like a family. ECEs in Talia's district did not have a negotiated contract at the time of the interview, but she indicated that the ECEs in her district would be part of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and that ETFO would act as their bargaining representative. She expressed disappointment about the lack of a collective agreement. "This is almost the end of my second year and we still don't have a contract."

Talia's schedule did not provide for any co-planning or preparation time with her partner. However, many of the planned instructional activities employed commercial program materials such as *CLICK*TM and *Writing Without Tears*TM that did not require professional decision-making. Talia attended provincially hosted professional learning

sessions with her partner, but she had not been a part of any sessions organized by the school board. District professional learning opportunities were organized after school hours and she was not able to attend them due to family commitments.

Amina lived forty minutes away from her place of employment and was planning to move to the school located nearest to her home once it became a Full-day Kindergarten site. Her prior experiences in the child care field were in a Montessori pre-school. She indicated in the interview that her experiences in Montessori were rooted in instructional practices that employed a lot of worksheets. This was in contrast to her teaching partner's background. Amina expressed gratitude about sharing and learning other practices from and with her partner. They were committed to using observation notes, video recording one another as they interacted with children and analyzing data for planning purposes. Amina indicated that they planned 'on the fly' but they made their planning visible to their administrator. She also said that the administrator provided monthly planning time during staff meetings and exempted them from lunch hour duties. Amina's district school board placed the ECEs in the same union as EAs, but Amina expressed dissatisfaction with the placement, describing it as disorganized, chaotic and not able to accommodate the diverse roles. She said, "They just weren't ready for us." For example, ECEs in Amina's district have a twenty-four month probationary period while Developmental Service Workers have a shorter one. She also felt excluded when the teacher attended Individual Program and Review Committee (IPRC) meetings without her. Yet she implied that she had a friendly, supportive working relationship with her partner who was a former ECE. She did not engage in social activities outside of the work day, but was happy that her partner advocated for the two of them to attend a conference together.

Mary was a qualified primary-junior grade teacher as well as an ECE, but at the time of the interview she was employed as a registered ECE in FDK with a teaching partner who was planning to retire at the end of the year. Until an administrator intervened part way through the year, Mary was providing monitoring and supervision of children for seventy minutes daily. She felt ‘stuck’ with respect to professional learning opportunities. She felt marginalized and ineffective as a practitioner. She had two partners over the course of the three year implementation process, but many of her comments referred specifically to the first partnership did not go well.

Contractual Issues

Negotiated contracts for ECEs were in flux as each participant revealed their understandings of work roles and responsibilities. Within the province of Ontario, ECEs and teachers were bound by collective agreements negotiated by labour unions and these influenced their economic status and positioning as employees in a school. In general, ECEs who worked in community based child care centres had been paid hourly wages well below the pay scale offered by school boards. Before coming to work in a school they had little experience or limited knowledge of collective bargaining.

A variety of employee groups are represented in Ontario elementary schools. Teachers are represented by Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) or the Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA). While ECEs are represented by elementary teacher unions others are represented by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) or groups such as Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).

Each district school board determined which union would represent their ECEs. In some school districts, the selection of the bargaining unit was determined by historical connections already in place. For example EAs may have been represented by CUPE and this influenced the selection of the bargaining unit to represent ECEs. At the time of my study each labour union was in the process of negotiating their collective agreement with the district school boards.

I inferred from the interview data that participants were struggling to understand the nuances of collective agreements and how the collective agreements and legislation were influencing their roles and responsibilities. However, one participant was an active member of her group's negotiating team. She indicated that her district school board and bargaining unit did not have an agreement in place and suggested that the lack of an agreement was creating prolonged probationary periods for ECEs that in turn seemed to influence the negotiation of roles and responsibilities within classroom settings.

In the ECE contracts described by my participants, any activity or work that was done outside of contracted hours was not paid work. No overtime payments or time off 'in lieu' were provided.

Talia: Getting stuff ready for what comes next. I think it's kind of a bummer that we don't get that planning time. I have to be there for 8 [a.m.]. My partner is always there before me. There wouldn't really be a lot of time.

Participants filed for Federal government employment benefits during school holidays in July and August as well as the winter holiday and the March Break. One of the participants at the time of the interview still did not have a collective agreement

although she had been working for the district school board for more than one year. Each of the participants highlighted her own experiences in relation to collective agreements.

Researcher: Does someone support you through a federation or union?

Amina: I don't know. We were placed in a union. I'm not sure that they were ready for us. It's a little bit unorganized. A lot of ECEs complain and send emails. Once they learn what we are about then they will do something. We're different from an educational system [child care]. We don't get planning time. We're just like the teachers. We don't get planning time and stuff. They just weren't ready! It always seems like they weren't ready and that we're complaining but, they just weren't ready for us! They treat us like TAs [teaching assistants] but, we're just like the teachers.

Mary also noted the lack of planning time and its impact on the working relationship with her partner and on their work day. She said that the ECE was expected to work directly with the children while the teacher appeared to have greater flexibility with planning time.

Researcher: Is planning time factored into your work day as paid labor?

Mary: No! We were told during our latest round of contract negotiations that we would get prep time when hell freezes over! We start a half hour before the bell. Most of that time is spent setting up the room for the day. Teachers are not required to be in the room at that time. My school has early entry so I only have fifteen minutes to set up before the children are let in. We are required to stay thirty minutes after the bell. This can be used to prep, but we also must clean tables, tidy the room, etc. Also, teachers are not required to stay, so we could be

on our own at this time. My partner and I typically have about fifteen to twenty minutes a day together to prep and plan. Most ECEs I know, myself included, work through breaks in order to get things done.

Researcher: Is there any extra work you do outside of your normal working day that is or is not paid for and what is that work?

Mary: I do a lot of work at home and school that is beyond the normal work day—I plan, prep materials, and work in the classroom changing dramatic play centers, switching up materials, tidying and organizing centers. None of this time is paid. We get no paid prep time.

Amina expressed the view that negotiating alongside established members of a union whose roles and responsibilities were very different from her own caused confusion for everyone and fracturing of roles. She gave details of this disconnect within her own bargaining unit.

Amina: We're on two years' probation so everybody is hush-hush!

It's twenty-four months' probation. I'm not permanent staff until January 2013. . .

That was a decision made by our union.

Developmental Service Workers. You know what that is?

Researcher: Yes.

Amina: DSWs and other titles are six month probationary contracts and we're under the same union. They want planning time because we want planning time.

The probation doesn't work the same. It's really, really unorganized!. The classroom teacher had planning time in minutes per cycle guaranteed in the

collective agreement while the contract that represented the Early Childhood Educator did not have these guarantees.

Later Amina elaborated on work carried out outside of paid hours.

Amina: Planning time. Lots of things I have to do at home. It goes into my family time. Maybe they don't get to do things they want to do. We have so much to offer and so little time. We don't get much money anyway. I don't get paid for stuff I do at home and when I stay after school two times a month.

Talia also expressed frustration in not having an established contract. This was revealed when I asked her to describe the work of the partners during play time.

Researcher: Please could you describe your work with the children during play time?

Talia: We're supporting their socialization skills. We also do any assessments that need to be done. Just being there and scaffolding their learning. Getting stuff ready for what comes next. I think it's kind of a bummer that we don't get that planning time. I have to be there for eight am. My partner is always there before me. There wouldn't really be a lot of time. My board doesn't have a collective agreement for our ECEs. We're just getting into ETFO. I find it frustrating. It's kind of too bad that they didn't get us all under the same umbrella. There were only seventeen of us I think. I don't know for sure. They're trying and I talked to a girl and she is trying and the board is not budging.

The difficulties associated with trying to set aside planning time with the teaching partner was a contentious issue. The partners were trying to plan 'on the fly.' This incidental

planning was highlighted in the comments of all the participants who saw it as a barrier to their collaborative practices in the classroom.

