Legal and Policy Implications for Early Childhood Professionals in Ontario’s Kindergarten Programs

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Applied Psychology Human Development
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The integration of child care and early education systems has been driving staffing change in early learning environments globally over the past decade (McCuaig & Akbari, 2014; OECD 2004, 2006, 2012; Senate of Canada, 2009). Rationales for staff integration often include concurrent movements to professionalize and regularize the early childhood sector. The legal and policy implication of systems integration in Ontario includes the movement of a largely non-unionized private non-profit sector workforce into the realm of public education in Full Day Kindergarten (FDK). Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to introduce a team teaching model comprised of a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) and kindergarten teacher, bringing approximately 10,000 new RECEs into the public education sector. At the same time, the College of Early Childhood Educators was also established to develop Standards of Practice and provide public accountability for early childhood professionals.

This thesis explores the new “professional” role of the RECE within the integrated FDK staff team in the education sector and the concurrent movement to professionalize and regularize the early childhood profession in Ontario. Through a series of four interrelated manuscripts that use a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches including feminist legal policy research and discourse analysis, this compilation thesis documents the legal and policy impact of
FDK staffing policy, and how it has influenced the way the professional co-teaching RECE role in FDK is being developed through legislation, policy and practice. By conceptualizing professionalization as a site of struggle and using feminist legal and policy research perspectives to understand policy implementation, I describe ways in which policy makers can have a more meaningful impact through FDK program implementation at all levels, and disclose strategies on how the policy intent of a more professional status and role for RECEs in Ontario’s education system can be realized.
Acknowledgments

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to the Early Childhood Educators who shared their experiences and learning from the early days of implementation of Ontario’s Full Day Kindergarten Programs. I am struck by their courage and professionalism in taking up the innovative challenge to enter the education sector as early education professionals, and for keeping children and families as the focus of their practice despite the contradictions of sometimes confounding law and policy. I am committed to support their journey to achieve better recognition as women, professionals, and valued early educators in our communities and within our legal systems.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Janette Pelletier who encouraged me to explore new skills in research and supported me throughout the development of my work in a relatively new area for me - early human development and education. I would not be here without her guidance and unquestioning support of my capabilities. I am indebted to my committee members; whose feminist ideology and discerning feedback and conversation were germane to my learning: Nina Bascia whose mentoring and guidance was instrumental in expanding my ideas on educational law and policy; and Rachel Langford whose insight on discourse analysis and work on professionalism of RECEs invariably sent me searching for more.

There are some teachers that leave an indelible impression on life, and I am fortunate to have encountered Barbara Rahder, Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University who believed in my academic potential and introduced me to my love of learning late in my life. My interdisciplinary approach to research and inquiry found its roots with the influences of the students and faculty I encountered in my combined Law Degree and Master of
Environmental Studies at Osgoode Hall Law School/York University, and I will always cherish this teaching and learning.

Bringing my interdisciplinary approach to my doctoral work, I sought connections within the OISE/UT community that allowed me to explore interrelated themes in my work. I am fortunate to have had the inspiration of my colleagues and professors in the first Early Learning Cohort at OISE, whose work encouraged me to think further in the field. My work would not have been possible without the guidance of Carl Corter, Charles Pascal, Michal Perlman and Olesya Falunchuk in this program. I was fortunate to work with the Atkinson Centre, and am indebted to Kerry McCuaig and the research team for their input and support of my work with educators and early learning policy. I am grateful to Nina Bascia’s community of collaborative educational policy student groups who fed my need to share and explore ideas in the education policy field. Thanks also to Kiran Mirchandani and members of her thesis support group on workplace learning and change, for welcoming me and sharing their learning.

Most importantly I am thankful for my family and friends who have sustained me throughout this process: My children Andrew, Nadya and Shari who have taught me so much and without whose persistent questioning and teaching, life would be mundane. My life partner Zeenat Janmohamed whose humility, compassion and commitment to strong public policy inspires me, and whose unwavering support of my intellectual and creative pursuits make me strong, and love life. My mother Joyce Gananathan, whose lifelong journey as a caregiver and teacher help me appreciate the human qualities that matter in life. My chosen family and friends who fed me; with food, encouragement, humour, art, politics and conversation that continue to expand my thinking and work. And not to be forgotten, my canine companion Hobbes whose soulful presence is a constant support for long hours of writing.
I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, Nathan Gananathan whose gifts of intellect, perseverance and ethics, equipped me well to undertake this work. I am forever grateful for the opportunities I have had that he could only dream of.
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Chapter 1

1 Setting the Context

1.1 Introduction to the Study

The integration of child care and early education services has been driving staffing change in early learning environments over the past decade influencing significant changes across Canada and internationally (OECD 2004, 2006, 2012; McCuaig & Akbari, 2014; Senate of Canada, 2009). In Ontario, early learning system integration has translated into the combining of early childhood education programs with education in one setting within schools; which has followed a dominant theme in early learning program integration. Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) was influenced by the report of the Premier’s Early Learning Advisor (Pascal, 2009). The blueprint report for Ontario offered a broad range of recommendations for full integration of child and family services from 0-12 years within Ontario’s education sector. The implementation of FDK for four and five year olds was a first step towards establishing a more comprehensive early learning system. Recommendations included significant staffing changes such as the shift of child care staff into the education sector and establishing integrated staff teams of teachers and Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). The FDK program has been implemented over the course of five years beginning in the 2010 school year, bringing approximately 10,000 new RECEs into the education sector. Many of these RECEs were previously employed in the private and non-profit child care sector in Ontario prior to the introduction of this new designated co-teaching role for RECEs in FDK programs.
The focus of this study is on the new “professional” role of the early childhood educator within the integrated FDK staff team and the concurrent movement to professionalize and regularize early childhood educators in Ontario. Through a series of four interrelated manuscripts, this compilation thesis documents the legal and policy impact of FDK staffing policy, and how it has had an impact on the way that the new professional RECE role in FDK is being developed through legislation, policy and practice.

This thesis is organized in seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and lays out the policy context for the study and the second chapter details the methodology for the individual manuscript studies. The four manuscripts are presented in chapters three, four, five and six respectively. The final and seventh chapter discusses the overall findings from all four manuscripts, and provides recommendations for future policy considerations.

The first manuscript (Chapter 3) entitled “Should We Care? Implications of FDK Program Policy on Early Childhood Pedagogy and Practice” was published in the *International Journal of Child care and Education Policy* (Gananathan, 2011) and draws on the early data collected in this study, beginning in 2010-2011. This study comprises the initial exploration of the thesis by undertaking an analysis of policy documents such as the Standards of Practice of both the College of ECEs (CECE) and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and discusses the impact of the integration of care and education through FDK programs on the professional role of RECEs in Ontario.

The second manuscript entitled “Negotiated Status: The Impact of Union Contracts on the Professional Role of RECEs in Ontario’s Full Day Kindergarten Programs” (Chapter 4) undertakes a document analysis of three union contracts. This study unpacks the ways in which the new professional role of RECEs is being crafted through the collective agreement provisions
of three major unions that represent RECEs in their new role in the FDK programs within the education sector. This second article has been published in a peer reviewed journal, *Canadian Children* (Gananathan, 2015).

Two other journal ready manuscripts are presented in this thesis. The third manuscript continues a legal analysis of the federal-provincial jurisdictional conflicts in the law and how these divergences have had an impact on the professional role of RECEs in FDK. This manuscript is presented in Chapter 5 of the thesis, entitled “Lesser Amongst Equals: The Discursive Construction of Ontario’s New Early Learning Professional in Law and Policy Texts”. It undertakes a document analysis of case law on the issue of whether RECEs in the FDK program are delivering curriculum and therefore exempt from Employment Insurance (EI) like their teaching counterparts.

Chapter 6, entitled, “From Policy to Practice: The Experiences of RECE Professionals in Ontario’s FDK Programs” comprises the fourth and final manuscript, presenting empirical findings from data collected through RECE interviews and surveys, as well as key informant interviews in this study. While the previous three manuscripts focus on how the law and policy documents seek to establish the new professional role of RECEs in FDK classrooms, the fourth manuscript illustrates the lived experiences of RECEs in FDK as a site of struggle for professional recognition, through the five years of implementation in Ontario. The manuscript unpacks the RECEs experiences with a view to understanding how the legislation and policies have directly affected the professional role and status of RECEs who are practicing in the education sector on the ground.

The final chapter discusses the overall findings of this body of work through the four manuscripts. The impact of the law, policy and practice on the professional status of the RECE
in FDK programs is considered and recommendations are made for future considerations in staffing policy related to systems integration.

1.2 Background to the Thesis

Bill 242 amended the Education Act in Ontario to require school boards to operate the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program for 4 and 5 year olds. The program was implemented in five phases, beginning in September 2010. The goal was to provide a universally accessible Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) program for 4 and 5 year olds across Ontario in all school boards. The Act also required school boards to provide an extended day (before and after school) program that connects with the core day (usually 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) to form a seamless full day early learning and kindergarten program in schools. Although Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten is the term used in initial policy documents, this thesis refers to the program as an FDK program in order to be consistent with the research and literature on this topic, unless referring specifically to terms used in the law and policy texts.

For the first time in Canada, the Ontario model introduced an integrated teaching team comprised of a designated position for a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) and a Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) working together within the FDK classroom. The teaching team brings together the expertise of both professional early educators to optimize early child development through a play-based early learning environment in FDK programs. Ontario is also the first province in Canada to establish an independent regulatory College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), which requires all Early Childhood Educators practicing in Ontario to be registered members of the College, and establishes a new Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for RECEs (CECE, 2010). The Education Act amendments refer to the RECEs working
in the FDK classrooms as Designated Early Childhood Educators (DECEs). Although the policy documents and literature sometimes refer to the new professional role of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in FDK classrooms as Designated Early Childhood Educators (DECEs), and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs); this thesis refers to these new professionals as RECEs in order to maintain consistency and recognize this new professional designation in Ontario as registered members of the College of Early Childhood Educators. Exceptions to using this title will utilize the specific language used in law and policy texts when referring to these documents, or when discussing early childhood education (ECE) with respect to training and credentialing.

The recent legal and policy changes in Ontario have had an impact on the professional status and skills of the RECEs. For example, RECEs now have a professional designation through the CECE, and their new role in the FDK classroom includes a shared responsibility and a duty to cooperate (with the certified teacher) to plan and deliver early learning curriculum in the school environment. At the same time, the new professional role of the RECE is ambiguous at best through policy implementation and interpretation, and it is unclear whether corresponding improvements to professional recognition, compensation, and working conditions will be realized in practice on the ground.

Professionalization is a contested term that is used both descriptively to distinguish characteristics that mark a particular profession, or prescriptively as a means of achieving a desired state. According to Hoyle (1982), professionalization has two components which may or may not be connected including improvement of status or what can be viewed as the process of professionalization, and improvement of skill which may be commonly referred to as professional development. He suggests professionalization includes, “the process of making the
criteria for a professional; a body of knowledge, exclusiveness, lengthy training, practitioner autonomy, a code of ethics etc.” and professional development that includes the process by which “practitioners improve their competencies” (Hoyle, 1982, p. 162).

The existing literature on the professionalization of RECEs is limited, particularly in the Canadian context and there is little research on the experiences of RECEs working in integrated staff teams in early learning environments in Ontario. Recent studies focus on the relationship between the early childhood educator and teacher in the integrated staff team (Corter, Janmohamed, & Pelletier, 2012; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Janmohamed & Pelletier, 2010; Tozer, 2013; Vanderlee, Youmans, Peters, & Eastabrook, 2012). However, there is little attention paid to the legal and policy implications of how the professional status and skills of the RECEs are being established in Ontario’s education sector. The implementation of the new FDK program offered a unique opportunity to document and analyze the efforts to professionalize RECEs through the current governance model where RECEs are placed in integrated teaching teams with certified teachers in kindergarten programs across public sector school boards in Ontario.

This thesis explores the construction of the new professional RECE in the FDK Program through legislation, policy, jurisprudence (legal decisions) and practice. For example, the thesis unpacks legislation, regulations and policies such as the Education Act, the Early Childhood Educator Act, the new Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program documents and College Standards and Codes of Ethics of Early Childhood Educators. The thesis reviews legal decisions that have an impact on the current understandings of the RECE role and status in the education sector. For example cases that discuss whether the RECEs qualify for Employment Insurance (EI) based on their new role in FDK are explored. Similarly, this thesis unpacks the ways in
which union contracts construct the new professional status of the RECE in FDK through the language utilized in collective agreements. The thesis also analyzes empirical data from RECEs working in the education sector and is informed by key informants such as teachers, union leaders, ECE training institutions, and policy advocates. In this way, it explores the everyday practices that shape the role and status of the RECE in Ontario, with a view to understanding the policy intent and the actual impact of how these policies have affected the role of the RECEs in FDK.

The new professional RECEs in Ontario’s FDK program are being distinguished by the Ministry of Education from other RECEs in the public education sector because of the distinct role they have in delivering a play-based curriculum in a team teaching model with a kindergarten teacher. Unlike other RECEs in the public education sector whose primary responsibility has been to care for children and assist the teacher in Educational Assistant or support roles, the new RECE professional is presented as an equal partner with the kindergarten teacher. At the same time, the new role of the RECE is being contested, challenged and informed by unionization and regulatory processes, which could either reinforce the systemic biases and gendered stratification of the early childhood workforce or create a more nuanced and equitable view of the role of RECEs.

The early childhood sector in Ontario has, like kindergarten teachers, been characterized as a largely female workforce that has traditionally struggled for better recognition and pay (Senate of Canada, 2009). It is also made up of private sector or independent non-profit and commercial programs that are regulated and funded by the province. The ECE workforce is the ninth largest occupational group made up predominantly of women representing about 98.2 percent of the workforce (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2013). The new RECE
role in FDK provides an opportunity to improve the professional status and recognition of RECEs through improved professional recognition and compensation in the sphere of public education.

This thesis focuses on the professionalization of the RECE in the Ontario context, with a view to understanding the impact of the legal and regulatory framework on professional status as well as the training and everyday practices that contribute to the recognition of the new RECE as a professional in the education sector. Particular emphasis is placed on the gendering of the early childhood sector and the professionalization of the RECE through systemic influences with a view to understanding and effecting possibilities for transformative change at a program and broader policy level. The thesis unpacks system level forces and the extent to which they contribute and impede the professionalization of the RECE in Ontario, by exploring the new professional role and working conditions of the RECEs in FDK. Factors such as education, work experience, compensation, supervision, respect for the role, and access to professional training are explored within the framework of legislation, jurisprudence, policy, and practice to explore the changes to the professional role and understand the contributory changes in working conditions of the RECE in the school environment.

Using a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches such as critical feminist legal theory, organizational systems theory, and discourse analysis, the purpose of this mixed method study was to address the following research question:

1. What impact has legislation, jurisprudence, policy and practice had on the professionalization of RECEs in Ontario’s education sector?
The study further explored the following sub-questions:

2. How does legislation, jurisprudence, policy and practice impact the systemic gendering of early childhood work in the education sector?

3. How is the new professional role of RECEs in Ontario’s education sector being constructed through practice?

4. What factors (professional status issues such as unionization, compensation, certification/regulatory bodies, and professional development such as increased training requirements) affect the new “professional” role of the RECE in Ontario’s education sector?

1.3 The Legal and Policy Context

The literature related to this study can be grouped within four domains. First, literature on the professionalization of RECEs, and similarly situated early education professionals is discussed to help understand the implications for regulating and professionalizing the early childhood sector and the systemic biases and stratification that may exist/persist in the workforce. Second, issues of governance including public policy on early education and child care as well as literature on systems integration in other jurisdictions is reviewed to provide a backdrop to understanding the current trends in policymaking in Ontario. Third, literature on unionization, compensation, and professional training particularly in relation to the early childhood and early education sector is reviewed to provide some context into the issue of professionalization. Fourth, exploring the literature on RECE professional development, program quality and professional practice provides insights into understanding how these micro level factors can impact the professional role of RECEs. If we are to understand professionalization as contributing to (a) status and (b) skills as described by Hoyle (1982), then we can unpack the
literature in these domains with an understanding of their contributory factors as they relate to the status and/or skills of the Early Childhood Educator in Ontario.

The figure below illustrates the relationships between the law and policy changes in Ontario and the organizational forces that impact policy implementation at all levels of the system. For example, the legislation that governs the work of RECEs in Ontario can be found in the Education Act and its recent amendments, the Early Childhood Educator Act which establishes the CECE and professional regulatory standards, as well as the Day Nurseries Act and Child and Family Services Act that governs the work of RECEs employed by third party operators in extended day programs in the child care sector (Figure 1). The recent Child Care and Early Years Act (2014) repeals the Day Nurseries Act and amends the Early Childhood Educator Act and the Education Act.

*Figure 1. Influences of Labour, Education, Child Care and Professional Regulatory Law in Ontario’s Systems Integration.* This figure illustrates the legal landscape within which the professional role of the RECE is being constructed in Ontario.
This professional status of the RECEs in Ontario is also influenced at an organizational systems level through implementation of the legislation and policies. For example, Figure 2 shows the various forces that can impact policy implementation at a macro, meso and micro level, including governments, school boards, unions and individual practitioners on the ground. Understanding policy research within the context of organizational and institutional systems is useful for analyzing the policy process, including policy development, policy implementation and outcomes.

*Figure 2. Systemic Factors: This figure illustrates the system level forces that affect policy implementation.*

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### 1.4 Professionalization of RECEs

The new architecture of Ontario’s integrated early learning program, as envisioned by the Premier’s special advisor, offers a “single program with a single pedagogical and curriculum approach planned and delivered by qualified educators using common space and resources” (Pascal, 2009, p. 18). The foundational aspects of the integrated FDK program in Ontario include the caring, nurturing and play-based curriculum and child development knowledge that the new professional RECE brings to the education sector. It represents the re-engineering of the RECE within the education sector as an equal partner with the kindergarten teacher: as a professional
with early education expertise in the early learning classroom that can offer meaningful expertise in early learning curriculum pedagogy and practice, rather than the historical construction of the RECE within school settings as a classroom assistant and care provider.

Driven by the explicit premise that quality programs are delivered by a diverse, knowledgeable and skilled workforce, Pascal (2009) lays out the policy recommendations for FDK programs for 4 and 5 year olds, comprised of an integrated staff team of a certified teacher and a RECE. He argues, “fundamental to the full day learning program are educators with child development knowledge and skills, and an effective parent engagement strategy” (2009, p. 32). While the report recognized the particular skills of RECEs and the fact that most of the OCTs did not have early childhood training, the team approach was chosen as an efficient way to bring child development skills to the FDK classroom, while avoiding a confrontation with the teacher unions. Pascal’s blueprint for staffing includes full time employment for RECEs through public sector school boards, a unique professional classification for RECEs within school boards, requirements for kindergarten teachers to complete an early childhood Additional Qualification (AQ) course within five years, and preparation and planning time for both educators. Further recommendations on workforce development include training recommendations such as refocusing the ECE diploma and degree programs to establish an early childhood specialty for working with 0-8 year olds, and amalgamation of the College of Teachers with the newly formed College of Early Childhood Educators. Related governance recommendations include the establishment of an Early Learning Division at the Ministry of Education, the development of management tools, and a province wide training plan to support school boards and administrators in the establishment and ongoing operations of the full day learning programs (Pascal, 2009).

Unlike the public education sector, child care is privately operated by largely non-profit
and commercial independent operators. Child care has historically been funded through child welfare agencies and viewed as the transfer of care from the working parent to a care-provider. While child care programs were established largely to provide support for working parents, there has been a growing recognition that children have a right to high quality early education. Recent trends in research and evidence on the science of early child development have shifted the focus to include the critical role that early childhood educators play in shaping learning (Barnett, 2008; Mustard, McCain, & McCuaig 2011; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). For example, McCain and Mustard (1999) highlighted the importance of early interactions between caregivers and children on brain development in the early years. This link between interactions and brain development helps to develop neurological pathways that may affect future health, learning and behaviour. Similarly, Mustard, McCain and McCuaig (2011) and Hertzman and Boyce (2010) have helped shift early learning policy and practice by highlighting the role that epigenetics plays in child development. For example, they have shown that early nurturing and stimulation can modify genetic codes, and influence behavioural responses in adulthood, and indeed by these early experiences, powerfully shape the very structure of the brain through biological embedding. Ginsberg (2007) argues that the role of play in optimal development has been recognized as a fundamental right of a child under the United Nations human rights convention (Article 31) and requires a broader view of early education programming to ensure that children of all socio-economic backgrounds can develop to their full potential. Scholars including Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk and Singer (2008), Saracho and Spodek (1995), Fawcett and Hay (2004) have also illuminated the importance of purposeful play in early education curriculum and pedagogy and the link to early development.

Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk and Singer (2008) attribute the crisis in current preschool education to the lack of attention to playful learning and the false dichotomy between play and
learning. Similarly, Mustard states, “programs should create playful environments, rich with opportunities for exploration which target the whole, active child and not just isolated cognitive skills” (2008, p. 10). Wexler (2004) and Hewitt (2001) have advocated educational approaches that allow children to learn through their own interests and have an active role in their learning through curriculum options and structured play, rather than viewing learning as instruction. For young children from low-income families, participation in high-quality early education programs with highly skilled teachers, small class sizes, high adult to child ratios, and warm positive interactions between staff and children has been demonstrated to enhance children’s cognitive and social development (Centre on the Developing Child, 2007).

These bodies of research have shifted the emphasis in early childhood from traditional notions of care to encompass a broader notion of early learning, with a focus on the full development of the child rather than the simple transfer of care from parents to care providers. It has fostered understanding and rethinking about why early nurturing and care is so closely linked to learning and the broader goal of school success. High quality early learning can establish social goals to create a more skilled and qualified workforce to help society to benefit from the economic returns on its investments in the early years. According to Barnett (2008, p. 90),

Scientists have learned much about the effects of education outside the home in the first five years of life. It is well established that intensive early education can dramatically improve learning and development of children from economically disadvantaged families. These early gains have long-term consequences for school success, employment and earnings, delinquency and crime, family formation, and fertility and health.

Despite these advances, pre-primary “notions of early learning often raise the spectre of toddlers at desks, with a fixed curriculum and tests to measure progress” (Moss 2006, p. 163). Termed as the schoolification of care, this approach of prescribed outcomes contrasts with social pedagogic practice including a broad developmental framework, and participatory curriculum
practices driven by children’s interests within the context of their families and communities (Senate of Canada, 2009, p. 31). In practice, the search continues for the appropriate balance between the pre-primary and social pedagogy traditions in early learning. However, the importance of linking early child development training amongst early educators to child development outcomes is a critical factor that is fundamental to Ontario’s new integrated Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten (Pascal, 2009).

