

Job Satisfaction of Early Childhood Educators in  
Nova Scotia and Their Perceptions of the  
Current Daycare System in our Province

Nicole Beck-Chisholm  
Mount Saint Vincent University

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**Dedicated to:**

**my father whose spirit keeps me strong,**

**my mother whose strength I admire,**

**and my boys, Dave, Matthew, and Riley**

**who inspire me on a daily basis.**

## **ABSTRACT**

A well compensated early childhood workforce, who are valued and respected by society, is the key to ensuring quality early childhood care. Teaching staff wages, work satisfaction, adult-child ratio, teacher's level of education and auspice are direct predictors of program quality (Doherty et al, 2000). However, the reality of the childcare sector is one of low wages, minimal benefits and very little respect and recognition from society.

Job satisfaction of early childhood educators in Nova Scotia and their perceptions of the current daycare system within Nova Scotia were investigated. Sixty-six early childhood educators from across Nova Scotia participated in the study, fifty-nine percent (59%) of educators worked in not for profit centers and 30.1% of participants were employed by for profit child care centers. The researcher-developed survey investigated participants' perceptions of their current work situation, their ideal child care setting, and the areas that need to be addressed to ensure quality care for children in Nova Scotia. Both Likert and short answer question formats were used on the survey.

Results indicated significant differences in the experience and education level of participants from not for profit and for profit child care centers. With participants from not for profit centers being more experienced and having a higher level of education. The majority of early childhood educators (60.9%) work 31 to 40 hour work weeks and many are making wages that are close to or below the poverty line. Only 15% of participants have pension plan options within their work place. Forty percent (40%) of educators receive 45 minutes or less of personal break time and over 50% of participants indicate they use their personal break time in order to fulfill job requirements.

Over ninety percent (90%) of participants indicated their workplace provides them with professional resources/books, and resource/materials for programming benefits and opportunities for professional development. However, very few educators (12.5%) receive time for programming and of the 90% who have opportunities for professional development; only 74.2% receive some financial assistance to access such opportunities.

Results indicated that early childhood educators feel that society as a whole devalue the early childhood field and provide no recognition for the crucial job early childhood educators do. As well, educators indicate that they feel that the government does not recognize the value of early learning or the benefits that quality child care brings to our young children. Participants of the current study felt that the governments' actions are not supportive of creating quality childcare centers as the province has low standards that are inadequately maintained and lacks in funding.

When asked outright if they are satisfied with their job, over eighty percent (82.3%) of early childhood educators agreed that they were satisfied with their current job. When looking deeper, results indicate that early childhood educators are in fact, unsatisfied with many facets of their current workplace conditions. Educators indicated that their work place provided unfair wages and benefits, did not provide adequate time for programming, had a philosophy that differed from their own and workplace relationships that were far from their ideal.

The results of the current study were in line with those of previous studies, highlighting the delicate interplay between structural, contextual and process quality elements that affect the quality of early childhood programs. The results also demonstrate that these elements affect and are affected by the job satisfaction of early childhood

educators, thereby recognizing that the job satisfaction of early childhood educators plays a significant role in the quality of care that early childhood programs are providing. These factors; work place conditions, policy/societal recognition, and auspice, which influence an employee's level of job satisfaction, do not operate in isolation but instead interact with and impact each other.

Results indicate that early childhood educators continue to work in a field that is undervalued and unfairly compensated for the work they do. The reality of the child care sector sadly continues to be one of low wages, minimal benefits and very little respect and recognition from society. These results speak to the need to address the personal, financial, and policy issues facing early childhood educators in Nova Scotia to ensure that early childhood educators are recognized and compensated fairly and that high quality education becomes the norm instead of the exception.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, Canadians have been slowly moving towards the realization that early childhood care is central to not only providing support for parents to enter the workforce, but more importantly, it is vital in providing our Canadian children with the care needed to reach their optimal development (Cleveland, Corter, Pelletier, Calley, Bertrand, and Jamieson, 2006; Environics Research Group, 2006). The key finding from twenty-five years of research is that, “the quality of child care is the most consistent factor that determines the effects of child care on children’s development” (Cleveland et al., 2006). Quality early childhood programs are essential to the emotional, social, physical, cognitive, and language development of our children and to the creation of a productive economy and society (Whitebook, Howes, Phillips & Pemberton, 1989; Chandler, 2003).

A well compensated early childhood workforce, that is valued and respected by society, is the key to ensuring quality early childhood care. Teaching staff wages, work satisfaction, adult-child ratio, teacher’s level of education and auspice are direct predictors of program quality (Doherty et al, 2000). However, the reality of the childcare sector is one of low wages, minimal benefits and very little respect and recognition from society. This situation reflects a crisis in the sector as the turnover of qualified, well educated staff seems to be unstoppable. In order to recruit and retain the skilled suitable workforce needed to provide high quality early childhood care programs, government, employers, professional groups and the public must advocate for well trained, justly compensated early childhood educators.

Government and professional groups need to assume a leadership role in this process by reviewing current policies with a view to affect positive change. A regulated child care system would be the most practical way to increase public support and recognition towards the early childhood care sector. At a time when child care is high on the government agenda, it is important to increase affiliations with professional organizations, push towards a higher unionized sector and continue advocacy efforts. We need to continue the momentum necessary to move the child care agenda forward.

It is impossible to separate the current human resource issues from the issue of providing quality child care. How can we keep qualified staff when we can only pay them an hourly wage that puts them below the poverty line? How can we ensure stability for children when staff turnover is so high? How can we provide rich learning environments for children that support all areas of a child's development when staff morale is low and most are experiencing burnout? And how can we provide positive, stimulating early childhood experiences for children when the early childhood caregivers who provide the care are not respected or valued for their work (Chud, 2001)?

With these issues in mind, the purpose of the present study is to gather information on current job conditions of early childhood educators within Nova Scotia and how these conditions meet early childhood educators' expectations. It is important to bring such factors to the forefront in order to address stakeholders with recommendations that could increase the job satisfaction of early childhood educators in Nova Scotia and move our province towards higher quality childcare. As well, information will be gathered addressing early childhood educators' perspectives on the current Nova Scotia daycare system. Specifically targeted will be how workers regard their present position within the childcare field, a snap

shot of what would be included in an “ideal” early childhood education field and how the present child care system in Nova Scotia could move closer to the ideal. My objective is that this information will serve as a resource to stakeholders who are invested in providing and maintaining high quality early childhood care programs throughout the province of Nova Scotia. Such insight from front line workers could help fuel the momentum needed to thrust the childcare agenda forward. Professional groups, early childhood educators, and the government need to listen to and support each other so that Nova Scotia can be a province where quality early childhood care is the “Norm” instead of the “Exception”.

#### **DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

**Quality** - The term Quality is used to refer to “the extent to which something is desirable or meets more than minimal standards (Doherty, 1999, p.5).”When talking about the quality of early childhood programs, we consider the effects of the program on children’s development, children’s health and children’s safety (Doherty, 1999). A program is considered to be **high quality** when it goes beyond meeting the minimal standards of protecting children’s health and safety and provides an environment that supports early childhood development.

**Job satisfaction** – The term job satisfaction is defined by the degree to which the employee (early childhood educator) evaluates the current conditions of his/her job and how these conditions meet his/her expectations. It encompasses the evaluations, attitudes and emotional responses that the employee (early childhood educator) has regarding his/her job (Jorde-Bloom 1986).

**Burnout** – The term burnout is characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion, lack of sense of personal accomplishment in one’s work and eventually the development of negative feelings towards the alienation from the people they serve (Goleman & Guo 1998, in Doherty and Forer, 2003).

**Professionalization** - For the purpose of this thesis, the term professionalization will refer to

an occupation that has a specific body of knowledge, written standards of practice that apply to everyone, institutions and mechanisms to monitor and enforce those standards, and an infrastructure to support practitioners and to ensure that the standards are understood, used and updated. The final step is legislative recognition by the provinces (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 1999).

**Structural elements** - Structural elements are elements that are concrete and easy to regulate. They are referred to as the “iron triangle” and include ratio, group size, and child care providers’ level of training and education (Kaiser & Kranshensky, 1999).

**Contextual elements** – Contextual elements are elements outside the child care center’s classroom but influence the quality within it. Contextual elements include things such as auspice, wages, working conditions, government regulations and funding (Doherty, 1999).

**Formalization** – The term formalization refers to “the degree to which jobs within an organization are standardized and explicit (Canning et al., 2002, p.73)

**Centralization** - Centralization is the degree to which decision making is concentrated at a single point and the extent to which others can and do have input into decisions (Doherty et al., 2004).

**Non-profit** – Non-profit early childcare centers are, “operated by parents, a voluntary board of directors, or a non-profit organization such as the YM/YWCA, a college, university or school board” (Doherty et al., 2000, p.23).

**For-profit** – For-profit early childcare centers are, “centers that are private businesses operated by an individual, a partnership or a corporation” (Doherty et al., 2000, p. 24).

**Auspice** – used in this document to mean for-profit or not for profit

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A Brief History

The history of early childhood care begins in the mid 1800's with the development of infant schools and kindergartens. These schools were developed as a means of offering care and instruction to poor children throughout the Canadian provinces (Friendly, Beach, & Turiano, 2002). As the concept that children benefit from formal education in their early years began to grow, so did the number of private fee based kindergartens. By the 1870's kindergartens were commonly seen. Such facilities were attended by the middle and upper class children (Friendly et al., 2002).

In the late 1800's, "free" kindergartens appeared. These kindergartens were organized and run by charitable organizations, such as women's groups and missionaries, and used as a means of facilitating the integration of children from other nationalities into the culture (Prochner, 2000). By the early 1900's, there were kindergartens for children ages 3 to 5 as well as some programs for the care of infants, across numerous provinces. The number of organized early childhood care facilities grew and some facilities, during this period actually received diminutive government support.

However, During World War II, the Federal government stepped up and through the development of the Dominion Provincial War Time Agreement (1942), offered to incur 50% of the cost of childcare. This agreement was made to the provinces as a means of providing child care in order to allow women to work in places outside of the home, in industries that were crucial to the war effort (Friendly et al., 2002; Pence, Canning & Griffin, 1993).

Unfortunately, once the war ended the government withdrew the funding and many early childhood centres closed. These closures confirmed that the government support was for the “war effort and not to support working parents” (Pence et al., 1993, p.140). At this time it was expected that things could return to the norm where mothers stayed home caring for the children and the household while the father worked outside of the home.

Beginning in the 1950’s an increasing number of mothers entered the work force creating a necessity for early childhood care. These trends point toward the economic necessity of two salaries to raise a family and represents changes which have occurred in women’s roles over the past twenty years. Pence et al, 1993 noted that: “with the dramatic increase in the number of families with working mothers, there has been a re-evaluation of the role that child care plays in Canadian Society” (Pence et al., 1993, p.141). As mothers entered the workforce, regulated child care centres grew once again in numbers and in 1979, the provincial governments began to provide child care centres with financial support to offset operating costs (Friendly et al., 2002; Corbett, 1989). According to Friendly et al, 2002: the “community demand for a national child care program-supported by the growing feminist movement- swelled throughout the 1980’s”.

Over the next ten years, attempts were made to develop a national approach to child care. In 1984, the Liberal government developed the task force on child care within the status of women office (Pence et al., 1993). In 1986, the Conservative government introduced a parliamentary committee on child care. During this time numerous provinces developed task forces to examine issues related to early childhood education (Pence et al., 1992). Results from these various task forces have made significant contributions to our greater understanding of the complex relationships among families, labor force participation, and



child care needs (Pence et al., 1993). Task forces and committees have looked at these issues for years, yet, a national childcare agenda never appeared.

“Despite the absence of national childcare legislation, provinces have begun to undertake specific initiatives to increase both the quantity and quality of child care spaces” (Pence et al., 1993, p.144). Most recently in Nova Scotia, Community Services Minister, David Morse, introduced the new Early Learning Child Care Plan. This 10 year plan, worth more than 130 million dollars, is intended to increase daycare spaces, including subsidized spaces, infant spaces and spaces for children with special needs, and provide support for the child care sector. In March 2007, the Nova Scotia Government announced an extra 5 million dollars in extra funding for child care centers within the province. The new child care operating grant includes approximately 54 of the 130 million dollar plans and is designated to help enhance staff salaries and benefits. Such movements are supportive and indicate that the government is committed to moving forward and improving and expanding early childhood care within the province and recognizes that, “Quality day care provides the best possible start in life for children of working parents” (David Morse as cited in ns government press release).

#### The Importance of Quality Childcare in Canada:

According to the 1996 census data 65.7% of mothers whose youngest child is less than three years of age and 73.4% of women whose youngest child is between the ages of three and five, are employed in the workforce. Many of these women rely on child care centers to care for their children (Doherty & Forer, 2003). Thus, child care is indisputably a way Canadian children learn, grow and live (Early Learning Knowledge Centre, 2006). A

child entering child care at the age of six months will receive 10,125 hours of care by the time they are age five. In fact, infants and toddlers spend more of their waking hours in licensed daycare and family care than in the care of family members (Goelman, Pence, Lero, Brockman, Glick & Berkowitz, 1993). Compare this statistic to the total number of hours a child spends in class between grades one and twelve which is just slightly more than that, at 13,680. Significant growth and development is happening within these hours. Because our Canadian children are spending so much time in childcare centers, it is important that all Canadians be concerned about the level of quality of early childhood programs.