Amina: We have a planning sheet with all the areas. In the writing centre to get them writing about what the kids are doing. There can be five different interests going at the same time. We just use the sheets to keep us going.

Then the sheets are available to us to plunk in ideas. The principal said, 'How do you show your planning?' It was both our ideas. We plan on the fly but, we have to show our planning. We don't get planning time. We're just like the teacher. We talk about things that we are doing. We need to do this after school. We don't get planning time and stuff!

It seems reasonable to infer that Amina was not part of that planning dialogue because her contract did not provide her with planning time.

The Professional Hierarchy

Related to contract issues were participants' perceptions of a hierarchy of status within elementary schools. The Merriam-Webster (2013) dictionary defines 'hierarchy' as "the classification of a group of people according to ability or to economic, social, or professional standing; also the group so classified" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hierarchy>, January 28, 2013). Hierarchy in this study refers to perceived differences in the status among individuals employed in an elementary school. All the participants alluded to differences in status between themselves and classroom teachers. They did so both explicitly and implicitly.

During the interviews, participants told me about hierarchical relationships in their schools. The principal was the school team leader followed by teaching staff and then the support staff. Teachers had more status than ECEs, teacher-librarians, or EAs. Participants related common themes as well as unique experiences. They peeled back the layers of their own work experiences to reveal implicit hierarchies that were manifested in the legislation, collective agreements, and school cultures.

An inability to change one's positioning in a setting can create feelings of powerlessness. In particular, ECEs felt they were being marginalized simply because of their perceived subordinate status. They felt that teachers were expected to deliver curriculum while ECEs were expected to perform domestic tasks such as care. For example, Mary assumed a domestic and supervisory role early in the morning. She then transitioned to other tasks that included set up for the day's schooling. Mary was expected to set up two classrooms for a breakfast program with herself as the only supervisor on site before the school day. Domestic tasks continued after school as she tidied up the classroom.

An implied hierarchy existed in Mary's school, not only between herself and the classroom teacher, but also between herself and the prep teachers. The Ministry of Education guidelines under Bill 242 highlight the ECE's role with the children which meant that when the physical education teacher led the children to the gym the ECE was expected to be present. In fact, the ECE was required to be in attendance with the children at all times other than during official breaks.

In spite of her positioning as a caretaker rather than a teacher, Mary was expected to carry out instruction with large and small groups of children. During literacy

instruction blocks, Mary worked one-on-one, or with small groups and sometimes with the whole class. Moreover, she was expected to plan her own lessons without input from the teacher and in some situations taught without the presence of the teacher.

Mary: I do all the planning and work on my own. There is no dialogue between what I am going to do and what she does. She has said that if I am teaching the circle then she doesn't have to be in the room. I'm not sure if I am supposed to take that as a compliment or if she just wants to leave me with the kids. I don't know. I don't think we're supposed to do that. She's just not there!

Marginalization

Status hierarchies can create a complex tapestry of issues. Questions raised for me included: How are ECEs being positioned in the partnership? And what structures might be supporting the subordinate positioning of ECEs? In order to come to a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of ECEs in relation to their teaching partners, I sought a definition of the term, marginalization. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2009) define marginalization as “a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities” (p. 1).

How was marginalization marked in the interview data? Mary was concerned about the realities of hiring practices as more qualified teachers train to become ECEs to enhance their personal employment opportunities. Marginalization was a theme in all participants' stories: hours of unpaid work, lack of prep time, work completed at home, and expectations to be with the children whenever the children were in the classroom all

contributed to feeling marginalized. Mary was interested in this aspect and asked, “What could happen if they might start hiring for those qualifications?”

Researcher: Why qualifications? How do the qualifications influence your work?

Mary: My concern from the get-go was the success or failure of this program. If ECEs have no power in the room... we are not the ones [partner] who make the changes in the program. We can't do it alone. They can't intercept the problem-solving. I can't work when there is a wall there!

In contrast to the stories of feeling marginalized were stories about relationships.

Researcher: How did you address the challenges? Have you had issues with your relationship?

Talia: No! We've been really lucky! She was off because of Fifth Disease.

(Pregnant women are not to report for work if a case of Fifth Disease is reported at the workplace). . . . I would go to her house at night and pick up her plans for the next day. I'd ask her and she said to try this. How about we try this first and we'll wait and see how this strategy worked. I don't want to overstep any boundaries and we waited it out and that's about the only time. We have challenging children.

It is worth considering the extent to which the ECEs' routine engagements in work outside of contracted hours was related to their identification as professional educators.

Mary: I usually do some prep work. I go to the computer lab to do some prep work during my break. . . I like doing the inquiry project. It's the one thing in the room I own. She lets me do that. When I'm doing small groups, I get to do things.

I've had an opportunity to document and be a part of that. It has been a growth experience for me.

Amina also took home work or completed work after the instructional day in order to be better organized for the following day while her partner did the same. Amina chose to take home the work and I believe this was not a condition of employment. Rather it spoke of the professionalism and commitment to children. But it did not address the issue of unpaid work. Although Amina complained about the heavy work load outside of the working day, she continued to work for free. For example, Talia arrived at work at 8.00 a.m. and Mary arrived at school before 8 a.m.

Amina: I don't have to work and do planning after work but, I want things ready for the next day. We need planning time together. We do it on our own. Every month we send home a newsletter. We ask your child about this and that. [What] things to bring in – pictures of the kids. [We want the children to be] talking about school at home with their parents. Natalia (pseudonym for Amina's partner) does this on her planning time. We talk about things that we are doing. We need to do this after school.

Each participant was responsible for work associated with the domestic sphere (e.g. hours of student supervision within the context of an education setting).

Mary: We have breakfast program at 8:15Aa.m. If the kids are in the room, I have to run back and forth between the two rooms. Breakfast program is in our room and next door. The EAs in the building lay it out on the tables. I set up the napkins and cutlery. The kids help themselves. I kind of help them if they need it. It's nice our school has it. Our school is the poorest in [the district]. I clear the tables from

breakfast and then at 8:30 the bell rings...I remain until 3:30 p.m. and clean tables. Teachers can leave at 3:15 p.m.

Yet Mary felt her supervision duties superseded her classroom duties. This was reflected in the supervision schedule of the first term. Mandated supervision duties by the principal did not provide Mary with opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations with peers.

Mary: I'm outside every morning and afternoon recess. I was out for forty minutes every lunch. I just feel like...I am outside every recess. We come in, undress and go right to snack. Sometimes she is there and then she's not. I think she likes having an ECE. Sometimes, she lets them in [to the classroom].

Sometimes she's in the room, but to be honest, she's not always there.

Mary used breaks to complete planning in order to reserve in-class time to document student learning and to set up for activities because prep time was not guaranteed in her collective agreement.

Although Amina believed that she was supported by her teaching partner, she too provided evidence of exclusion from professional conversations. Amina referred to the absence of funding for her to attend parent meetings with her partner and the impact of her absence on parents' perceptions of her role in the classroom. She felt that it diminished her role as an educator in FDK.

Amina: I don't get to be in the IPRC [Individual Program and Review Committee] meeting. Only the teacher [attends]. Again, [there is] no money for coverage. My teacher thinks we are both in the classroom and I don't get to be

there. I'm nothing! I don't get to be there. The parents think [the teacher] is the main person.

Mary reiterated the stance of Amina. Feelings of marginalization or working at the edge of the fringe of a formal education system persisted. This was supported by structures of the system.

Feelings of marginalization were often the result of disrespectful practices for participants. Mary, for example, told me that the teachers and EAs sat at different tables during lunch and the ECEs were expected to sit with the EAs. Mary felt particularly resentful about this practice. She was a member of the Ontario College of Teachers as well as a qualified ECE. As a member of both professional groups, she struggled with being on the outside looking in. As a member of a team she viewed herself as existing on a lower rung of the teaching ladder. I asked her what difference it makes to think of a colleague as a partner.