The professionalization of RECEs in Ontario’s education sector follows a wider trend that is sweeping early education reforms across Canada and the world and reflects the broader shifts towards understanding the importance of early development and the critical role that the early childhood professional plays in early learning environments (McCuaig & Akbari, 2014). Because early learning systems integration is a relatively new phenomenon that has taken root over the past decade, the research on the professionalization of the RECE in early education is limited, particularly in the Canadian context (Corter, et al., 2012, 2009; Langford, 2008; Osgood, 2006; Simpson, 2010). For example, Simpson (2010) argues that the introduction of the Early Years Professional EYP) in the UK by the central government does little to improve their status and position in the workforce, because there has not been a significant change in the power dynamics, memberships and values of the communities of practice to which EYPs belong. Simpson identifies the practice of EYPs as central to the construction of their professional role in the Early Years Program in the UK. Simpson highlights the fact that the EYP’s “were attentive to creating possibilities and assumed responsibility to choose, experiment, discuss, reflect and change” (Simpson, 2010, p. 8). He argues that the EYPs continued to embrace and pursue subjective professional projects, and to define and negotiate a course of action as a way of expressing their professional ideas in their role. At the same time Simpson highlights the early years as a site of conflict, suggesting that the actions of the EYPs take place in circumstances
that are potentially enabling and inhibiting in regard to their professional positioning. For example, “across contexts the value placed on EYPs was to have a shaping influence on EYPs role” (Simpson, 2010, p. 8). He suggests that the previous inequalities of condition and opportunity may be perpetuated across the workforce, particularly when EYPs work alongside teachers.

Similarly, Langford (2008) highlights that many ECE program graduates are not willing to stay in the early childhood workforce because it is characterized as economically, socially and politically marginalized. Using a variety of data including interviews with College faculty, and an analysis of student assignments that discuss the role of an RECE and textbooks used in ECE training programs, Langford illustrates the embodiment of a “good early childhood educator” and the other elements that make up the social practice of educating and caring for young children including social relations, material practices and power. She proposes an alternative discourse of criticality that encourages RECEs to look outward as social and politics subjects, and individually or collectively make a difference in their work “on their own terms” that has the potential to affect the RECEs identity, social relations and professional position (Langford, 2008, p. 96). Cumming and Sumsion (2014) uncover the significance of less tangible aspects of RECEs’ professional practice as inclusive of spaces of imperceptibility from which perception and interpretation can flow rather than having an identity grounded in professional status. They suggest that early childhood professionals may not have uniform opportunities for interpretation and expression of their professional practice and highlight the importance of not romanticizing educator practice. Furthermore, they note that these productive and fluid relational aspects of RECE practice may exacerbate educator feelings that their practice is poorly recognized.
Recognition of other professionals within classrooms, schools and the education sector can also be helpful to understanding RECEs’ professional status and recognition, because it highlights how teachers who are perceived to have lower status in the education sector are affected by system factors such as professional training, career choice availability and professional commitment. For example, Bascia and Jacka (2001) argue that while English Second Language (ESL) teachers value the challenges of working with new immigrant students, they face lower social and professional status than regular teachers in the schools. Bascia and Jacka (2001, p. 341) link research on low student status to teacher status or “real school” conditions such as the need for ESL teachers to “continually renegotiate their positions and re-establish their credibility and to be a visible team player when structural conditions marginalize them” as daunting challenges that these teachers must overcome to achieve professional status. They suggest that teacher training requirements, early career choices, and the daily practices of ESL teachers have important consequences for teacher efficacy, career commitment and the quality of ESL programs. For example, factors such as the changing job market with the availability of only ESL teaching jobs, standardized testing and increased pressure to integrate their work and support regular teachers in classrooms potentially affect the professional status of the ESL teachers in schools.

### 1.5 Governance and Systems Integration

#### 1.5.1 The History of Public Education and Child Care Policy

In 1844, the Schools Act of Upper Canada (now Ontario) became law and established public education as a universal right. Ontario’s historical recognition of universal public education represents “a democratic ideal as the place where everyone, regardless of background,
gets his or her start in life” (Mackenzie, 2010, p. 63). Access to primary education in Ontario begins at age 6. Ontario’s new FDK program offers children as young as 4 years of age universal access to enter the education system, although attending FDK is not yet a legislated requirement for 4- and 5- year olds (Education Act, 2010). With the implementation of FDK about 184,000 or 75% of all 4- and 5- year olds had access to full day early learning programs by September 2013 (Ministry of Education, 2013). Fully implemented, the program now serves about 260,000 children in the province (Ministry of Education, 2014).

While primary education has been a universal right since 1844, explicit support for early childhood care was introduced during the Second World War to support the need for increasing numbers of women moving into wartime industries. Support for child care has largely been through the provision of tax incentives and subsidies to support low income and single parent households (Senate of Canada, 2009). The Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services was created in 2003 to bring together programs for children and youth from across several ministries. Included were child welfare, children’s mental health, and other intervention services, and included the provision of licensed child care services through private or independently operated commercial, non-profit or municipal centres across Ontario.

Implementing a universally accessible publicly funded early education system shifts the provision of early care and learning into the public education sector. Moving child care from its welfare associations into the education sector ostensibly creates better wages and working conditions for the early childhood educator and elevates their professional role within the education sector in these new RECE positions. It is important to note that the implementation of FDK for 4- and 5- year olds in Ontario was intended as a first step towards implementing a more comprehensive early learning system for children from 0-8 years, as recommended by the
Premier’s advisor (Pascal, 2009). In support of this fundamental shift, the Ontario Ministry of Education established a new Early Learning Division (ELD) with an early learning mandate that includes child care, family support, and early education. More recently the ELD has taken over legislative responsibility for licensed home and group child care, the management of family support services and funding relationships with municipal service systems.

1.5.2 Early Learning Legislation and Policy in Ontario

In Ontario, the introduction of Bill 242 in 2010 amended the Education Act (2000) to requires schools and school boards to operate the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten program for 4 and 5 year olds, signaling an important shift in the legislative history of care and education in Canada. The new Education Act amendment spells out the shared responsibilities of the teacher and RECE and a “duty to coordinate and cooperate” (Education Act, 2010, s. 264.1) and coordinate in the planning and delivery of the Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten program; the assessment and observation of children; communicating with families; and maintaining a healthy social, emotional and learning environment. The amendment to the Education Act also requires the teachers and ECEs to be members of their respective colleges, including the newly formed College of Early Childhood Educators, established by statute in 2007 (ECE Act, 2007).

The introduction of the teaching team in Ontario brings together two professionals with diverse qualifications and skills. RECEs are required to complete a two-year diploma in early childhood development that includes emergent or child-led programming, play-based curriculum and principles of early brain development. Teachers complete a Bachelor of Education program with a focus on curriculum planning, and assessment. The two professionals are expected to bring their unique skills and training in a collaborative and complementary way as equal partners to the new FDK program. Collaborative teaching is described as a distribution of responsibility
for planning, instruction and assessment (Friend & Cook, 2010) and includes collaborative structures such as a supportive environment, leadership and professional efficacy (Press, Sumson & Wong, 2010). Gibson and Pelletier (2010) identify the challenges that the new team teaching model in Ontario may pose, including sharing classroom resources and space, as well as defining the RECE and teachers’ own professional turf and professional identity. For example, Janmohamed, Pelletier & Corter (2011) highlight the differences in the collaborative structure between the teacher and RECEs and how the teacher may dominate the relationship between the two educators because they are perceived to have more power in the relationship based on their training, salary, working conditions, and professional status.

While the policy changes introducing the team teaching model are critical in moving towards the professional recognition of RECEs in the education sector, they also reflect the strong lobbying efforts of the teacher unions to ensure that the FDK program had a full-time teacher as part of the integrated staff team. For example, all of the Education Act amendments proposed by the teacher unions were accepted by the government and integrated into the legislative changes. As a result, the Education Act amendments note that, “nothing in the duty to cooperate limits the duties of teachers under the Education Act, including duties related to report cards, instruction, training and evaluation of the progress of pupils in kindergarten classes, and the preparation of teaching plans” (Grieve, 2010, p. 5). These explicit directives ensuring teacher responsibilities serve to contradict the team teaching model and the requirements of RECEs to plan and deliver curriculum, assess and observe children and maintain a healthy social emotional learning environment as equal partners in the team teaching model (Education Act, RSO 1990; Bill 242, Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010).
The ongoing challenge for the newly created professional in school settings will be to gain the professional recognition that the RECE deserves in the early learning classroom, despite the systemic inequalities in wages, working conditions, training and professional recognition. Inter-professional practice requires both the RECE and the teacher to “look beyond the boundaries of one’s own discipline, recognize common values, appreciate different practices based on discipline specific knowledge and skills and negotiate differences in priorities (Press, Sumasion, & Wong, 2010). At the same time, parity in the educator roles must be established at all levels including the administration and implementation of the policy to ensure the policy intent in the law and policy documents of creating a professional co-teaching role for RECEs in the education sector can be realized.

1.5.3 Integrated Staff Teams: Lessons, Observations and Recommendations for Improved Policy and Practice

In Starting Strong II, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted progress in early learning across countries including a growing trend towards integrating early childhood policy and administration under one ministry, often education (OECD, 2006). The OECD also identified the need for greater contact between early childhood and schools, and an understanding of the need for qualified staff able to respond to changing social and family conditions (OECD, 2012). The Early Childhood Education Report (2014) further outlines the Canadian trend toward moving early childhood programs to education with eight out of ten provinces/territories integrating the two systems, including the province of Ontario (McCuaig & Akbari, 2014). In a study of European models, Haddad (2002) found that integration between care and education is directly associated with the assumptions about the responsibility for care and the socialization of children. A more comprehensive approach is
utilized when caring for young children is viewed as a public responsibility rather than when underlying societal assumptions placed this responsibility in the private sphere of women’s work within the family.

The OECD (2004) evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Care services viewed Canada’s child care programs negatively, describing services as a “patchwork of uneconomic, fragmented services, within which a small child care sector is seen as a labour market support, often without a focused child development and education role” (p. 6). The disadvantages arising from the rift between early education and child care have also been outlined as creating “policy and service delivery confusion with different staff training levels and much poorer qualification levels and working conditions required of child care staff” (Senate of Canada, 2009, p. 14). Furthermore, the division between care and education results in young children moving back and forth between both systems at different times during the day, which is often disruptive for children and inconvenient for parents (Colley, 2006). However, the more recent reporting of the OECD (2012) indicates a positive shift toward more investment in the early years, primarily by provincial governments fuelled by research evidence that illustrates the positive outcomes, further highlighting the low level effort on the part of the federal government in Canada.

The Toronto First Duty program, a model of early education service integration where preschool, child care, parenting and kindergarten programs operate under one umbrella has gained much attention locally, nationally and internationally. Corter, Janmohamed and Pelletier, (2012) point to the integration model as a positive and effective learning environment for young children. Their research highlights the capacity of professionals from education and early childhood to work collaboratively and to build on the strengths of each other, while recognizing the importance of reciprocal mentoring and a professional respect. However, a key finding of
the Toronto First Duty (2009) evaluation is, that as a result of the difference between funding structures, professional training and uneven distribution of planning time, there is a need for system wide structural change to ensure effective integration, rather than an expectation of best practice amongst educators.

In an Australian study of systems integration Press, Sumsion and Wong (2010) found that there were many factors that worked against early learning program integration, including inequitable working conditions such as disparate pay and leave concessions, the relatively low status of early childhood education and care professionals, the existence of real or perceived professional hierarchies, and the absence of ECEC professionals at government decision making levels. Similarly, the OECD (2010) reviews found a number of common weaknesses in staff integration including low recruitment and pay levels, particularly in child care services; lack of certification in specialist early childhood pedagogy; excessive feminization of staff; and lack of diversity of staff to reflect neighbourhood diversity. While Ontario’s integrated early learning system promises to be an exemplar of early learning service integration, early observations on staff integration and implementation provides cause for further study on the professional identity and inter-professional respect within the teaching team, as indicated by Gibson and Pelletier (2010).

1.5.4 Governance

The OECD (2012) report suggests that to shape a universal early childhood education and care program, it is necessary to have expert administrators plan and implement an integrated efficient system. Detailed strategizing and planning are necessary to expand a large system at all levels. Without experienced managers with a strong early childhood professional background, policy-making may lack contact with practitioners that is necessary for relevant policy
formation, integrated curriculum and successful implementation. At the same time Corter, Janmohamed, & Pelletier (2012) suggest that local levels of government and management are necessary for effective policy implementation to occur, highlighting the role that municipalities, regional governing bodies, schools boards, local service delivery organizations, and the community can play in policy implementation.

New Zealand, Cuba and Sweden have highly integrated models of early childhood education and care services, with a single department responsible for education and child care, a common curriculum, equal funding structures and equivalent staff qualification for both early learning (child care) and schools. For example, in Sweden the Pre-School Act was amended so that both child care and pre-school (education) classes were referred to as “preschool” to reflect the integration of the two types of services (Senate of Canada, 2009). The OECD (2012) refers to Sweden as an example where officials from the Social Affairs Ministry, charged with early childhood planning were transferred to the Ministry of Education to develop policy and implement the integrated program.

Similarly, establishing an Early Learning Division (ELD) within the Ministry of Education in Ontario is a first step, but only a beginning towards establishing a vibrant early learning program. It is important to note that not all countries have endorsed integration; particularly Germany, which maintains a federated system of funding, and France, where integration has resulted in uneven service provision and a lack of common Standards of Practice that have become the hallmark of integration (OECD, 2006). The ELD needs to demonstrate its capacity to develop relevant early learning policies and be able to provide appropriate training for early learning staff teams with supports for administrators to successfully implement the new early learning program.
While the ELD has provided some training to integrated staff teams on their new role and curriculum, access to this training has been limited. Many RECEs have not been able to attend the sessions and are frustrated by the inability to access adequate training on their new professional role within the FDK program (Ciccone, 2010; Janmohamed, McCuaig, Akbari, Gananathan, & Jenkins 2014; Vanderlee, 2005). Aside from access to training and professional learning, fuller policies are required including funding and structural shifts that ensure early childhood educators are professionally recognized, compensated fairly and not undermined through a second class category of employment in school boards.

The completion of FDK programs raises questions about the outcome of the remaining recommendations of the special advisor with respect to staffing. Implementing the full early learning system recommendations remains critical to building a viable integrated staff team with job stability and the ability to access improved professional recognition, compensation, training and regulation within the education sector. For example, the Ontario government’s decision to allow school boards contract out the delivery of extended day programs through third party organizations compounds the fragmentation of the early years services in Ontario (Atkinson Centre, 2010). The unfortunate victims of this band-aid solution are the children, families and RECEs who are “reduced to seasonal workers, switching between EI and part time work in either kindergarten or child care, undermining quality in both” (Atkinson Centre, 2010).
1.6 Unionization, Compensation, Professional Training and Recognition

1.6.1 Unionization

The labour movement has had a strong influence on the early education and child care sector with a view to professional recognition, enhancing women’s equality, improving work-life balance and defending public infrastructure (Doherty, 2002; Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 2008; Young, 2010). Labour has consistently advocated for the overall regulation of the child care sector, believing that regulation is important to fostering professionalism (Young, 2010). In *Unionization and Quality*, Doherty (2002) states that unionized centres pay 8.3% higher wages than non-unionized centres for child care teachers. More recent studies (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2013) show that the median hourly wage for unionized staff is $20.11 compared to 15.50 for non-unionized staff, although unionization in the sector remains low at about 21.5% (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2013). These unionized jobs tend to provide better working conditions, such as paid preparation time and pay for meetings held after hours, and important benefits such as disability insurance, employee top-up of Employment Insurance (EI) parental leave benefits and pensions. Wages and benefits for teaching staff are substantially better in unionized centers. Research indicates that higher wages and better benefits reduce staff turnover rates and increase the likelihood of high quality child care (Doherty, 2002). In unionized centres, wages are higher even after accounting for other factors known to influence wage level such as the individual’s position and length of education. A higher proportion of unionized centres provide their staff with benefits that provide a measure of longer-term security such as disability insurance, extended health care, and life insurance. A
higher proportion provide benefits that improve daily working conditions such as paid preparation time, compensation for meetings held after hours, and a room set aside for staff only. Retirement income becomes more important to child care workers as they age, and unions have made some significant recent inroads in this area. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), for example, is developing a multi-sector pension plan for negotiation by small workplaces such as child care centres. Québec unions representing child care workers recently negotiated a pension plan for all centre-based employees.

Similarly, the Doherty (2002) study exposed that unionized early childhood educators have more access to in-service training and off-site professional development. They are also more likely to have collective agreement provisions for the payment of registration fees, paid release time and replacements to enable them to attend professional development sessions (Doherty, 2002; Young, 2010). It is not surprising, then, that the Unionization and Quality study also found that: there are lower ECE turnover rates in unionized centres, and more unionized providers expect to be working in child care in three years; centre directors have an easier time recruiting and retaining staff; unionized centres act in ways and have characteristics that support high quality programs, and have higher ratings on program quality than non-unionized centres. A significantly higher proportion of unionized centres act in ways that predict or are associated with higher levels of quality. In comparison with non-unionized centres, unionized centres hire a lower proportion of untrained teaching staff and a higher proportion of staff with two years or more of education, pay higher salaries, are more likely to provide in-service education, expect workers to be responsible for a slightly lower number of children, and more often act as field training sites for ECE students (Doherty 2002).

Despite these findings, only an estimated 21.5% of child care sector staff members in
Canada are unionized as discussed above, in comparison to 86% of teachers working in the education sector across Canada (ETFO, 2008). It would appear that the representation of unionized teachers in Ontario is greater, based on the teacher’s legislated membership in a teachers’ union. The new RECE positions are predominantly unionized and their first collective agreements set a new precedent for other RECEs in Ontario, potentially increasing the number of unionized RECEs in this province. RECEs in Ontario’s FDK programs are predominantly represented by the three major unions in the education sector; namely the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), and Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF). Many of the provisions related to RECEs in these collective agreements establish contract legacies that will be difficult to change once included in these first agreements.

There is ample evidence from other occupations in Canada that unionization is associated with substantially higher wages and better benefits for women as well as decreased wage inequity between men and women, suggesting that unionization will aid in pay equity for early childhood professionals in the integrated programs (Doherty, 2002). The findings reported in this thesis indicate that unionized teaching staff perceive a greater ability to influence decisions that directly affect their daily work. This is particularly true in the education sector where school board employers are accustomed to collective bargaining and working with unions to negotiate staff issues.

In 2005, the Integration Network Project delivered a manifesto for the reform and integration of education and care programs in Ontario (Colley, 2005). Their vision of the integrated workplace called for the reform of training and education of all staff working with children aged 0-6 years, and included sustained public investment in early learning and care,
which led to “narrowing the gap in training and pay differentials between professions because they became members of the same unions which negotiated salary scales based on experience, qualifications and specific work responsibilities” (Integration Network Project, 2005, p. 7).

Despite this visioning, Ontario’s rollout of the FDK program has one significant weakness in its design of the integrated staff team. While all elementary teachers in Ontario are legislated to belong to a professional teachers' union under the Education Act (2000, s.277.4), the new professional RECE is not similarly equipped to belong to a teachers’ union and receive professional recognition as an early education professional. For example, as a result of a 1943 poll showing 93% support for mandatory union membership and a strong lobby by the teacher federations, the Teaching Profession Act was passed in Ontario in April 1944. The Act gave statutory rights of representation to the federations as professional organizations who would raise Standards of Practice, enforce a code of ethics and establish rights to bargain collectively with school boards (ETFO, 2008). Since then, all elementary teachers in Ontario must belong to either the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (public), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (Catholic) or the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-Ontariens (French). Despite the re-engineering of the RECE as a new professional with curriculum planning and program delivery responsibilities within the education sector through the Education Act amendments, the failure to include mandatory union membership for the new RECE in the Education Act amendment has potentially left the RECE without similar protection. As a result, RECEs in the FDK programs belong to several unions representing professionals and paraprofessionals in education, undermining their capacity to negotiate a stronger collective agreement.
Unfortunately, many were not provided a choice because of the philosophical differences in how the new RECE is viewed by the different unions in the education sector. An examination of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE, 2010) and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF, 2010) websites show that they have historically represented RECEs in the education sectors, most of whom have occupied roles as educational assistants, child-minders and child care workers within their collective agreements. These positions in the school setting had none of the curriculum and pedagogical responsibilities that the new RECE is charged with in the FDK programs. Nonetheless, these unions have been able to negotiate voluntary recognition agreements with school boards to include the new professional RECE in these existing collective agreements, along with other non-teaching staff in the education sector. These three unions represent a majority of the new RECEs in the FDK programs, which could potentially lead to role confusion.

For example, there is an ongoing lack of professional recognition because of internal hiring and bumping from the previous ECE categories into the new RECE role in FDK programs. These former ECE categories of work come with established subordinate relationships in the school setting, which could impact the new relationships required within the FDK teaching team. Compensation and benefits provided to the RECEs in some of these collective agreements are coordinated with non-teaching ECE categories, as is access to training and professional development (particularly in areas such as early learning curriculum and assessment) in which non-teacher or non-elementary unions may not have as much expertise. Taken together this lack of expertise will likely have some lasting impacts on the new professional role and status of the RECE in FDK programs.
Because of the lack of clarity about the role of the new RECE position, some school boards chose to post the new position externally, which led to several grievances and legal disputes with existing unions that have left some new RECEs without union representation at all. Teacher unions were required to amend their constitution in order to be able to recruit RECEs as members and only the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) was able to gain the support of its existing membership to make this change. The constitutional amendments were not passed by the Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) however, OECTA agreed to allow ETFO to recruit RECEs working in Catholic school boards.

As a result, ETFO mounted an aggressive campaign to organize the new RECEs in the FDK program and have successfully received certification from the Ontario Labour Relations Board to represent RECEs in at least ten school boards (both public and Catholic) through the certification vote process in Ontario, allowing the RECEs more options to choose their representative. While the advantages of belonging to the same union as their teaching counterparts and having access to similar professional development opportunities, and professional recognition as early educators makes sense to most RECEs, it is yet unclear how these RECEs will fare in comparison to their colleagues who are represented by non-teacher unions. In the absence of unifying legislation that elevates the new professional RECEs’ professional representation to that of teachers, unions must come together to share strategies and lobby to improve the conditions of the RECE. This may be difficult to achieve given that the unions have been set up to compete against each other to win representation rights for RECEs.