Research provides an abundance of support that the first six years of life are the most crucial for the development of children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language skills (Kontos, Hsu, & Dunn, 1994). It is believed that this time is important time for brain development when the structure of a child's brain is strongly influenced by the world around him or her (Chandler, 2003). Therefore, the quality of care a child receives in his or her early years, affects the way he or she thinks, learns and develops, setting the stage for that child's health and social success throughout his or her life (Province of Nova Scotia, 2001).

Chandler (2003) notes:

Children who participate in quality early childhood development programs tend to be more successful in school, are more competent socially and emotionally, and show higher verbal and intellectual development during the early years than children who do not participate in these programs. Ensuring healthy child development, therefore, is an investment in a country's future workforce and capacity to thrive economically and as a society. (p.3)

As suggested, quality early childhood development programs provide social and economic benefits to society and are essential to Canadian economic development and success (Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre, 2006). Such programs are producing children with solid skills and competencies to be successful in the future, allowing parents to enter the work force, lowering social spending and increasing tax revenue (Ackerman-Ross & Khanna, 1989; Barnett, 1995, Chandler, 2003). The benefits of quality early childhood programs are plentiful but the difficulty lies in the ability to regulate and control the varying elements that influence such programs.

#### Elements that Influence the Quality of Early Childhood Programs

Quality child care begins by protecting the health and safety of children. Child care becomes high-quality when it extends beyond the minimal standards and supports early childhood development (Doherty, 1999, Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre, 2006). There are numerous characteristics that are necessary for high quality care. Such fundamental characteristics include; a high adult-child ratio, small group sizes, staff with post-secondary training and education, a positive care provider-child relationship, well defined spaces, well structured and well planned curricula, significant parental involvement and a well compensated workforce (Doherty, 1999). Each of these characteristics falls under the larger umbrella of elements influencing the quality of early childhood programs.

The quality of early childhood care programs is influenced by structural elements, contextual elements and process quality. Structural elements are elements that are concrete and easy to regulate. They are referred to as the “iron triangle” and include ratio, group size and child care providers level of training and education (Kaiser & Kranshinsky, 1999).

Contextual elements are elements, other than structural, that are outside the child care center's classroom but influence the quality within it. Most of the contextual elements show their influence through the impact they have on the early childhood care educators' job satisfaction. These contextual elements include things such as auspice, wages, working conditions, government regulations and funding (Doherty, 1999). The third element that affects the quality of early childhood programs is that of process quality. Process quality elements are those that affect the child's daily experience, such as the types of experiences provided, child and adult interactions, consistency of care provider and the level of parent involvement. It is important to note that process quality is directly influenced by the structural and contextual elements of an early childhood care center.

Provincial regulation of structural elements is one method used to influence the quality of child care. However, structural elements alone do not guarantee quality, as might be suggested by the term used to refer to these elements, "iron triangle". Structural elements help set the stage for quality but it is the contextual elements that effects children's daily experiences (Doherty, 1999). For example wages, which are a contextual element, can affect the quality of a program which in turn affects children's daily experiences. Results from studies indicate that higher wages produce more satisfied staff, and satisfied staff equals fewer turnovers. Fewer turnovers translate into consistency of child care staff and consistency of child care staff means a more consistent relationship between worker and child. One of the most important elements of high quality care is a consistent positive relationship between child care provider and child.

Contextual elements such as wages, working conditions, auspice, organizational climate and director's administration style also influence the care provider's job satisfaction.

The job satisfaction of the early childcare worker influences his or her behavior as well as turnover rate, which in turn influences the overall quality of the program. Indeed, the overall quality of the program has an impact on the child's well-being and development (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, & Tougas, 2000). It is the child's well being and daily experiences that we refer to when addressing process quality.

As previously mentioned, process quality is influenced by elements such as the interactions between childcare provider and the child, types and variety of experiences provided, consistency of provider and level of parent interaction and involvement (Goelman et al., 2000). However, the "most important ingredient of high quality early education and care is the relationship between the teacher and the child "(Doherty, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to employ child care providers who are able to show sensitivity, responsiveness, encouragement and who participate in reciprocal interactions with the children with whom they work (Doherty, 1999). In order to maintain a staff of individuals who are able to continue to possess such skills, we must first ensure conditions that support teachers, in providing quality child care programs, are in place.

Doherty (1999) lists a number of supports that caregivers require in order to provide high quality care. She noted that caregivers must first of all meet the health and safety needs of children, by providing a safe physical space that is sufficiently funded to provide the children with nutritious food. As well, caregivers need to be supported by limiting the number of children for whom they are required to provide care (ratio/group size). When a child care provider is responsible for too many children or the group size is not adjusted to reflect the developmental level or needs of the children or the inclusion of children with special needs, the provider can become stressed. Child care providers who are stressed have

difficulty providing the developmentally appropriate and stimulating activities that are required to maintain high quality within a centre.

Having the support of colleagues and directors, helps ensure conditions that are conducive to providing quality care. Research indicates that workers who have a good relationship with their coworkers and feel supported by them, are more satisfied and committed to their job (Communications, 1993). At a time when child care in Canada is experiencing a staffing crisis, it is important to do whatever one can to provide staff with a feeling of job satisfaction and commitment, to avoid the devastating effects of frequent staff turnover.

#### Job Satisfaction and Quality Early Childhood Programs:

Job satisfaction has been shown to reduce the level of staff turn over and increase the retention of qualified staff. Because the quality of a program is greatly effected by and is reflected in the number of staff turnovers a child care facility experiences, the importance of job satisfied staff to quality child care cannot be over emphasized. Research has consistently found an association between high staff turnover and the overall quality of childcare programs (Doherty & Forer, 2003). A fairly compensated workforce that is valued and recognized for its contribution to early childhood learning and development is the key to increased job satisfaction and ensuring quality childcare (Beach, Bertrand, Forer, Michal, & Tougas, 2004). However, recognition in the form of better pay and working conditions has not materialized in Canada. In a sector that requires such a huge physical and emotional investment, failure to address human resource issues has led to high levels of stress, burnout

and frustration and low levels of job satisfaction (Doherty & Forer, 2003). This in turn has lead to the seemingly unstoppable cycle of turnover among early childhood care staff.

The rate of turnover is also a cause for concern as research indicates that many staff are not only leaving child care centers but are also leaving the field completely (Doherty and Forer, 2003). Many early childhood centers are already finding themselves in a hiring crisis as qualified individuals continue to leave the field and fewer high school graduates are choosing to enter the field.

Ferguson (2001) reported that there are a number of reasons for the failure of students to enter the field, one of which is the high tuition fees. Students are realizing that entering a low paying profession makes it extremely difficult to pay back the nearly \$40,000 dollars in student loans they incur for a four year early childhood education degree. As well, the lack of accurate and attractive information on the requirements of training programs and the rewards of a career in early childhood education make the university and college training programs less attractive to high school students. (Ferguson, 2001).

Current literature highlights many of the factors affecting the recruitment and retention of qualified early childhood educators. These factors which include influence as employee's level of job satisfaction include such issues as work place conditions, policy/societal recognition, and auspice. These factors do not operate in isolation as they interact with and impact each other, making it increasingly difficult to retain qualified staff in early childhood care centers in Canada.

### Factors that affect Job satisfaction of Early Childhood Educators:

#### A) Work place conditions

Perhaps the most obvious factor impacting job satisfaction is work place conditions. This would include things such as wages, benefits, and duties. Early childhood educators' dissatisfaction with pay and benefits has long been cited in the literature as a reason for their intent to leave their job (Cornille, Mullis, Mullis, & Shriner, 2006). In addition, low wages and minimal benefits are strong predictors of staff turnover (Doherty & Forer, 2003; Communications, 1993).

Child Care workers continue to be paid approximately half the national average for all occupations (Beach et al., 2004). *The Labour Market Update* (2004) reports that in 2000, the average annual income for early child care educators was \$16,167. For most occupations, the longer you work in the field, the more you earn. For example, individuals ages 25 to 34 earn 43% more than individuals ages 20 to 24 and individuals ages 35 to 44 earn 20% more than individuals ages 25 to 34. However, this does not hold true for individuals in the child care field whose wages remain static around the age of 35 (Communications, 1993).

For some this would mean that they are making less every year because their salary does not increase but the government deductions and the cost of living do. People who rely on their salary to cover their daily expenses have a difficult time making ends meet. Doherty et al., (2000) compared the annual salary of assistant teachers or teachers living alone without dependents in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland with the government low income cutoffs. The results indicated that child care staff were living close to or below the poverty line. Accompanying this issue of low wages was the issue of minimal benefits. Doherty and Forer (2003) reported that the availability of benefits is also a predictor of job



satisfaction and staff turnover. Many child care workers are working 40 to 45 hour weeks yet receive minimal benefits. Doherty (2001) reports that only 37% of people in the field have a paid lunch, 26% have no paid sick time and only 25% have a pension plan. Individuals working in the early childhood care field are beginning to consider the implications of having no pension plan and this maybe a reason more and more early childhood care workers are leaving the field (Doherty & Forer, 2003).

Although early childhood care workers continue to earn a low wage, they report that their job expectations and duties continue to increase (Ferguson, 2001). Staff continually are required to do more multitasking and in many centers they find themselves spending more time doing custodial duties rather than the early childhood development activities for which they were hired. White and Sakai (2003) reported that in many cases workers felt that turnover within the center create more work for them. Frequent changes in staff require the remaining staff to continually assist children to cope with disrupted relationships, help orient and train new staff, and establish new working relationships.

This reality means that their workload is considerably increased which can lead to increased stress and lower job satisfaction. In turn, stress leads to burnout which is “characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion, lack of sense of personal accomplishment in one’s work and eventually the development of negative feelings towards the alienation from the people they serve (Goleman & Guo, 1998 in Doherty and Forer, 2003). Burnout is the strongest predictor of a early childhood care worker leaving his or her place of employment (Doherty and Forer, 2003; Curbow, Spratt, Ungarnetti, McDonald, & Breckler, 2000).

Other facets of job satisfaction needing consideration when discussing work place conditions include: the employee's relationship with coworkers and supervisors, satisfaction with autonomy and decision making, and personal compatibility with the center's philosophy (Manlove & Guzell, 1997; Catapano, 2001; Bloom, 1995). Manlove and Guzell (1997) stated that the more the employee values and beliefs match the organization's values and beliefs, the greater their willingness to exert the efforts of the organization and desire to stay with the organization. This notion is supported by teachers interviewed by Catapano (2001) who all noted that one of the reasons they continue to stay at their current place of employment is because their own personal philosophy was compatible with that of the director's of the early childhood center with whom they work.

Teachers participating in Catapano's research also identified their relationship with their coworkers and supervisor as being another reason why they were satisfied with their jobs, as evident by their long stays (seven or more years) at the same child care facility. Teachers need support and it is important that they can rely on their relationship with other staff within their place of employment. It is important that directors are supportive of such relationships and empower their staff by doing such things as providing structured time where staff has the opportunity to talk to their colleagues about professional matters and encourage coworkers to observe and give feedback to one another (Granger & Marx, 1992).

## B) Policy/Societal Recognition

Research continues to indicate that teachers feel there is a lack of recognition for the child care field and the work performed by early childhood educators (Beach et al., 2004; Communications, 1993; Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, & Tougas, 2000).

Communications (1991) reported that only 16% of staff believed that they have the respect of the public at large, while Doherty et al., (2000) reported that in 2000 only 8.2% of staff believed they had the respect of society in general. This is a 50% drop in early childhood educators' perceptions of how they are perceived which is highly disturbing at a time when many organizations and advocacy groups are lobbying to increase public support for early childhood care. While early childhood educators recognize that the main purpose of early childhood care is to promote the growth and development of our children they are dismayed by lack of knowledge and understanding of their profession. With information like this, it is not surprising that lack of respect is the second most negative aspect of working in the child care field with number one being pay and advancement opportunities.

Even though research has indicated that there are multiple benefits to children receiving quality child care, especially during their first six years of life, it seems that societal attitudes have not changed regarding out of home care. There is little recognition for the skill and knowledge required to effectively work in the childcare sector. Many people in society view childcare as a “babysitting service” and do not recognize the developmental purpose of having a well trained, highly qualified caregiver (Beach et al., 2004). This is surprising considering,

Child care is central to providing support to children and families, enabling parents to contribute to the economy and ensuring the learning, care and developmental needs of children are met. The childcare workforce is critical to the success of these outcomes and to the well-being of a healthy and productive society (Doherty & Forer, 2003, p.i).

Neither government policy on childcare nor the limited legislation governing daycares reflect an increasing awareness of the importance of early childhood development and care.

Government actions seem to support the view that the main purpose of childcare is to support parents entering the labor force, not to support the early development and learning of children (Beach et al., 2004).