Mary: It's hard for me to think of her as partner. It's hard for me not think of myself as one to three steps below her. It was an eye opener! I don't think of her as a partner. It's wrong for me to think of myself as that. That's wrong! I need to think of myself like that.

When asked about defining moments thus far in her ECE career, Mary reflected on her need to be vocal about her perceptions.

Mary: [The] supply teacher sat with me on Friday and asked if I could show her what she could do with the kids. She asked me what do I think of what they were going to do today? She said, 'It wasn't fair for me to do everything that was in the daybook.' [Oh my God, this is what you do with a partner?] I love my job. I love

working with the kids. If we aren't honest then things won't change. I wonder if this reflects on the ECEs. How much of this have I carried?

Interprofessional Practices

The ECEs' were somewhat preoccupied with a need to clarify their professional identities in relation to other professionals' roles and responsibilities within the context of daily work. They also underlined the importance of respectful communication for developing shared practices. The data suggest that ECEs and their teaching partners built curriculum based on professional knowledge and practices related to their respective professions and understandings about the diverse populations they served. However, the measurement of success of a collaborative relationship appeared to be based on mutual support and communication between the partners as well as complementary knowledge bases.

The ECEs perceived that respect and cooperation were demonstrated in some, but not all partnerships. I inferred that administrative decisions and tacit, shared understandings about work roles contributed to poor communication between partners. Conversely, as long as roles were clearly understood, communication could continue on a respectful footing. For example, Talia indicated that she had a respectful relationship with her partner even though instructional strategies were often demonstrated by the teacher while she cared for the children or acted as a supervisor.

Talia: She greets the children as well. She does the attendance. She does the morning routine. She does the morning message. She does the calendar.

Unfortunately, Mary's relationship with her partner was complicated by the fact that the teacher was retiring at the end of that school year. From the beginning, the division of labour was inequitable and the teacher functioned in an authoritarian manner. It was my understanding that Mary took up some of these issues with her partner, but the result was that the teacher abdicated responsibility for more tasks, leaving Mary with greater responsibilities and an expanding role. There were no apparent benefits for Mary in that the partnership.

Researcher: What benefits do you think partnerships provide for each person?

Mary: There is no partnership! I don't get anything out of it! She [teacher] is not investing professionally. She gets to go in and out of the room. I've missed breaks because she is not in the room and I don't know where she is. I try to make it up at lunch and she tells me when I can have my break. She's not my boss! I think the ECEs only have thirty minutes for lunch. I think the others [teachers] get a longer lunch.

Mary also spoke of the importance of the partnership for the success of the FDK initiative.

Mary: I'm worried that someone who is trying to save money will take the program away. I take that on my shoulders. When we're in the room with a wall there is only so much we can do if there isn't a partnership. . . . There are people who get what the program could be but it doesn't filter down into the classroom.

Talia and Amina had a clearer sense of their evolving roles. They were able to see the possibility of growing professionally and were supported in a new system as valuable members of teams.

Researcher: How might you define growth in your professional conversations and pedagogy? What defining moments have you experienced in the implementation process have been the highlight this year?

Talia: Every day last year I would come home and tell my husband that I love my job. This year has been different. I always wanted to work with kids and be in kindergarten and being a mom came first. I wanted to be in the school. I was in the right school at the right time. I would not want to work anywhere else.

I'm still learning. The Ministry is changing and we can't change the world in one day. I think going to a new school we can change things in our room. That's the whole thing too. You have to play with things. I have more positive than negative things that don't really change the job. [I am trying to be] an active member in my union. I'm being underpaid in my profession compared to other people in my building. I feel that people don't look at me any different. I don't think the people in our building [think] that the teachers are up here and I'm not down there. There is a level of respect. . . . Having a really good partnership! I've had a really good experience. I've learned a lot from Amber. I had a conference time with her and she taught me how to file every picture in the file for each child. We clicked through all those fifty pictures with the parents. I will do that forever because of her.

Talia's was a more optimistic story. In the interview she compared her past and present roles. She was a former EA in the same school and understood the complexities of FDK. Framing negotiations around the needs of the students provided a strategy that helped her to reposition her professional self. Talia and her partner were able to build on

their prior knowledge of learning environments and made pedagogical decisions to meet the needs of their students. They made collaborative decisions about some instructional practices and provided a support system for one another. Talia observed that her support system resembled a “family.” In her school, valuing others’ decisions as individuals was highly prized.

Talia: Our staff are very much like a family. They value you as a family and as an individual. There is so much inclusiveness. My partner included me in everything. We talk about it. There is a lot of communication. Not only is she my colleague but she is my friend. I feel that all my colleagues are my friends. I hope that doesn’t change when we go to a new school and a bigger staff.

The beginning of the day provided Talia and her partner with opportunities to employ consistent and cohesive care and education.

Talia: We have them come in and they sign in. They print their names and they pretty much do that. The teacher does the opening circle. Then they do Jolly Phonics™ centers and letter recognition, sounds and centers. I guide them and give them assistance.

Amina referred to professional conversations that had led to resolution of issues on a daily basis. Her partnership relied on their common understandings of child development, similar education/training backgrounds and openness to learning from one another as colleagues, but she and her partner also relied on personal connection and general notions of collegiality.

Amina: [You] need a little bit of a friendship. . . . I won’t call her to go out for the weekend. We eat lunch together but we don’t go out on the weekend. I get along

with everyone. There is an age difference. It's good to know each other. If she's not up to it today, sometimes I have to take over the show. When I'm not feeling well so does she. I like that we have that.

The ECEs were developing their professional identities in relation to their teaching partners within the context of their daily work. As the ECEs negotiated their roles and responsibilities in FDK, they were developing communication skills and adding to their funds of knowledge. However, as they positioned and repositioned themselves within the FDK initiative they sometimes encountered barriers to communication and it is to these that I now turn.

Barriers to Communication

It is my belief that interprofessional practices are critical to the success of the Ontario FDK initiative. Misunderstandings can therefore undermine the government's goals. The interview data point to the existence of numerous barriers to communication between the ECEs and teachers. Even in situations where reciprocity was the norm, occasional power struggles were inevitable. I concluded that such struggles are products of interpersonal communication and structural conditions such as inequitable access to time and funding for professional learning. For example, opportunities to share their core beliefs and make curriculum decisions based on professional experience and background knowledge are not afforded by a contract that does not allow for common planning time. The start date of employment and introduction of the partners was the first day of school.

In the ministry's training related to FDK the importance of welcoming ECEs into a partnership was romantically portrayed, but with the start date and introduction of the

partners occurring on the busiest day of the school year – the first day of school – the conditions necessary for a smooth transition were not in place.

Researcher: Where did you meet your first partner? That is, when did you first make contact with one another and how?

Mary: I met my first partner in Phase One of Full-day K [Kindergarten.] We met the first day of school. I was assigned to the school by the board.

Also, lack of shared preparation time and supervision schedules made it difficult for either partner to seek clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Researcher: Is there planning time in your work day and what might it look like?

Mary: We start half hour before the bell. Most of that time is spent setting up the room for the day. Teachers are not required to be in the room at that time. My school has early entry so I only have fifteen minutes to set up before the kids are let in. We are required to stay thirty minutes after the bell. This can be used to prep [preparation time], but we also must clean tables, tidy the room, etc. Also, teachers are not required to stay, so we could be on our own at this time. My partner and I typically have about fifteen – twenty minutes a day together to prep [prepare] and plan. Most ECEs I know- myself included, work through breaks in order to get things done.

While it was not exactly a barrier to communication, the decision to employ commercially produced “teacher-proof” instructional materials for some lessons made communication between ECEs and teachers less important than it could have been. Mary and Talia referred to seat work such as *PALS*TM and formal worksheets the children completed with the teachers.