1.6.2 Compensation

similarly demonstrated that higher wages in child care centres are associated with higher quality in early child development programs. Currently, education qualifications determine the pay scales for the RECE who has a two-year diploma and the teacher with minimum of a four-year degree (Speir, 2010). However, over time, the requirements for the new RECE role in FDK may alter necessary qualifications, as has been the experience in Sweden, France, Finland and Italy where all educators are required to have a graduate degree to work with 3-6 year old children (OECD, 2012).

The Senate of Canada (2009) identifies that despite much higher levels of requirements for staff in centre-based child care and the recognition of the need for qualified staff, a snapshot from across the provinces identified that “no jurisdiction requires all child care staff to have postsecondary ECE training” and that “required training in centre-based care ranged from none to a diploma requiring one to three years of education”. The OECD (2004) notes that kindergarten teachers did not generally receive specific enough training to work with this age group of children, even though they are required to complete a university degree and receive general practical training in the delivery of curriculum. Obtaining a university degree tends to hide the fact that the degree in question may not carry a significant module of early childhood theory or training. The OECD (2004, p. 68) identified that “it is problematic to have teachers working in kindergarten that have not been trained for the role – even if they receive a top up or in-service training course – particularly if that role is likely to expand downwards to junior kindergarten, as already in several provinces”.

For example, teachers in Ontario may have a general arts or science undergraduate degree in an unrelated field, and are able to complete a one year teacher education program primarily focused on curriculum and assessment in order to obtain their Bachelor of Education and
teaching credentials. Regulations related to the Ontario College of Teachers’ Act were amended in 2014 to enhance teacher certification requirements effective August 2015. However, there is still no child-development specific training required for elementary teachers. While the Ontario’s teacher education programs will expand to two-year programs, the emphasis is on greater practice teaching time, student mental health and equity issues (Ontario College of Teachers, 2015).

Early childhood educators in Canada are among the lowest paid, earning about one half of the national average for all jobs (CUPE, 2007). The early childhood workforce in Canada is 98.2% female (CCHRSC, 2013) and they overwhelmingly feel that they aren’t valued or respected for the work they do, despite their higher education in comparison to the overall working population. The Senate of Canada (2009, p. 104) identified that “the differential in compensation was a persistent stumbling block in recruitment and retention within the workforce citing that child care salaries are no where near teachers’ salaries”.

Statistics Canada data (2006) confirms that the average wages of ECEs are $18,157, a dismal 40% of the average wages of elementary and kindergarten teachers at $44,636. Despite the shift of RECEs into the education sector and the purported increase in their salaries, there has not been much change in the salary differential between teachers and RECEs. McCuaig and Akbari (2014) report that the RECEs in Ontario earn approximately $38,979 annually representing 44% of the salaries of their teaching counterparts who earn $87,780 annually. In the new FDK program, the “designated” professional RECE working in a school board has a minimum salary of $19.48 per hour, but is being employed largely on ten-month contracts and is being paid an average of 30 hours per week (Ciccone, 2010). This translates to an annual wage of about $23,604/year, which is about 52% of a teacher’s annual salary, still leaving a substantial
wage gap between the early education professionals in the integrated staff team. Factoring in the hours that the RECE is volunteering towards preparation time in order to meet the new professional expectations of their role, results in a much lower hourly wage than is currently paid to the RECE. According to Ciccone (2010), RECEs were volunteering an average of an hour per day of unpaid time towards preparation and supervision of children during their breaks or after school in the initial stages of implementation. In comparison, their teacher partners were provided 240 minutes of paid planning time each week. This differential will continue to pose challenges to a team teaching model when one member of the team has limited rights but similar responsibilities.

It is interesting to note that during the 1991 Census in Canada, Early Childhood Educators were included in the child care and home support workers subgroup of sales and service occupations, along with babysitters and nannies. However, the 2001 and 2006 surveys by Census Canada reclassified the Early Childhood Educator with elementary and kindergarten teachers under occupations in social science, education, government service and religion (Census Canada, 2006; National Occupation Classifications). It remains to be seen if this shift in classification will translate into improved compensation and benefits for the new RECE positions in FDK programs and an improved recognition for their professional status in early education.

Colley (2005, p. 29) recommended that a “comprehensive review of training requirements would be a good starting point to begin the important work of improving training for all professionals working in early childhood education and care to ensure that a significant portion of basic training is specific to the early childhood field and to the understanding and delivery of early childhood programs”. It would appear that a review of compensation that includes preparation time, hours of work and other factors with respect to the newly designed role of the
RECE is also warranted at this time, to ensure that the new RECE in FDK programs is compensated adequately in their new professional role.

1.6.3 Professional Training and Recognition

In 2007, the provincial government announced the establishment of a regulatory College of Early Childhood Educators that would undertake the role of maintaining professional Standards of Practice amongst early childhood education practitioners (Early Childhood Educator Act, 2007). Its mandate included setting Standards of Practice and ethics that demonstrate respect for diversity and sensitivity to multiculturalism, establishing requirements for professional qualifications, the creation of a public complaints process, and providing supports for RECEs to upgrade their qualifications to a diploma through grants for tuition and associated costs (College of ECE, 2010). The federal government also provided funding for improved access to training for supervisors and directors (Standing Senate Committee, 2009).

Although there is a national desire to ensure that all educators have some minimal formal training in early development, Perlman and Fletcher (2008) suggests that research on the link between better child outcomes and additional training and qualifications has reported conflicting findings. For example, Early and her colleagues (2006) report that the level of teacher education, training, and credentialing are not consistently related to classroom quality or other academic gains for children. In contrast, in Norway, an OECD country that is well known for innovative early child development programs, integrated staff teams working with 0-7 year old children have a specialized graduate degree in early learning.

The OECD Canada Report (2004) suggests that there is a societal shift away from traditional notions of child care to more developmental goals for children coupled with the emergence of a new professional ECEC profile that is trained to work with both young children
and families. New professional profiles in other countries such as Sweden, New Zealand and Norway have resulted in higher recruitment and training levels, better pay and conditions for staff, which in turn leads to improved outcomes for children. Similar innovations are being implemented in Prince Edward Island, Canada where the province has increased training requirements and supports for early childhood educators to complete 20 additional courses at a university level and for kindergarten teachers to complete a Bachelor of Education degree and to take courses specific to early childhood education (Mella, 2009). PEI has also launched a series of integrated early years centres, blending family support, special needs and licensed child care, moving early childhood toward a more comprehensive model (Flanagan, 2010). With a move toward linking with the school system, there is a stronger awareness of the important role RECEs play in early education.

Ontario’s new RECE role in FDK programs similarly sets up the early education professional to function within an integrated team comprised of a teacher and RECE in the education system. However it is not clear how these roles will be shaped over time. For example, some of the key questions raised in the OECD countries include whether there is a core professional in integrated staff teams, what the balance between professional and assistant would be, what level and type of education these professionals will have, who will pay for their training and improvements to the workforce (OECD, 2004). It is clear that it is critical to acknowledge both teaching roles in the FDK program, although the training is different, the learning of both professionals is acquired differently and that there may be pedagogical differences in how the learning is executed. For boards and schools that have not had early childhood educators as members of their staff, principals and vice principals need to ensure that the stage is set at the school level, to welcome these new educators. For principals in schools where early childhood educators have already been part of the staffing team, discussions about how the role is changing
with this new vision of early learning will be important (Speir, 2010).

1.7 Professional Development, Quality and Professional Practice

Full service integration requires a re-design of the pre-service training for educators and an infusion of inter-professional practices and expertise combined with action at numerous levels including government policy, governance, leadership, organizational culture and ethos, and frontline professional practice and teamwork (Press, Sumson & Wong, 2010). Inter-professional practice requires the ability to articulate one’s own discipline-specific knowledge and skills, while being able to look beyond its boundaries to appreciate different practices and negotiate differences in priorities. Staff teams in integrated early learning environments are going to be required to deal sensitively, respond appropriately to children with special needs, and provide individualized support to every child in moments of vulnerability or stress.

Despite what we know about the benefits of staff collaboration, one of the most pressing challenges identified for integrated staff teams is the need for shared time to meet, with opportunities to communicate and build a team (e.g., Corter et al, 2012). The Toronto First Duty model demonstrated that such coordination of preparation time is “not only sensible, but also deepens professional collaboration through joint curriculum planning (Janmohamed & Pelletier, 2010, p. 20). In addition to joint professional planning time, other key issues including ratios and professional development training need to be addressed, in order to ensure effective staff integration. The Toronto District School Board recommends coordination of teacher preparation times with those of the child care staff based on the Best Start staff integration model. However, shared planning time remains an ongoing challenge in the implementation of the full day early learning kindergarten component.
Staff-to-child ratios have been identified as an important consideration in the quality of early learning programs and the working conditions that support healthy staff to child interactions (OECD, 2004). The child care sector has historically established a range of ratios based on the age group of the children, with kindergarten-aged children having a ratio of 1:12 with a maximum of 24 children in the classroom (Day Nurseries Act, 2010). In Ontario, the ratios between educator and child have changed from 1:12 for centre-based care at age five (Senate of Canada, 2009). The new Child Care and Early Years Act (2014) replaces the Day Nurseries Act but retains the same ratios in preschool programs. However, the average ratio in the new full day early learning kindergarten classroom in Ontario is 2:26. Because the ratio is stated as an average, the numbers in class sizes across the province vary and can be as high as to 2:32 depending on school demographics and is left up to the principal to manage. While Pascal (2009) suggests that the effectiveness of educators depends on elements such as group size, adult-child ratios and supportive working conditions, he leaves the door open to school boards to exercise discretion in this respect based on student numbers and regarding combined or separate environments for 4 and 5 year olds.

We don’t have to look very far to identify some of the issues that will aid in successful integration and professional recognition. Joint professional learning opportunities can support reciprocal learning, and has been proven to change staff perceptions about the benefits of working in an integrated team (Janmohamed & Pelletier, 2010). Collaboration amongst staff is a foundational concept in the Reggio Emilia approach that is fostered within a belief system that “a group has a greater intelligence than an individual” (Speir, S. 2010, p. 24). According to Speir, this theme of collaboration and reciprocity is mirrored in the structure of classrooms containing two teachers who work together with the same group of 26 children.
The sharing of different perspectives brings new ideas and interesting approaches, as it evidenced by the documentation and interpretation that these differently trained educators produce and render through discussion in the team teaching environment. Opportunities for both educators to collaborate and coordinate their professional skills and expertise are critical to the successful implementation of the FDK program and the establishment of the new professional role for RECE in Ontario’s education sector.
Chapter 2

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

My work was informed by critical feminist legal theoretical approaches and policy research perspectives, that enabled me to understand and unpack the social structures and power relations that permeate and locate the work of early childhood educators in Ontario. I attempt to capture the everyday lived experiences of RECEs as new professionals in the education sector through surveys and interviews that explored the working conditions and professional role in the FDK environment. My study included key informant interviews with early education policy leaders to provide the context within which these everyday experiences evolved and allowed for a deeper understanding of the institutional and political frameworks that promulgated these experiences. My methodology includes content and text analysis as a way to understand language in legal and policy documents, as well as the underlying discourses that situate the RECE’s professional status in the education sector using a broader policy research context. Using feminist legal policy research approaches and text analysis, I was able to unpack the discourses of what constitutes a professional early childhood educator in the law and policy texts, and through semi-structured interviews with early childhood educators, that capture the essence of human experience about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2010). My work also included quantitative analysis of survey data from the RECEs collected throughout the study in a concurrent transformative mixed method design, that looks at the gendered reproduction of early childhood work through the working conditions of RECEs in FDK programs.
2.1.1 Feminist Legal Perspectives

As a lawyer and feminist researcher, I was drawn to integrated perspectives in my analysis to understand the systemic influences of gender and the power in the legal construction of the new RECE professional in Ontario. I utilized a critical feminist legal framework (Boyd & Sheehy, 1986; Fudge, 1993; Fudge & Vosko, 2001; hooks, 2000; Osgood, 2006), to unpack and explain the social and legal construction of the professional status and work of early childhood educators in the education sector and to build new understandings of the impact of professionalization of early childhood work. Critical legal research views law as a tool to understanding and overturning institutional hierarchies (Kennedy, 1997). In this way, I advance a broader understanding of the social and political systems within which the RECE professional is being constructed in policy using policy research and analysis approaches including organizational (Datnow & Park, 2009; Darling-Hamming, 1997; Smith & O’Day, 1990) and ecological systems perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).

Feminist researchers view gender as a basic organizing principle, which profoundly shapes and mediates the conditions of our lives (Lather, 1991). Critical feminist legal analysis has been explained as a process that examines and critiques the law by analyzing the relationship between gender, sexuality, power, individual rights and the judicial/governance system as a whole. Critical feminist analysis poses gender as a fundamental category in which meaning and value are assigned and as a way of organizing human social relations in the lived experiences of women (Harding, 1986). In this way, feminist researchers do extensive work to expose the explicit and gender-neutral practices in organizational processes that advantage men and disadvantage women, and in practices that are patterned in terms of stereotypical male and female roles (Acker, 1992). Embedded in this feminist perspective is the premise that inherent
gender biases in traditional research require a critical stance towards the methodological approaches utilized in this study (O’Leary, 2010).

Early childhood work has traditionally been viewed as an extension of the care work primarily undertaken by women in the family (Cameron, Moss, & Owen, 1999; Fudge & Owens, 2006; Mirchandani, 1999). More formal child care programs were established during World War II because of the need for women to enter war industries while the men were away at war. This historical construction of child care as a gendered workforce persists to this day, despite new research on the importance of early learning on child development outcomes. For example, the early childhood workforce continues to be a female dominated sector, with Statistics Canada reporting that 97% of early childhood educators and early childhood assistants are female (Statistics Canada, 2011). Statistics Canada also reports that the early childhood education workforce is accessible to new immigrants because of the relative ease of getting accreditation for prior learning in other countries. Only 51% of the workforce works in full time salaried positions, and the average annual employment income of the early childhood workforce is only 44% of the national average (Statistics Canada, 2011). These factors point to the relatively low status and precarious nature of child care sector work and the systemic challenges that RECEs face in gaining better professional recognition for their skills and expertise.

In exploring the gendered reproductions of RECE’s work, I was able to challenge dominant notions of the early childhood educator that perpetuate the dichotomy between care and education in the FDK program using a critical legal feminist lens. My study offers perspectives on how to embed a feminist paradigm to include a broader re-conceptualizing of the new early childhood educator as a professional with child development skills and responsibilities that must be recognized within the elementary education system in Ontario at a micro, meso and
macro level (Creswell, 2010). The macro level of policy represents the larger policy making bodies such as governments and institutions that are involved in developing policy at a provincial level. The meso level policy factors include organizations and institutions involved in shaping policy through implementation at a local board or community level. Micro level policy factors are affected by the everyday practices of RECEs in individual classrooms and schools.

My choice of a theoretical framework includes an explicit realization that the theorists I have described have themselves engaged with several other theorists and bodies of work to create new knowledge. In this way, my approach explores a critical feminist standpoint and policy research theories to explain the historical construction of the early childhood workforce and the gendering of early childhood and early education work.

2.1.2 Policy Research

The recognition of the RECE’s professional role in the education sector or lack thereof, and the resulting implications for RECEs’ professional practice in the classroom can be understood in different ways based on the perspectives that we utilize to understand the policy process. Bascia (2011, personal communication) suggests, “When policies get stuck, it is because we haven’t thought of a way of problematizing systems, organizations and the people who influence them”. She cautions that it is important to be aware of the inherent assumptions about systems and organizations in policies, and the dynamic forces that are at play at the legislative, labour contract and practice levels that affect policy outcomes.

Darling-Hammond (1997) views schools as bureaucracies and argues that top down decision-making retards change. She suggests that policies become “hyperrational” when legislators prescribe methods that cannot achieve the desired ends, which causes organizations to become inflexible, undermine the development of professional standards that could better guide
practice, and impair organizational problem solving (p. 64). Her policy research perspectives on the historical creation of educational bureaucracies to control schools and classroom practices situate the arena of decision-making at the top tier of educational policymaking, with governments, policymakers and bureaucratic administrative leaders as the technical rational decision-makers who controlled educational outcomes through centralized decision-making, special offices and staff roles, as well as rules governing production. At the same time, she advances a perspective where “professional teachers should be allowed to focus on doing the right things, rather than doing things right” suggesting a more targeted approach to policy implementation. She argues “effective teaching requires flexibility, a wide repertoire of strategies, and use of judgment in complex, non-routine situations where multiple goals are being pursued.” Her policy research perspectives on effective organizational change include teachers and practitioners as critical policy actors in shaping educational outcomes at the school or classroom level of implementation (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 38-66).

In undertaking policy research and analysis, one arena of policymaking can be understood to be at the bureaucratic provincial government level with policy actors such as the Ministry of Education and the newly formed Early Learning Division within the Ministry, as well as school board trustees and administrators as critical players to the policy outcomes related to the professional status of RECEs in FDK classrooms. From this perspective, the failure of the policy is placed on the implementation stage, because it treats the policy design and implementation stages as separate and distinct. Similarly the lack of professional recognition of the RECE is often defined in terms of the lack of motivation and capacity at the implementation level, and the policy solutions that have resulted are focused on presenting clearer instructions and stronger incentives. For example, more training is offered to educators, and memorandums issued by the Early Learning Division on collaborative practice and respect for the new RECE role in the FDK
classroom have become more common. The separation of policy implementation and design perspectives can be useful to analyze the current approaches being utilized by the educational bureaucracy in Ontario, to understand the new role of RECEs in education sector. It would appear that the program design and implementation reinforces a universal approach, without consideration for the way individual schools and educators interpret and shape the policy outcomes within the systems they operate within. This perspective is also useful to understand the mechanisms that are historically used to drive large system change in education and provides a useful analogy to the early learning systems changes that are being carried out in Ontario’s FDK programs, affecting the professional status of RECEs.

An alternative view of policy advanced by Smith and O’Day (1990) identifies the need for dual system reform in order to affect lasting change and suggests that structure and regulations are both absolutely necessary to create a coherent environment where boards, administrators, teachers, and RECEs can perform their jobs best. For example, the implementation of FDK in Ontario needs to consider the diverse communities and governance structures across the 72 school boards in the province. Smith and O’Day (1990) argue that fragmented authority structures and multiple short term and conflicting goals and policies have created mediocrity in resources and conservatism in instructional practice. Their solution combines “the vitality and creativity of bottom up change at the school site with enabling and supportive structure at more centralized levels of the system” (p. 245). They argue that the state, in our case the Ministry of Education, is a critical actor if the intent is to influence more than a few districts at a time, because they are in a unique position to provide coherent leadership, resources and support to the reform efforts. For example, “States not only have the constitutional responsibility for education of our youth, but they are the only level of the system that can influence all parts of the K-12 system” (Smith & O’Day, 1990, p. 246). This perspective of dual system reform is useful to
understand the critical role that both government and practitioners have on the RECE’s professional status and recognition in the FDK programs. If we view the introduction of a more “professional RECE” with curriculum responsibilities into the education system through the FDK programs as a system wide change, the Ministry of Education is a critical part of the system that can in fact influence the whole system, across the public, Catholic and French systems and all school boards in Ontario. As Smith and O’Day (1990) argue, government operated systems are in the best position to leverage other aspects of education, such as the system factors including the training, wages and working conditions of the newly minted professional RECEs across Ontario. This is apparent in the inter-jurisdictional conflicts in law and policy that are discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, resulting in the failure of the boards to implement the seamless day model.

The dual system perspectives in policy research and analysis, illustrates how these everyday practices of RECEs are further shaped by the social location of the RECE (gender, race, education, class etc.), their relationships with other professionals in the classroom (teachers, resource professionals, principals etc.) and the broader school community (parents and school board administrators) while they are constrained by the system factors such as unionization, training and the labour market. The arena of action can be seen in the organizational contexts in which the RECEs operate, such as individual FDK classrooms, in relation to the broader organizational and political systems of schools, school boards and the province. For example, Clune (1990) discusses the ways that the context within which schools operate affects policy. He suggests that schools can act as policy critics and policy mediators through the school level decisions that are made in implementation. He suggests that schools can play a vital role in policy construction because they “have their own complex shifting and contradictory agendas” (Clune, 1990, p. 258). Similarly Bascia (1996) discusses the complications of reform schemes
that focus on schools, and highlights how the power inequities between collaborative reform partners and divergence of values can impede school level reforms, particularly where schools have more critical problems.

At the same time a more complex co-construction approach to education policy reform involves “a dynamic relationship, not just among structures, but also among cultures and people’s actions in many interlocking settings. It is this intersection of culture, structure, and individual agency across contexts that helps us better understand how to build positive instances of educational reform” (Datnow & Park, 2009, p. 359). If the professional role of RECEs is to be understood in a mutually adaptive, dynamic process that includes the individuals as well as the cultures and systems that influence them, then the professional recognition of the RECE in the FDK program is not only determined by the Education Act provisions at a macro level, but also by the everyday practice of the RECEs at a micro level and by meso system factors such as professional training, unionization and the job market. For example, Darling-Hammond (1997, p. 48) discusses the role that unions played in humanizing schools and asserting the teachers’ role in decision making along with wage issues. Her perspective on effective education reform includes organizational structures and processes that “come closest to conveying the complexities, uncertainties, and processes of teachers’ lives in “real” settings” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.68). In this way, a more nuanced perspective of the policy process that includes meso system factors could be useful for analysis of the problem of RECEs professional status in FDK programs.
2.2 Methodology: Discourse Analysis through Content and Text

Feminist legal analysis and policy research approaches are concerned with the discourses of power and systems of governance that are inherent in texts and the language of lived experience within particular social settings. As a result, I was drawn to the use of discourse in texts and in the language used by RECEs to describe their experiences in the education sector (Fairclough, 2003; Lazar, 2005). I was able to undertake text analysis to identify discourses of professionalism in constructing the RECE role and status in FDK, with respect to the description of the role, responsibilities, and the working conditions of RECEs. My work includes thematic analysis of text to identify what is included and excluded in the discourses used to describe the role of RECEs in law and policy texts and in the professional practice of RECEs on the ground.