There is a lack of sound child care policies that provide a clear vision of the roles and goals of early childhood care at the provincial level (Ferguson, 2001). Beach et al., (2004) indicated that of all the factors that affect the child care field, the most important is that of public policy. In order to increase the degree of recognition that child care workers receive which in turn would increase levels of job satisfaction, a general policy that clearly recognizes the central role of child care to early childhood development must be addressed. Such a policy would be the most effective and practical way to gather public support for early childhood development and make sure the number one priority for child care shifts from being to support parent participation in the labor market to ensuring the well-being of children and support in all areas of their development (Beach et al., 2004).

Such a shift in public support would allow child care workers to feel that the work they do is valued. Recognition for the early childcare educator field brings with it a greater sense of professionalism as well as personal and job satisfaction. Considering the relationship between job satisfaction and quality early childhood programs, it is time for Canadians to push towards the implementation of strategies that would aid in increasing societal recognition and adequate compensation for the early childcare sector.

Beach et al., (2004) identified three strategies that could be used to aid in increasing the recognition that society gives the early childhood care sector. Strategies include

unionization, advocacy and professionalization. The term professionalization, in this case refers to “an occupation that has a specific body of knowledge, written standards of practice that apply to everyone, institutions and mechanisms to monitor and enforce those standards, and an infrastructure to support practitioners and to ensure that the standards are understood, used and updated. The final step is legislative recognition by the provinces” (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 1999). Beach et al., (2004), suggested that: “professional affiliation is a critical support to individuals and the workforce” (p.10). However, out of the 137,000 early childhood workers in the Canadian child care field, as reported in 2001, only 15,000 had an affiliation with a professional child care organization.

Many child care staff work in small centers and have limited interactions with other professionals in the field. Mostly, they are limited to the support of their coworkers. Increasing the number of members in these organizations needs to be a priority if we wish to increase recognition for the early childhood care field (Beach et al., 2004). By doing so, we can provide support for workers and at the same time strengthen child care organizations. There is strength in numbers and strong numbers help with advocacy efforts. Advocacy efforts are extremely important because:

Advocacy efforts of child care organizations have contributed to keeping child care on the public agenda and raising awareness. These efforts have also highlighted the need for increased public funding and the development of a coherent child care system in Canada. Advocacy organizations continue to promote the message to policy makers and the public that all children and families should have access to quality child care and that the workforce is key to the delivery of quality child care (Beach et al., 2004, p.11).

Continued advocacy of these issues will bring increased societal recognition to the field.

The third strategy, put forth by Beach et al. (2004) to increase the recognition of Canada's early childhood care workers is unionization. Unionization has played a major role in advancing public policy and in pushing the government to increase funding in the early childhood care sector. However, Communications (1993) reported that unions represent only one in five early childhood care staff members as compared to the general labor force where unions represent one in three workers. In 2002, only 13.4% of early childhood care programs were unionized (Doherty & Forer, 2002).

Unionization is beneficial for the childcare work force and for Canada's young children. Unionized centers act in ways that are conducive to high levels of job satisfaction and to overall high quality of early childhood centers. Wages and benefits for staff are substantially better in unionized centers compared to non unionized centers. Communications (1993) reported that staff in unionized centers received wages 33% higher. As well, most receive benefits that provide long term security and improve working conditions (Doherty & Forer, 2002). Higher wages and better benefits lead to lower turnover rates in unionized centers. These benefits are highly associated with job satisfaction which decreases the likelihood that one will leave the job. When turnover does occur, unionized centers have an easier time recruiting new staff.

It only make sense that in a field, where there is such a high turnover rate due to low wages and benefits, that unionized centers would have many qualified applicants from whom to choose. Unionized centers hire a greater proportion of staff with a two year or more early childhood education diploma or degree (Doherty & Forer, 2002). These findings that lead to higher overall program quality in unionized centers suggest that the recognition that staff are

receiving in the form of better pay and working conditions, supports teachers in providing quality interactions and stimulating activities that promote the optimal development of the children they serve. In summary,

professionalization highlights the expertise of practitioners, advocacy stresses public policy and unionization focuses on conditions in the workplace. All three can contribute to improving working conditions for practitioner. (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 1999, p.30)

As mentioned, turnover in unionized centers is low so the opportunity for advancement into such a center does not show itself often. This holds true for advancement within the general early childhood care field as well. This is a concern as lack of opportunity for advancement affects employees' level of job satisfaction.

The child care ladder is limited and opportunities for advancement have not kept up with the workforces increasing educational attainments (Beach et al., 2004; Whitehead, 1997). Seventy-seven percent of teachers in the early childhood care field indicate that they do not believe that there is potential for them to advance in the child care field (Doherty et al., 2000). Communications (1991) reported similar findings, reporting that two out of three workers believed that advancement did not exist at their current place of employment and one out of three workers believed that in order to advance, they must leave the field entirely.

There seem to be limited career opportunities within the early childhood care field compared to the growing opportunities in related sectors such as early intervention and family resource programs (Beach et al., 2004). Required specialized education in the field

continues to increase but advancement opportunities continue to be very minimal, looking very bleak to child care staff wishing to advance their position and expand their experience based on the number of years they have been in the field or the increasing level of their education. Movement to other related sectors to fulfill these wishes also affects the increasingly high turnover rates within the field. Doherty et al. (2000) discussed the need for career ladders or lattices (lateral moves) in child care in order to retain experienced and well trained child care staff.

Lateral moves would involve things such as acting as a practicum supervisor, more involvement in curriculum design and the development of teaching resources, conducting early childhood research or consultation, and mentoring less experienced staff. Such moves would recognize and reward staff experience, education, and knowledge, by providing staff that have been in the field for a long time, with new meaningful roles (Doherty et al., 2000). This method allows avenues for staff to increase their knowledge base and expand their experience, all while helping centers retain their most qualified and experienced staff.

### C) The Auspice of Early Childhood Development Programs

The issue of auspice in childcare and its relation to quality has been debated in Canada for years. Research consistently shows that non-profit centers have better overall program quality than for profit centers (Communications, 1993, Canning, Lyon, Kienapple, & Young, 2002, Cleveland & Kranshinsky, 2004). The debate among research is why this is so.

Two main theories arise from the literature. The first is that for profit centers differ in their organizational structure. The second is that non-profit centers have higher levels of



access to resources with which to provide a quality program. As research in this area continues, it has become more apparent that the difference in quality between these two types of centers is reflected more in the difference between their organizational structures and has less to do with the difference in access to resources.

When access to resources is compared for the two sectors, it has been found that the non profit sector does indeed have greater access to resources from a magnitude of sources including the government, the community and donations (Doherty, Friendly & Forer, 2002). Cleveland et al. (2002) reported that 44% of non profit early childhood centers compared to only 11% of for profit centers had access to subsidized rent or utilities, and 18.3% of non profit centers revenues and only 5.4% of for profit revenues were received from wage and operating grants from the provincial government. As well, Doherty et al. (2002), reported that the non-profit sector gets 20.8% of janitorial/maintenance free or subsidized compared to the low number or 3.3% for the for profit sector. However, when comparing non-profit and for profit early childhood programs, that are on more equal playing fields, such as jurisdictions where both sectors are treated identically with regards to funding, the non-profit sector still measures higher on quality (Doherty et al., 2002). Therefore, we can conclude that between sector differences in access to resources is not sufficient on its own to explain the between sector differences in overall program quality.

The stronger of the two theories is the one that suggests that non-profit and for-profit centers differ in their organizational structure which then creates differences in their behavior which in turn affects the overall quality of their program. There are two fundamental differences between for profit and non profit early childhood centers that are believed to have a direct influence on their organizational behavior. The first is the manner in which these

centers use their surplus revenues (Cleveland & Kranshinsky, 2004). Non-profit centers are required by law to reinvest the surplus back into the organization but owners of for profit centers can use their own discretion as to how they utilize the surplus (Doherty, 2002). The manner in which each centre utilizes their surplus can impact the overall program quality of the center.

The purpose or goal of for profit centers is to realize a profit for owners, where as the goals of a non-profit centre is to maintain a balanced budget. Doherty (2002) suggested that these differences in goals lead to differences in organizational behaviors. For instance, when looking at the process of hiring staff, non-profit centers will most likely hire qualified staff based on the goal of enhancing children's development and would pay the highest salary that their budget would allow. In for profit centers the "profit motive" might encourage the hiring of staff with lower qualifications in order to pay a lower wage, keeping with their goal of increasing surplus revenue (Doherty, 2002). Communications (1993) reported that non-profit centers devote 76% of their budgets to staff wages, compared with for profit centers who contribute 60%. Since higher wages and the level of early childhood training staff have are highly correlated with job satisfaction and the quality of a program, we can see how the way in which each deals with surplus revenues can influence the quality of their centre.

The second fundamental difference between profit and non profit childcare centers involves their approach to decision making. Non-profit organizations have a board of directors to which the centre director is accountable for his or her actions and decisions. This is not the case for profit centers where owners can make the sole decision and are not accountable to anyone else.

These two fundamental differences between non-profit and for profit child care centers, lead to between sector differences in organizational structure. In order to understand the between sector differences in organizational structure we must consider two components of organizational structure. These two very important components include formalization and centralization. Research has shown that non-profit child care centers and for profit centers differ with respects to these components (Canning et al., 2002, Doherty et al., 2002, Cleveland & Kranshinsky, 2004). These studies have indicated that non-profit centers are more formalized and less centralized than for profit centers.

Formalization refers to “the degree to which jobs within an organization are standardized and explicit (Canning et al., 2002, p.73)”. So being highly formalized means that non-profit centers have written job descriptions, salary scales, policies, and that staff have clear written guidelines on what their roles and responsibilities are. Catapano (2001) reported that the consistency of policies and procedures were important to early childhood educators and that knowing what to expect left employees satisfied. Doherty and Forer (2003) indicated that the availability of such things as a written job description, a regular written performance appraisal, and staff policy manual promotes job clarity and can predict actual turnover rates. Stress level is reduced when workers have job clarity. High stress level is a predictor of burnout and burnout predicts staff intentions to leave their job and even the early childhood care field in its entirety (Doherty & Forer, 2003). We know that turnover is highly correlated to the over all quality of centers. Therefore, we can conclude that the less formalized centers, such as for profit centers, may have decreased overall quality due to the lack of job clarity that is supportive of low turnover rates, and reflected in employee’s level of job satisfaction.

The second component that we must consider is that of centralization. Centralization is “the degree to which decision making is concentrated at a single point and the extent to which others can and do have input into decisions” (Doherty et al., 2004). So centers that are highly centralized have an owner/operator that makes most of the decisions with little or no input from others. Research indicates that this is the case with for profit centers. Perhaps, because the owners do not need to answer to anyone and are profit orientated instead of developmental orientated. This high rate of centralization lowers the quality of for-profit centers.

Research shows that non profit centers are less centralized when it comes to organizational behavior. In non-profit centers where the director is responsible to a board of directors, the director cannot be the sole decision maker. Also driving this low level of centralization is that non profit centers are developmentally goal orientated. For instance, they want to prevent staff turnover because turnover is highly predictive of centre quality. One way to do this is to involve staff in program and policy decisions. Having a voice in what happens within the center makes employees feel valued and increases job satisfaction (Communications, 1993). Increased job satisfaction lessens turnover rates.

In review, there is supportive research that indicates that non-profit centers are more formalized and less centralized than for profit centers (Canning et al., 2002; Doherty et al., 2002). Furthermore, for profit centers tend to be operated in such a way that may decrease their ability to provide a program that enhances children’s development. These differences in organizational structure and behavior contribute to lower levels of overall job satisfaction and program quality of the for profit early childhood care sector.

## Summary

Quality child care is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and does not exist as a homogeneous factor (Goelman et al., 2000). The achievement of high quality care comes from the delicate interplay of three main elements including, structural elements, contextual elements and process quality. Many studies support the importance of the interplay between these elements and agree that each element has a momentous influence on the others (Goelman et al., 2000; Doherty, 1999; Kaiser & Kranshinsky, 1999). Also recognized within research is how these elements affect and are affected by the job satisfaction of early childhood educators. Thus, it should be recognized that the job satisfaction of early childhood educators plays a significant role in the quality of care that early childhood programs are providing.

As we continue to remain in a staffing crisis, the social, emotional, physical cognitive, and language development of our children continues to be threatened. It is essential that we not only continue research and act upon findings in the area of job satisfaction of early childhood educators, but that we act upon the significant research that has already been done within the field. We need to continue to define factors influencing job satisfaction so we know what elements we need to target in order to increase the quality of child care programs as they are influenced by job satisfaction. As well, it is important to continue assessing the current level of job satisfaction of early childhood educators to evaluate whether or not we are making progress in this area.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to evaluate the current status of job satisfaction of early childhood educators in Nova Scotia. Factors such as working conditions, auspice, and policy/societal recognition, which are highlighted in the literature, will form the

basis of this inquiry. An additional purpose is to gain perceptions of early childhood educators regarding the status of the child care system in Nova Scotia. It is important to hear from front line workers as they have a tremendous effect on the quality of early childhood programs.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the method the researcher employed to study job satisfaction of early childhood educators in Nova Scotia and their perceptions of the current childcare system in Nova Scotia. Participants and measures are outlined as well as procedure and ethical concerns.