Mary: Usually at this time, the teacher has some form of seat-work, she'll call them over to her desk to work. I usually do some sort of prep work... She's doing stuff ...like Jolly Phonics™. I use the Scholastic reading plans.

This use of ready-made, "teacher-proof" materials allowed ECEs and teachers to instruct without engaging in dialogue with their partner. For example, phonics instruction was delivered through the *Jolly Phonics*™ program. The writing program was delivered through *Writing without Tears*™. The reading program was delivered through *CLICK*™. *Making Words*™ was a word study program. Each of these products was prescriptive in nature with explicit instructional methods that included prompts, responses and questions posed by the educators through a published script. Teaching with these programs was followed by literacy centers work that employed program materials.

Talia: Again, it is play-based literacy centers. We try to change those out every week. We were looking at positional words. [The use of] *Making Words*™ [was used for word study]. We have guided reading centers.

My further questions about the professional's role with respect to prescriptive language programs and implementation of a play-based learning elicited the following response from

Talia: I'm not sure. I'm kind of on the fence with this one. That's hard to know. It all depends on whether you choose to be there. If you are plopped there, I don't know. You have to be a deep, caring individual. You have to have some knowledge of early development. I don't know how to say it. It could be beneficial but not necessary. You could have been a student who skimmed through it. It's kind of a good blend. It's hard to pinpoint.

The data are also silent on some issues. For example, even though curriculum documents and guides were available to everyone, the ECEs did not refer often to principles of learning and curriculum making outlined in the document. It seemed that they were not discussed by ECEs and their partners either. It is therefore surprising that the participants appeared to place such a value on their partners' professional knowledge.

Professional Knowledge

In the *Full-day Kindergarten Early Learning Draft* (OME, 2010b), college educated ECEs are described in the following way:

Early childhood educators bring a focus on age-appropriate program planning to facilitate experiences that promote each child's physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social, and creative development and well-being, providing opportunities for them to contribute to formative assessment (assessment for learning) and evaluation of the children's learning. They are also responsible for implementing the integrated extended day. (OME, p. 8)

Some of these resources are not dissimilar to the resources that teachers bring to a classroom but the ECEs who participated in my study saw their backgrounds as distinct from the backgrounds of their teacher partners. They spoke of their teacher partners' knowledge with deep respect and almost an air of awe. Yet Talia often worked alone.

Talia: We split them into two groups and I read them a story and we talked about concepts of print. It's not every day. We talk about fiction and non-fiction. They bring their books to me and I sign them out. Then the next group comes in and the other group goes to computers for twenty minutes. On Mondays and Wednesdays – group A would be going to the library first and the other group goes to the gym.

You get what I mean. Then we bring them back and I do that. We have a couple of EAs and the prep teacher – just supervising all that.

The participants also described their own professional backgrounds as uniquely valuable. For example, Talia believed that practical knowledge and knowledge of child development supported her work and relationships with children.

Researcher: Do you think that if teachers had an ECE background would it be different?

Talia: I'm not sure. I don't know. You have to be a deep caring individual. You need to have some knowledge of early development.

Amina too drew on her knowledge of child development, but remarked that instructional strategies were not addressed in any previous professional learning sessions.

Shared backgrounds can help to bridge gaps created by hierarchical structures. Amina and her teaching partner shared common backgrounds as registered ECEs. Their shared knowledge fostered open dialogue and relationship building. Amina noted, “[M]y partner used to be an ECE, so she knows as well. We have to work as a team.” Amina and her partner ‘talked’ after school, they made decisions together about what each one did in the classroom. They based their work on the interactions with the children and their common understandings of child development. They engaged in dialogue around child development and pedagogy from an inquiry stance described in the FDK document to work towards research-based education programming outlined in OME monographs.

Amina: Sometimes I will videotape Natalia and she will be on the floor with the kids and something will come up and we get to the good things.

Prior to the roll out of the FDK program, Amina had not been familiar with using observations as an assessment practice. Amina's training had promoted use of worksheets and prescriptive teaching, but she told me she was a risk taker with respect to learning new skills. She felt safe to explore new avenues of teaching and learning with her partner. She and her partner communicated on a professional level to understand the work they engaged in as a team.

Amina: When I saw how things worked from observational notes, it really came together. That was a big wow for me! I've learned a lot from Natalia.

Amina and her partner learned to trust and respect the skills each one brought to the setting. Hers was the only team of the three who said they drew on the *Full-day Kindergarten Early Learning* (OME, 2010b) document to guide their work.

Amina: We both have copies of the document. [We] refer to it often. What we see with the kids we link to the document. It keeps us looking at the document and stuff that we are doing.

It is unfortunate and noteworthy that Mary's background as a qualified teacher did not help her to position herself as a partner worthy of respect. Mary stated that she and her partner did not engage in any conversations before the school day began due to scheduling conflicts related to supervision and time lines for instruction. They were unable to dialogue around the curriculum and the children's needs as well as their own needs to grow as collaborative partners.

Mary: Right after snack, we have gym. At the beginning of the year I was alone in the gym. [We] flip the duties or planning for gym. If it's my week for the gym activities, she stays in the room while I set up the gym. So if it's her week with

the gym, then I stay in the room while she sets up and I stay with the ‘snackers.’ If it’s my week to do gym, then it is her week to do literacy circle.

When a perceived lack of reciprocity grew unbearably frustrating, Mary used her knowledge of the school hierarchy to access administrative support. She sought support to get something done and also to communicate to her teaching partner that as an ECE she wanted to be heard. Mary felt that she was not being heard and her professional ethics drove her to seek support from the school administrator. In the interview she also indicated that her base of support was greater as she moved up through the district’s chain of command.

Mary: I feel the further you go up in the system, [ECEs] feel supported.

Mary was not able to effectively function within her role as her partner was consistently absent or late for supervision duties and classroom instruction which caused misperceptions of responsibilities. Communication between the partners became shrouded in mistrust and misalignment of perceived roles and responsibilities.

Mary: She [the teacher] said in September she wasn’t inviting me into this program as she was retiring. The other side is that she is in the job and she is getting paid. I have been in this grey area while she gets into retirement. I’m working with someone who doesn’t believe in this program and professionally I don’t know where I am. Where do you go with that?

Past relationships seemed to play a role in partnerships. For example, in Talia’s partnership the difference in status between teachers and EAs may have been reproduced in the new partnership. Talia was still responsible for a number of activities she previously assumed within her former role.

Talia: On Mondays and Wednesdays Group A would be going to the library first and the other group goes to the gym. You get what I mean. Then we bring them back and I do that. We have a couple of EA's and the preparation teacher just supervising all that. Then I prepare for snack. I get my forty minute break. And that's the morning. It feels like one-hundred hours.

As the ECEs developed better understandings of the ways schools worked, they began to explore their relationship with their partner through professional knowledge. Not all the partnerships engaged in deep conversations related to curriculum nor did they necessarily share their professional backgrounds in order to come to a consensus about their work. I was interested therefore in exploring professional learning opportunities as avenues that could allow them to communicate with one another.

Professional Learning Opportunities

There is evidence reported in the research literature that “[b]ecause of the differences in their initial preparation, early childhood educators may respond in divergent ways to types of in-service training usually undertaken (Berson & Sherman, 1976). That is, teachers and ECEs’ judgments about the value of professional learning activities create a need for differentiating professional learning (Verzaro, 1980). The data provide some support for this view. For example, Talia attended a Ministry of Education learning session for teachers. The theme was ‘repeat, rethink, remove’ common practices in the Kindergarten classroom. These themes were directly related to the Ministry’s desire to disrupt common pedagogical practices in kindergarten classrooms, especially the practice of decorating walls with commercially produced posters and charts.