Content analysis is a research technique that is useful for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts (Nuendorf, 2002; Krippendorf, 2012). While content analysis is largely a quantitative method of inquiry that is concerned with counts of key characteristics or variables, it has some broader applicability in qualitative contexts that have a deeper analysis of text (Nuendorf, 2002, p. 14). Text analysis or the linguistic analysis of text can be understood as an essential part of discourse analysis although discourse analysis is not merely the linguistic analysis of texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 3). In this study, I undertake an analysis of texts such as legislation, policy memoranda, Standards of Practice, case law, and transcribed interviews with RECEs, with a view to identifying patterns and themes in the discourses of professional status. I chose to focus on identifying three aspects of professional status, namely the role, responsibilities and working conditions that could contribute to the professional status of the RECE in FDK programs. In this way, I undertake text analysis as a way to identify the relationship between the language of the text and the social contexts, or the
social character of the texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 5). Particular to this approach of text analysis was an analysis of what was included and what was excluded in the text in relation to the professional status of RECEs. Fairclough (2003, p. 15-16) suggests that the involvement of text in meaning making, or the analysis of the causal or ideological effects of texts can be framed within theoretical approaches such as ethnography or organizational analysis. For example, by using organizational policy research and feminist legal constructs, I am able to link the micro analysis of these texts to the macro analysis of how power relations work across networks of practices and structures.

Foucault (1981) suggests that discourses are linked to the effects of power as they produce new knowledge and ways of thinking, and that discourse constructs the topic as it defines and produces the objects of our knowledge and thus it is more than an individual way of thinking and producing meaning. Fairclough (2003, p. 124) argues that “discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another – keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, dominating – and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another.” Gee (2014) suggests that language is political and describes discourse as a way of using language to convey views about relationships in social contexts. By exploring discourse in this way, I engage in a thematic analysis of text and interview data within the broader context of understanding the social and political construction of the discourses of RECE professional status and their influences within law, policy and practice. For example, I examine the way that unions and legal adjudicators construct and convey views about the role and status of RECEs in the education sector through discourses of professionalism in texts.

Recent studies have highlighted the impact of agency and subjectivity in the professionalization of early childhood educators (Osgood, 2006; Simpson, 2010). For example,
Walkerdine (2006, p. 38) explains that the production and regulation of workers is discursively shaped by the “complex linkages of sites and practices through which subjects are formed”. Likewise, Simpson (2010) unpacks the notion of agency and its impact on the professional role of the early educator, using a critical realist approach that expands both post-structural and activist perspectives. Langford (2005) suggests that the representation of the early childhood educator in a defined way produces a particular knowledge that brings power to professional practice. She argues based on Foucault’s concept that knowledge becomes constituted through shifting discourses and supports power in action, that discourse can be used to designate the conjunction between power and knowledge.

In this way, I was able to explore the ways in which the new early childhood professional in Ontario is engineered in law and policy texts, and the significance of the discourse of the early childhood professional in the RECEs’ everyday experiences and practice. At the same time, the convergence of triangulated qualitative data with quantitative data from surveys and texts provided information on the systemic inequities that may be inherent within the legislation or policy frameworks that inform the lived experiences of RECEs and explore possibilities for education reform that involves a dynamic relationship, not just among structures, but also among cultures and people’s actions in many interlocking settings (Datnow & Park, 2009) across all levels.

2.3 Methods and Research Design

The research design of this thesis reflects my interdisciplinary approach to understanding law and policy as a gendered lived experience that is shaped by social and institutional norms. I used a concurrent transformative mixed-methodological approach in this research study
(Creswell, 2010), to include both qualitative and quantitative approaches simultaneously to inform an evolving research process. This approach allowed me to understand both the lived experiences of the RECEs and the rational norms and policies that shaped their realities through the development of ideas across experience and reality. The data sources included surveys and interviews with RECEs, interviews with key informants from the early childhood and education communities, as well as textual analysis of legislation, case law, and policy documents such as collective agreements and policy memoranda from the Ministry of Education.

The triangulation of data sources enabled me to identify the various ways in which the professionalization of RECEs across the province is unfolding. For example, my review of the legislation, jurisprudence and policy texts revealed the rationale for a team teaching model in FDK that recognizes the professional skills that RECEs bring to the classroom. Through text analysis of discourse within the broader systemic and organizational policy context, I was able to further uncover the evolution of the professional RECE and the legal disputes that contest their role and legitimacy as early educators in the classroom. The interviews with RECEs in turn shed light on the everyday lived experiences of the new early education professional, and highlight the issues that arise from policy development to implementation. Triangulation also provides depth to the study by validating findings from a variety of sources. For example, I was able to identify working conditions such as holidays, preparation time and paid lunch breaks through the survey data, while at the same time, document review of the union collective agreements confirmed the accuracy of these findings. Similarly, initial key informant interviews set the context and identified FDK implementation issues that helped focus my research questions.
2.4 Research Context

The Ministry of Education under the Education Act governs Ontario’s education system. A newly established Early Learning Division is responsible for the administration of early childhood programs through municipally licensed providers, as well as full day kindergarten and elementary education through Ontario’s school boards. The Province of Ontario’s school system is governed by 72 school boards including 29 English Public, 31 English Catholic, 4 French Public and 8 French Catholic boards and a few geographically isolated school authorities. There are approximately 3978 elementary schools in the province with a total government investment of 21 billion dollars (Ministry of Education, 2013).

The full day kindergarten implementation was phased in over a five-year period beginning in September 2010 at a cost of approximately 1.5 billion dollars. By September 2014, the program was fully implemented and available to all four and five year olds in Ontario in publicly funded schools. Initially, it was estimated that once implemented the FDK program would employ approximately 20,000 Early Childhood Educators across the province and serve about 265,000 four and five year olds (Ministry of Education, 2013). The initial proposal was to have school boards operate both the FDK core program as well as extended day programs staffed by the teaching teams. However, due to a strong child care sector lobby and lack of clarity in the implementation policy, many school boards have opted to contract out extended day programs to third party child care operators, reducing the number of RECEs employed by the school boards to approximately 10,000 in 2014 (Janmohamed et al, 2014).

The RECEs working in FDK programs are employed by various school boards and represented by three major unions, namely Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO),
Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and smaller unions or professional associations. FDK also involved the delivery of before and after school programs provided by school boards or third party licensed child care operators. The majority of RECEs employed in before and after school programs are employed by privately operated third-party child care providers (Ministry of Education, 2013). This transfer of responsibility maintains the status quo of early childhood educators employed in the private and non-profit child care sector organizations where only 21.5% of the child care sector in Ontario is unionized and compensation is lower (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2013), unlike in the education sector that is publicly funded with a high level of unionization and better wage rates.

As FDK was rolling out, the College of Early Childhood Educators was gaining membership with approximately 55,000 members across Ontario that are required to be registered with the college in order to practice, in accordance with the Early Childhood Educator Act (College of ECE, 2014). Not to be confused with the College of ECE, the Association of Early Childhood Educators (AECEO) is a professional and advocacy organization that was charged with equivalency certification through accreditation and training of its members over its 60-year history, prior to the establishment of the college. The AECEO continues to represent members in a variety of policy advocacy and training initiatives as a professional organization in Ontario. However, it is no longer responsible for certifying early childhood educators in Ontario.
2.5 Data Collection

The data in this study can be divided into four areas: (1) Text analysis of selected policy and legislative texts, (2) surveys and (3) interviews conducted with RECEs, and (4) key informant interviews with early childhood and education policy leaders. My study received ethics approval from the University of Toronto as a doctoral requirement initially in 2011, and annually until the completion of this study.

2.5.1 Legal and Policy Documents

The selection of legal and policy documents was completed over the four-year period of implementation of the FDK program in Ontario. Textual analysis of related documentary evidence on the professionalization of RECEs in Ontario was conducted throughout the course of this study. This included researching and identifying appropriate texts, and compiling and reviewing documents. The material was selected based on its relevance to RECEs’ professional status through legislative changes, jurisprudence, policy documents, regulations, collective agreements and other grey literature and was analyzed in relation to the RECE role, compensation and working conditions. This included:

- Legislation and related legal submissions
- Jurisprudence (Ontario Labour Relations Board arbitration decisions on certification and representation and grievance arbitration on teaching/assessment/curriculum, Board of Referees for Employment Insurance on EI disputes, etc.).
- Collective Agreements (RECE and teacher) or employment contracts
- College of ECE, Ministry of Education and school board regulations and policies
• Policy reports, position papers, media reports and other related documentation including websites, videos and other communication tools.

Analysis of legislation such as the Education Act amendment (Bill 252) that addresses FDK programs in Ontario, and the Early Childhood Educator Act on the implementation of the College of ECE was critical to this study. Policy memoranda from the Ministry of Education and Boards of Education as well as policy documents from the College of ECE provided important information on the implementation of the program and the professional role of the RECE. Union contracts and legal decisions from tribunals and boards of arbitration illuminated current thinking on the role and status of RECEs in Ontario. It was also important to examine the policy monitoring reports, position papers, media articles and related documentation including websites, videos and communication tools from early childhood policy advocacy groups, professional organizations, and unions in this process.

2.5.2 RECE Participants

RECEs were recruited to participate in this research throughout the implementation of FDK programs in Ontario. Because the early experiences of Early Childhood Educators in their new roles within FDK programs were critical to this study, data collection began in the first year of implementation of the FDK program in March 2011, and continued through to the fourth year of program implementation in the 2013/14 school year. RECE participants were recruited through the child care community, early childhood and FDK related conferences, and professional organizations, creating a snowball effect of participation. A flyer (see Appendix A) was distributed outlining the purpose and scope of the study, inviting RECEs currently working
in FDK programs in Ontario to participate. A total of 51 participants participated in the study through surveys and interviews.

Because FDK implementation was relatively new and RECEs were novices in the education arena, the RECEs who were recruited in the first year expressed some fears about sharing their experiences without having any repercussions from their employers. In order to ensure that RECEs were comfortable sharing their experiences and to assure them that the study was independent from their employment relationships with the school boards, the decision was made not to recruit participants through school boards. As a result, RECEs who contacted the researcher were from a variety of schools boards, representing both public and Catholic schools across the province from urban centres and rural communities.

A few unions that represent the RECEs in FDK that were interested in the study approached me. Although I was involved in some of the union organizing drives and had access to these networks, I made a conscious decision not to recruit any participants through the unions, in order to maintain independence and neutrality in my research. These decisions may have affected the number of participants who were recruited and the range of school boards or communities they represented across Ontario. Due to limitations with funding, travel to rural or northern regions of the province was not possible, which may also have had an impact on the lower level of recruitment of participants from more isolated regions in the province of Ontario.

Despite these limitations, there were 51 RECE participants recruited for the study representing 19 school boards across the province. The RECEs had a range of experience in child care from 1-16 years prior to entering the FDK program. While all of the RECE participants had an ECE diploma which is the minimum requirement to practice in Ontario, a third also had a degree in early childhood studies or another undergraduate program related to child studies. Two
of the participants were also members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in addition to their ECE qualifications. All of the participants were registered members of the College of ECE. A majority of the participants were recruited in the first year, with smaller samplings from the three following years of implementation.

2.5.3 Key Informants

I conducted meetings with early childhood and education sector specialists such as government and policy makers, professional and regulatory organizational leads, advocates and policy researchers. I contacted individuals who were identified as being involved in the development or implementation of the FDK program in Ontario through key policy documents and through early childhood professional networks such as the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, College of Early Childhood Education and Ontario Ministry of Education. These meetings were conducted during the course of the study from 2011 to 2014 in order to understand the larger context and political landscape. These perspectives were helpful in shaping this research study, by providing the context for the FDK program policy intent, as well as the implementation challenges from a school board, municipality, and child care operator’s perspective. These interviews helped identify the appropriate survey and interview questions, as well as determine key policy documents that were analyzed in this study.

2.6 Research Procedures

The research procedures undertaken in this study were conducted in concurrent phases that informed the evolving research process. Phase I involved recruitment of participants and
administration of an initial survey and semi-structured interviews with RECEs. Phase II involved administration of a follow up survey with RECE participants.

Ongoing key informant interviews as well as textual data collection and analysis were undertaken throughout the research project in both Phase I and Phase II. This involved identification and analysis of legal and policy documents, as well as key informant interviews with early childhood and education policy leaders in the field. See Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHASE I &amp; II:</td>
<td>Document Review</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Identify the legal and policy framework that impacts the professionalization of the RECE in education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE I:</td>
<td>Initial Survey</td>
<td>34/51</td>
<td>Determine qualifications to work in the FDK program. Determine role and working conditions prior to working in FDK (in child care sector), and immediately after being hired into the FDK position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part A: Qualifications survey (see Appendix A)</td>
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<td>Part B: Pre-employment survey (see appendix B)</td>
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<td>Part C: Current employment survey (see Appendix C)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>29/51</td>
<td>Identify factors that influence including legislation and policy, unionization, professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current role and working conditions (see Appendix D)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE II:</td>
<td>Follow Up Survey</td>
<td>39/51</td>
<td>Determine role and working conditions approximately 1 year after being hired into the FDK position. Identify factors that influence including legislation and policy, unionization, professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role and working conditions (see Appendix C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE I &amp; II</td>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Identify policy directions, influences and political rationale in the professionalization of RECEs in Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants</td>
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</table>

Table 1. Research Design. This table includes the various stages of the research process, the participants involved and the goals of the research study.
2.6.1 Text Analysis

Legislation and policy documents were analyzed throughout the process to inform the development of survey tools, interview protocol, and analysis of the findings in this study. I was able to focus on the relevant sections of the legislation or policy document using the indexes provided with the document. I also used keyword searches to identify and analyze themes in the documents. In particular, I was interested in the use of words such as “professional” or “role” in relation to descriptions of RECEs in FDK, which helped me to focus my search within these relatively large documents. Many of the documents were found on the Internet using popular search engines.

In particular, the Education Act amendments and related policy memoranda, which lay out the role of the RECE in FDK programs, were instrumental to understanding the team teaching model and the role that RECEs play in the FDK classroom. The legislation was accessed through online databases using legal research techniques that I was familiar with such as the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) database. Ministry of Education discussion forums and revisions to the Act were also informative in understanding the evolution of the role and were obtained through the Ministry of Education website.

The College of ECE Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics as well as position papers and policy documents from professional organizations such as the AECEO and Atkinson Centre were key to understanding the evolving professional role of the RECE in Ontario. These documents were readily available on these organizational websites. Analyses of these policy texts were undertaken as part of the doctoral study and presented in a paper that was published in a peer-reviewed journal, *International Journal of Child care and Education Policy (2011)*. This
paper discusses the implications of integrating the care and education roles of educators in FDK, and is included with permission in this thesis in Chapter 3.

Similarly, union contracts were selected and analyzed as part of this doctoral study, to understand the differences between the three largest unions that represent RECEs in the education sector. These union contracts were analyzed and reported in the journal *Canadian Children* (Gananathan, 2015). The contracts were obtained online through school board and union websites. Three contracts were chosen to reflect the RECE collective agreements of the three major unions with three different school boards in Ontario. This manuscript has been published in *Canadian Children* and is included with permission in this thesis in Chapter 4, entitled “Negotiating Status: The Impact of Union Contracts on the Professional Role of RECEs in Ontario’s Full Day Kindergarten Programs” (Gananathan, 2015).

Germane to this analysis was the legal decisions and discussion contained in legal decision-making and case law, on the role of RECEs in education, such as key decisions on the eligibility of RECEs to Employment Insurance. These documents were identified through news reports, as well as RECE participants and key informants who were able to uncover the issues. However, obtaining the full text of the decisions required further legal research through legal databases such as CanLII and E-Laws. The analysis of the jurisdictional implications between federal and provincial laws, on the new RECE role in FDK is presented in this thesis in a manuscript in Chapter 5, entitled, “Lesser Amongst Equals: The Discursive Construction of Ontario’s New Early Learning Professional in Law and Policy Texts”. This manuscript will be submitted for publication.
2.6.2 Initial Survey

An initial survey (Appendix A) administered with the RECEs who contacted the researcher comprised three sections identifying their training and experience, previous employment in the child care sector, and current employment in the school board. Thirty-four RECEs completed the initial survey during the period from March 2011 to October 2013. The survey instrument was developed using Survey Wizard, an online survey tool available to graduate students at OISE/UT. Participants were emailed a link to the survey, which required them to sign in using an email address and to complete the survey online. Some participants were given a paper copy of the survey to complete and their responses were entered into the survey database.

The survey data were downloaded from the Survey Wizard software into an Excel spreadsheet and were coded thematically according to RECE qualifications, previous employment and current employment. These data were largely quantitative in nature. The data were exported into SPSS and analyzed in this format.

2.6.3 Interviews with RECEs

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 of the RECEs recruited to the study that completed an initial survey. These RECEs indicated that they were interested in an interview during the initial recruitment phase. The interviews were conducted in a variety of settings ranging from coffee shops, homes, classrooms, public libraries, community organizations, and at OISE/University of Toronto. Interviews were scheduled at the time and place suggested by the RECEs, and most were held after school during the week. The interviews were conducted in English and were approximately one hour long. Interviews were generally structured around key questions but the interviewer was open to explore areas that the RECEs discussed during the
interview in relation to their professional role and status in the FDK program. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Notes were kept during the interviews and observations were recorded after the interview based on my perceptions of the interviewee, location, and context. I initially intended to interview all of the participants in the study, but reached a point of data saturation, where common ideas or themes emerged in the interviews and there was no need to continue with the interviews. However, all 51 participants were invited to participate in an interview and if participants had pursued an interview, I was prepared to follow up.

Participants did not receive incentives to complete the interviews or the initial survey. An important aspect of the interviews with RECEs was to build trust and establish a rapport that allowed the RECEs to share stories of their experiences including the power dynamics that surrounded their working relationships and roles. Once the RECEs had the opportunity to understand the purpose of the study and my interest in the project as a lawyer, a child care advocate, a former executive director, and as a union organizer of RECEs, they were keen to provide input into the study and discuss their experiences with me. The RECEs needed few prompts, and were able to provide rich examples from their day-to-day experiences to illustrate the ways in which they felt their role was understood or respected in the school setting. Many of them indicated that the interview was the first time they had the opportunity to reflect on and provide feedback on how the RECE role was being implemented in the schools, particularly in the initial years, because they felt often overlooked within the organizational structures.

Semi structured questions were posed to the RECEs and the conversation was relaxed and unfolded based on the context and comfort of the participants. Because the RECEs contacted me independently and were not coerced or forced to participate by any organization or group, they
felt they had made an autonomous decision to participate in the study and shared their feelings openly with me. They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and asked to share the invitation with their colleagues, which some of them did. I was disappointed that I was not able to connect RECEs working in the same school due to reasons of confidentiality, despite their shared experiences and potential to collaborate on making change on the ground.

It was interesting to note that the participants who met in a school setting were sometimes more cautious in their responses, compared to those who met with me outside the school environment, who were able to speak more freely. Despite being in a public space such as a coffee shop, which was not a secure confidential environment, they seemed less concerned about confidentiality in these settings than when they were in a classroom in a school setting after school hours. In this way there was a sense of surveillance that pervaded some of the interviews conducted at school sites. This relates to the power challenge that remains between educators in the school system. For example, in one interview, the RECE met me at the school and we went to an empty classroom that was adjacent to the kindergarten room to conduct the interview. Partway through the interview, the teaching partner entered the room and spent some time at the other end of the room making tea and organizing some of her work. The RECE was clearly disturbed by this and later explained that she often feels there is a lack of trust of RECEs in the school. She told me that she had explained the purpose of the study to her teaching partner who was clearly curious and may have wanted to ensure that nothing bad was being said about the relationship. It was obvious to me through these interactions that the RECEs were dealing with issues of power and autonomy in being able to carve out a space for their professional existence in the school context.
The interviews were recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis. Interviews were transcribed using Microsoft word and coded manually. Data from the interviews were systematically analyzed and categories or themes were identified throughout the transcriptions and checked for accuracy. Detailed thematic analysis was conducted and helped to refine the coding scheme, using memos to organize categories. The codes that emerged were lack of understanding of the role, professional recognition, professional roles, professional responsibilities, professional skills and knowledge in early child development, working conditions, compensation and training. Having four of the 29 interviews independently coded ensured the reliability of the coding, and there was unanimous agreement regarding the themes that emerged in the interviews that were coded independently.

2.6.4 Follow Up Survey with RECEs

An email invitation was sent to the 51 participants in the study after a period of one year had lapsed since the initial survey and interview had been completed. The email included a link to a follow up survey to document both quantitative and qualitative data on their experiences and in particular, any changes to their compensation and working conditions in the FDK program. The purpose of this follow up survey was to gather in-depth data on the continuing experiences of RECEs in FDK a few years into the implementation of the program in Ontario. Of the 51 RECEs who were invited to participate, 39 completed the follow-up survey. The follow-up surveys were completed in November and December of 2013.

An incentive was provided in the form of being entered into a prize draw for a $50 gift certificate if participants completed the online survey by a particular deadline. Due to the time that had lapsed since the 51 participants were recruited into the study, a decision was made to provide an incentive to complete the follow up survey. This resulted in a very quick turnaround
and 39 surveys were completed within a relatively short time frame. The incentive may have also influenced the overwhelming response rate of 76%, although participant familiarity with the study and researcher may have also played a part in this high response rate.

These surveys were also completed using Survey Wizard software. The data were downloaded from this program into an Excel spreadsheet and coded based on previous codes used in the initial survey. Unfortunately, the participant results of this survey could not be linked to the responses from the initial survey participants, because although participants were required to sign in using their email address, there were no other identifying features in the data that could be linked to the earlier survey. Participant data was not linked to individual identifying features in order to ensure the confidentiality of the participant responses. As a result, the survey data were considered as groupings of participants in the analysis of the data from the initial survey and the follow up survey. These sets of data were analyzed independently as separate groups and not linked to participants, in order to maintain their confidentiality.