#### **B. Participants**

Sixty-six full time early childhood educators working in Nova Scotia participated. “Full time early childhood educator” refers to individuals who work twenty-five hours or more per week at their current worksite. The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services provides a booklet noting all the centers in Nova Scotia, the number of children served at each, number of staff, and whether they are for profit or not. This booklet was used to select the centers. Daycares were chosen using a stratified random sampling approach to ensure the sample was proportionally representative of workers from rural/urban areas and from for profit/not for profit centers.

#### **C. Measure**

Author-developed surveys were used to collect the data regarding the current level of job satisfaction of early childhood educators in Nova Scotia and their perceptions of the status of the Nova Scotia early childcare system. Two surveys were administered a Demographic Survey and a Child Care Provider Survey (Appendix A). These self developed surveys were created after an extensive literature review and numerous conversations with colleagues, professionals and educators within the field.

- i) **Demographic survey** – The Demographic Questionnaire was intended to gain information on participants: age, gender, level of education, as well as the number of years they have spent in the field, their auspice of workplace, salary and benefits. Information gained from this survey helped contextualize the data in the Child Care Provider Survey and allowed for comparisons between and among groups.
- ii) **Child Care Provider Survey** - The child care provider survey was made up of five sections. Section one had five questions addressing job satisfaction and intent to stay within the field that required a “yes” or “no” response. Section two also required a yes/no response to questions addressing the level of formalization and centralization of the participant’s work place. Section three involved the participant rating how well his or her current position matched his or her ideal childcare job. Response format involved a three point Likert scale with the choices not my ideal, somewhat my ideal, or my ideal. Section four required the participant to check the level of importance a number of issues had with regard to achieving quality childcare within Nova Scotia. Participants rated the issues as; not of importance, somewhat important or very important. The fifth and final section consisted of short answer questions that targeted participants’ views of the current daycare system in Nova Scotia, what they feel it should look like and how they think we can move our current system closer to the ideal.



#### **D. Procedure**

Following ethics approval, early childhood centers were randomly chosen using the directory of childcare centers in Nova Scotia, provided by The Department of Community Services. A stratified random sampling approach was used to choose participating child care facilities.

Contact was made via phone to the directors of the chosen facilities. During contact, the purpose of the study was discussed and a request for center participation was made. Upon receiving consent via e-mail from the early childhood center's director for their facility to participate, packages were mailed out to each individual childcare facility. This package included a follow-up letter to the director noting the purpose of the study, and providing instructions for employee participation (see Appendix B) and research packages to be distributed to each fulltime early childhood educator. The early childhood educators' package contained; 1) a letter to participants (see Appendix C), 2) demographic survey 3) the child care provider survey, and 4) pre-stamped, self addressed return envelopes.

Four weeks after sending out the research package the researcher noted the return rate. The return rate was low (24%) so the researcher telephoned participating centers and requested the directors' support in encouraging early childhood educators to return their surveys. Another two weeks was allotted for the anticipated increased return of completed surveys and response rate increased to 38%.

## E. Data Analysis

Data analysis included both quantitative and qualitative data.

- 1) Qualitative Data – Data analysis in qualitative research involves organizing data, breaking it into clusters, then further narrowing the data and categorizing it into themes. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define data analysis as “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others.” (p.157). For this study, short answer responses were evaluated and coded for emerging themes. This data was coded by two researchers and inter-rater reliability calculated to be 98% using the formula  $\frac{A}{A + D}$  where A represents the number of agreements and D represents the number of disagreements.

- 2) Quantitative Data – Surveys were coded and analyzed. Means and standard deviations were calculated. Chi Squares were calculated to examine whether there were statistically significant responses from the different respondent groups. Data was not analysis for comparison by center type between rural and urban settings as the majority of the respondents were from urban areas of Nova Scotia. This is to be expected as there are few daycares in rural areas.

## **F. Ethical Considerations**

### *1. Confidentiality*

Confidentiality of participants was ensured. To ensure confidentiality, surveys were numerically encoded and no personally identifying information was requested. The researcher had no access to early childhood educator's names. No person or centre was identified in the thesis nor will they be identified in future presentations/papers. Only the group data will be reported

### *2. Volunteer Participants*

Participation in this all adult study was voluntary. Participants chose to complete the surveys or not and there was no cost incurred by the participants.

### *3. Informed Consent*

Participants received a letter informing them that they could choose to complete the survey or not.

### *4. Issues of Harm*

Participation in this research project was voluntary. Participants were all adults who were informed that they did not have to answer any questions which cause them discomfort. No evidence of harm was foreseen. Possibility of harm is deemed to be low.

## **G. Limitations of the Study**

(1) The mailed survey method of data collection can produce a low response rate due to an inability to provide follow-up with the participants themselves. However, every attempt was made to encourage the return of surveys. Directors were contacted by telephone and requested to encourage participants within their center to respond.

(2) The method of delivery placed the responsibility of distribution of the surveys to the directors. Thus, there was no way to know if the survey was received by the educators. However, every attempt was made to encourage the return of surveys. The response rate of 38% may actually be an underestimate as not all of the surveys may have been distributed.

(3) There was no opportunity to answer participants' queries about the items on the survey. It was assumed that participants understood the purpose of the study, as well as the actual survey questions. Therefore, possible responses may be inaccurate due to the lack of understanding of the questions presented. However upon developing the surveys the author presented it to several colleagues, and had it read for clarity. The items on the surveys were reviewed and changes were made to questions until it was accepted that the items on the questionnaires were easily interpreted by the targeted participants.

(4) When interpreting the results of qualitative data, it is possible for the interpreter to be subjective thus, possibly ignoring valid results or adding results that were not present. To prevent subjectivity, a second reviewer was utilized and inter rater reliability was used.

## **H. Research Questions**

- (1) How did participants respond to items dealing with work conditions on the Child Care Provider Survey?
- (2) How did participants respond to items on Section One of the Child Care Provider Survey dealing with job satisfaction and intent to stay in the child care field?
- (3) What is the percentage of agreement with statements dealing with work conditions on Section Two of the Child Care Provider Survey dealing with the level of formalization, centralization, and professional development?
- (4) How did participants respond to items on Section Three of the Child Care Provider Survey dealing with their current working conditions as compared to their ideal child care job?
- (5) How did participants rank the statements, in Section 4 of the Child Care Provider Survey, dealing with issues that are important to achieving high quality child care within Nova Scotia?
- (6) How did participants describe the current daycare system in Nova Scotia?
- (7) How did participants describe an ideal daycare system in Nova Scotia?
- (8) What did participants feel is needed to move the current daycare system closer to the ideal in Nova Scotia?

## CHAPTER 4

### I. Introduction

This chapter contains the results of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Parts I, II, III and VI of the Child Care Provider Survey were coded and analyzed. The percentage of participants agreeing with given statements was calculated and chi square analyses were carried out to determine if there were significant differences between the responses by respondent groups. Responses to three written, short answer questions were coded and grouped to determine emergent themes.

### II. Participants

Sixty-three of 166 surveys sent out were returned, resulting in a 38% response rate. While this response rate is within the acceptable range for survey data (Roe & Parker, 1997), it may be an under-estimate as the researcher has no way of determining whether early childhood educators actually received the survey due to the means of distribution. Surveys were sent to directors to distribute to their staff as personal information of early childhood educators was not available. Some surveys may not have been distributed.

Early Childhood Educators from both not for profit and for profit child care centers across the province of Nova Scotia responded to the survey. The percentage of participants from for profit centers was 39.1% while 59.4% of participants were from not for profit child care centers (See table 1). The total percentage of female participants was 95.2%. It is important to note that the other 4.8% represents missing data from returned surveys.

Table I – Participants responses to demographic items on the Demographic Survey

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Not for Profit</b>	<b>For Profit</b>
Gender	Female	95.2*	100	100
Education	High School	6.8	2.9	12.5
	ECE Equivalency	18.6	17.1	20.8
	1 Yr Community College	8.5	8.6	8.3
	2 Yr Community College	28.8	25.7	33.3
	Bachelor Degree	30.5	37.1	20.8
	Master Degree	1.7	2.9	0
	Other	5.1	5.7	4.2
Experience	0 to 5 years	34.9	28.9	44.0
	6 to 10 years	17.5	10.5	28.0
	11 to 15 years	17.5	21.1	12.0
	16 to 20 years	14.3	13.2	16.0
	> 20 years	15.9	26.3	0

Participants varied in the number of years they have worked in the childcare field with the largest percentage having less than five years experience (34.9%). However, 30.2% of participants have been working in the field for 16 years or more.

With regards to education, 30.5% of participants had a Bachelors Degree while 28.8% had completed a two year community college program, 6.8% achieved high school and 18.6% of participants have completed the Early Childhood Education Equivalency. When participants were separated according to auspice, results indicated that there were significant differences in the education level and the experience of the participants. Twelve

point five percent of educators in for profit centers indicated that their highest level of education obtained was high school. In not for profit child care centers, only 2.9% of educators indicated high school as the highest level of education obtained. Thirty seven point one percent of participants from not for profit centers identified their highest level of education as being a Bachelor Degree as compared to 20.8% of participants from for profit centers.

Not only did the not for profit centers have educators with higher levels of education but they also had educators with more experience. Twenty six point three percent of educators from not for profit centers have been in the early childhood field for greater than twenty years. There were no participants from for profit centers with more than twenty years experience. The majority (44%) of participants from for profit centers had between zero and five years experience. In fact, 72% of participants in for profit centers had 10 years of less experience in the field. This differs dramatically from educators in not for profit child care centers where results indicated that 60.6% have greater than ten years experience.

### **III. Responses to Research Questions**

**Research Question 1:** *How did participants respond to items dealing with work conditions on the Demographic Survey?*

The majority of participants (60.9%) work 31 to 40 hours a week and 34.4% of participants work more than forty hours a week. With regard to annual income, 57.8% of early childhood educators who participated reported an annual income of \$24 999. Twenty-nine percent of these salaries were below \$19 999. Less and only 17.2% reported making between \$25 000 and \$29 999 a year. (See Table II).



Table II – Participants responses to items on the Demographic Survey dealing with work conditions.

Type of Centre	Not for Profit	59.4*
	For Profit	39.1*
Hours of Work per Week	25 to 30 hours	3.1
	31 to 40 hours	60.9
	> 40 hours	34.4
Annual Income	15 000 to 19 999	29.7
	20 000 to 24 999	28.1
	25 000 to 29 999	17.2
	30 000 to 34 999	7.8
	> 35000	9.4
Benefits	Yes	81.3
	No	17.2
Dental	Yes	71.9
	No	26.6
Medical	Yes	76.6
	No	21.9
Pension	Yes	15.6
	No	81.3
Sick Days	Yes	65.6
	No	31.3
Number of sick Days	1 to 5 days	3.1
	6 to 10 days	31.3
	11 to 15 days	15.6
	>15 days	7.8
Amount of Personal Break Time	None	14.1
	16 – 30 minutes	21.6
	31 – 45 minutes	4.7
	46 – 1 hour	39.1
	> 1 hour	15.6
Personal Break time spent completing job tasks	Yes	62.5
	No	21.9
Do you feel you must complete job tasks on your personal time?	Yes	53.1
	No	14.1
Do you receive scheduled programming time?	Yes	12.5
	No	82.8
How much programming time do you receive?	30 -60 minutes	4.5
	>1 hour	9.5

\* indicates missing data

Nine point four percent of participants indicated that they had an annual income of greater than \$35000. It should be noted that directors were included within the study and this percentage is likely reflective of the directors' salary.

Participants indicated a range of personal break time. Fourteen percent of participants indicated that they received no personal break time during their work day. The majority of participants (39.1%) indicated they receive between 45minutes and one hour of break time. However 62.5% of participants indicated they used their personal break time to complete job related tasks. Of these 62.5%, 53.1% felt that they needed to do so in order to fulfill their job requirements. Only 12.5% of participants receive scheduled programming time per week.

The majority of participants (81.3%) indicated they had benefits available within their work place; 71.9% had dental benefits, 76.6% had medical benefits, 65.6% had paid sick days (with 31.3% indicating they received between 6 and 10 days annually), and only 15.6% indicated they had Pension Plan Options within their work place.

**Research Question 2:** *How did participants respond to items on Section One of the Child Care Provider Survey dealing with job satisfaction and intent to stay in the child care field?*

Overall, 82.3% of participants agreed that they were satisfied with their current job. When looking at participants separately in terms of the auspice of the centres where they work, significantly fewer early childhood educators (70.3%) in not for profit centers were satisfied with their current job compared to 100% of participants working in for profit centers.

Table III – Percentage of *agreement* with items on Section One of the Child Care Provider Survey.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Not For Profit</b>	<b>For Profit</b>
Are you satisfied with your current job?	82.3	70.3	100.0*
Do you plan to be working in the field in five years time?	83.9	81.3	87.5
If you could start your career over would you choose a position in the early childhood education field?	55.7	45.9	70.8*
Are you affiliated with an early childhood professional organization?	40.7	50.0	26.1*
Are you unionized within your work place?	9.5	13.2	4.0

- $p > 0.05$
- Chi Squares were calculated to examine whether there were statistically significant responses from the different respondent groups.