However, any ECEs who had trained in emergent curriculum had been engaging in such professional dialogue already, long before the implementation of FDK.

The FDK document does not specify the type of professional learning opportunities needed for interprofessional practice. At the time of my study, the ECEs had only recently entered the school system and accommodations for attending workshops and conferences were not yet readily available, but questions and decisions surrounding professional learning opportunities for ECEs were surfacing. Why were teachers allowed to attend conferences while an ECE working in the same classroom was not offered the same opportunities? Why did an ECE not have opportunities to engage in professional learning directly linked to curriculum documents and the well-being of kindergarteners? It is noteworthy that the teaching partner of one participant also saw the inequity in this situation and advocated for the ECE to attend a regional conference for educators and system leaders on the topic of self-regulation, a topic directly related to the curriculum.

Amina: Natalia recommended that I attend the [conference] with her. [She] went to the principal and recommended me and I got to go.

While attending the conference Amina and her teaching partner were able to build on their relationship and deepen the understanding of the topic as it related to their classroom practices.

In spite of Amina's positive experiences with her teaching partner, some comments about professional learning opportunities conveyed a sense that professional learning was viewed as an imposition. One participant said she did not see the value in attending mandatory sessions presented by the district school board's health and safety

committee as determined by Ministry of Labor and felt these sessions were not directly related to her work.

Amina: I took in something about the autism training because we have a lot.

[T]here is health and safety and nothing really that is geared to us.

For my participants, professional learning opportunities in the early phase of FDK implementation had been patchy. Sessions focused on implementation of FDK for school-based professionals rather than creating opportunities for professional growth. Talia highlighted the patchy structure of Ministry of Education in-services as having split sessions for a variety of audiences. Specific days were allotted for specific audiences. Principals attended a session on a given day while ECEs and teachers attended other days. The main focus for principals' in-service was operational in nature and appeared as a closed door session to the educator teams. Amina's perception of exclusionary practices and lack of transparency has plagued Ministry of Education sessions possibly creating further communication barriers.

Talia: There was a three day course and the first day was for the principals. I was part of the TLCP [*Teaching Learning Critical Pathways*] and EPCI's [*Early Primary Collaborative Inquiry Project*]. I was quite honoured to be asked to attend our ministry training [EPCI]. The first year we went to a one day [session] and this year we went to a two day one. A really interesting thing happened this time. There was one school that only sent one teacher and it was a French Immersion (FI) school. They e-mailed the school and the second day they sent the ECE. She is the only FI in the roll out. She was feeling really overwhelmed. She was a brand new teacher. She had her partner there. It's just like when you go to

the doctor. You can't absorb everything. That's pretty much the PD (Professional Development) in a nut shell... This was the first year I heard about learning goals and descriptive feedback.

In Mary's view, board-initiated safety training was not a professional learning opportunity. She found workshop topics redundant and of little interest. She felt they needed to be current and relevant in order to be of perceived value.

Mary: We haven't had any workshops. Last year we had one. We had a co-planning day last year for a half day planning. Not this year. No workshops this year in the summer. I have gone to Ministry [of Education] things [in the past]. It is possible that Mary's dual professional background in early childhood education as well as teaching were a source of her dissatisfaction.

Mary: When we have workshops for Kindergarten or in the classroom, it's not stuff that's new to ECE's. Its professional development that's information that's appropriate for Kindergarten and a lot of that we learned already.

Mary indicated that she had completed ECE and teaching programs recently. She began working as an ECE shortly after graduating from a college program. This was in stark contrast to her exit from university with a Bachelor of Education degree. She was unable to obtain employment as a teacher and returned to school in hopes of securing a professional position. Talia also complained about the professional learning opportunities made available to her and indeed, to her teaching partner via Ministry in-service training.

Talia: We were just at a two day workshop with the ministry. It was too much information and we were on overload. There was our lead and fourteen of us and a literacy coach.

Mary sought her own professional learning opportunities as a response to what she saw as a lack of professional learning opportunities created in the system. She needed to advocate for herself and engaged in a Ministry of Education initiative that afforded her opportunities to meet with other educators that included ECEs, teachers, administrators, system support staff and ministry officials. Professional dialogue was embraced in the professional activities.

Mary: All I do is on my own. I *Google*TM it or I go back to my old text books and I read. I think we need to be responsible for our own professional development. I think we have to do it on our own.

Issues related to access to professional learning opportunities intersect with contractual issues. When professional learning opportunities were provided outside of the instructional day they set off a chain of potential questions and decisions by ECEs as to who had access to learning and who did not. Compensation for work outside of the instructional day and external demands such as family responsibilities precluded attending any professional learning opportunities. Talia needed to make a conscious decision about care for her own children over professional learning opportunities that potentially impacted her work, knowledge base and professional dialogue with her colleague.

Talia: There's really not a lot of professional development for Early Childhood Educators. They are offering them after school and for me it's difficult. I have three boys. My husband works in X (indicating a location and distance from home). I can't get to a lot of things.

Talia believed there was merit in professional learning directly related to classroom instruction. It also influenced her interactions with her own children at home.

Talia: This was the first year I heard about learning goals and descriptive feedback. And now I know what it is...Now I know what my sons are talking about. I learned about the three part math lesson and I saw it with my seventeen year old son. If I hadn't been in Kindergarten I wouldn't be able to transfer it to my own kids. I'm transferring my learning too.

Professional learning opportunities were provided to the partners for various reasons. Teachers were able to attend conferences while ECEs were mandated to acquire health and safety skills. As the partnerships evolved opportunities to engage in deep pedagogical conversation were not available to the teams due to contractual issues.

Concluding Remarks

The ECEs in this study positioned themselves in relation to their teaching partners and often tended to look at their partners' positions as privileged ones. I sorted the many issues they discussed using terms such as contractual issues, issues related to hierarchy, marginalization, interprofessional practices, barriers to communication and professional knowledge and learning.

Issues such as lack of joint preparation time and low hourly wages seemed to overshadow the day to day work of the participants. For professionals employed in a system priding itself on inclusiveness, the acceptance of and resignation to marginalization is of concern. The ECEs were struggling to have their voices heard within their partnerships, but they faced exclusionary practices in their day to day work

and relationships as well as within the overall structures of the Ontario FDK initiative. Hierarchical structures existed in schools prior to FDK and these wove their way into the ECEs' experiences of their partnerships. The ECE participants reflected on differential valuing of their roles and responsibilities as well as the roles and responsibilities of others in schools. Scarcity of resources, gendered inequities, and differences in educational backgrounds were all featured in their stories. In the next chapter I observe the perception that the ECEs' voices were not sought in decision making about their roles and responsibilities. Rather they were plunged into domestic tasks while teaching partners assumed the role of instructional leaders. The undervaluing of care persisted as the partners attempted to co-construct their roles.

I came to the conclusion that the ECE-teacher partnerships being described in the interviews were riddled with communication stops and starts as the ECEs struggled to have their voices heard. The ECEs did not have opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge or opportunities to engage in deep pedagogical discussions. Power struggles between the partners were evident as they struggled to share tasks. In short, my ECE participants were struggling to claim a professional identity and status in relation to others' professional roles and responsibilities in the school setting.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to learn about participants' experiences of a legislated partnership with a kindergarten teacher. In conducting the interviews, my hope was to provide a fluid and open space for ECE professionals to discuss their subjective experiences of one professional partnership. The study asked the following questions:

How is the legislated partnership between ECE teachers and certified teachers from the Ontario College of Teachers defined and represented in official texts pertaining to Ontario's Full-day Kindergarten programs and ECE teachers' accounts of their partnership activities?

How are ECE teachers positioned within this discursively produced partnership?

What role(s) might different professional discourses play in the positioning? What role(s) do differences in power and status play in the positioning?