2.6.5 Key Informant Interviews

Throughout the study, I was invited to participate in related research projects on FDK and to speak at conferences and early childhood training sites, which allowed me to travel within the province and outside, and to identify key players in the implementation of the FDK program. I used these opportunities to have both formal and informal discussions on the evolving professional role of RECEs in FDK classrooms, which influenced my research and thinking. In particular, I was able to have discussions with school and early childhood leaders from Burlington, Hamilton, Ottawa, Sault Saint Marie, Toronto, and Waterloo.
Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or over the telephone with six individual key informants. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and were recorded and transcribed for analysis. In addition, detailed notes were taken of each interview that was later used to ensure accuracy in the transcription. Popular themes were identified and coded throughout the interviews with little notion of the codes or themes that could have emerged. Once these codes were identified, it was manageable to expand on these themes.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather these perspectives on the professionalization of RECEs in Ontario and to illuminate broader sector views and experiences of the RECEs in Ontario’s FDK programs. I was particularly interested in how these leaders were involved in shaping the professional role of RECEs through policy advocacy efforts, and their recommendations for improving the recognition of RECEs in FDK programs across Ontario. These participants were helpful in identifying legal and policy documents that were analyzed in this study. The results of the surveys and interviews are presented in a manuscript entitled “From Policy to Practice: The Labour Implications of RECEs in FDK Programs across Ontario” which appears as Chapter 6 in the thesis.

In the next section, I present the two published articles related to the document analyses of the legislation and policy such as the professional Standards of Practice of RECEs and teachers, as well as a comparison of union contracts representing RECEs in the education sector. Two manuscripts outlining the discourses that have shaped the new professional role through case law and interview/survey data, appearing as Chapters 5 and 6, follow the two published articles. In the concluding chapter (Chapter 7), I summarize and discuss all the findings, make links between jurisprudence, policy and practice and provide a series of recommendations to strengthen the status of RECEs in the education system.
Chapter 3

3  Should We Care? Implications of FDK Program Policy on Early Childhood Pedagogy and Practice

3.1  Abstract

The government of Ontario is instituting a comprehensive early learning system that moves child care and the caring profession into the realm of education through the integration of early education and care. This paper highlights the need for the preservation of care and nurturing, the hallmarks of the “caring profession” within the integrated staff team in Full Day Early Learning in Ontario to ensure quality early child development outcomes and the prevention of the “schoolification” of early learning and care programs. Caring and nurturing are important elements of early childhood education practice and form the basis of effective early child development programs. The value of care in early learning, and recognition for the professional capacities that RECEs bring to integrated staff teams in early education must be reflected in education policy at a team, school, organizational and systems level to ensure successful staff integration and a caring learning environment that contributes to positive child outcomes.

Key words: Early learning policy, integrated staff team, schoolification of care.

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1 This manuscript was previously published in a peer-reviewed journal. Gananathan, R. (2011). Implications of full day kindergarten program policy on early childhood pedagogy and practice. International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 5(2), 31-43.
3.2 Introduction

The government of Ontario is instituting a comprehensive early learning system over the next four years (2010-2014). The implementation of Full Day Early Learning (FDEL) in Ontario represents a philosophical shift that is sweeping across Canada, and indeed internationally over the past decade; one that moves child care and the caring profession into the realm of education through the integration of early learning and care within the education system (OECD, 2006).

The first phase of the program that is being implemented in 2010/2011 includes an integrated Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten (FDELK) program for 35,000 four and five year old children. The kindergarten curriculum framework reflects an inquiry-based approach that is centred on evidence that highlights the importance of social and emotional development on children’s learning. The program includes an integrated teaching team comprised of a kindergarten teacher and a designated early childhood educator (DECE) working together within the classroom to provide a play-based early learning environment that brings together the expertise of both professional early educators to optimize early child development.

The newly established College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) recently released its Standards of Practice for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) in February 2011. Not surprisingly, the new code of ethics and Standards of Practice are modeled after the Ontario College of Teachers’ Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. However, it is not clear how these standards reflect the pedagogical shifts in current evidence based practice in early child development.

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2 This article was published in 2011 shortly after the implementation of the FDK program began, and was written in present tense to reflect the situation at the time. Terms used in the article (e.g., FDK, FDELK, FDEL and play-based) appear as published and may not be consistent with the rest of the thesis.
development in a play-based non-didactic learning environment which is central to the new full day kindergarten program philosophy.

3.3 Using Text Analysis to Understand Policy Implications

Drawing on initial observations from early childhood educators who work in the FDELK program, this paper undertakes a content analysis of the Standards of Practice of both early education professions in Ontario as well as emerging practices, with a view to deconstructing how policy implicates practice and child development outcomes. Text analysis can be understood as the systematic analysis of text and the broader social contexts in which the text is produced (Fairclough, 2003). By engaging in the explicit use of language included or excluded in the Standards of Practice, and exploring the professional scope of the early childhood educators’ work at a systemic level, this study aims to uncover the ways that caring and nurturing are implicated in early learning professional practice. By using feminist legal theoretical approaches, this paper exposes the social reproduction of care work as a gendered phenomenon in the education sector, through forces that reinforce the dichotomy between care and education work.

Grounded in evidence on attachment that informs “developmentally appropriate” early childhood practice, this paper will (a) discuss how the new Standards of Practice for RECEs and the newly revised Standards of Practice of teachers address and reflect current early learning research and pedagogy; (b) provide early observations from the field based on initial data collection on shared early learning practice and pedagogy; and (c) offer recommendations on how the new role of the new professional RECE can effectively shape early learning policy and practice in Ontario.
Recent trends in research and evidence on the science of early child development have shifted the focus to include the critical role that early childhood educators play in shaping learning (Barnett, 2008; McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). While these bodies of critical research have shifted the emphasis in early childhood from care to early learning, with a focus on the development of the child rather than the simple transfer of care from parents to care providers, they have also helped us understand and rethink why early nurturing and care is so closely linked to learning and the broader goal of school success.

Caring and nurturing are important elements of early childhood education practice and form the basis of effective early child development programs. The value of care in early learning, and recognition for the capacities that RECEs bring to integrated staff teams in early education must be reflected in education policy at a team, school, organizational and systems level to ensure successful staff integration and a caring learning environment that contributes to positive child outcomes. This paper highlights the need for the preservation of care and nurturing, the hallmarks of the “caring profession” within the integrated staff team in Full Day Early Learning in Ontario in order to ensure quality early child development outcomes and the prevention of the “schoolification” of early learning and care programs.

3.4 The Defining Qualities of an Early Educator: Standards of Practice and Care

The integration of child care and early education services has been driving staffing change in early learning environments over the past decade (Senate of Canada 2009; OECD 2006). The new architecture of Ontario’s integrated early learning program as envisioned by the Premier’s special advisor offers a “single program with a single pedagogical and curriculum
approach planned and delivered by qualified educators using common space and resources” (Pascal, 2009, p. 18).

Driven by the premise that quality programs are delivered by a diverse, knowledgeable and skilled workforce (Ackerman & Barnett, 2006; Bellm, 2008; Bernhard, 2003; Early, et al., 2007; Moss & Bennett, 2006), Pascal (2009) lays out the policy recommendations for FDEL programs for four and five year olds, comprised of an integrated staff team of an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) and a RECE. He argues, “fundamental to the full day learning program are educators with child development knowledge and skills, and an effective parent engagement strategy” (2009, p. 32). Pascal’s blueprint for staffing includes the creation of a unique professional classification within school boards for RECEs, new requirements for teachers to complete an early childhood Additional Qualification (AQ) course within the next five years on early development, and preparation and planning time for the educator teams. Further recommendations on workforce development include training recommendations such as refocusing the ECE diploma and degree programs to establish an early childhood specialty for 0-8 year olds that would reflect a greater understanding of early development practices. In addition, amalgamation of the College of Teachers and the newly formed College of Early Childhood Educators (Pascal, 2009), to create a more streamlined early learning professional designation.

The Ontario Education Act amendments in 2010 allow schools and school boards to operate the full-day early learning program for four and five year olds, signaling an important shift in the legislative history of care and education in Canada. The new Education Act amendment spells out the shared responsibilities of the teacher and RECE and a duty to cooperate and coordinate in the planning and delivery of the Full Day Kindergarten program; the
assessment and observation of children; communicating with families; and maintaining a healthy social, emotional and learning environment. However, “nothing in the duty to cooperate limits the duties of teachers under the Education Act, including duties related to report cards, instruction, training and evaluation of the progress of pupils in junior kindergarten and kindergarten classes, and the preparation of teaching plans” (Grieve, 2010, p. 5). The amendment to the Education Act also requires the teachers and RECEs to be members of their respective colleges, including the newly formed College of Early Childhood Educators, established by statute in 2007 (ECE Act, 2007).

Underlying these recommendations for a unified pedagogical approach in the new Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program is the former kindergarten curriculum as well as a new framework for early learning environments called Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT, 2007). ELECT proposes a range of principles including knowledgeable, responsive and reflective early childhood practitioners that reinforce the evidence on attachment in the early years. ELECT (2007, p. 19) states,

“Reflective practitioners use an emotionally warm and positive approach which leads to constructive behaviour in children…reflective thinking and empathy have their roots in early relationships, where emotions are shared, communicated and expressed. Empathy is broadened when children share experiences, relate and respect each other in the context of caring, secure relationships with adults.”

The ELECT framework includes guidelines for professional practice that encourage educators to “create supportive, trustworthy and pleasurable relationships that enable children to benefit from early learning opportunities” (ELECT, 2007, p. 77). For example, it states, “It is by being treated with fairness and empathy that children develop empathy” (ELECT, 2007, p. 44).
However, the new kindergarten curriculum chooses to focus on the environment rather than delving into the quality of the relationships themselves. For example, the document states,

A supportive social environment has a positive impact on children’s learning. Children are more able and more motivated to do well and achieve their full potential in schools that have a positive school climate and in which they feel safe and supported. ‘School climate’ may be defined as the sum total of all the personal relationships within a school (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 4).

Similarly, the curriculum suggests that staff teams should ensure the learning environment is inclusive, where children feel comfortable and safe because the atmosphere is vital to the emotional development of children (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 35). However, staff responsiveness is generally aimed at how the practitioners respond to a child’s learning and inquiry rather than their social and emotional needs (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 25-26). For example, the curriculum includes examples of narrative modes of assessment such as “saying, doing and representing” that capture children’s learning within the contexts of relationships and environments, which interplay with the team’s intentional interactions such as “responding, challenging and extending” and are focused on the child’s learning needs. The differences in the philosophical underpinnings of what is included and excluded in these curriculum documents reflect an underlying dichotomy between care and education.

In 2007, the provincial government announced the establishment of a regulatory College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) that would undertake the role of maintaining professional Standards of Practice amongst early childhood educators (Ontario MCYS, July 2007). Registration in the College requires a minimum qualification of a two-year post-secondary Early Childhood Education diploma or equivalent. The first college of its kind in Canada, the CECE
mandate includes setting professional Standards of Practice and a code of ethics, establishing requirements for professional qualifications, developing a public complaints process and providing supports for RECEs to upgrade their qualifications (CECE, 2010).

The CECE has recently released its new Standards of Practice that govern the practice of Early Childhood Educators in Ontario, outlining six standards that all registered ECEs must adhere to as well as a code of ethics to guide the profession. Interestingly, the first standard of practice is entitled “Caring and Nurturing Relationships that Support Learning” and focuses on the relationship with the child and their families. It states (CECE, 2011, p. 13):

Early Childhood Educators establish professional and caring relationships with children and families. They engage both children and their families by being sensitive and respectful of diversity, equity and inclusion. Early Childhood Educators are receptive listeners and offer encouragement and support by responding appropriately to the concerns and needs of children and families.

The Code of Ethics includes responsibilities to children, families, colleagues and the profession, as well as to the community and society. Again, the focus on caring and nurturing relationships with children is paramount. Section A of the Code of Ethics (CECE, 2011, p. 11) states:

Early Childhood Educators make the well-being and learning of all children who are under their professional supervision their foremost responsibility. They value the rights of the child, respecting the uniqueness, dignity and potential of each child, and strive to create learning environments in which children experience a sense of belonging. Early
Childhood Educators are caring, empathetic, fair, and act with integrity. Early Childhood Educators foster the joy of learning through play-based pedagogy.

Similarly, the newly revised Ethical Standards of the College of Teachers (2010, p. 9) include standards of care, respect, trust and integrity, albeit with a focus on academic learning. For example, the standards of “care” and “trust” are described as follows:

The ethical standard of care includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students’ potential. Members express their commitment to students’ well being and learning through positive influence, professional judgement and empathy in practice. Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members’ professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

Similarly the Standards of Practice for the teaching profession include a “commitment to students and student learning” (OCT, 2010, p.13) which states:

Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

While the Standards of Professional Practice of both colleges clearly reflect the nurturing of children’s social and emotional development, there is some divergence in the day-to-day pedagogy and practice of both professionals. This may be attributed to a culture of litigation and complaints against teachers that has resulted in “no touch policies” in school environments.
An initial exploration into the no touch policies of school boards reveal that these policies are largely in place to deter educators from using excessive force in disciplining their students. For example, in the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario’s (ETFO) resource document entitled, “Use of Restraint Advice” aimed at its members, the union cautions that:

Using force to discipline a student puts teachers at a particularly high risk of being accused of assault. The Criminal Code provides only a limited defence to teachers correcting students by force…many boards have a ‘hands off’, ‘no touch’ policy in relation to discipline. For this reason it is critical that all members take precautionary steps to avoid physical contact with students except where it is needed and in accordance with board policy (ETFO, 2011).

Similarly, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA), Spring 2010 newsletter outlines:

To date this year we have had four complaints reported to the CCAS. Two complaints were dismissed as unfounded. Nonetheless, the teachers involved were placed under a great deal of stress. The other two have not yet, been resolved. It is important to follow the ‘Be Wary, Be Wise’ directive during your daily teaching activities. Be professional at all times and avoid ‘touching’ students.

Unfortunately, these directives inform and affect the day-to-day interactions between educators and students, permeating these caring and nurturing relationships with a sense of caution and surveillance that does not exist in the child care environment. Despite a nurturing approach in professional standards for teachers, Piper and Stronach (2008), found that early years practitioners are aware of the prevailing no-touch norm and, for the most part, act
accordingly, even when (in some instances), they may be aware that this response is to the detriment of the young child. The study also found that educators were aware that a demonstration of the caring nature of the practitioner or “caregiver” would have been more appropriate in that particular situation. The authors discuss the irony of these professionals who are seemingly more concerned about others watching them than their own appropriate response to meet the immediate needs of the child (e.g., a hug to make the hurt go away).

Similarly, Lawson (2008) also found that educators had their own views on touch and while they felt that not touching children could be detrimental to their emotional and physical well being, there was no agreement on the parameters of touching. Some teachers had no qualms about using reassuring touch, whereas other felt that touching a child that was merely seeking comfort and reassurance was a minefield. Unfortunately, these policies and resulting practices do not reflect what we know about the benefits of care, nurturance and attachment, particularly in early learning environments. Ironically, these policies exist in situations where schools promote “a caring and family ethos” (p. 95).

3.5 Reflections on Integrated Practice in the ELP

The foundational aspects of the integrated FDEL program in Ontario include a caring, nurturing and play based curriculum framework, which the new professional RECE brings to the education sector. It heralds the re-engineering of the RECE within the education sector as an equal partner with the kindergarten teacher, and a professional with early education expertise in the early learning classroom: one can offer meaningful expertise in early learning curriculum pedagogy and practice rather than the historical construction of the ECE within school settings as
a classroom assistant and care provider which furthered the false dichotomy between learning and care.

According to a recent response paper from the Atkinson Centre (2010), there are some very good examples of teaching partnerships between RECEs and teachers in the full day kindergarten program. However, what is also abundantly clear are ongoing structural challenges to establishing stronger partnerships with uneven planning time for the educator team and full day kindergarten classrooms, many operating with larger numbers of children than the recommended 26 per class. In a study of the Peel District School Board, nearly a third of the teachers reported overseeing more than 26 children (Hammer, 2010). Initial results also point to differentials in pedagogy, where early childhood educators are being discouraged from being affectionate and caring in their classroom practice.

As part of my doctoral research on the changing role of the Early Childhood Educators in the Early Learning Programs, I have interviewed several RECEs working in FDK in 2011, on their early experiences in the programs. There have been accounts of positive relationships with team teachers and administrators in the schools; parents and families who are beginning to understand the changing role of the RECE as early educators in the classroom; and RECEs who are able to utilize their skills and expertise in child development to plan and implement programming in partnership with their teachers. However, RECEs also described their frustrations with their inability to transfer their knowledge and skills on child development from the child care sector into the education context. Many are struggling with the cultural shift from early childhood environments where children thrived with caring and nurturing relationships with their educators, to the school environments where there is a culture of suspicion and mistrust of educators.
Initial results on the role of the Early Childhood Educators who are working in the Early Learning Program in Ontario and their shared practice and pedagogy with teachers raises questions with respect to the issue of care and nurturing. For example, one RECE stated that the school has a “no touch policy” that does not permit the RECE to hold a child’s hand while walking down the hallway; she has been cautioned by her teacher colleagues not to hold hands with students. She described that in child care, the practice of holding a 4-year old child’s hand while walking down a hallway would be completely acceptable given the social and emotional connection between the child and their caregiver. However, in a school setting, she struggles not to take the hand that the child reaches up, to avoid brushing up against the school’s no hands policy. She said:

It’s really hard, when you are walking down the hallway and a child reaches up to take your hand, as an ECE, you don’t even have to think about it…you just take their hand. After all, they are just 4, some are not even 4 yet, and it is completely natural for them to reach up to hold your hand. Now I have to think about it and I even got told by other teachers in the school not to do it. Not my teaching partner, but another teacher that saw me holding a student’s hand (ECE-A, 2011).

In another example, an RECE (ECE-B, 2011) described a situation that arose when a child was sick after eating lunch. She was alone in the classroom with the children because the teacher was on her lunch break. When she called the office she was asked to send the child to the office and call his home to have him picked up, because she was not allowed to help him clean himself up. The child was forced to sit in his dirty clothes for almost an hour while he waited to be picked up, because of the school’s no touch policy. The RECE questioned how this would impact the child’s social and emotional well being with respect to his embarrassment with
his peers and his self-esteem. She voiced her concerns to me about not being able to reconcile her desire to “do the right thing” and follow her RECE training to respond to the child in that particular situation, and her discomfort with being unable to reconcile this with the schools no touch policy. These examples highlight the need for reconsideration of daily routines and practices in schools, which may cause emotional distress for the child. Educators need to revisit their professional Standards of Practice that emphasize caring and empathy as foundational principles, to shift to a more humane approach of dealing with such incidents.

In another example (ECE-C, 2011), an RECE described how a young four year old child in her JK class was having a difficult time self–regulating while coming in from the playground. The child was sitting on the ground in the locker area crying loudly and was refusing to take his coat off and enter the class because of an incident with another child in the playground. In a child care setting, the RECE stated that she would have picked the child up, sat him down on her lap and helped him to calm down and refocus, which reinforces the important links between responsiveness and self-regulation in children. However, she described her frustration about not to be able to help the child because she was constrained by the no touch policy in the school. Since she was unable to intervene as trained in a more caring and nurturing manner the situation became much worse and the child’s behaviour lasted much longer. She felt that there needed to be a greater focus on the child’s social and emotional needs and a better understanding of the role that early educators can play to support this development in the school environment. Despite what the Standards of Practice outline in terms of establishing caring and nurturing relationships and the need to be responsive professional educators, in this case, the RECE is following the expectations of the school with respect to her behaviour.
All of the RECEs whom I interviewed expressed their concerns about the lack of understanding of their role in the school system, and their frustrations about being constrained by school policies that prevent them from responding to their young students' needs in caring and nurturing ways that are central to their early child development training. Many stated that they continued to practice what they believed was the appropriate response, whenever they were able to do so. For example, one RECE described how she assisted a child who had a toileting accident, regardless of the school's policy although she made sure that her teacher partner was present in the room while she did so. Clearly, the cooperation of her teaching partner was important to allow both educators to respond appropriately. She also reported the incident to the parent, who was very grateful for the caring intervention, which allowed her child to spend the rest of the day in school. However, she felt frustrated by the lack of understanding of her role in the school. She stated,

In the beginning of the year we had a very young child, who didn’t turn four until November and it was a big transition for him with the accidents and toileting…and the teacher said that she is not allowed to assist in the washroom and he was left on his own…until she realized that I was an Early Childhood Educator and she said, ‘wait, you can help him’. I know that is the role of the Educational Assistants in the school, but I just helped him because he needed assistance at that time.

These examples reflect the culture of the school system, which focus on academic outcomes and are somewhat ambivalent about the notion of play-based learning and the need for caring and nurturing relationships to support learning. The schools’ no touch policies in large part stem from the need to protect educators from allegations of improper conduct that can result in disciplinary measures through the College of Teachers. In fact, the Elementary Teachers’
Federation of Ontario, the largest union that represents over 76,000 elementary school teachers in the public system in Ontario has a posted precautionary measures for its members to follow that encourages teachers to, “wherever possible avoid physical contact with students” (ETFO, 2011). However, the number of complaints and allegations are few considering the number of teachers in Ontario. For example, the 2009 annual report lists 117 complaints against teachers for “abuse of a student” and 96 complaints of “conduct unbecoming a teacher”, with only 11 members suspended from teaching as a result (OCT, 2011). The allegations of abuse represent only .04% of the total 224,000 members of the College. The College of ECE has had only nine complaints filed against its 30,000 members with none referred to the discipline committee (CECE, 2010) as yet.

At the same time, there is a sense that not only RECEs, but many teachers also disagree with the no touch policies. It is encouraging that there is a trend towards the nurturing of caring relationships in the school system both in Ontario and in the broader context. For example, Garner (2011) suggests that if we stigmatize nurturing behaviour and seek to restrict all physical contact between responsible adults and children, we will only undermine healthy relations between the generations. This behaviour only serves to make children more suspicious about adults and adults more nervous and confused about their role in our society. Research also suggests that “social and behavioral skills have a positive effect on the growth of academic skills in the early elementary grades” and that “the teachers who are good at enhancing social and behavioral skills provide an additional indirect boost to academic skills in addition to their direct teaching of academic skills” (Jennings & DiPrete, 2008, p.1).
3.6 Conclusion: The Defining Qualities of Integrated Early Learning and Care

The OECD (2006) suggests that there is a societal shift away from traditional notions of child care to include more development goals for children in early learning that leads to improved outcomes for children. As a result, there is an emergence of a new professional ECEC profile that is trained to work with both young children and families in countries such as Sweden, New Zealand and Norway (Bennett, 2008). Ontario’s new RECE role similarly sets up the new education professional to function within an integrated team comprised of a teacher and RECE in the education system. However, it is not clear how these roles will be shaped over time and whether the defining qualities of care and nurturing that are the hallmarks of the Early Childhood Educator will permeate Ontario’s Early Learning Programs. This study uncovers that while the Standards of Practice of both the RECEs and teachers specifically require aspects of caring and nurturing, there is an ongoing culture of fear and suspicion cultivated by the unions, that contributes to an ongoing dichotomy between care and education work.