When asked if they would choose a career in early childhood education if they could start their career over, significantly fewer educators (45.9%) in not for profit centers indicated that they would choose the same career path compared to 70.8% of educators in for profit centers. Interestingly, 83.9% of participants indicated that they plan to be working in the field five years from now.

Significantly more workers in not for profit centers than for profit centers were affiliated with an early childhood professional organization, 50% versus 26.1% respectively. As well, there were significant differences between auspice when looking at whether the work place was unionized. Results indicated that 13.2% of participating not for profit centers was unionized while 4.0% of participating for profit centers was unionized.

**Research Question 3:** *What is the percentage of agreement with statements on Section Two of the Child Care Provider Survey dealing with the level of formalization, centralization, and professional development?*

When looking at the level of overall agreement with the statements in section two, of the Child Care Provider Survey, there were a number of statements with an agreement percentage of 90% or greater. (See Table IV). The majority of participants indicated that their centers provided professional resources/books for early childhood educators (93.7%), resource/ materials for programming benefits (93.7%), opportunities for professional development (93.7%) and had a child-centered philosophy (96.8%). As well, these centers provide a reasonable amount of stimulating toys (85.7%) and art/craft supplies (88.9%) for the children. Interestingly, only 21.3% of centers provide an adequate amount of time for programming and planning so early childhood educators could have time to prepare and plan how best to use the resources they have. As well, even though 93.7 % of participants indicated that they had opportunities for professional development, only 74.2% indicated that their workplace provided funding for professional development.

Table IV – Percentage of *agreement* with questions on Section Two of the Child Care Provider Survey.

<b>My Center provides/has...</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Not for Profit</b>	<b>For Profit</b>
1. Written job descriptions	79.9	81.1	76.0
2. A list of roles and responsibilities for all staff	80.3	80.6	80.0
3. Personal Policies Information booklet	95.2	97.4	92.0
4. An annual written performance appraisal	58.6	50.0	70.8
5. A salary scale outlining amounts and times of increments	44.4	63.2	16.0
6. Opportunity for staff involvement in program and policy decisions	72.1	72.2	72.0
7. Professional resources/books for early childhood educators	93.7	94.7	92.0
8. Resources/ materials for programming benefits	93.7	92.1	96.0
9. Opportunities for professional development	93.7	94.7	92.0
10. Funding for professional development	74.2	81.6	62.5
11. Funding for child care association memberships	17.9	17.1	19.0
12. Adequate time for planning/programming	21.3	19.4	24.0
13. A reasonable workload	78.0	64.7	96.0
14. A place for staff to relax	52.5	58.3	44.0
15. A place for meetings	66.7	65.7	68.0
16. Adequate benefits	71.4	78.9	60.0
17. Pension Plan Options	26.2	36.1	12.0
18. Paid holidays	98.4	100	96.0
19. Fair wages	44.3	45.9	41.7
20. A place for parents	30.4	33.3	26.1
21. A child-centered philosophy	96.8	97.3	96.0
22. A behavior management policy	98.4	97.4	100
23. Lots of stimulating toys for the children	85.7	76.3	100
24. Lots of art/craft supplies for the children.	88.9	84.2	96.0
25. Enough room for the children to move and explore.	77.0	75.7	79.2
26. Room to have a private conversation.	66.1	54.1	84.0

Eighty one point six percent of participants (81.6%) from not for profit centers were provided funding for professional development compared to 62.5% of participants working in for profit centers.

Adequate space within the child care facilities appears to be difficult to access. Only 52.5% of the participating centers had a place for staff to relax. Finding a place for a private conversation may prove difficult as only 66.1% of educators indicated that there was a room to have a private conversation within their workplace (not for profit 54.1% and for profit 84.0%). In addition, participants indicated limited space for meetings (66.7%), little space for parents (30.4%) and 77% of participants indicated that there was enough room for the children to move and explore.

There were a number of statements on section two, of the Child Care Provider Survey which addressed the extent of formalization of participating centers. Percentages varied from a low of 44.4% to a high of 95.2%. Overall, participants indicated that 79.9% of the participating centers provide written job descriptions. Eighty point three percent (80.3%) provide a list of roles and responsibilities for all staff, 95.2% provide their educators with a personal policy information booklet, 58.6% provide an annual written performance appraisal and 44.4% of participating centers provide their educators with a salary scale outlining amounts and times of increments. When separating participants with regards to the auspice of their workplace, there is a dramatic difference between not for profit and for profit centers and the presence of a salary scale. Sixty-three percent (63%) of not for profit centers compared to sixteen percent of for profit centers provide their educators with a salary scale outlining the amounts and times of increments. As well, there were differences between auspice with regards to receiving an annual written performance appraisal. Seventy point

eight percent (70.8%) of participants from for profit child care centers and 50% of educators from not for profit centers indicated they received an annual written performance appraisal. Another significant difference that appeared between participants from not for profit and for profit child care centers was the percentage of participants that agreed their center provided a reasonable work load. The percentages were 64.7 and 96.0 respectively.

However, there was little difference between the auspice of centers when addressing the issue of fair wages. Educators from both types of centers indicated that their center did not provide fair wages as seen from the low agreement rate. Only 45.9% of educators working in not for profit centers and 41.7% of educators working in for profit centers agreed that their workplace provided fair wages. As well significant differences appear between auspices when looking at the agreement percentages for adequate benefits. Close to 79% of not for profit centers as compare to 60% of for profit centers provide their educators with adequate benefits. Overall, 98.4% of educators receive paid holidays and only 26.2% of participating educators are offered pension plan benefits. When looked at separated by auspice, 36.1% of educators in not for profit centers and 12.0% of educators in for profit centers had access to pension plan benefits.

**Research Question 4:** *How did participants respond to items on Section Three of the Child Care Provider Survey dealing with their current working conditions as they compared to their ideal child care job?*

Shockingly there was only one single item on section three of the Child Care Provider Survey that had greater than a 50% response rate of being the educators' ideal for both groups. (See Table V). This single item is the educators' relationship with the children with

whom they work (67.2%). The educators' relationships within their workplace all had a very low percentage of being close to their ideal. The relationship that had the highest percentage of being close to the educators' ideal was their relationship with their co-workers (50.0%). The percentages get even lower when looking at the educators' relationship with parents (45.3%) and the educators' relationship with their director (31.3%). With percentages this low, it is not surprising that only 60.9% of educators indicated that their current workplace atmosphere was "close to their ideal". Only 37.5% of participating educators indicated that the amount of time allowed in their week to talk to and receive feedback from their coworkers was close to their ideal. As well, only 39.1% indicated that the opportunity to interact with fellow professionals within the field was close to their ideal.

Thirty-nine percent of participants indicated that the time and opportunity to participate in professional development was close to their ideal. The amount of funding provided for professional development by the employer was only close to the ideal for 42.2% of participants. Low percentages appeared when looking at the how close to the ideal the amount of programming time was as well as access to programming materials and resources. Percentages were 21.9 and 48.4 respectively.

Again, the concerns with limited space within the centers was evident, as a low percentage of participants indicated that both their physical work space (39.1%) and amount of space to store their personal belongings (28.1%) were close to their ideal. Perhaps one of the most telling results is that only 45.3% of participants indicated that the philosophy of their work place was close to their ideal. This response may be related to the relatively low percentage of participants (34.4%) who felt that the amount of time that they spent with the children was close to their ideal.



Table V – Participants responses to Section Three of the Child Care Provider Survey,  
describing how current working conditions compare to their ideal.

MY CURRENT...	Overall			Not For Profit			For Profit		
	Not like ideal	Close to ideal	Is my ideal	Not like ideal	Close to ideal	Is my ideal	Not like ideal	Close to ideal	Is my ideal
Workplace has a philosophy that is	4.7	45.3	43.8	5.6	47.2	47.2	4.2	50.0	45.8
Relationship with my coworkers is	18.9	50.0	28.1	29.7	40.5	29.7	4.0	68.0	28.0
Relationship with my director is	15.6	31.3	43.8	26.5	29.4	44.1	4.2	41.7	54.2
Amount of time allowed in my week to talk to and receive feed back from my coworkers is	39.1	37.5	21.9	52.6	36.8	10.5	20.0	40.0	40.0
Amount of opportunity to participate in professional development is	29.7	43.8	23.4	37.8	37.8	24.3	20.0	56.0	24.0
Amount of funding provided by my employer for professional development is	25.0	42.2	29.7	26.3	29.5	34.2	25.0	50.0	25.0
Amount of opportunity for interaction with professionals within the field is	40.6	39.1	17.2	54.1	24.3	21.6	24.0	64.0	12.0
Amount of programming time is	67.2	21.9	7.8	73.0	21.6	5.4	64.0	24.0	12.0
Access to programming materials and resources is	17.2	48.4	29.7	18.9	54.1	27.0	16.7	45.8	37.5
Amount of space within the center to store my personal belongings in	50.0	28.1	20.3	55.3	23.7	21.1	44.0	36.0	20.0
Workplace's physical space is	34.4	39.1	23.4	40.5	37.8	21.6	28.0	44.0	28.0
Workplace's atmosphere is	14.1	60.9	23.4	21.1	63.2	15.8	4.0	60.0	36.0
Relationship with parents is	9.4	45.3	43.8	10.5	52.6	36.8	8.0	36.0	56.0
Relationship with the children is	3.1	28.1	67.2	2.6	28.9	68.4	4.0	28.0	68.0
Amount of time for interacting with the children is	17.2	34.4	46.9	21.1	42.1	36.8	12.0	24.0	64.0

When looking at the data in terms of the auspice of the child care centers with which the participants work, it is interesting to note that the participants of for profit centers indicated two areas of concern that were not identified by participants of not for profit centers. Fifty four point one percent (44.1%) indicated that the opportunity for interaction with professionals within the field was not like their ideal, compared to 24% of participants from not for profit centers. Fifty two point six percent (52.6%) of participants from for profit centers indicated that the amount of time in their week to talk to and receive feed back from their coworkers was not like their ideal compared to 20% of participants from not for profit centers.

Results indicated that a greater percentage of educators from for profit centers had relationships within their work place that reflected their ideal, compared to participants from not for profit centers. When focusing on relationships, 56% of for profit educators compared to 36.8% of not for profit workers indicated that their relationships with parents were their ideal. Sixty four percent (64%) of for profit educators compared to 36.8% of not for profit educators indicated that the amount of time they have for interacting with the children is their ideal.

**Research Question 5:** *How did participants rank the statements, in Section 4 of the Child Care Provider Survey dealing with issues that are important to achieving high quality child care within Nova Scotia?*

The top five statements indicated by participants as being important to achieving high quality child care in Nova Scotia were: Salary (100%), A public policy that clearly recognizes the central role of child care to early childhood development (96.3%),

Table VI – How participants ranked the statements in Section 4 of the Child Care Provider Survey as being important to achieving high quality child care within Nova Scotia.

	<b>Overall</b>		<b>Not For Profit</b>		<b>For Profit</b>	
	<b>Some What Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Some What Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Some What Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>
Early childhood professional organizations	38.7	56.5	35.1	56.8	44.0	56.0
Unions	47.5	14.8	38.9	22.2	60.0	4.0
Advocacy efforts	23.0	75.4	25.0	75.0	20.0	76.0
Increased societal recognition	11.5	86.9	19.4	80.6	0	96.0
The provincial government's actions	6.7	91.7	5.7	94.3	8.0	88.0
Salary		100		100		100
Benefits	4.8	95.2	2.7	97.3	8.0	92.0
A public policy, that clearly recognizes the central role of child care to early childhood development	3.2	96.3	2.7	97.3	4.0	96.0
Provincial salary scale for Early childhood educators	6.6	91.8	5.6	94.4	8.0	88.0
A certification process for Early childhood educators	27.4	58.1	29.7	56.8	24.0	60.0
Lower teacher to child ratios	25.8	67.7	18.9	75.7	36.0	56.0
Smaller group sizes	24.2	71.0	13.5	81.1	40.0	56.0
Higher operating standards	21.0	77.4	16.2	81.1	28.0	72.0
An Increased number of inspections/unannounced visits by Early Childhood Development Officers	41.9	48.4	37.8	56.8	48.0	36.0
Establishment of a career ladder	33.9	62.7	34.3	65.7	33.3	58.3
Increased financial support from the Federal government	4.8	95.2	2.7	97.3	8.0	92.0
Increased support services for centers providing care to children with special needs	8.1	91.9	5.4	94.6	12.0	88.0
Professional Development	19.4	80.6	24.3	75.7	12.0	88.0
Education Requirements of Early childhood educators	16.1	83.9	16.2	83.8	16.0	84.0

Benefits (95.2%), Increased financial support from the federal government (95.2%) and increased support services for centers providing care to children with special needs (91.9%). It is not surprising that salary was indicated as being the most important factor to address in order to create high quality child care within the province. Nearly ninety-two percent (91.8%) of participants indicated that the implementation of a provincial salary scale for educators was very important. As well, participants indicated that both societal recognition and the Provincial Governments' actions were very important, with percentages of 86.9 and 91.7 respectively. Although the percentages of participants indicating that items dealing with regulating factors are "very important" was moderately lower, there was still a respectable percentage of participants (77.4%) who saw these issues as "very important. Seventy-five percent (77.4%) of educators agreed that higher operating standards were very important. As well, 71% of educators felt that smaller group sizes and lower teacher to child ratios (67.7%) are very important to achieving high quality child care in Nova Scotia.