In this chapter, I present the key findings and discuss some implications for professionals who share a teaching and learning environment. I will also present some thoughts about the future of school-based Early Childhood Education in Ontario. I will conclude with suggestions for possible future research.

Representations of the Partnership

To explore the teaching partnership between ECEs and FDK teachers I began by reviewing the official documents. I assumed that the documents would influence the thinking of the participants with respect to their role in FDK (Kelly, 2004).

The Full-day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act 2010 (Bill 242) and *Full-day Early Learning Kindergarten Draft 2010 program* (OME, 2010b) list the expectations of the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners as follows:

- communicate with each other and their school community;
- develop strong and flexible relationships;
- integrate learning across a continuum of four and five year olds;
- co-construct and share common language;
- appreciate one another's backgrounds and how diverse backgrounds could support young children's learning, growth and development;
- entrust a process of transformation as a collaborative team within the context of the Full-day Kindergarten program;
- negotiate the use of already existing resources.

My survey of literature on professional partnerships suggests that the Ontario legislation was based on a health and/or social work model. However, the nature of the partnership was also implicitly influenced by the pre-existing disparities between school teachers and ECEs which were reproduced in the ECEs' collective agreements. Like Amey, Eddy and Campbell (2010), I believe that some challenges surrounding collaborative practices can be created by policies themselves, even though they were designed to solve social problems. FDK does solve some problems for families. The politicians proposed that families would be supported by integrating child care and education in FDK. However, they implemented the initiative quickly and in the process, failed to provide adequate consultation with and support for either partner.

The ECEs, who came from a variety of settings such as non-profit co-operative preschools and child care centers, were not represented by a single union (as compared to teachers) such as the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) or the Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA). Some ECEs were represented by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF); others by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) or Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU). It is not surprising that so many ECEs feel confused about their roles and responsibilities in FDK. For example, as one of the study's participants, Amina, reported, she felt she was not supported by her union and commented numerous times that the system was not ready for their profession to join the education field. As the FDK initiative matures, contractual issues such as preparation time, supervision and salaries will need to take priority in negotiations with provincial leaders in order for ECEs to feel valued and treated equitably for their teaching practices.

How did the ECE participants represent the partnership? Reflecting on the data presented in the previous chapter, I concluded that the ECEs were interpreting their roles in relation to the way in which their teacher partners were positioned. ECEs' level of training and education coupled with their responsibilities and accountability contributed to their interpretation of their roles. These perspectives are not unique. For example, while attending a conference in Victoria, British Columbia in June 2013, I presented findings from this investigation to a group of early childhood education scholars. During the question period, one member of the audience indicated that ETFO had negotiated roles and responsibilities for the teachers and made sure that ECEs were excluded from certain professional routines – most notably assessment. I wondered if the two groups

were being competitive or was this a story of both groups having requisite knowledge to be accountable for assessment? While the veracity of the comment is beyond the scope of this study, it illustrates the competitive nature of the partnership process. This theme of hierarchy wove its way through the investigation as the participants' related stories of marginalization that reminded me of Cinderella. Like Cinderella, they had been invited to a party, but not everyone at the party was happy about it.

How were the ECEs Positioned in the Partnership?

The data show that the ECEs I interviewed were perceived to be positioned as people on the outside looking into an established program. The teachers were on 'home territory' while the ECEs were coming into that territory. They had few opportunities to build trust and rapport with their teaching partners before the beginning of the school year and the classroom environments they entered had been established by the teachers. They found these environments less than invitational and felt that the school system was not set up to accept ECEs as colleagues. As in health care (see e.g. D'Amour & Oandasan, 2005) the professional team was composed of members with differing amounts of authority and status, but issues of power and status were not up for discussion. There wasn't time for discussion let alone power and status.

In the future, as the two professions come to together to build a relationship in the field, opportunities to learn from one another and engage in deeper pedagogical conversations may become more numerous and more frequent. Formally integrated learning opportunities in pre-service programs and on-going professional development that is job embedded may provide the team with opportunities to learn from one another

and open space for dialogue in order to “familiarize them with the similarities and differences in their roles, ongoing learning will be necessary to soften the boundaries and rivalries that too often exist between professions” (Gastaldi & Hibbert, 2011, p. 249). The data provide some clues that this may be the case for some partners now. Amina and her partner continued pedagogical conversations throughout the year. It is worth noting that they shared professional knowledge as both partners had worked in child care facilities prior to entering the education arena. If ECEs and teachers could access a knowledge base that included interprofessional practices, the partnership process may look different. Recognition of various funds of knowledge of both partners for the goals of the program may stitch together a stronger partnership. Planning and attending meetings and professional development as a team would provide ECEs with a voice and access to information that could influence their practice in the classroom. These suggestions draw on the writing of Liaskos, Frigas, Antypas, Zikos, Diomidis and Mantas, (2009) who defined interprofessional education as: “occasions when two or more professions learn from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care” (p. S43).

A central issue in the data was the lack of common preparation or planning time which created a barrier to communication and shrouded their interprofessional learning in misunderstandings about their roles and responsibilities. The effectiveness of any collaborative partnership is supported by trusting and respectful relationships (Monteil-Overall, 2009), but learning from and with one another requires uninterrupted blocks of time to share ideas and concepts.

Positioning Theory became much more relevant and clear to me as I made connections with the classic storyline of Cinderella. Just as Cinderella recounted her life

of servitude in relation to her step sisters and step mother, the ECEs told stories of being left with all the domestic work while the teachers engaged in the more glamorous aspects of life in the school. However, unlike Cinderella, ECEs in my study described many opportunities to teach. But except for Mary, the ECEs did not talk explicitly of positioning. Their positioning may have been unintentional, but they assumed subordinate identities and described themselves as people who occupied subordinate positions. Mary may have had other stories operating in the background of her life or in the school or educational culture. Mary played the role of an overworked Cinderella needing to be rescued by a prince and it was interesting to me that her situation was ameliorated by a new administrator who stepped in and instituted a more equitable supervision schedule. Subordinate positioning in the workplace is usually marked by lower wages, but in the FDK workplace it is also marked by being paid by the hour. Where a salaried teacher may feel that they are working too many hours for their salary, a worker who is paid explicitly for six hours is likely to view work carried out outside of the paid work day as unpaid work. Many people see the role of the ECE as similar to an EA because they are not aware of the legislation. This is not surprising, but it may account for some lack of understanding about why ECEs would feel marginalized. ECEs were used to being caregivers, but they felt their dispositions were being exploited by their teacher partners. The classroom environment was 'owned' by the teacher. Like Cinderella, they felt like strangers in a home that belonged to others and consciously acted as guests or strangers in their new environments. The ECE participants felt that teachers held the keys to greater understanding of the education system and that teachers might have acted as hosts, but as the partnerships evolved during the school year,

opportunities to share knowledge and expertise were few and they were dominated by the demands of the system. Mary's interview highlighted her frustration about the lack of opportunity to discuss relevant child development issues with her partner. To borrow words from Eddy (2007) and Farrell and Seifert (2007) her partnership seemed doomed to fail.

One example of the ECEs' lack of insider knowledge of the school system can be found in their lack of familiarity with acronyms. The use of acronyms was prevalent in the interviews with ECEs and one participant (Mary) questioned the researcher if she knew what some of the acronyms meant. They were developing a new language in their new role as part of their on-the-job training. However, co-constructing a common language required a shared time, place and resources. The language they shared needed to support their on-going story.

Stories behind the Story

Lurking behind the participants' stories of practice is a larger story surrounding professionalization of the ECEC field. According to Canadian researchers Pence and White (2011), ECEC is an emerging profession that is just beginning to question assumptions and issues of power. Now ECEs from a variety of backgrounds are witnessing a transformation within the profession. In Ontario, the ECE professional community has introduced accreditation which "is founded on the beliefs that for change to be real and lasting, it must be initiated by the early childhood organization and that program improvement results from collaborative problem-solving approach" (Chandler, 2012, p. 180).