It is critical to acknowledge both teaching roles in the integrated model, although the learning is acquired differently and may be executed differently. For example, some of the key questions raised in the OECD countries include whether there is a core professional in integrated staff teams, what the balance between professional and “assistant” would be; what level and type of education these professionals will have; and who will pay for their training and improvements to the workforce (OECD, 2004).

Full service integration requires an infusion of inter-professional practices and expertise combined with action at numerous levels including government policy, governance, leadership,
organizational culture and ethos, and frontline professional practice and teamwork (Press, Sumson and Wong (2010). Inter-professional practice requires the ability to articulate one’s own disciplinary specific knowledge base and skills, while being able to look beyond its boundaries to appreciate different practices and negotiate differences in priorities. Boards, administrators and principals that have not previously had early childhood educators as members of their staff need to take leadership to broaden the scope of professional practice in early learning environments. They need to ensure that the stage is set to welcome these new early educators at the school level, and acknowledge the expertise in child development that they bring to the classroom. In schools where early childhood educators have already been part of the staffing team, discussions about how the role is changing with this new vision of early learning will be important (Speir, 2010). Fundamental to this re-visioning will be the caring and nurturing role that both teachers and early childhood educators can play in the early learning program.

Given the history behind no touch policies and the renewed investments in early child development in Ontario, it is time to revisit and rethink the implicit and widespread no touch policies and their implications for children’s development and learning experiences. There is an opportunity to reframe early learning programs, and put the needs of the children at the core of early learning pedagogy and practice, that integrates both the perspective of the child as well as the adult professional. We need to re-connect with Standards of Practice that demonstrate the caring nature of both early learning educators as caregivers, and reconsider the conditions under which and by whom touching is appropriate and preferred, in order to reduce prejudices in the classroom and eradicate societal stereotypes of touch and touching (Piper & Stronach, 2008).

These issues challenge trainee early childhood practitioners to develop a strong understanding of the link between quality early learning environments, and the critical
importance of integrating social emotional support to ensure success in learning. It is, therefore, imperative to reflect on the systemic issues that get in the way of caring and nurturing in early learning practice within an early learning framework that is focused on literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The Toronto First Duty program, a model of early education service integration where preschool, parenting and kindergarten programs operate under one umbrella has gained much attention locally, nationally and internationally (Corter et. al., 2009). The report concludes (p13):

Fundamentally, the research evidence points to the integration model as a positive and effective learning environment for young children. It highlights the capacity of professionals from education and early childhood to work collaboratively and to build on the strengths of each. It recognizes the absolute importance of reciprocal mentoring and a professional respect for each other. Teaching became seamless across the two professions.

However, a key finding of the Toronto First Duty evaluation is a need for systems wide structural change to ensure effective integration, rather than an expectation of best practice pedagogy amongst educators.

The ongoing challenge for the newly created professional RECE in school settings will be to gain the professional recognition that is afforded to teachers in the early learning classroom. Supports to successful integration and professional recognition include joint professional learning opportunities that can support reciprocal learning, and have been proven to change staff perceptions about the benefits of working in an integrated team (Janmohamed & Pelletier, 2010). A foundational concept in the Reggio Emilia approach is the need for
collaboration amongst staff. According to Speir, (2010, p. 24), the Reggio Emilia approach espouses a belief system that:

A group has a greater intelligence than an individual. This theme of collaboration and reciprocity is mirrored in the structure of classrooms containing two teachers who work together with the same group of 26 children. The sharing of different perspectives brings new ideas and interesting approaches, evidenced by the documentation and interpretation that these differently trained educators produce and render through discussion.

The Toronto First Duty demonstration site has demonstrated that such coordination of preparation time is “not only sensible, but also deepens professional collaboration through joint curriculum planning (Janmohamed & Pelletier, 2010, p.20).

There are many structural and political barriers in administration as well as professional and historic barriers in pedagogic practice to overcome an integrated approach to ECEC services for kindergarten-aged children in Canada. “The goal is to strive for collaboration, mutual respect between sectors and communities and develop options based on collective imagination” (Colley, 2005, p. 31). Despite the enthusiasm for integrated early education and care, Press, Sumsion and Wong (2010) warn against a “one-size fits all” approach to integration. They suggest that policy and professional development programs should recognize the value of diverse approaches rather than advocating for a standardized model.

But where does that leave Ontario’s new early education professional? On the one hand, the everyday pedagogical practice of the early learning classroom can shape the long-term professional role, identity and recognition of the new Early Childhood professionals. However, Speir (2010, p. 24) rightly argues, “Structures will need to be in place to support the two
educators and help them develop a collaborative learning process, ensuring that each voice and opinion is heard and respected. There is much more to the successful implementation of this process than simply putting two educators in one room.” This reinforces the findings of the Toronto First Duty program that effective governance is critical to ensure staff integration is successful.

Corter et al. (2009, p. 10) state, “The staff team pathways are the critical, and interwoven design strands we need to focus on at the very beginning of implementation”. Fullan (2001, p. 130) captures the significance of the day-to-day practice of organization change when he states:

Organizations transform when they can establish mechanisms for learning in the dailiness of organizational life. People make…fundamental transitions by having many opportunities to be exposed to ideas, to argue them to their own normative belief system, to practice the behaviours that go with those values, to observe others practicing those behaviours and most importantly to be successful at practicing in the presence of others (that is, to be seen to be successful).

The labour movement must consider child care a priority. Advocating, organizing and bargaining are inter-connected strategies that would make good use of the movement’s structure and experience (Doherty, 2002). For example, unions could play a greater role in helping early educators understand the situations in which caring, nurturing and safe touch practices can contribute to early development, rather than focusing on the fears of how touch and caring interactions will be construed by others.

In addition, a staged approach to skills upgrading has been a key to ensuring that staff that are hired into integrated early learning environments can move towards a common ground in
training and skill levels. For example, in New Jersey, the court ordered that early learning staff upgrade to a four-year child development focused degree over time, which resulted in 95% of the staff meeting these expectation (Press, Sumsion & Wong, 2010). Similarly, Prince Edward Island’s integration efforts include increased requirements for early childhood educators to complete 20 additional courses at a university level and for kindergarten teachers to complete a Bachelor of Education degree and take courses specific to early childhood education (Mella, 2009). The recommendation that all kindergarten teachers in the early learning program complete an additional qualification course in early development will be helpful towards creating a greater understanding of early child development theories such as attachment and care. Finally, training must be provided to school boards and administrators on a more consistent and accessible basis to ensure systemic change and coordinated outcomes across the province in relation to staff integration and the professional recognition of the new RECE role.

Ontario’s current policy direction focuses on implementing a Full Day Kindergarten Program with an increased emphasis on schooling. However, adequate attention is not being paid to educator qualifications and program quality that could contribute to child development outcomes. Despite the policy intent of shared responsibility to plan and implement curriculum together, the limit placed on the duty to cooperate confirms the “lead” role of the teacher in the classroom with respect to instruction, assessment and classroom management (Grieve, 2010, p.5), leaving the RECE in a precarious position in the classroom, having to negotiate the responsibilities and roles with their teaching partner in an attempt to co-operate. Given the complexities of the institutionalized education setting and the relative lack of power of the new professional RECE in the early learning classroom, great care must be taken to ensure that we do not lose the policy and program intent articulated in the special advisor’s report with respect to care and nurturing in integration. It can only be achieved with an ongoing and multipronged
approach of strategic legislation and policy; union collaboration and political support; training and infrastructure support for school boards and administrators; and professional development for the teaching teams.
3.7 References


Chapter 4

4 Negotiating Status: The Impact of Union Contracts on the Professional Role of RECEs in Ontario's Full Day Kindergarten Programs³

4.1 Abstract

This study analyzes three union contracts as a way to unpack the ways in which the professional role of the registered early childhood educator (RECE) in full-day kindergarten (FDK) programs in Ontario is recognized and constructed in policy texts. The study examines what constitutes an “early learning professional” compared to a “teacher” or “educational assistant,” and how the discourses of professionalism are constructed through policy texts to position the role of RECEs in FDK. Results from this study suggest that union contracts play an important role in shaping the new “professional” role and status of RECEs in FDK programs.

4.2 Overview

The professional role of RECEs is evolving through the integration of care and education through full-day kindergarten (FDK) programs across Canada. While unions have historically played an integral role in improving the wages and working conditions of RECEs in the child care sector, integration of early learning into the education sector presents a new opportunity to raise the professional profile and working conditions of RECEs. This study examines the union

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contracts of three major unions that represent the RECEs in FDK programs in Ontario, namely the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF), and the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO). Using a comparative text analysis approach, this paper examines how the program and policy intent articulated in Ontario’s Education Act to establish professional early learning pedagogical teams has been realized through policy documents such as union contracts. In particular, the impact of union contracts on the new professional role and status of RECEs in the education sector is examined, including the material gains and potential losses realized by the RECEs in FDK based on their union contracts through wages, benefits, and working conditions. For example, while unionization can benefit RECEs, it is important to understand the differences in union approaches to negotiating RECE contracts and the ways in which these influences shape the role and status of RECEs in FDK programs. The findings in this study can provide insight about union processes to stakeholders in other jurisdictions, to ensure better professional recognition of RECEs through negotiated union contracts.

4.2.1 Legislative Context

Primary education has been a universal right in Ontario since 1844 under the Education Act, while explicit support for early childhood education and care was introduced much later under the 1946 Day Nurseries Act and the 1971 Child and Family Services Act. Child care programs were introduced to support increasing numbers of women moving into the workforce, to provide enrichment to children in need, and later to support dual-income families. These licensed child care programs were primarily staffed by ECEs and other support staff and for the most part were not represented by union contracts. As of 2007, ECEs in Ontario are now
required to be registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators (Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007).

In 2010, Ontario’s Education Act was amended to include changes related to the implementation of full-day kindergarten (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2010). One of these changes was the introduction of a team teaching model in the full-day early learning—kindergarten (FDELK) program, which placed a registered early childhood educator (RECE) and a certified teacher in the kindergarten classroom as professional partners with a “duty to cooperate” in designing and delivering a play-based full-day early learning program (Education Act, 1990, s. 264.1). This new model of pairing a teacher and an early childhood educator was the first of its kind in a Canadian jurisdiction. Prior to this change in legislation, kindergarten programs were under the purview of certified teachers and ancillary support staff.

Although RECEs have previously worked in the education sector, they have occupied support roles such as educational assistants in classrooms have had no curriculum planning, assessment, or independent child supervision responsibilities. The recent legislative and policy changes to integrate care and education in Ontario’s FDK program recognize the early child development knowledge and expertise of RECE professionals, as envisioned by Pascal (2009). RECEs in FDK programs are now required to plan and deliver curriculum together with the teacher, participate in assessments, supervise children (without the need for a teacher to be present in the classroom) and deliver a play-based curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b).

Elementary teachers in Ontario are legislated to belong to a teachers’ union (Education Act, 1990, s. 277.4 [3]). However, the legislative changes made to the Education Act in 2010 were silent about which union would represent the new RECE early learning professional in
FDK. As a result of this omission, education sector unions scrambled to organize the RECEs, resulting in them being represented by a variety of unions and professional associations across the province. Unlike elementary teachers, who are represented by one union (in either the Catholic or the public sector) and have one collective voice and bargaining power with similar wages and working conditions, RECEs in Ontario are left with a variety of union contracts and a patchwork of wages and working conditions. Some of these unions represent support staff, secondary school teachers and professional associations in the education sector, and may not fully appreciate the context of the RECEs’ new professional role in FDK programs. As a result, the potential gains afforded through the Education Act amendment may have been eroded in terms of both role and status of RECEs as well as any material gains in wages and working conditions that might have occurred as a result of these increased roles and responsibilities.

4.2.2 Union Representation in Full-Day Kindergarten

In Ontario, there are two routes to representation by a union: voluntary recognition or certification of a bargaining unit (Labour Relations Act, 1995, ss. 7-15). Voluntary recognition is an informal process that allows employers to voluntarily recognize that a union represents a certain category of workers that may include incorporating a new job classification into an existing collective agreement. A more formal and sometimes lengthy process requires a union to apply for certification through the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) to represent a group of workers in a newly defined bargaining unit. Before a certificate of representation is issued, this process requires the union to show support from the group of employees by way of signed membership cards and winning a vote arranged by the OLRB.

Based on the Education Act amendment, the new early learning professional role of RECEs in FDK affords the RECEs in FDK programs higher status as professional partners
within the team. Unlike previous educational assistance roles that they occupied in the education sector that have no curriculum planning, assessment, or independent child supervision responsibilities, RECEs in FDK programs are required to plan and deliver curriculum together with the teacher, participate in assessments, supervise children (without the need for a teacher to be present in the classroom) and deliver a play-based curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010-2011).

Despite the significant changes in responsibility for the new RECE role in FDK in Ontario, two large education sector unions, CUPE and OSSTF, entered into voluntary recognition agreements with many Ontario school boards, arguing that they already represented educational assistants with early childhood education qualifications in schools, and that the new RECE job category fell within the parameters of their existing collective agreements. They were given the right to represent RECEs in full-day kindergarten by adding the FDK RECEs to existing collective agreements. As a result, a majority of Ontario’s 72 school boards took the voluntary recognition approach with respect to RECEs in FDK classrooms.

In contrast to the approach taken by CUPE and OSSTF, the union that represents Ontario’s elementary school teachers seized the opportunity to expand its representation through the certification process. ETFO launched a large-scale campaign in 2010 to organize as many RECEs as possible in the education sector. The process entailed several legal challenges at the OLRB (see, for example, Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario v. York Region District School Board, Globe 24h Case Law, 2012) to determine whether the RECEs in question fell within an existing agreement or were an appropriate bargaining unit of their own. Interestingly, and despite ETFO’s earlier political lobbying against introducing RECEs into the FDK classrooms as teaching partners (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 2009), ETFO’s
organizing campaign was entitled “one union, one profession,” implying that the RECEs and teachers should have equal recognition as early educators. ETFO president Sam Hammond strongly supported the RECEs joining ETFO, stating,

> Membership in the same union will have many advantages both for teachers and for ECEs: it will facilitate team building, professional learning, quicker problem solving, and conflict resolution. A strong, united early learning team is better placed to resist pressure. ETFO understands elementary education and elementary educators. This federation is a natural choice for ECEs. Our ECE members will be equal partners in our federation (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 2010, p. 4).

Interestingly, a number of leaders within the early childhood sector and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario also endorsed ETFO as the most effective and professional union for the new school board RECEs. As a result of the campaign, ETFO was successful in organizing 10 of Ontario’s 72 school boards and has won the right to represent RECEs as separate bargaining units in these workplaces. The differences in representation among the three educational unions presents an opportunity to analyze how a professional role and status is constructed through union contracts and to assess whether there is any material difference in the wages and working conditions in the three contracts.

### 4.3 Content Analysis of Union Contracts

Bredeson (2001) suggests that teacher unions have an inordinate amount of influence in schools. He argues that union contracts can provide an “important lens for examining
organizational structures and dynamics” (Bredeson, 2001, p. 3). This study undertakes a content analysis (Nuendorf, 2002) of three union collective agreements as one lens for examining the organizational influences and dynamics that these unions bring to negotiating the new professional role and status of RECEs in FDK programs in Ontario. I explore how the language in the three union contracts reflects and constructs the importance that schools, administrators, and unions place on new professional RECE roles and analyze the extent to which the roles are explicitly recognized and in what ways the contract language determines wages, hours, preparation time, and other conditions of employment that could influence the RECEs’ pedagogical practice in the newly designed team teaching model. In this way I undertake a broader text analysis (Fairclough, 2003) that includes the social contexts that shape the discourses of professional status including the role, responsibilities, and working conditions of RECEs in the union contracts. In particular, I look at what is included and excluded in these texts, with respect to the RECEs’ professional status.

Union contract provisions are negotiated within the context of a variety of formal and informal processes, policies, and practices that can “confound and compound the contract’s power to influence” (Bascia, 1994, p. 83). These could include the union’s history, its relationship with its members, and the political influences that shape the negotiation of particular contract provisions, which in turn have a powerful impact on the working conditions and status of the union’s members. This paper thus engages in content analysis of the union contracts within the context of a broader understanding of the discourses that have shaped the specific provisions articulated in the contracts and with a view to contextualizing the union agreements as historic artifacts, or an imperfect record of earlier (or current) issues and decisions. This content analysis forms part of a broader analysis of the legal and policy construction of the new early
learning professional in Ontario, which investigates the labour policy implications of FDK implementation on the status and working conditions of RECEs in Ontario.

### 4.3.1 RECE Wages and Working Conditions in FDK: A Comparison of Three Union Contracts

The three union contracts reviewed for this paper reflect three large unions representing RECEs in full-day kindergarten in three Ontario school boards:

- Toronto District School Board—CUPE Unit C Agreement and Related Documents
- Ottawa–Carleton District School Board—OSSTF District 25 Educational Support Professionals Agreement and Related Letters of Understanding
- Toronto Catholic District School Board—ETFO Agreement

To compare wages and working conditions, I identified major contractual provisions that form the basis of RECEs’ compensation as well as non-compensation-related items that contribute to working conditions in the workplace, as detailed in Table 1. In addition, I refer to and analyze addenda and memoranda relating to RECEs in FDK that were either agreements made after the ratification of the existing collective agreement or form part of the union contract with the employer.
\textit{Table 1. Comparison of specific provisions in the CUPE, OSSTF, and ETFO agreements.}


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Provision</th>
<th>CUPE</th>
<th>OSSTF</th>
<th>ETFO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope of agreement</td>
<td>Covers office, clerical, secretarial, technical staff, educational assistants, aquatic, health care, food services staff, itinerant music instructors, and school support staff</td>
<td>Covers all professional support staff</td>
<td>Covers designated ECEs in FDK as defined by the Education Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Addenda: special memorandum of understanding for ECEs in FDK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of document</td>
<td>188 pages (including addenda)</td>
<td>85 pages (including addenda of 8 pages)</td>
<td>75 pages (including addenda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union representation</td>
<td>80 stewards from all jobs, negotiation committee of eight members get 700 hours off with pay for negotiations</td>
<td>Five bargaining committee reps, three labour management committee reps, three grievance committee reps with paid time off for bargaining, meetings, and grievance resolution</td>
<td>Executive Committee of ECEs and 20 days leave with pay for officials to conduct union duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times ECE is mentioned in the agreement</td>
<td>One time in schedule of job categories</td>
<td>None in collective agreement; 16 mentions of ECE in letter of agreement</td>
<td>279 times (designated ECE or DECE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times the word professional is used in the agreement</td>
<td>19 times, related to PA or PD, professional librarian and professionals or paraprofessionals</td>
<td>49 times, related to professional associations, professional growth, professional training, etc.</td>
<td>10 times, related to professional practice, professional duties, professional activity, and professional training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Refers to schedule A but not included in document</td>
<td>Agreement for board to post at a starting salary of $19.48, although there was no agreement on the salary schedule</td>
<td>Experience credit for 4 qualified years prior to date of hire including from prior employers. Grid range $: $18.54 letter of permission $20.09-qualified 0 years experience $21.63-qualified 1 years experience $23.18-qualified 2 years experience $24.72-qualified 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Provision</td>
<td>CUPE</td>
<td>OSSTF</td>
<td>ETFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>experience</td>
<td>$26.27-qualified 4 years experience</td>
<td>(Qualified is a member in good standing of the College of Early Childhood Educators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>ECE hours based on program needs</td>
<td>Between 6.25 and 6.5 hours per day for core program. Extended program to be determined.</td>
<td>Seven hours per day/35 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation time</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>30 minutes each instructional day or 150 minutes for a 5-day period, scheduled in blocks no shorter than 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch break</td>
<td>Unpaid lunch of 30 minutes on shifts over 5.5 hours</td>
<td>30-minute unpaid lunch break</td>
<td>Unpaid 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaks</td>
<td>Combined rest/lunch of 15 minutes per 4-hour day and 2 breaks of 15 minutes for days over 5.5 hours</td>
<td>Two paid 15-minute rest periods each day or 1 rest period of 15 minutes for half days</td>
<td>Two paid breaks of 15 minutes each day (am/pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional activity (PA) or professional development (PD) days</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Union allowed to offer training on site on PD days—time unpaid by employer</td>
<td>Six days/school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comp/lieu time</td>
<td>Overtime paid at 1.5x rate; lieu time with approval</td>
<td>ECEs are not eligible for time off in lieu; additional hours assigned by principal shall be paid at straight time</td>
<td>If ECE works overtime, as authorized by principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>.40 cents/km</td>
<td>Board-wide rate as approved by the supervisor</td>
<td>.45 cents/km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Employer shall endeavour to provide training opportunities</td>
<td>Paid time off and cost of training for required courses to upgrade qualifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension plan</td>
<td>OMERS or teachers’ pension plan if qualified</td>
<td>OMERS or OTIP if 10 or more month employees</td>
<td>OMERS or OTPP (for DECEs with teaching credentials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory holidays</td>
<td>Eight days, including New Years, Family</td>
<td>11 days including Easter Monday,</td>
<td>11 days, including Easter Monday + half days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Provision</td>
<td>CUPE</td>
<td>OSSTF</td>
<td>ETFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day, Good Friday,</td>
<td>Canada Day, and August civic holiday</td>
<td>before Christmas and New Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter Monday,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Day,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing Day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vacation</strong></td>
<td>11 days—less than 1 year</td>
<td>15 working days</td>
<td>15 days—less than 1 yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 days—1 to 9 yrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 days—1 to 9 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 days—9 to 16 yrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 days—9 to 16 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 days—17 to 22 yrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 days—17 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefit plan</strong></td>
<td>Health, dental, long-term disability, life insurance up to $30,000</td>
<td>Health, dental, long-term disability, life insurance up to $45,000</td>
<td>Register after three months of at least 14 hrs./week; employer pays 100% of premium, health, vision care—$350/2 yrs, orthopedic $900/yr., life ins of three times annual salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
<td>Seniority applies—30 days notice to be deemed surplus</td>
<td>First consideration for initial vacancies will be given to qualified EA bargaining unit members or other OSSTF members; seniority carried forward</td>
<td>Date of hire, layoff only at the end of the school year, on recall list for two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick leave</td>
<td>Eligible after 15 hours/week up to 24 days/yr. prorated based on 12 months</td>
<td>Two days per month prorated, to a maximum entitlement of 340 sick leave credits</td>
<td>Accumulated sick leave two calendar days per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other leaves</td>
<td>General, political activity, pregnancy, infant/child care leave of one additional year, family medical leave</td>
<td>No leaves of absence with pay—article 19.09 does not apply to ECEs</td>
<td>Bereavement five days, personal leave of absence of up to one year, jury duty, court appearance, urgent personal business, family medical, compassionate leave, pregnancy/adoption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2 CUPE Contract

CUPE’s collective agreement is the most extensive of the three contracts, covering a variety of clerical, technical, and educational support staff in one 188-page document. The RECEs in FDK were included in the existing collective agreement through voluntary recognition by the Toronto District School Board because educational assistants with ECE qualifications were already represented by CUPE in this workplace. Remarkably, “ECE” is only mentioned once in the whole document in the schedule of job categories and there have been no attempts made to differentiate between the new professional role of RECEs in FDK compared to the educational assistant roles previously represented by the union. The term “professional” is used in relation to training and development in a general sense. Interestingly, this is the only one of the three contracts that uses the term “paraprofessionals.” This could be attributed to the expertise of this particular union in representing paraprofessionals and support staff in the education sector.