With regards to education, 83.9% of participants felt that the education requirements of early childhood educators were very important. As well, professional development was deemed important to the creation of high quality care in Nova Scotia, with a 80.6% agreement rate from participants.

Only 14.8% of participating educators indicated that unionization was important to creating high quality child care in Nova Scotia. Also, the percentage of agreement differed among auspices with 22.2% of not for profit and only 4% of for profit centers indicating that unionization was very important. Participants also ranked the following relatively low regarding importance to the creation of high quality child care in Nova Scotia: Early childhood professional organizations (56.5% agree it is very important), a certification

process for early childhood educators (58.1% agree it is important), and the establishment of a career ladder (62.7% agree it is important).

**Research Question 6:** *How did participants describe the current daycare system in Nova Scotia?*

Participants' responses were similar, regardless of whether they worked for a not for profit or for profit early childhood center. Participants from both sectors painted the current daycare system as one that is undervalued, inadequate, and lacking in government support.

Participants described both external difficulties and internal difficulties with the current daycare system in Nova Scotia. An external theme that arose repeatedly is that of societal recognition. Participants felt that society as a whole devalued the early childhood field and provided no recognition for the job early childhood educators do. Some comments from participants include:

“It is a very poor system and it is hard to believe that some parents still think we are their babysitters”

“I feel that early childhood educators still do not have the recognition that they deserve”.

“Staff are under appreciated by society”

“We need to be recognized more as a profession.”

As well, participants indicated that they felt that the government did not recognize the value of early learning or the benefits that quality child care brings to our young children. Participants felt that the governments' actions are not supportive of creating quality childcare centers as the province has low standards that are inadequately maintained and provides limited funding for early childhood care. Numerous participants indicated that the government is not providing the funding necessary to increase salaries/benefits and for centers to purchase the materials necessary to run a quality program. Some of the participants noted;

“They (referring to the current daycare system) need more funding for supplies and salaries, therefore it doesn't always meet requirements of the quality it should be”

“It (referring to the current daycare system) should have standards that centers have to meet. No Child should have a sub-standard care. No center should be disadvantaged”.

“It is poorly regulated and standardized”

“Unless there are strict regulations and guidelines people and children will continue to use substandard childcare, and further more people will continue to open and operate substandard childcare facilities.”

Participants also indicated that childcare was not affordable or accessible to all children and families. Such views are reflected in the following quotes from participants:

“Right now it (referring to the daycare system in Nova Scotia) is really luck of the draw, if you’re lucky you have care available to you. That is, you have quality care that is affordable to you. However most quality child care in this province is becoming more and more out of peoples’ price range. Often people may settle for less than quality because it is affordable for them”.

“The system is moving unfortunately to a who can afford child care system.”

“I think the system is increasingly inaccessible to parents who have a middle income.”

“The daycare system is severely under funded in order to provide adequate access by all children.”

“Inadequate in terms of spaces available.”

“The province is in dire need of more centers.”

Internally, participating educators indicated that they are overworked and under paid as they continue to gain increased responsibility. Nearly every participant indicated that early childhood educators were underpaid and received unfair wages for the important work that they do on a daily basis. Participants noted:

“It is an insult to all early childhood educators to settle for minimum wage.”

“Most early childhood educators are living on poverty wages”.

“The daycare system in Nova Scotia is under paying their early childhood educators.”

“I make \$8 an hour and have been in the field for 20 years. My government grants totaled \$3662.95 for the 2006 year.”

As well, many educators indicated that there is currently a high staff turnover due to stress and low pay and benefits. Some participants indicated that the province is in a crisis as no one is entering the field due to low salaries. It should be noted that many of the participants indicate that the internal difficulties with the system are secondary to the current external state of the daycare system in Nova Scotia.

**Research Question 7:** *How did participants describe the ideal daycare system in Nova Scotia?*

Overall, participants agreed upon what the ideal daycare system would look like and again, responses could be categorized into external and internal themes. Participants identified the ideal daycare system as one where early childhood educators are well respected and compensated for the important work that they do. In the ideal daycare system, society and the government would recognize the developmental importance of quality early learning. Some of the statements from participants include;

“In an ideal childcare system there would be respect and value for workers.”



“In the ideal system people would have more respect for ECEs.(Early Childhood Educators)”

“In the ideal daycare system early childhood educators would be recognized on the same professional level as teachers.”

“Better recognition from the public for what our job consists of (Referring to what the ideal daycare system in Nova Scotia would look like).”

Participants indicated that in the ideal childcare system, childcare spaces would be plentiful and accessible to all children and families. Necessary training and support would be provided to successfully include children with special needs.

“The ideal system would be that no matter where you lived, no matter what your child’s age, no matter what your income, you would have access to quality child care and it would be affordable and easily accessible (no wait lists).”

“The ideal system would allow everybody equal rights to quality daycare.”

“The ideal daycare system in Nova Scotia would have all parents pay a small nominal fee.”

“The ideal daycare system would provide an opportunity for all children to engage in daycare/preschool opportunities.”

“A spot for every child that needs it and affordable for all parents. (Referring to what the ideal system would look like)

One common theme that continually arose was that of better working conditions. It should be noted that working conditions can fall under both external and internal themes as the external government policies and funding play a secondary role in the individual centers ability to provide excellent working conditions. Many participants indicated that in the ideal daycare system, educators would have access to increased benefits and would be paid well for their work. Some of the participants suggested that early childhood educators should fall under the Department of Education instead of the Department of Community services and be paid as such. Such a suggestion is highlighted in the following statement written by a participant; “Researchers talk about how important the early years are in the development of a child. Put daycare centers under the same umbrella as our schools. Put the teachers of these children in the same pay scale as teachers in the school system.” Many participants articulated that in the ideal daycare system the government would provide more funding to support the increase of benefits and salaries.

Externally driven are the participants’ indications that the ideal child care system would have higher operational standards and maintenance of these standards. Suggestions for increased standards included lower ratios, increased training standards, and smaller group sizes. Some participants indicated that all centers would be treated equally regardless of auspice.

Internally the ideal daycare system would provide educators with both the time and funding to participate in ongoing professional development, increased amount of programming time, and of course increased pay and benefits. Some participant comments include;

“The ideal childcare system would provide more special needs assistance and quality time for programming.”

“Opportunities for professional development during the day or week (Referring to the ideal daycare system).”

“Children with special needs would receive additional support for themselves and teachers.”

“The ideal daycare system would provide us with less custodial duties and more time for growth and development through the week and time to do more programming during work time.”

**Research Question 8:** *What did participants feel is needed to move the current daycare system closer to the ideal in Nova Scotia?*

Most of the suggestions given by participants on how to move the current day care system closer to the ideal, builds on the foundation of more government funding. Participants suggest that more government funding is needed in order to increase spaces, increase educators salaries/benefits, and support families with the financial burden of childcare. Some of the statements addressing these issues include:

“The federal and provincial governments need to give more funding directly to wages.”

“The funding to help keep daycare costs down for families (referring to what is needed in order to move the current daycare system closer to the ideal).”

“The system needs funding; it all comes down to the money.”

“Assistance needs to come from the federal and provincial governments (Referring to what is needed to move the current daycare system closed to the ideal).”

Participants indicated that the government needs to standardize education and training requirements and increase the education standards. One participant indicated that there should be no equivalencies accepted. A few educators from for profit centers suggested that there be a salary scale that is based on education and experience. As well, a few educators from for profit centers suggested that the operating standards and access to government monies should be the same for all early childcare centers regardless of the auspice of the center. This finding suggests that some educators from for profit centers believe that they are treated unfairly. Perhaps one of the most attention-grabbing statements made by the participants is those who indicate that the educators feel like the government is not listening to them. Some statements made by participants include:

“The government needs to listen to what educators are saying – then go the distance. It is not good enough to just leave us with broken promises.”

“A team of professionals who work in this field should develop ways to make the needed changes and the government should listen and follow through with those changes.”

“The government needs to listen to the front line workers.”

Participants also highlight the fact that they feel unappreciated and undervalued by society. Participants suggest that in order for the ideal daycare system to become a reality that there must be increased societal education and recognition about the importance of the early childhood educators' role. One participant sums it up by writing, "we need societal recognition of the great importance of the early years and a commitment to a delivery system that matches childrens' development and families' needs".

Two suggestions made by educators in not for profit centers, were to increase advocacy efforts and increase the number of affiliations with professional organizations:

"We need one voice from a professional organization in stead of many single voices."

"We need to push advocacy – make the government put quality child care on every election campaign."

"We need more people to get involved in the child care association. It's time to make a stand in large numbers to show the government how important we are to the functioning of society."

"The families who need child care need to pair with educators and advocate because the government doesn't seem to listen to the educators themselves. Perhaps the only way to get through to the government is to organize a provincial walk out of every single child care provider in Nova Scotia. This may be the only thing that would get this field the attention it deserves. Imagine, the whole province would shut down."

The for profit participants had a few suggestions as well, of what is needed to move our current daycare system towards the ideal system. One educator suggested that government officials should spend time within daycares and gain more knowledge on what frontline workers do. Another educator summed it all up in two words. Those two words were, “A Miracle”.

## CHAPTER 5

### **(A) Introduction**

Current research continues to emphasize that the quality of early child care is the most consistent factor that determines the impact of child care on children's development. The quality of early childhood programs is greatly effected by and reflected in the number of staff turnovers a child care facility experiences. High staff turnovers are usually reflective of a child care setting where workers are dissatisfied, underpaid, over worked and undervalued. With this in mind this study investigated the current working conditions of early childhood educators within Nova Scotia to see if they were condusive to high quality early childhood programs. As well, the perceptions of early childhood educators regarding the current daycare system in Nova Scotia, what the ideal daycare system would look like, and how we can move the current system closer to the ideal were investigated. Responses from the non profit and for profit centers were analyzed to determine if there were significant differences between respondent groups. Factors affecting job satisfaction will be discussed with regards to external and internal factors.

### **(B) Internal Factors that Affect Job Satisfaction**

#### Programming and Professional Development

Results indicated that very few early childhood educators receive time within their daily routine, for programming and planning. This is an enormous concern as quality programming is the foundation of a quality program. Since 1997 there have been standards in place to ensure developmentally appropriate practice of programming within early childhood

care (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). The National Association for the Education of Young Children set guidelines that should be the standard by which all child care educators and facilities operate. These guide lines address developmentally appropriate practices for adults providing care and education services to young children. Literature indicates that a well-structured, well-planned curriculum is needed for a quality program that benefits all areas of children's development (Friendly et al., 2007; Friendly & Beach, 2005; Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Center, 2006; Doherty, 1999; Doherty, 2000; Doherty et al., 2000). Friendly et al., 2007 describe a high quality childcare program as having a,

daily, planned program that exposes children to language ideas, and provides many play-based opportunities for interaction with peers, exploration of the environment, experimentation and problem-solving.(p.11)

Anyone can throw toys on a table or gather children in a circle but it requires time and effort to provide children with programming that benefits all areas of their development. Daycare centers are catering to a wide variety of children, all with varying needs and it is essential that educators are able to teach and program to meet the needs of all the children present. It is not enough just to have programming material available to educators. Early childhood educators need time with which to utilize such materials.

However, The Daycare Act of Nova Scotia does not address programming per say or planning time; it only provides a general statement on daily program;

A daily program shall be established by each facility with provision to facilitate and stimulate intellectual, physical, emotional and social development appropriate to the developmental level of the child and should include activities to encourage language development. (Day Care Act, program, pg.1)



It is the educators' who must plan and program to ensure that they are facilitating and stimulating each area of a child's development. While the minimum standards noted in the Day Care Act do not address these issues, educators recognize the importance of programming time and planning. This requires access to appropriate resources, time, ongoing professional development and opportunities to dialogue with colleagues.

Ongoing professional development helps support educators in providing the programming necessary for a quality program. It is important for educators to participate in ongoing professional development that keeps them up to date with the most current best practices as they facilitate the learning of all the children with whom they work. As professional development plays an important role in creating quality early childhood programs, it was promising that results from this study indicated that the majority (93.7%) of early childhood educators had ongoing opportunities to receive professional development. Concerns however occurred because so many participants indicated they have no access to funding to utilize such opportunities. It is not realistic to suggest that early childhood educators incur the cost for ongoing professional development as nearly half of them are making wages below or close to the poverty line (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2001). Considering the impact professional development can have on the programming and planning for children, such an issue should be addressed in the Daycare Act of Nova Scotia, ensuring that early childhood educators receive a minimum amount of professional development funding on an annual basis. Such a revision to the Daycare Act would require financial support from the government to centers in order to cover not only the cost, or a percentage of the cost, of the professional development but also to cover a substitute budget

so that educators can attend workshops. Centers need to encourage and recognize the value of professional development and staff must take ownership and create a climate of learning.