ECEC is also a field shared by many professionals. Unfortunately, it may not yet be functioning as a multi-professional field.

A successful team is one that demonstrates professionalism, shared beliefs, common identity and vision and breadth of experience and skills, and feels secure enough within the management system to take on new activities without fear and to operate within a professional climate which balances openness to ideas with pragmatic critique. (Bertram, 2002 cited in Rankin & Butler, 2011, p. 44)

In order to develop a multi-professional field, diversely positioned practitioners require opportunities to find common ground through sharing knowledge and skills.

Also embedded in my participants' stories of practice is a policy story. The FDK roll out process was determined by the Ministry of Education with little or no decision making opportunities for teachers or ECEs. The policies simply positioned the teachers as keepers of pedagogy while ECEs were expected to know about child development. But how was knowledge of child development supposed to inform pedagogy if ECEs were not allowed to have a voice in discussions about pedagogy? Frustration was expressed by all the participants as they weighed in on teaching opportunities. They were teaching in tandem with their partners but seemed disappointed with the selection of opportunities presented and especially by the pre-packaged programs being used. Providing opportunities to make decisions around curriculum development may have provided the ECEs with a stronger sense of belonging.

In my survey of professional ECE literature I discovered that in several European countries, some professionals who work with young children are trained as social pedagogues. Social pedagogy "[i]s concerned with the theory and practice of creating...

[a]n environment conducive to their well-being and learning” (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011, p. 33). From the perspective of social pedagogy, the ECEs need to participate in decision-making. The relationship between pedagogues and teachers is

a relationship amongst equal human beings where power is used not as a form of control but as responsibility, a relationship that leads to less dependence on the social pedagogue and facilitates a person’s increasing ability to access resources themselves (p. 44).

My participants could have benefited from the social pedagogy perspective. As the partners negotiated their responsibilities, they needed opportunities to value and discuss relevant understandings about their community in order to feel empowered.

In a system historically comprised of numerous fragmented programs and services, the Ontario government is attempting to bring health, welfare and education for young children under the Ministry of Education’s administrative auspice. The FDK initiative is underway and needs the perspective of many professions, not just ‘a few good men.’ Hibbert, Hunter and Hibbert (2011) argue professions acting in isolation do not have the capacity to respond to a variety of needs. Many leaders in the field of education and care are called upon to support the initiative. A shared vision must be created and clear to all those who wish to participate (Hyson & Whittacker, 2012). This decision-making needs to include teachers and ECEs. I wondered if my participants accepted the invitation to the ball possibly believing it to be a new direction, but with few supports were in place to make the experience a successful one. Meanwhile, teachers were not asked about the future of their roles and responsibilities in education either. In school-based early learning, all the practitioners need to have a clear understanding of the

vision along with opportunities to create the integrated professional identities needed for integrated services (Goffin, 2012). In a truly integrated system ECEs and teachers will create a “shared identity” (Goffin, 2012, p. 172). Questions about professionalism arise as educators begin to investigate these new ways of being. For example, will ECEs lose their autonomy if an integrated professional stance is employed (Frost, 2011). As individuals connect with different forms of professional development will they disconnect from the learning environment? And finally, will families perceive ECEC to be different from education? However, the challenges faced by policy makers can best be summed up in a question posed by Goffin when she asks what early childhood education and care is for and who is responsible for early childhood education and care?

Implications for Practice

ECEs’ transformation of their ‘selves’ as professionals can be supported by professional learning opportunities. However, in a field where multiple backgrounds and expertise in specific areas are evident, new identities need to be supported (Rankin & Butler, 2011). To build trusting relationships, partners require time and energy and support for authentic dialogue aimed at creating a culture of understanding about roles and responsibilities (Frost, 2011). Such a vision was explored by Hyson and Whittacker (2012) in their research of three states in the United States. All three states used their own approaches to addressing professional development, all findings from all three states showed that a transformative culture is the responsibility of many stakeholders including state and university level educators.

Professional development opportunities outlined by Chandler (2012) include: four stages of support: Novice –mentoring; Emerging – teaching strategy development; Experienced – professional development and Mature – continued professional growth (p. 183). As ECEs' roles evolve and as the roll out of FDK continues, ECEs from year one may act as mentors to newer ECEs in the education system. As year one ECEs continue in the education field, they will need other professional growth opportunities to support them. The *Standards of Practice* (2011) address ECEs only, but future development of shared knowledge building as a professional development initiative may prove beneficial.

Intentionally planning integrated professional development opportunities could form a gateway to collaborative practices among professionals. Engaging college and university faculties of education and child care of pre-service and graduate programs in agreements with respect to shared learning opportunities in the classroom and in the field would support ECEs and their teaching partners as they develop an integrated professional identity. Engaging leaders from child care facilities and schools in meaningful professional learning could support professional identities as they ebb and flow (Hyson & Whittacker, 2012). I believe that at the Ontario provincial level, advisory councils could help stakeholders to connect research, policy and practice with the appropriate funding model to support the professional growth of ECEs and teachers as their roles evolve.

Re-engineering professional learning in ECEC to reflect the growing changes in the field will be necessary. Funding for integrated learning opportunities may need restructuring to support pre-service as well as post graduate students. ECE students and pre-service teachers may be in school longer, but may support classroom pedagogy

through co-operative placements or internships. Opportunities exist for district school boards, community-based centers and universities and colleges to develop programs that reflect their needs and areas of specialization.

While the professionalization story is a generally positive one, at least one leader in the field cautions that serious consideration needs to be given to professional development strategies and accreditation. Chandler (2012) points out that individuals may be excluded from the profession due to the uncalculated costs of a hierarchy of credentials. Moreover, the instability of the ECEC profession is a continuing problem as ECEs leave the profession due to poor wages and benefits as well as the effects of changes in the workplace (Kagan, Kauerz & Tarrant, 2008).

Eichsteller and Holthoff (2011) suggest leaders will need to respectfully provoke educators to move out of their comfort zone in order to gain the benefits of new learning. Instructors of pre-service and graduate programs will need support in up-grading their skills and knowledge in order to facilitate learning opportunities for students. All levels within the system, including senior administration, support staff and supervisors will need opportunities to dialogue as well as engage in integrated professional development. Mentoring and coaching opportunities need to be in place for all levels in the system in order to support one another as they learn. Providing professional development for multi-disciplinary teams will require planning and inclusionary practices of many partners in the school system as well as the community. Professional development will need to be facilitated by representative groups including ECEs and teachers as a collective group of educators sharing a common and valued vision.

Implications for Research

The sample for this study was not large but the data collected was rich and full of stories within stories. A larger representation of ECEs in this study would have provided a broader context of how the roles and responsibilities of ECEs are perceived. Only one side of the story was told, but another is still waiting to be heard. The voices of the teachers were not reflected in this study. They too have a story to share. I wonder if their story is, *The Little Red Hen*?

As partners involved in an initiative, issues surrounding decision-making practices at many levels need to be addressed. I still have more questions than conclusions. How do teachers in FDK perceive their role in relation to ECEs? Are they represented in the current literature? What practices and qualifications are needed to be an effective teacher in an integrated system? How might legislation support or hinder future partnership development?

Legislated partnerships open the door for interpretation of the definition of a partnership and with it interprofessional practices. I need to understand and gain a greater appreciation of the work carried out by organized labour with respect to contract negotiations. This would also include the recruitment and hiring practices by district school boards. As district school board's engage in hiring practices, I am drawn to the qualifications and standards a district school board might entertain.