Notable in this contract is the fact that RECEs are considered hourly employees whose hours are based on program needs. This allows for RECEs to be assigned split shifts and to be laid off in the middle of the school year. The fact that this contract offers only eight statutory holidays to its members—even though there is a minimum of nine statutory holidays a year in Ontario under employment standards legislation that generally applies to non-unionized staff—is significant. Presumably, the ninth holiday falls within the summer months and is not included in this contract, which may be the result of the temporary nature of RECEs’ employment. Regardless, because of the scope of this contract and the various job categories it covers, it appears that the inclusion of the new professional role of RECEs in FDK has had little impact to
elevate the status of RECEs covered by the contract, including those previously in educational assistant roles.

4.3.3 OSSTF Contract

OSSTF was granted a voluntary recognition agreement with the Ottawa–Carleton School District board because they represented educational assistants with ECE qualifications prior to the FDK implementation. OSSTF is a union that largely represents high school teachers, but it also represents a significant number of support staff in elementary schools. The language in this contract reflects this mix of professional and support roles throughout, for example, in the use of the terms “professional growth” and “professional associations” alongside “professional training.” Although the OSSTF contract covers a large group of educational support professionals, it has a special letter of agreement that specifically addresses RECEs in FDK programs.

RECEs are considered hourly staff with a 6.25 or 6.5-hour core day not including an unpaid lunch, which leaves RECEs open to being assigned split shifts to cover both the early morning and after-school periods of each day, particularly in the extended day program. At the same time, RECEs are not entitled to lieu time, and are required to be paid “straight time pay” for any additional work time that is scheduled by the principal. It is unclear whether this provision would extend to overtime hours as defined under employment standards (normally hours over 44 are paid at 1.5 times the regular rate). In this contract, the RECE letter of agreement does not allow for any leaves of absence. It is unclear whether this has changed in subsequent agreements with the employer. Similarly, the RECEs are characterized as hourly paid employees rather than full-time permanent contract staff with more job security, which leaves the
door open to shorter contracts with no express provisions that layoffs can only occur at the end of the school year.

### 4.3.4 ETFO Contract

ETFO won the right to represent the RECEs in FDK through certification. As a result, the ETFO contract covers a dedicated bargaining unit of RECEs, referred to as designated early childhood educators (DECEs) as described in the Education Act amendments. It is not surprising that the term DECE is mentioned 279 times throughout the contract. While the term “professional” was only used ten times in the contract, there appears to be a tacit acknowledgment throughout the agreement that the discussion is completely centred on professionals. For example, the term “professional” is used to describe the professional practice and professional duties of the DECEs and is not just related to professional activity days and professional training that are common to professionals in other agreements. In addition, there is detailed language in the ETFO agreement about the specific role of DECEs in the early learning program, including discussion about functioning in an early learning team teaching environment.

Importantly, this contract ensures that the DECE positions are considered full-time ten-month contracts, and the DECEs are given three weeks’ vacation over the December and March breaks. As a result, the contract ensures that DECEs can only be laid off at the end of each school year, which characterizes their employment as permanent contract staff, with seniority and right of first refusal to return to the same job the following year. It also prevents DECEs from having to apply for EI benefits over the December and March breaks. Sick time, benefits, pensions, and time off in lieu are all modeled after the teachers’ collective agreements. Although DECE salaries are lower than the teachers’, they are determined by a grid that recognizes prior experience, not only with the same employer, but also from previous employers both in and
outside the education sector. This is the only contract that allows for paid time for DECEs on professional activity days, a clause that allows DECEs to participate alongside their teacher partners in board-sponsored professional development with pay. Also significant is the fact that this is the only contract that provides for 30 minutes of preparation time each instructional day, or 150 minutes in a five-day period. Although teachers receive 240 minutes of preparation time each week in comparison, this is a good starting point for DECEs; it recognizes their new role in planning curriculum, and it sets the tone for increased time in future negotiations. Overall, this contract appears to recognize the newly elevated status of RECEs in the FDK program as teaching partners in the classroom.

4.4 Discussion: The Influence of Union Contracts on the Role and Status of RECEs

Implementing Pascal’s (2009) vision of a universally accessible publicly funded early education system shifts the provision of early care and education into the public education sector. This shift to a public system ostensibly creates better wages and working conditions for the RECE and elevates their professional role within the education sector in these new professional positions, which include increased responsibilities such as planning and implementing play-based curriculum alongside their teacher partners. In support of this fundamental shift, the Ontario Ministry of Education established a new Early Learning Division with an early learning mandate that includes child care and early education.

While these policy changes have the potential to elevate the status of RECEs in the education sector, analysis of these three union contracts indicates that the historical construction of RECEs as care providers rather than early educators impacted the existing contracts. For
example, contracts with unions that formerly represented RECEs in support positions within the education sector have continued to reflect the new professional role in similarly constructed positions, while unions that did not previously represent RECEs in this support capacity have moved from characterizing the new roles as care providers toward a more complex early learning professional status within the teaching team in FDK programs. CUPE and OSSTF contracts reflect no changes to the new role of RECEs as early education professionals with teaching responsibilities in FDK. In fact, these union contracts group all RECE jobs, including educational assistants and child care workers, under one job category regardless of the role they occupy as support staff in schools or in their new role as teaching partners in the FDK program.

There are a number of challenges outlined in the RECE contracts that contribute to the precarious nature of RECEs’ status as professionals. Unlike teachers, who are guaranteed a full year salary, vacation plans, and professional development time and funding, RECE contracts are characterized by hourly salaries, less job security, and a potential for split shifts. For example, they are the only contracts that characterize RECEs in FDK programs in Ontario as hourly paid staff with less job security and the potential for split shifts. These contracts also include provisions that may erode basic employment standards rights, such as statutory holidays or overtime pay, given that they sometimes reflect fewer entitlements than legislated as minimum employment standards. Interestingly, the CUPE and OSSTF contracts also address the issue of travel time between locations independent of the unpaid lunch break, indicating that RECEs may be assigned to more than one work location each day. This also contributes to a more precarious job arrangement for RECEs who have to juggle split shifts and different classrooms at multiple school locations and negotiate relationships with teaching partners, supervising principals, children, and families in these different locations. Clearly this arrangement does not provide the time or supports required for RECEs to function in the classroom as a professional partner in the
program. Given the large numbers of staff covered by these collective agreements and the range of job categories they reflect, it would be difficult for a subset of this group, such as RECEs in the FDK programs, to put forward any specific provisions related to their role or status in the program as part of future contract negotiations.

In contrast, ETFO’s collective agreement represents only RECEs in the FDK program and recognizes the professional status of RECEs in FDK through specific contract language. This is the only union contract that characterizes RECEs as full time 10-month contract employees with no mid year layoffs, no split shifts and no erosion of basic employment standards. This is also the only union contract to recognize the professional role of RECEs as early educators with curriculum delivery expectations through the express provision for planning time. ETFO’s contract also affords RECEs more access to paid training and more paid time off for union-related activities.

While CUPE and OSSTF limit seniority to the current job, ETFO managed to include prior experience from other employers as a creative proxy for seniority, and allows RECEs transferring into the education sector from the child care sector to be compensated for their prior experience. This allows RECEs to be compensated in a way that recognizes their prior professional experience outside the education sector and improves their overall recognition and status in the education sector.

Although there is significant variation in how RECEs are positioned within union contracts, a number of provisions seem to level the playing field between CUPE, OSSTF, and ETFO, including access to pensions, unpaid lunches, paid breaks, vacation pay of three weeks to start and deferred salary plans. Although explicit salary information was not included in all the contracts, the Ontario government legislated the minimum wage for RECEs in FDK as starting at
$19.68 in year 1 and $20.05 in year 2 (Ministry of Education, 2010a). This legislative provision made a significant difference in wages for RECEs in FDK programs in the education sector, regardless of the union they are represented by. While individual union contracts can provide for recognition of seniority or prior experience, they apply to specific groups of RECEs. Given the number of RECEs employed in the FDK programs in Ontario, the provincially legislated minimum pay for RECEs in FDK has been an effective way of improving the wages of RECEs across Ontario and recognizing the new professional role that RECEs play in FDK.

4.5 Conclusion: Professional Recognition of RECEs in FDK

The historic dichotomy between the care and education of young children has been well documented (Gananathan, 2011; Irvine, Kertridge, McPhee, & Freeman, 2002; Wood, 2004). These writers suggest that there are many barriers to inter-professional collaboration, including legal decisions that characterize power differentials between team members, and differences in professional value systems, professional organizations, registration requirements, professional training, and professional identity. Wood (2004) argues that while there has been a schism between care and education settings in the past, a contemporary consensus has emerged on the concept of “educare,” which combines both elements.

While the implementation of FDK attempts to level the playing field between teachers and RECEs as early education professionals in Ontario (Ministry of Education, 2010b; Pascal, 2009), the failure to legislate RECEs as professional early educators to belong to teacher unions alongside their pedagogical partners sets up RECEs to negotiate the contested terrain of their work. It perpetuates the age-old rift between care and education and undermines the policy intent of integrating care and education in Ontario’s FDK teaching teams. Other jurisdictions facing
similar challenges in Canada, such as the Atlantic provinces, have embraced creative alternatives to develop stronger links between the two professionals, such as training for grand-parented RECEs and teachers in order to establish one early learning professional (Moss & Bennett, 2006), regardless of whether they were trained as teachers or RECEs. Ontario’s reticence to recognize the professional status of RECEs in FDK through stronger labour-related legislative provisions is a lost opportunity to do the same.

As we have seen, unions can play a critical role in how RECEs’ new professional role is redrawn in the “educare” context and how the RECEs’ role and status as early development specialists get recognized. Regardless of which union represents the RECEs in FDK, there needs to be stronger language in union contracts to reflect RECEs’ team teaching role, their elevated responsibilities of curriculum planning and delivery, and their new professional role in FDK programs. Some key considerations for unions include addressing the need for adequate paid time for curriculum planning, full-time stable employment with comparable benefits to provide consistency in the program, and greater opportunities for professional training, such as additional qualification (AQ) courses in assessment, literacy, and numeracy with related pay increases (similar to what teachers receive for completing kindergarten AQ courses) in order to build stronger collaborations with kindergarten teachers.

Union contracts need to recognize the differences between RECEs in care roles (such as educational assistants who have a support role in the classroom) and RECEs in FDK programs (who have program planning, assessment, and curriculum delivery expectations) through express language that describes RECEs in FDK as early education professionals. For example, RECEs in FDK should be listed as a separate professional job class in union contracts. Given the large number of RECEs represented by CUPE and OSSTF through voluntary recognition agreements
across the province, the potential impact on the role and status of RECEs is substantial if the role continues to be characterized in a support capacity. It is time for unions to step up to the plate and implement contract language that reflects the team teaching model and policy intent behind the Education Act amendments. As discussed previously, governments play a key role in legislating minimum pay scales to reflect the professional roles of RECEs in FDK programs and ensuring recognition for their professional skills and expertise. It would be beneficial for governments to strengthen the role of RECEs as teaching partners in the FDK program and to consider ways to improve the team teaching relationship and working conditions of both team members. This could be achieved through skills training for RECEs and teachers with a view to leveling the playing field, and revisiting the notion of legislating RECEs in the FDK program to belong to a teachers’ union.
4.6 References


http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=2269


Chapter 5

5 Lesser Amongst Equals: The Discursive Construction of Ontario’s Early Learning Professional RECE in Law and Policy Texts

5.1 Abstract

This paper analyzes the legal changes and the underlying policy intent of the Ontario Education Act changes introduced through Bill 242 in 2010, and the jurisdictional conflicts of these changes with the federal Employment Insurance Act (EI Act). The paper explores the resulting impacts, and ultimately material gains and losses, on the discursive construction of Ontario’s new early learning professional in the education sector, Registered Early Childhood Educators in Full Day Kindergarten programs.

5.2 Background

In 2010, the Education Act was amended to include changes related to the implementation of FDK for 4- and 5-year olds in Ontario. For the first time in any Canadian jurisdiction, these legislative changes included the introduction of a unique team teaching model in the FDK program (Corter, Janmohamed & Pelletier, 2012). The changes place a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) and Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) in the kindergarten classroom with a mandated “duty to cooperate” in designing and delivering a play based full day early learning program. The introduction of the early learning teaching team is noteworthy because it is the first time it has been legislated in any Canadian jurisdiction.
The policy intent behind the change was to recognize the long-term benefit to a comprehensive full day of learning for kindergarten children, that maximizes early learning and care. It also recognized the early child development knowledge, skills and pedagogical expertise that RECEs bring to the classroom in the education sector, and elevated their status in the classroom from previous educational assistant roles, through a shared responsibility with teachers to develop and deliver a play-based early learning curriculum (Pascal, 2009).

At the same time, significant new policy unfolded related to the teaching teams, the role of each educator, and the position of RECEs in the school system. Although in principle, a partnership between the RECE and OCT was desired, in practice, the early childhood educator’s status and role in FDK has been compromised through conflicts with law and policy, leading to legal challenges and competing interpretation in case law. An example of this is the definition of what constitutes a teacher in the Federal Employment Insurance (EI) Act and the disentitlement of RECEs in the FDK program for Employment Insurance benefits and the legal discourses that ensued because of the new early childhood professional role in the team teaching model. As a result of many of these legal discourses, the gains afforded through the provincial Education Act amendment have been eroded both in terms of role and status as well as any material gains in wages and working conditions that might have occurred as a result of these increased roles and responsibilities.

5.3 Content and Text Analysis as a Way to Understand Policy Discourse

The discursive construction of RECEs as early learning professionals in the FDK program is explored in this paper. Using content and text analysis as a way to understand the
way that meaning is attached to the new “professional” team teaching role and status of RECEs in FDK, this paper unpacks the ways in which meanings are discursively constructed in policy and legislation texts and legal decisions by the various actors involved in the discourse such as school boards, child care operators, RECEs, unions, advocacy organizations, governments, and adjudicators.

Content analysis is a useful tool for analyzing policy through text (Nuendorf, 2002) as well as through the social construction of meanings assigned to discourse in text (Ball 2012; Fairclough 1992, 1995, 2003; Gee, 1999; Saarinen, 2008; Thomas, 2005). In this way, content analysis can be utilized to unpack the dynamics of discourses operating between text and culture. Inherent in this approach to text analysis is an emphasis on the productive nature of discourses, the relationship between knowledge and power, and the network of dominance entangled with the multiple subject positions and identities or actors involved in the discourse (Foucault, 1972). For example, the process of discourse analysis uncovers the construction of everyday meanings of discourses to the particularities of meanings assigned within social or cultural groups such as a profession or institution, which in turn give rise to new discourses or forms of knowledge (Rautalin & Alasuutari, 2007). In this way, we can analyze the FDK policies by not only looking at the textual construction of meanings, but also at the social and political contexts within which these meanings are constructed and legitimized by the various actors in the discourse. For example, by using organizational policy research and feminist legal constructs, I am able to link the analysis of the text to how power-relations work across networks of practices and structures.

Fairclough (2003, p. 124) argues that “discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another – keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, dominating – and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another.”
Similarly, Thomas (2005, p. 47) describes discourse analysis as “a movement between the analysis of texts to their broad social formations”. She proposes that discourse analysis is a multi-dimensional method that includes analysis of texts by the identification of features of the text through which discourses may be traced; the analysis of discursive practices engaged in the interpretation or production of texts and the relationships between them, and the analysis of the social and cultural practices surrounding the texts.

Saarinen (2008) argues that the “study of policy discourse involves questioning language dualistically, both as construing policy and being affected by it”. This paper similarly undertakes an analysis of FDK staffing policy and legal analysis in terms of its social and cultural discursive practices that are at force to shape and influence the construction of the early childhood educator as an early learning professional in Ontario through law and policy texts. It also analyses how the professional practice of early childhood educators are at once enabled and constrained by such discourses.

In particular, this paper explores the discourses of what constitutes an “early learning professional” compared to a “teacher” or “educational assistant”, and how the discourses of professionalism are constructed through legal and policy texts to position the role of RECEs in FDK. Professional status is understood to include the role, responsibilities, and working conditions of RECEs in the education sector. By exploring more specifically what is included and excluded in relation to the professional role of RECEs in education, this paper unpacks the ways in which certain authoritative voices are legitimized in the policy-making process and how it impacts the role and status of RECEs in FDK programs across Ontario.
5.3.1 Policy Texts

The implementation of Full Day Kindergarten in Ontario has been accompanied by a number of legal and policy changes at all levels that have had an impact on the professional role and status of RECEs, which would require a much broader analysis than this paper allows. Therefore, this paper focuses on an appeal decision of the Board of Referees (a Federal government Tribunal) on the interpretation of the Employment Insurance Act and how it discursively constructs the early childhood professional in FDK programs. In order to undertake this analysis, I begin by investigating the context and intent of the policy articulated in the provincial Education Act amendments through the textual construction of the new RECE role in FDK in legislation and related policy documents. I then undertake a content and text analysis of the discourses of professionalism and what constitutes a professional versus an assistant in the context of the new RECE role in FDK programs in the case law related to EI eligibility. Discourses used by the various actors in this process convey a set of values about the new role of the RECEs in FDK. By using content and discourse analysis in this way, I seek to uncover how the historical and gendered construction of care work as women’s work, continues to influence the role of RECEs and their role in the integrated FDK staff teams.

For the purpose of this paper, I analyze the following texts:

- The Ontario Education Act amendments enacted through Bill 242 in 2010
- Related policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education on Bill 242 as a way to guide implementation of FDK
- A recent decision of the Umpire serving Employment Insurance judgments, on an appeal by an Early Childhood Educator who was denied Employment Insurance benefits, discussing his/her role in the program
• Related case law and legislation under the Employment Insurance Act as it relates to eligibility for benefits.

5.4 Setting the Context

5.4.1 Legal Amendments to the Education Act

The Education Act in Ontario was amended through Bill 242 in June 2010 to require school boards to provide FDK programs. A number of changes came into force that detailed the responsibilities of a new “designated” ECE. The main provision in s. 264.1(1) requires teachers and designated early childhood educators to cooperate with each other and coordinate in planning and providing education to pupils; observing, monitoring and assessing the development of pupils; maintaining a healthy physical emotional and social learning environment; communicating with families; and performing all duties assigned to them by the principal with respect to JK and K programs (Education Act, RSO 1990).

The amendments (Education Act, RSO 1990, ss. 261-262) require both teachers and designated ECEs to be members of their respective regulatory colleges, and impose the same probationary period of two years for both professionals. Similarly, there are a number of sections that were amended to strike out the word “teacher”, and replace it with “teacher and designated early childhood educator”, or the words “teacher in their practice” and substitute it with “teachers and designated early childhood educators in their practices” (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2010, s. 261 and s. 286.1), implying that the teacher and Designated ECE are both equally charged with the duties of implementing the FDK program.
Interestingly, the Education Act (Education Act, RSO 1990, ss. 277.47[4] and 277.48 [3]) sets out that school boards shall not require teachers to mentor or participate in performance appraisals of designated ECEs, further establishing that the ECE is not an assistant to the teacher, but a professional counterpart that has similar reporting relationships to the Principal of the school, as do teachers. For example, a posting for an ECE at the York District School Board states, “the successful DECE candidate(s) will be responsible for collaborating with the kindergarten teacher and other staff to implement the Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten Program (FDK) under the supervision of the Principal and in compliance with Board policies, procedures and Ministry of Education direction” (York District School Board, 2013).

5.4.2 Ministry of Education Communication on Implementation

At the time that the Education Act amendments came into force, the Ministry of Education issued a series of memoranda and public service announcements to school boards, parents and the public to describe the changes, and aid in the implementation of the law (Ministry of Education, 2010). These documents provide further detail on the policy intent behind the new FDK program, the teaching team and ultimately the impact on young children and families. The documents reinforce the rationale articulated by the Premier’s Early Learning Advisor in the report \textit{With Our Best Future In Mind} (Pascal, 2009, a) and its compendium implementation report entitled \textit{Every Child, Every Opportunity} (Pascal, 2009, b). Pascal’s rationale includes a focus on early human development that maximizes learning through play, a program that values the professional expertise of both teachers and RECEs through a team teaching model, and a publicly funded system of early learning that integrates child care and education to improve learning for children and access for families.
In a memorandum to the Directors of Education (Ministry of Education, May 5, 2010, p. 4-5), under a section entitled “roles and responsibilities of teachers and RECEs”, Jim Grieve, the Assistant Deputy Minister states [emphasis added]:

“The legislation creates section 264.1 in the Education Act to establish a duty for teachers and ECEs to co-operate and co-ordinate in the following areas:

• Planning and delivery of the JK/K program,
• Assessment and observation of children,
• Communicating with families, and
• Maintaining a healthy social, emotional, and learning environment.

The Education Act states,

Amendments to the Bill (as a result of motions put forward at the Standing Committee on Social Policy) removed references to duties of teachers with respect to the extended day program by reflecting that extended day programs will be led by ECEs. Nothing in the duty to cooperate limits the requirements that teachers and ECEs must be members of their respective Colleges (i.e. the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators), nor limits the duties of teachers under the Education Act, including “duties related to report cards, instruction, training and evaluation of the progress of pupils in junior kindergarten and kindergarten classes, and the preparation of teaching plans”.