### Space within the Workplace

The issue of space was consistently mentioned in participants' responses. Educators indicated that there is a serious lack of appropriate space within the facilities where they work. Educators noted a lack of space for children, families and themselves. In my experience, this is the reality. Many centers, if meeting the minimum standards put forth under the Daycare Act of Nova Scotia have many children compacted into a small space, have little storage and no space for staff to relax. The Daycare Act states that, "every facility shall provide a minimum indoor space of 2.75 square meters (30 square feet) of unobstructed playroom space for each child" (Daycare Act, Building equipment and space, p.10). For example, if you have a room 15 feet by 20 feet (30 square feet) you can legally have ten children in that room all day. Centers comply with these minimum requirements but once furniture and equipment are added to the room, there is limited free space for children. Thus, the minimum standards for spacing should be increased and perhaps the extra cost for start up centers should be subsidized by the government.

Past research identifies indoor and outdoor space as being contributors to quality early childhood programs (Doherty, 2000; Friendly, Doherty and Beach, 2007; Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Center, 2006). Ideally there needs to be space within the child care centers to have meetings and private conversations. Centers are providing service to families with a wide variety of needs and the facility should reflect this. Many centers are providing care to children with special needs and require space for Individual Program Plan

meetings. It is difficult to maintain a professional manner when you have no place to have a conversation involving confidential information. It is also important to respect the privacy of families. This again is difficult to do when you are constantly having to have private conversations in the hall way. The issue of space requirements needs to be addressed more fully at a policy level and added to the Daycare Act and Regulations.

When there is a staff room available to staff, it also typically becomes a place for storage. Based on personal experience, staff rooms are often cramped due to limited space and storage difficulties, and are furnished with hand me down furniture. It appears that the value of personal space for staff to relax, communicate and work is overlooked. Staff need personal storage space as well as a place to unwind, relax and program (Boyd & Schneider, 1997). It is difficult to relax with everyone's materials and center equipment surrounding you. Friendly and Beach (2005) stress the importance of physical amenities that support staff. Early childhood educators should feel that their needs are valued. Having an adequate staff room and a center that conveys that educators are respected, have an impact on the morale of the individuals working within the program and thus, on the quality of the program (Friendly & Beach, 2005). It is unfortunate that educators feel devalued by society and perhaps even more difficult when early childhood educators feel devalued by their workplace. Ensuring a space that is dedicated to staff and their needs would likely increase their job satisfaction.

#### Relationships within the Workplace and Compatibility with Workplace Philosophy

Other facets of job satisfaction needing consideration include: the employee's relationship with coworkers and supervisors and personal compatibility with the center's philosophy. In the current study participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with their

current workplace relationships. Early childhood educators' indicated that their relationships within their workplace were not very close to their ideal. Perhaps one of the saddest results is that less than fifty percent of educators indicate that the philosophy of their work place is close to their ideal. The philosophy of a center really is reflective of the beliefs of how children learn and is difficult to teach if you have a differing idea of how children best learn.

Manlove and Guzell (1997) stated that the more the employee values and beliefs match the organization's values and beliefs, the greater their willingness to exert the efforts of the organization and desire to stay with the organization. This notion is supported by Catapano's (2001) research which identified educators' relationship with their coworkers and supervisor as being another reason why they were satisfied with their jobs, as evident by their long stays (seven or more years) at the same child care facility. Teachers need support and it is important that they can rely on their relationship with other staff within their place of employment. It is important that directors provide structured time where staff have the opportunity to talk to their colleagues about professional matters, as well as a private place to have such conversation (Boyd & Schneider, 1997). However, many early childhood educators in the current study indicated that the amount of time they received for such purposes was not like their ideal.

Perhaps directors could benefit from the opportunity to get together and share ideas on how they can work in time and strategies to support communication and feedback among staff members. Child care is a team effort. Quality child care is affected by how well members work together. It is essential that members feel they are supported by their coworkers and that they can depend on each other. Positive working relationships are conducive to increased job satisfaction and high quality child care.

### **(C) External Factors that Affect Job Satisfaction**

#### Money/Funding

It appears that all issues come back to money and funding. As previously mentioned, early childhood educators' dissatisfaction with pay and benefits has long been cited in the literature as a reason for their intent to leave their jobs. In addition, low wages and minimal benefits are strong predictors of staff turnover. Results from the current study indicated that educators are still extremely dissatisfied with their current wages. As many early childhood educators make close to, or below, the poverty line (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2001), this is not surprising. Educators from both auspices of centers indicated that their center did not provide fair wages and indicated increasing salaries as being the most important factor to address in order to create high quality child care within the province. Efforts to increase the wages of early childhood educators must continue and go beyond the current salary enhancement grant of between three and four thousand dollars annually. When most educators make below 20 000 dollars a year, three to four thousand dollars still keeps them at poverty level. It is not possible for centers to increase salaries and benefits without much needed support from the government. Trying to do so would mean raising parent fees and making quality child care increasingly unaffordable for families. The government needs to step up and create a provincial salary scale based on education and experience and the government needs to provide centers with the funding needed to pay educators based upon qualifications. The literature continues to clearly indicate that well trained and well educated child care providers who are fairly compensated for their work is linked to greater job satisfaction, better performance, and high quality child care centers

(Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Center, 2006; Doherty et al., 2000; Chud, 2001; Beach et al., 2004; Communications 1993).

As well, the government needs to develop a system that ensures that all childcare facilities have the necessary funding to access the equipment and materials to run a high quality daycare. Until recently, the government provided equipment grants for some not for profit centers. For many centers that funding was likely all that was allotted for annual equipment and materials. This grant has since been eliminated and combined with the salary enhancement grant, infrastructure grant and infant care grants to create the Operating Grant. These new arrangements means the funding for equipment has been eliminated as the guidelines of the new operation grant do not stipulate that a percentage of the grant will go to equipment. Because of the dire need for centers to increase educators' salaries and benefits, more than the 75% of the Operating Grant is allotted to salary and benefits. Centers have been put in a position where they have to weight the benefits of using the grant for equipment or increased salaries. Both are essential to creating high quality child care centers. Rather than using funds for competing needs, there must be a balance. Well equipped centers with educators receiving appropriate pay are fundamental to quality child care (Communications, 1993; Doherty et al., 2000; Beach et al., 1998; Beach et al., 2004).

### Policy/Societal Recognition

The current research results are supportive of past studies (Beach et al., 1998; Beach et al., 2004; Boyd, 1997; Chud, 2001; Prochner, 2000) which indicate that early childhood educators feel there is a lack of recognition for the early childhood field. A theme that arose again and again was that of lack of societal recognition. Early childhood educators feel that

society, as a whole, devalues the early childhood field and provide no recognition for the crucial job early childhood educators do. As well, educators indicate that they feel that the government does not recognize the value of early learning or the benefits that quality child care brings to our young children. Participants of the current study felt that the governments' actions are not supportive of creating quality childcare centers as the province has low standards that are inadequately maintained and lacks in funding. This is the reality. For instance, the government does not recognize educators graduated levels of qualifications. Individuals with a two year certificate have the same recognition as an individual with a Masters Degree. There is no financial recognition for obtaining higher education and thus individuals feel devalued. When you couple the reality that educators feel devalued with the fact they have limited options for pension plan and are paid considerably less than educators in the school system, it creates an aura that early childhood care really isn't that important. As well, The Daycare Act and Regulations which govern our early childhood education field, have not been updated and revised to recognize the changes that have occurred within our province regarding access to training and professional development, best practices, current knowledge and recent research findings. We have over forty years of research that indicates that early childhood educators are underpaid and lack access to benefits. Well respected researchers such as Doherty, Friendly and Beach continue to push the issue to the forefront by compiling mounds of research in this area (Doherty et al., 2004; Friendly et al., 2005; Beach et al., 2004). Yet, the government fails to acknowledge and act upon such research.

When describing the ideal daycare system, educators described it as one where early childhood educators are well respected and compensated for the important work that they do.

In the ideal daycare system, society and the government would recognize and support the development of quality early learning for all children.

Participants suggested that in order for the ideal daycare system to become a reality that there must be increased societal education and recognition about the importance of the early childhood educators' role. A few suggestions made by educators in not for profit centers match those identified by Beach et al., (2004) and include increased advocacy efforts and increased affiliation with professional organizations. Beach stated that "professional affiliation is a critical support to individuals and the workforce (p.10)".

The strategy for increasing societal recognition that was mentioned by the majority of participants was that of advocacy. Participants agree that advocacy efforts are extremely important and that there is strength in numbers. It is important that early childhood educators in this province band together, decide what exactly it is they want from the government and devise a campaign that will help reach their goals. It is important for educators to educate parents on the current working conditions of the daycare system, how these conditions impact job satisfaction and what it means for their children's early development. There is strength in numbers and with parents and early childhood educators working together and supporting each other, change will occur. For the benefit of all children, we need to campaign to change the current policies and regulations to make Nova Scotia a leader in high quality early childhood care.

#### **(D) Current Job Satisfaction of Early Childhood Educators within Nova Scotia.**

When asked outright if they are satisfied with their job, over eighty percent of early childhood educators agreed that they were satisfied with their current job. However, when



looking at participants separately in terms of the auspice of the centers where they work, significantly fewer early childhood educators in not for profit centers were satisfied with their current job compared to 100% of participants working in for profit centers. Such results may reflect the differences in the education level and the experience of the participants. The majority of educators in for profit centers have lower levels of education and less experience than early childhood educators in not for profit centers. With many educators from for profit centers having high school as their highest level of education received, it may be possible that they are satisfied with their current job because there are not many places one can work without some secondary education. As well, with the majority of participants from for profit centers having less than five years experience, they may be more satisfied with their current job because they have nothing to compare it to or have not been in the field long enough to be updated on the reality of the current working conditions. These young educators are at a time in their life where they are not yet concerned with saving for retirement and therefore having access to benefits such as a pension plan is not a priority.

When looking deeper, results indicate that early childhood educators are in fact, dissatisfied with many facets of their current workplace conditions. Educators indicated that their work place provided unfair wages and benefits, did not provide adequate time for programming, had a philosophy that differed from their own and workplace relationships that were far from their ideal. In fact, there was only one single item on section three of the Child Care Provider Survey that had greater than a 50% response rate of being the educators' ideal. (See Table V).

This single item is the educators' relationship with the children with whom they work. Perhaps it is the love for children that, when looking at the big picture, makes educators feel that it is all worth it. Some of the educators noted;

“I stay in the field because I love working with children and certainly not because of the benefits.”

“I love working with children, they teach me something new everyday.”  
Perhaps the truest indication of whether educators are satisfied with their current

workplace is reflected in the percentage of participants who indicated that if they could start their career over again, they would not choose the early childhood field (47%). This number is alarming especially when the field is in a staffing crisis. Staffing is essential to providing high quality care. As a province, it is not enough to ask individuals to enter the field because they have a “love” for children. We need to fairly compensate the workforce we have and give them the recognition they deserve. Creating a satisfied workforce will invite others to choose the valuable field of early childhood education.

## **(E) Recommendations**

### Recommendations for Future Research

(1) This study could be replicated using a larger sample group. A larger sample may provide greater insight into early childhood educators' perceptions of the current daycare system in Nova Scotia and provide increased insight into what educators' feel is needed to move the child care system in Nova Scotia closer to the ideal. As well, a greater number of participants may provide researchers with greater insight to the current working conditions and job satisfaction of early childhood educators within Nova Scotia.

(2) In addition to replicating the study to include a greater number of participants, future researchers should provide participants with an opportunity to participate in a focus group or in depth interview. In depth interviews and focus groups allow participants to elaborate on how they feel and can enhance the amount of information gathered during research.

(3) It is also recommended that future researchers survey parents regarding their satisfaction level with the daycare system in Nova Scotia. Surveys could include questions that provide insight into parents' perceptions of issues relative to access and funding for daycare as well as early childhood educators' treatment within the daycare system.

(4) Research should look at the current government guidelines and their impact on daycares. Researchers could interview directors of daycares within Nova Scotia. Interview questions could focus on directors' perceptions of the parameters set up by the government, especially whether the minimum standards, as written in the Daycare Act of Nova Scotia, should be the standard.

(5) It is recommended that researchers replicate the current study in other Atlantic provinces as well as pursue more research on rural/urban issues.

#### Recommendations for Early Childhood Educators

(1) Early Childhood educators should become more involved professionally. Research emphasizes the importance of professional development. If early childhood educators want to

achieve recognition they need to work together to move toward gaining professional status. They should affiliate themselves with a professional organization and continue their professional development.

(2) Early childhood educators should advocate for change. They need to gather together and decide what it is they want from the government and then start a campaign that will allow them to obtain it. It is important they be united. They need to look to the future and not get bogged down over issues such as certification. If they want to be recognized as professionals they must set a date and minimum standards for entrance into the field. Current early childhood educators can be grandfathered in. However, proceeding to lobby with a united standard is essential.