In the *Full-day Early Learning Kindergarten Draft* document (OME, 2010b), many partnerships are highlighted including the partnership with parents as active agents in education. Although this study looked at the legislated partnerships of ECEs with teachers, I am interested in understanding how this implicit partnership is expected to

work. Other implicit partnerships include those with community-based organizations such as child cares. With the *Modernization of Child Care* (OME, 2013c), district school boards and local child care facilities are engaging in complex negotiations about space and physical environments. These negotiations based on provincial policies would be interesting.

Other stories are still in need of telling. I would like to continue to collaborate with community and school/graduate school based educators to develop Early Years' curriculum that reflects the diverse nature of who we are as educators. I would like to understand how we produce curricula or how educators position themselves in the curriculum rather than how the curriculum positions them as I suggested earlier in this study. Through collaborative practices, I hope to engage community partners in deeper dialogue in order to grow my understanding of social pedagogy. As I continue to research Early Childhood Education within my present role and share these literature findings, I hope to push my thinking and understanding.

I hope to explore the many questions I have about Early Childhood Education in Ontario and beyond. I would like to investigate the link between newcomer mothers and how they are encouraged to support their young ELL children attending FDK programs.

Concluding Remarks

Within my present role as learning coordinator with responsibilities for program implementation for Early Years, I wanted to tell the story of the ECEs in this study. It isn't a classic fairy tale with a 'happily ever after' but it does make good reading. Assumptions were made that Cinderella was the underdog living in poor conditions.

Cinderella was actually the daughter of a nobleman, a child of privilege. Reading ahead into the next chapter of this story, interprofessionals working in schools require opportunities for reciprocal knowledge building and ways of communicating effectively with one another in an evolving system. ECEs and teachers need opportunities to plan such professional learning opportunities within networks as not only job embedded action but also as a professional development, mentoring and coaching strategy. Bringing together multi-disciplinary professionals to create and define integrated services is part of the pre-service and on-going education of the partners is critical to the well-being of the system and its future citizens. As the partners are supported by a network of professionals from system staff development and program leaders, invitations to excite and ignite the thinking of our educators as will be the climax. As competent and capable educators negotiating their roles and responsibilities, they have kept their promise of caring for young children in a time of change. I too, hope I have kept my promise to tell their story.

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number: 1103-6
 Principal Investigator: Rosamund Stooke
 Student Name: Rosemarie Walton
 Title: *Together we stand, divided we fall: Partnerships in the full-day early learning Kindergarten*
 Expiry Date: October 31, 2011
 Type: M. Ed. Thesis
 Ethics Approval Date: April 21, 2011
 Revision #:
 Documents Reviewed &
 Approved: UWO Protocol, Letter of Information & Consent, Advertisement

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

Dr. Alan Edmunds (Chair)

2010-2011 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Alan Edmunds Faculty of Education (Chair)
 Dr. John Barnett Faculty of Education
 Dr. Jacqueline Specht Faculty of Education
 Dr. Farahnaz Faez Faculty of Education
 Dr. Wayne Martino Faculty of Education
 Dr. George Gadanidis Faculty of Education
 Dr. Immaculate Namukasa Faculty of Education
 Dr. Kari Veblen Faculty of Music
 Dr. Ruth Wright Faculty of Music
 Dr. Robert Macmillan Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Graduate Programs & Research (*ex officio*)
 Dr. Susan Rodger Faculty of Education, UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (*ex officio*)

The Faculty of Education 1137 Western Rd. London, ON N6G 1G7	Karen Kueneman, Research Officer Faculty of Education Building kueneman@uwo.ca 519-661-2111, ext.88561 FAX 519-661-3029
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Interview Questions

Interview Questions will be selected and/or adapted from the following list:

Routines

Please could you describe what you do at the beginning of your day from 8:45 until 9:00.

Tell me about your entry routines and what each partner does when the children arrive?

Describe your work during opening activities of the day in an Early Learning environment.

Please could you describe your work in the morning and the work of your colleague?

Please could you describe your work with the children during the literacy block?

Please could you describe your work with the children during the numeracy block?

Please could you describe your work with the children during play time?

Please could you describe your work with your colleague during play time?

Please could you describe your lunch routines as an educator.

What is your role with respect to supervision? What is the role of your partner?

Please could you describe what you do during the afternoon?

Tell me about the entrance routines after lunch.

Tell me about your role in the exit routine.

Tell me about your role and work.

Opportunities

What opportunities do you have for growth and development of skills and knowledge in your job?

What do your partner and other school staff do that makes you feel supported?

What benefits do you think partnerships provide for each person?

What shared goals, roles and responsibilities does this partnership provide you?

Does your professional code of ethics help you figure out your partnership role?

In what ways?

Influences

What difference does it make to you to think of your colleague as a partner?

In what ways does your educational background and pedagogy guide your discussions or interactions with your partner?

How might your educational background impact and guide your discussions with your partner?

Professional Conduct

In what ways if any do you use your code of ethics?

In what ways does your code of ethics guide your partnership or engagement in professional dialogue?

What kinds of challenges have you experienced this year? What happened? How did you address the challenges?

Growth and Professional Development

How might you define growth in your professional conversations and pedagogy?

What defining moments have you experienced in the implementation process have been the highlight this year?

What is your perception of how educational background shapes your role?

Could you please illustrate how one might grow professionally?

Consent Form

Together We Stand, Divided We Fall: Partnerships in the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten

I have read the Letter of Information related to the above titled project. I understand the proposed research and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring a penalty of any kind, that I may decline to answer any specific questions should I choose to do so, and that the information collected is for research purposes only.

I consent to participate in this study.

Name of participant (please print):

Signature: _____ Date: _____

E-mail Message to Principals from Board Research Officer to recruit participants

Partnerships in the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten

(Date)

Dear (Administrator),

My name is Rose Walton. I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into the partnership of registered Early Childhood Educators and certified teachers with the Ontario College of Teachers and would like to invite your Early Childhood Education staff to participate in this research. Could you please forward this request to any of the Early Childhood Educators working in the Full-day Early Learning Kindergarten? Thank you in advance for your consideration.

The aims of this study are to come to a greater understanding of the nature of an Early Childhood Educator's roles and responsibilities in the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten as a partner in education and child care within the school system. ECE teachers will be asked to engage in an interview process for approximately one hour followed by a review of the responses to the questions to provide clarification or add or delete any information to clarify responses.

If you have any further questions about this study, or would like to participate please contact: _____.

Sincerely,

Rose Walton

Partnerships in the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten

(Date)

Dear (Early Childhood Educator name),

My name is Rose Walton. I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into the partnership of registered Early Childhood Educators and certified teachers with the Ontario College of Teachers and would like to invite your staff to participate in this research.

The aims of this study are to come to a greater understanding of the nature of an Early Childhood Educator's roles and responsibilities in the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten as a partner in education and child care within the school system. If you agree to participate in this study you will be invited to participate in an interview process for approximately one hour followed by a review of the responses to the questions to provide clarification or add any other information to clarify your responses. The follow up review will take approximately 30 minutes. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name or information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The information collected will be locked in a cabinet and disposed of through a shredding process following the study.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no risk of penalty or employment status.

If you have any further questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at _____. If you have any questions about this study, please contact: _____.

Sincerely,

Rose Walton

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Rose Walton

Post-secondary University of Western Ontario

Education and London, Ontario, Canada

Degrees: 1981 B.A.

The University of Western Ontario

London, Ontario, Canada

1982 B.Ed.

Special Education Specialist

1984

Childhood Education

1985

Primary Education Specialist

1986

Kindergarten Part 2

2013

Honours and Joan Pederson Memorial Award, Early Years Research

Awards: 2011

Dean's Honour List

1982

Related Work Learning Coordinator – Early Learning (K-2)

Experience Thames Valley District School Board

2009-2014

Publications:

Pressey, Linda & Walton, Rose. (2013). Towards Collaborative Practice, Leaders and Learners, (Winter 2012-2013). 32-33