(3) Early childhood educators need to avoid getting discouraged. It is important that, as a field, educators maintain their professionalism and continue advocating for better working conditions.

(4) Early childhood educators should continue to recognize that appropriate programming is essential for quality care. Educators should continue to make personal time for programming until their work place begins to provide an appropriate amount of time for programming within their working day. At the same time educators need to lobby for changes within the Nova Scotia Daycare Act.

(5) Early childhood educators should become vocal. They should inform the public of the current working conditions of the early childhood field and enlist their support. By supporting and mentoring each other, families, community members and early childhood educators can increase the pressure on the government to make the changes necessary to create a high quality early childhood care system in Nova Scotia.

#### Recommendations for the Government

(1) The government should review the current Daycare Act and Regulations and make appropriate revisions as knowledge and conditions within the field have changed since the current act came into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1980 with a few amendments being introduced in 2004 (Day Care Act).

(2) Research indicates that the job satisfaction of early childhood educators affects the quality of early childhood education programs. Therefore, the government should listen to the early childhood educators who work in the field everyday and validate them by acting in ways that will increase the current job satisfaction of early childhood educators within Nova Scotia.

(3) The government should recognize Nova Scotia's families' needs for affordable, accessible, quality child care. The government needs to develop a plan that will make such child care possible for all children and families within Nova Scotia.

(4) The government should revisit the current credentials needed in order to work within the early childhood education field. The government should look at the credentials required by other provinces and take leadership role in this area. The government must set a date and minimum standards for entrance into the field. Current early childhood educators can be grandfathered in. However, increasing the minimum credentials, needed to work within the early childhood field, is essential.

(5) The government should continue to act upon the years of research that indicate that child care facilities are in need of the government's financial support. The government should help support salaries that indicate the value of the work early childhood educators do on a daily basis. As well, the government should provide increased assistance to daycares in the form of grants to allow centers to purchase and have access to the materials such as art supplies, toys and equipment, that make a quality early childhood program.

(6) The government should develop a vision of where they would like to see the daycare system of Nova Scotia in ten years. They need to have a vision of a system that is the ideal and move towards high quality childcare in Nova Scotia. The government needs to target what we as Nova Scotians' feel is acceptable within the daycare system and not look at what they can get for the least amount of money.

## **(F) Summary**

Quality child care is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and does not exist as a homogeneous factor (Goelman et al., 2000). The achievement of high quality care comes from the delicate interplay of three main elements including, structural elements, contextual elements and process quality. The results of the current study support the results of the many previous studies that highlight the importance of the interplay between these elements and agree that each element has a momentous influence on the others (Goelman et al., 2000; Doherty, 1999; Kaiser & Kranshinsky, 1999). Also recognized within research is how these elements affect and are affected by the job satisfaction of early childhood educators. Thus, it should be recognized that the job satisfaction of early childhood educators plays a significant role in the quality of care that early childhood programs are providing. The external and internal factors which influence an employee's level of job satisfaction include such issues as work place conditions, policy/societal recognition, auspice and funding. As demonstrated in the results of the current study, these factors do not operate in isolation but instead interact with and impact each other.

As we continue to remain in a staffing crisis, the social, emotional, physical cognitive, and language development of our children continues to be threatened. It is essential that we continue research and act upon findings in the area of job satisfaction of early childhood educators. We need to continue to define factors influencing job satisfaction so we know what elements we need to target in order to increase the quality of child care programs as they are influenced by job satisfaction. As well, it is important to continue assessing the current level of job satisfaction of early childhood educators to evaluate whether or not we are making progress in this area.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the current status of job satisfaction of early childhood educators in Nova Scotia. Factors such as working conditions, auspice, and policy/societal recognition, which were highlighted in the literature, formed the basis of this inquiry. A secondary purpose was to gain perceptions of early childhood educators regarding the status of the child care system in Nova Scotia. Results indicate that as a province we still have a long way to go in order to create a satisfied field of educators and create a province where high quality education is the norm instead of the exception.



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Appendix A  
Measures



## Demographic Survey

The researcher has no way of identifying who responds to the surveys. While the researcher would like you to answer all of the questions, you do not have to answer any which cause you discomfort. Please check the box that most applies to you.

1. Gender       Male       Female
  
2. What is the highest level of education you have obtained?
  - High School
  - Early Childhood Education Equaliviancy
  - Community College:    1 year program    2 year program    3 year program
  - Bachelor Degree
  - Masters Degree
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How many years have you been working in the early childhood field? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What is the type of the centre where you work?
  - Not for profit       For Profit (Private daycare centre)
  
5. How many hours per week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What is your annual income?
  - Between \$15 000 and \$19 999       Between \$30000 and \$34 999
  - Between \$20 000 and \$24 999       Greater than \$35 000
  - Between \$25000 and \$29 999
  
7. Do you have an option for benefits within your workplace?       Yes       No
  - Dental                       Medical                       Pension
  - Sick Days      If Yes, how many per year \_\_\_\_\_?
  
9. How much personal break time do you receive per day ( i. e. – lunch, coffee break, please do NOT include time allowed for programming)? \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Do you spend your personal breaks completing job related tasks?       Yes       No
 

If you answered yes, do you feel that you need to complete such tasks on your personal breaks in order to fulfill you job requirements?       Yes       No
  
11. Do you receive scheduled programming/planning time off the floor on a weekly basis?
  - Yes       No
  - If you answered yes, indicate the amount of hours/minutes per week \_\_\_\_\_

## Child Care Provider Survey

### Section One:

Circle “yes” or “no” to the following questions.

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| (1) Are you satisfied with your current job?   | YES | NO |
| (2) Do you plan to be working in the field in five years time?                                     | YES | NO |
| (3) If you could start your career over, would you choose a position in the early childhood field? | YES | NO |
| (4) Are you affiliated with an early childhood professional organization?                          | YES | NO |
| (5) Are you unionized within your workplace?   | YES | NO |

### Section Two:

Please answer the following questions regarding your workplace by marking “yes” or “no” in the space provided.

My Center provides/has...	YES	NO
1. Written job descriptions		
2. A list of roles and responsibilities for all staff		
3. Personal Policies Information booklet		
4. An annual written performance appraisal		
5. A salary scale outlining amounts and times of increments		
6. Opportunity for staff involvement in program and policy decisions		
7. Professional resources/books for early childhood educators		
8. Resources/ materials for programming benefits		
9. Opportunities for professional development		
10. Funding for professional development		
11. Funding for child care association memberships		
12. Adequate time for planning/programming		
13. A reasonable workload		
14. A place for staff to relax		
15. A place for meetings		
16. Adequate benefits		
17. Pension Plan Options		
18. Paid holidays		
19. Fair wages		
20. A place for parents		
21. A child-centered philosophy		
22. A behavior management policy		
23. Lots of stimulating toys for the children		
24. Lots of art/craft supplies for the children.		
25. Enough room for the children to move and explore.		
26. Room to have a private conversation.		

**Section Three:**

Think about your ideal job within the field. Check the column which best suits your perceptions of how your current position resembles your ideal job.

<b>MY CURRENT...</b>	<b>Not like my ideal</b>	<b>Relatively close To my ideal</b>	<b>Is my ideal</b>
Workplace has a philosophy that is			
Relationship with my coworkers is			
Relationship with my director is			
Amount of time allowed in my week to talk to and receive feed back from my coworkers is			
Amount of opportunity to participate in professional development is			
Amount of funding provided by my employer for professional development is			
Amount of opportunity for interaction with professionals within the field is			
Amount of programming time is			
Access to programming materials and resources is			
Amount of space within the center to store my personal belongings in			
Workplace's physical space is			
Workplace's atmosphere is			
Relationship with parents is			
Relationship with the children is			
Amount of time for interacting with the children is			

**Section 4:**

Please indicate your perceptions of the importance of the following to achieving high quality child care within Nova Scotia by checking the box that best represents your opinion.

	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Some what Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>
Early childhood professional organizations			
Unions			
Advocacy efforts			
Increased societal recognition			
The provincial government's actions			
Salary			
Benefits			
A public policy, that clearly recognizes the central role of child care to early childhood development			
Provincial salary scale for Early childhood educators			
A certification process for Early childhood educators			
Lower teacher to child ratios			
Smaller group sizes			
Higher operating standards			
An Increased number of inspections/unannounced visits by Early Childhood Development Officers			
Establishment of a career ladder			
Increased financial support from the Federal government			
Increased support services for centers providing care to children with special needs			
Professional Development			
Education Requirements of Early childhood educators			

**Section 4: Short Answer**

Please answer the following. Feel free to write more and attach if needed.

1) How would you describe the current daycare system in Nova Scotia?

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2) What could the ideal daycare system look like in Nova Scotia?

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3) What is needed to move the current daycare system closer to the ideal in Nova Scotia?

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Appendix B  
Letter to Director/Owner/Operator

**(letterhead here)**

Dear Director/Owner/Operator,

My name is Nicole Beck-Chisholm and I am the resource teacher at the Child Study Centre at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts (Child and Youth Study) program at Mount Saint Vincent University. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on how Early Childhood Educators within Nova Scotia feel about their jobs. The proposed study will involve gathering information on current job conditions and how these conditions meet early childhood educators' expectations. I am also seeking your perspective on the current Nova Scotia Daycare system regarding how workers regard their position and how the Nova Scotia child care system could move closer to the ideal. My goal is that this information will act as a resource to stakeholders who are invested in providing and maintaining high quality early childhood care programs throughout the province of Nova Scotia.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please complete the enclosed demographic survey and a child care provider survey. The completion of the attached surveys should take approximately 25 to 35 minutes. Please understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions on the surveys that cause you discomfort. All information will be kept completely confidential. Only group results will be reported and no single person or childcare facility will be identified. The surveys will be numerically coded and destroyed after the data has been coded and inputted for analysis. A summary of the research findings will be shared with your childcare facility when the thesis is completed.

If you choose to complete the surveys please enclose your completed survey in the self addressed envelope provided and return by (*place date here*).

As discussed earlier during our telephone conversation, I have provided you with the materials needed for the early childhood educators at your facility to participate in my research. We discussed; (1) distribution, (2) providing reminders to staff, and (3) filling out a survey yourself. I am requesting that you provide each of your fulltime staff (those working 25 hours or greater per week) with a package. Participation in this research is voluntary.

To ensure the return of surveys I am requesting that surveys be returned by (insert date) in order to be included within the data analysis.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me, Nicole Beck-Chisholm, at [REDACTED] or (902)457-6287 [REDACTED] or my thesis supervisor Dr. Carmel French at (902)457-6187 ([carmel.french@msvu.ca](mailto:carmel.french@msvu.ca)). If you have any questions about how this study is being conducted, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office, who is not directly involved in the study, at (902)457-6350 or via e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).

I would like to thank you for your participation and support in this research project. It is my hope that this research will contribute to increased numbers of quality childcare programs in Nova Scotia through increased job satisfaction of early childhood educators.

Sincerely,

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Nicole Beck-Chisholm  
Graduate Student  
Mount Saint Vincent University

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Dr. Carmel French  
Department of Child and Youth Study  
Mount Saint Vincent University



Appendix C  
Letter to Early Childhood Educator

**(letterhead here)**

Dear Early Childhood Educator,

My name is Nicole Beck-Chisholm and I am the resource teacher at the Child Study Centre at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts (Child and Youth Study) program at Mount Saint Vincent University. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on how Early Childhood Educators within Nova Scotia feel about their jobs. The proposed study will involve gathering information on current job conditions and how these conditions meet early childhood educators' expectations. I am also seeking your perspective on the current Nova Scotia Daycare system regarding how workers regard their position and how the Nova Scotia child care system could move closer to the ideal. My goal is that this information will act as a resource to stakeholders who are invested in providing and maintaining high quality early childhood care programs throughout the province of Nova Scotia.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please complete the enclosed demographic survey and a child care provider survey. The completion of the attached surveys should take approximately 25 to 35 minutes. Please understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions on the surveys that cause you discomfort. All information will be kept completely confidential. Only group results will be reported and no single person or childcare facility will be identified. The surveys will be numerically coded and destroyed after the data has been coded and inputted for analysis. A summary of the research findings will be shared with your childcare facility when the thesis is completed.

If you choose to complete the surveys please enclose your completed survey in the self addressed envelope provided and return by *(place date here)*.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me, Nicole Beck-Chisholm, at [REDACTED] or (902)457-6287 [REDACTED] or my thesis supervisor Dr. Carmel French at (902)457-6187 ([carmel.french@msvu.ca](mailto:carmel.french@msvu.ca)). If you have any questions about how this study is being conducted, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office,

which is not directly involved in the study, at (902)457-6350 or via e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).

I would like to thank you for considering my research project. It is my hope that this research will contribute to increased numbers of quality childcare programs in Nova Scotia through increased job satisfaction of early childhood educators.

Sincerely,

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Nicole Beck-Chisholm  
Graduate Student  
Mount Saint Vincent University

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Dr. Carmel French  
Department of Child and Youth Study  
Mount Saint Vincent University