An analysis of these statements in the texts reiterates recommendations contained in the Pascal (2009) report, that reinforce a team teaching model of two professionals bringing together their expertise in related but different areas. Both professionals are required to be members of
their respective colleges, and while the teacher and RECE are charged with a duty to cooperate, it is clear that the teacher’s responsibilities with respect to report cards, instruction, training and evaluation are not limited. Similarly, the teacher’s duties around preparation of teaching plans are not limited. At the same time, the policy states the RECE has a role in planning and delivery of the program, and the assessment and observation of children. These directives can seem confusing and contradictory between policy and practice. For example, the use of words with similar meaning to describe the duties of the RECE and teacher such as assessment and evaluation, planning and preparation are all examples of how the texts reinforce the notion that the teacher and RECE are both equally charged with the responsibility of the program.

The importance of this professional merging of teaching and early childhood is reflected at several levels in the texts. For example, the memo describes the significance of integrating early childhood and education under the Ministry of Education as follows [emphasis added]:

The transfer of child care to the Ministry of Education is a significant step in the government’s plan to enhance seamlessness between the two systems and integrate programs and services for young children and their families. Putting the care and education of our children under one ministry will make them more coherent, consistent and responsive to Ontario’s families’ needs (Ministry of Education, May 5, 2010, p. 8).

In related announcements, the Ministry of Education (2013) describes the role of teachers and RECEs in the FDK program as follows [emphasis added]:

Teachers and early childhood educators (ECEs) are working together to help young students learn during the regular school day. These educators have
complementary skills that create a learning environment to support the unique needs of each child. With two qualified professionals in the classroom for the full school day, there is more time for individual and small group instruction.

Early childhood educators have knowledge of early childhood development, observation and assessment. They bring a focus on age-appropriate program planning that promotes each child’s physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social and creative development and well-being. Teachers have knowledge of the broader elementary curriculum, assessment, evaluation and reporting, and child development. They are responsible for student learning, effective instruction and evaluation and formal reporting to parents, based on the teacher-ECE team’s assessments of children’s progress.

The Ministry of Education reiterates these discourses of team teaching, shared responsibility and collaborative practice in other policy documents and texts. For example, the FDK program curriculum document (MOE, 2010-2011) describes the role of Teachers and Early Childhood Educators as a team that are knowledgeable, responsive, reflexive educators that use a range of skills that are complementary to each other in planning and delivering the program. For example, the document states [emphasis added]:

The Early Learning–Kindergarten team uses reflective practice, planned observation, and a range of assessment strategies to identify the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children in order to provide instruction that is appropriate for each child (“differentiated instruction’). This includes whole-class instruction, small-group learning, independent learning, and activities at learning centres. There should be a balance between educator-initiated and child-initiated
activities – times when a member of the team guides the children’s learning and times when children are given opportunities to choose activities to demonstrate their knowledge. Learning experiences should promote integrated learning and allow children to handle, explore, and experiment with a variety of materials that are familiar to them or that they can connect to everyday life. *Team members should also use their knowledge of the social and cultural contexts* in which the children live to *develop and provide learning experiences that are meaningful, relevant, and respectful*…Early childhood educators and teachers will have the benefit of a *collaborative and complementary partnership* to support children and families in a high-quality, intentional, play-based learning environment.

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

*Early childhood educators bring a focus on age-appropriate program planning to facilitate experiences* that promote each child’s physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social, and creative development and well-being, providing opportunities for them to *contribute to formative assessment (assessment for learning) and evaluation of the children’s learning*. They are also responsible for implementing the integrated extended day.
At a textual level, the law and policy documents use strategies such as recurrent patterns in the structure and content of the texts and presuppositions around meanings of words such as collaboration and complementary. For example, the policy documents list teachers and RECEs alongside each other repeatedly, use words such as “team”, and “their” to describe shared responsibilities of both teacher and RECE in planning and delivery. The documents also refer to the “two professionals,” “working together” and describe “complementary” core professional competencies repeatedly. The texts require a “shared duty to cooperate and collaborate in planning and delivering the program”. The transition of the RECE’s role within the education sector is an important social event in the way that this text is presented.

It is also important to review what is not included in these texts, such as an explicit use of words such as “equal” when discussing the shared responsibilities of the two professional team members. Similarly, there is no mention of the word “teach” even though both professionals are charged with “planning and delivering” the program. There are ambiguities in the text that leave the reader to construct meaning in text, for example in articulating how RECEs “bring a focus on age appropriate program planning” to the program. Similarly, there are many pre-suppositions in the text. For example, there is a lack of clarity around the meaning of the word “professional” in any of these texts, even though the MOE and curriculum documents explicitly require each of the early learning team members to be members of their respective regulatory bodies.

It is important to note that the regulation of Early Childhood Educators in Ontario under an independent College of Early Childhood Educators was introduced through the ECE Act shortly before the implementation of the FDK program (Early Childhood Educator Act, 2007), as a way to increase the professional recognition and public accountability of the profession. The College of ECE is structured along the lines of the College of Teachers and in fact a number of
the initial council members and administrators had a teaching background rather than an early childhood background (College of ECE, 2009).

5.5 Conflict of Laws

Not surprisingly, the lack of clarity in legislation and policy documents on the role of Ontario’s new Early Learning Professional has led to further confusion and conflicts with the law. In particular, an early Umpire’s decision on an appeal under the Employment Insurance Act debates whether RECEs would be disqualified from receiving EI benefits based on their new (team) teaching role in the newly implemented FDK program in Ontario. In the following section, I unpack the discourses of the early childhood educator as a teacher versus assistant in this legal decision.

5.5.1 Background on Employment Insurance Act

Under authority of paragraph 54(j) of the Employment Insurance Act (1996) the Commission has the authority to pass regulations to prohibit the payment of benefits to those in occupations that experience annual periods during which no work is performed by a significant number of persons engaged in that occupation. Pursuant to that authority, section 33 of the Regulations impose additional conditions and terms in relation to teachers and states that a claimant who was employed in teaching for any part of the claimant's qualifying period is not entitled to receive benefits (with some exceptions). Teaching is defined as the occupation of teaching in a pre-elementary, an elementary or a secondary school, including a technical or vocational school.
5.5.2 Team Teacher or Team Assistant?

In a January 2011 Canadian Umpire Benefit (CUB) 76308 decision (Service Canada, 2010), the Board of Referees considered the appeal by the Commission where an RECE was initially denied benefits during a non-teaching period pursuant to s. 33 of the Employment Insurance Regulations by the Commission. The decision was appealed by the RECE and the Board of Referees disagreed and granted her benefits, concluding that the claimant was not a teacher but rather a permanent support staff employee. However, the Commission appealed this decision, arguing that the RECE is a teacher under s. 33 of the regulations.

The facts of the case are as follows. The claimant was employed as an Early Childhood Educator by the Lakehead District School Board (LDSB) in a FDK program on a 10-month contract that concluded in June 25, 2010. She was laid off for the summer, but had accepted a contract for a permanent position with the same employer starting September 2010. The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario represented the RECE, and the evidence in this appeal included the collective bargaining agreement between the union and the school boards’ RECE bargaining unit as well as the claimant’s job description.

The union advanced arguments that [emphasis added]:

The applicant is not an Educator as defined under the Ontario Education Act as she does-not have an Ontario Teaching Certificate. She does not belong to the Ontario College of Teachers. She does not have the authority to move children forward in grades, instruct, plan school studies, and grade students. She works under supervision of a qualified teacher. She is paid hourly, biweekly, not on the same scale as a teacher, she receives vacation pay during the year, not in summer.
The Umpire agreed with the Board of Referees finding that the “evidence provided by the Appellant's Representative clearly demonstrates she is not a teacher or a contract worker. She is a permanent support staff employee” (Service Canada, 2010).

These arguments advanced by the union clearly misinterpret the policy and legislation articulated in the Education Act and the Ministry memoranda. For example, the union argues that the RECE works under supervision of a qualified teacher, when the policy explicitly states that the teacher is not to evaluate the RECE, and the RECE reports to the Principal. Similarly, the union argues that the RECE does not have the authority to “instruct, plan school studies, and grade students” when the policy texts clearly require RECEs to have responsibilities related to “planning and delivery of an age appropriate program, and assessment and observation of children.” These inter-textual voices contribute to the way that the role of the RECE evolves in the legal decision.

It is important to note that the RECE in this appeal is actually represented by the same union as all elementary teachers in Ontario. Teachers in Ontario are legislated to belong to the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO). However, when the FDK program and team teaching model was introduced, RECEs in FDK programs were not legislated to belong to the teachers union. This policy decision resulted in recruitment drives by ETFO and voluntary recognition by some boards of unions such as CUPE and OSSTF that had previously represented Educational Assistants with ECE credentials in schools. In a letter to its members, ETFO president Sam Hammond (ETFO, 2010a) explains the decision to unionize RECEs [emphasis added]:

Because ECEs in the new Early Learning Program are working alongside ETFO members and, like all our members, they deserve the benefits of belonging to a
Historically, ECEs have had to fight hard for recognition and respect. They are mainly women, and their work has consistently been undervalued by their employers, and by society as a whole…

Membership in the same union will have many advantages both for teachers and for ECEs: it will facilitate team building, professional learning, and quicker problem solving and conflict resolution. A strong, united early learning team is better placed to resist pressure. ETFO understands elementary education and elementary educators. This federation is a natural choice for ECEs. Our ECE members will be equal partners in our federation.

While ETFO’s organizing platform was entitled “one union, one profession” (ETFO, 2010b), and promised to “help raise the status of ECEs” (ETFO, 2010a), the position of the union in this appeal was not reflective of the above position. It does not support the union’s long-term goal of elevating the professional status of RECEs, or improving their working conditions by obtaining full time permanent status for RECEs or vacation pay during the summer months. In fact is serves to create a more precarious employment structure for RECEs by casting them as assistants in hourly paid contract positions that will be laid off periodically rather than as professionals in year round salaried curriculum delivery positions.

The Umpire accepted that the material findings made by the Board of Referees was in accordance with the evidence before it, including “the employer’s evidence that the claimant could not carry over sick leave…the vocational/professional status of the claimant, the duties of teachers as compared to Early Childhood Educators, and the benefits provided.” In this way, the school board, another key player in the implementation of FDK, also reinforces the position that the RECE is a support staff and not a professional educator alongside the teacher.
Interestingly, the RECE in this process is caught in the power struggle between the school board, union and government. Although she argues:

I disagree with this decision because I am not a teacher. A teacher is paid by salary and receives payment 12 months out of the year. I am an Early Childhood Educator. I am an hourly paid employee and I have been laid off as of June 25, 2010...It is to the best of my knowledge that other support staff who work for the Board of Education are not having difficulty obtaining EI benefits. As an Early Childhood Educator I have received EI benefits every summer over the past nine years of working for the Lakehead Board of Education without any difficulty.

It is important to note that the RECE in question had been employed by the same school board as an Educational Assistant for several years, prior to assuming an RECE position in the FDK program, implying that she may not have fully understood her new professional role as a co-teacher in FDK as articulated in the policy documents, nor have the institutional power to engage in a discourse that demands professional recognition and pay along with status as an equal to a teacher (Foucault, 1976). It is significant that the RECE is appealing this decision so that she can qualify for EI income benefits during the summer months in order to support herself, because she is not paid through the summer like full time, salaried teaching positions in Ontario, because the new role of ECE is categorized as a 10-month contract position in this school board.

The Umpire in this decision, seemingly unaware of the change in Ontario legislation and policy states:
Although it is not material to the issue that is at the heart of this case, it does appear from Ms. G.P.’s experience that the Commission changed its application of section 33, essentially purporting to change the law in doing so. In its submissions to the Umpire, there is no explanation or legal precedent offered to explain this other than the Commission’s concluding statement that Ms. G.P. is an Early Childhood Educator, which is considered a teacher for the purposes of the Regulation and as such, she cannot receive benefits during the summer non-teaching period.

While he goes on to state that “the actions of the Commission either past or present are not determinative of the legal issue to be determined” in the case at hand, he misses the opportunity to interpret the legislation in the context of the new professional role of RECEs in the FDK program in Ontario.

Interestingly, there are precedents from other jurisdictions that purport to allow RECEs more professional recognition as teachers, precedents which are dismissed by the decision maker. For example, the Umpire states [emphasis added],

Although those two CUBs held that Early Childhood Educators were teaching within the meaning of section 33(2) of the Regulations, those cases could be distinguished as they reflected factual situations in Saskatchewan (68744) and P.E.I. (73025) where the factual context may differ from Ontario.

The decision continues on with other distinguishing features, for example which unions can represent teachers, self-regulations of the profession, qualifications, and other such details. All of which indicate that on a principled approach, one
cannot simply distinguish one precedent from another on the basis of simple occupation, such as itinerant teacher as opposed to Early Childhood Educator.

There are other decisions of the Board of Referees that also discuss the role of an RECE in school settings, that clearly establish the role of an RECE as a non-teacher, citing the fact that the roles are regulated under separate Ministries, which is not the case in Ontario. For example, in CUB 28456 (Service Canada), states [emphasis added]:

The Appellant raises a further argument that half her work was in an occupation other than teaching. Her school West-Mont is both an elementary school and a preschool. She is qualified for teaching and as an assistant in the elementary position, which comes under the Ministry of Education. The pre-school comes under the Ministry of Health and is governed by day-care regulations. She makes a distinction between being a "teacher" and an Early Childhood Educator. She believes the Board was in error in referring to her work in the pre-school as "teaching in a pre-elementary school" according to Regulation 46.1(1).

In the same decision, the Umpire dismissed the appeal stating that the decision of the board of referees should not be interfered with because (the) [emphasis added]:

Appellant is a very reasonable person and apparently a very competent and versatile teacher, but it is difficult to find why the same Unemployment Insurance Regulation should not be applied to her. She received one salary to cover both "teaching jobs", only one of which required a teacher's certificate, but spent half her time in the other work, which she does not consider as teaching. Early Childhood Education however has an element of teaching in it (as the mere word "education" might seem to indicate). I do not
think it can be considered as an occupation other than teaching, so as to come within the exception of Regulation 46.1(2)(c).

This recognition of the word “education” as a fundamental element of the teaching profession has some significance in how the role of RECEs can be viewed in Ontario.

5.6 The Impact of Discourse on RECE Professional Status in FDK Programs

In analyzing the discourses of the RECE in the FDK programs through the legislation, policy documents and jurisprudence we can see how the professional role of the RECE is being discursively constructed both in the texts as well as through the legitimizing views and authoritative voices that gain traction in the discourse of what constitutes a teaching professional.

Although the FDK program is still relatively new in its implementation and despite the views of the Ministry of Education, the authoritative voice in the legal decision is focused on the union and employers view of the RECE professional. The decision is further legitimized by the views of the RECE themselves, even though the conflict between their former role as an Educational Assistant and their current role as an RECE in FDK is not addressed.

While the EI Act has not changed, this decision has an important impact on the future eligibility of RECEs in this new FDK role to get Employment Insurance during periods of unemployment and layoff. This changes the scope of the RECE in FDK from a professional teaching partner to a seasonal support staff similar to Educational Assistants who previously qualified for EI. Materially, this would mean less responsibility in the classroom, less monetary
compensation in the form of year round salaried positions, less benefits, and ultimately less recognition as equal professional partners in the early learning teaching team.

In my doctoral study I interviewed several RECEs who are employed in the FDK program and are working alongside teachers. Many of them have four-year degrees and several years of experience in early learning settings, both within schools and in the child care sector. While there have been positive accounts of relationships with team teachers in schools, the RECEs also describe their frustrations and their inability to transfer their expertise in child development to the education sector. When I ask them about their experiences about their role and working conditions, many feel that they do not get the recognition they deserve for the early child development knowledge and skills they bring to the FDK program. All of the RECEs interviewed have applied for EI and were focused on getting benefits for the summer, winter and spring school breaks. Many did not understand the potential impact of the EI decisions on the future role or working conditions of the RECE professional in FDK. Those who did stated that they would rather have no EI benefits and choose to be full year salaried staff instead to reflect their new professional role in FDK. In fact, some argued that the position should be paid at the same rate of pay as teachers, given the level of responsibility they had in the classroom.

The Ministry of Education and provincial government has been attacked for implementing FDK at a significant cost to taxpayers. Despite the attacks, the government has reinforced its commitment to early learning on Ontario, although the fiscal pressures might explain the fissure between the policy intent articulated in text and the follow through in implementation supports.

The Elementary Teachers Union has attempted to elevate the professional role of the RECE while juggling the backlash from teacher members who are opposed to RECEs in FDK
classrooms, and the lack of legislative support for RECEs to be members of ETFO alongside their teacher partners in FDK. In protecting the teacher’s role in the FDK teaching team, the co-teaching role of the RECE has been compromised, along with the corresponding stability of year round salaried positions for RECEs.

5.7 Raising the Professional Status of RECEs in FDK

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Jim Grieve urges Directors of Education to consider that:

The success of full-day early learning is ultimately in your hands. The government and ministry are responsible for articulating the vision, setting policy, allocating resources and providing support. But full-day early learning will become reality for young children and their families through the leadership and actions of boards and local communities (MOE, 2010, p. 9).

It is critical that all of the actors revisit the legislation and policy documents in order to reinforce the professional role of RECEs in the program with a view to understanding and supporting the skills and expertise they bring to the classroom. This would require unions and advocacy organizations to consistently refer to RECEs as professional early educators, not just in promotional or media documents, but also in the backrooms and courtrooms where policy debates occur and decisions get made. It would require employers and school boards to stay true to the policy intent behind the legislation to integrate early learning and care, despite political pressures from the private sector to contract out early learning services to private providers. It would require the Ministry of Education to provide adequate funding to school boards to recognize the value of RECEs as equal partners, through permanent year round positions and comparable benefits and working conditions to those of teachers.
Despite the fiscal and political pressures, it is imperative that we learn from other jurisdictions that have undertaken a team teaching model that recognizes both professionals as early learning pedagogical partners. While Ontario is leading the legislative changes in early learning and others are looking to us…we can look to examples in other OECD countries to reinforce the importance of early learning pedagogy and child development skills in our team teaching models. Only by this recognition can we begin to erase the discourses of historic gendered inequality and imbalance between the two early learning professionals, and begin to build a true early learning teaching team that maximizes the skills of both professionals to improve the status and role of RECEs and ultimately, early learning for young children in Ontario.

Despite the policy intent of the team teaching model with a shared responsibility to plan and implement curriculum together, the discourses that construct the role of the RECE in the teaching team leave the RECEs in a precarious position in the classroom, having to negotiate their responsibilities and roles with their teaching partner in an attempt to co-operate and coordinate. These discourses reinforce the historic dichotomy between care and education and contribute to the gendered reproduction of care work as women’s work. Given the complexities of the institutionalized education setting and the relative lack of power of the new professional RECE in the early learning classroom, great care must be taken to ensure that we do not lose the policy and program intent articulated in the special advisors report. Paying attention to the discourses of professional practice, team teaching and shared early learning pedagogical leadership can help construct a more fulsome professional early learning teaching team that maximizes teaching and learning in the FDK program in Ontario.
Chapter 6

6 From Policy to Practice: The Experiences of RECE Professionals in Ontario’s FDK Programs

6.1 Abstract

The FDK program has been implemented in Ontario over the course of five years from 2010-2014. While the previous manuscripts focus on the legal and policy documents that establish their new professional role in the FDK program, this manuscript draws on empirical data to focus on how the RECEs have experienced the impact of law and policy changes during implementation in their daily practice. The study results reveal that the RECEs were largely unprepared for these changes, felt isolated and unsupported in their new professional role, and were for the most part not aware of how policy would impact their role. Many have left more stable employment in the child care sector with full time salaried positions to take on more precarious jobs with the school board that are hourly paid, ten-month contracts, and sometimes require shift work.

The study uncovers the discourses of what constitutes professional practice and the power relations that underlie the experiences shared by the RECEs. The RECEs in the study were articulate and passionate about being an early childhood professional and felt strongly that they had much to offer in the new integrated FDK program with respect to the knowledge and skills they bring. Although the RECEs feel undervalued and find their skills underutilized, they have also developed strong partnerships with their teaching colleagues and peers in the school by demonstrating the professional skills they have to offer in working with young children and
families. As a result, they are able to carve out a more professional role for themselves through practice in the classroom as early learning professionals and partners in FDK program delivery.

This paper reports on the empirical findings and analyzes the content and discourses of the RECEs in relation to their evolving role and status in the FDK classroom. It uncovers the ongoing dichotomy between care and education in program integration, and the need to overcome the historic and gendered construction of care work as women’s work, in order to recognize and optimize the strengths of early childhood professionals as co-teachers in the integrated kindergarten program environment. The paper concludes with recommendations for principals and teachers to better understand the role of the RECE in FDK, and for RECEs to understand the policy context of the education sector that they now work in, including unionization, professional responsibilities as an RECE, and the role of professional advocacy and lobbying to support their role. It also recommends the critical role that unions and advocacy organizations can play to advance a more professional co-teaching role for RECEs in Ontario’s integrated FDK programs as articulated in the law and policy.

6.2 Background

Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to introduce a team teaching model in FDK programs. Comprised of a certified kindergarten teacher and a designated position for a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE), the teaching team was legislated with a “duty to coordinate and cooperate” (Education Act, 2010, s. 264.1) in planning and delivering a play-based early learning kindergarten program for four and five year olds. The FDK program in Ontario was implemented over five years, beginning in September 2010. The program serves more than 260,000 four and five year olds in the province in a full day program that is
universally accessible to families. It is estimated that the FDK program employs about 10,000 RECEs across the province, that are predominantly unionized positions. The minimum starting rate for RECEs in the FDK program was legislated at $19.48 for the first year, and many school boards implemented pay scales that recognized the prior experience of the RECEs (Ministry of Education, 2010). In 2014, funding for FDK programs became part of general student grants administered by the province. As a result, there is no longer an hourly rate specified for the RECEs (Ministry of Education, 2014), leaving it up to the unions and school boards to negotiate.

The initial blueprint for the FDK program (Pascal, 2009) was comprised of two RECEs working in tandem with a kindergarten teacher, to provide seamless early learning in the school. The school boards were expected to operate a core day program, as well as before and after school extended care from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Due to a strong lobby from the child care sector, a majority of the school boards chose to contract out their before and after school extended day programs to third party private and non-profit operators from the child care sector. Consequently RECEs in the core FDK program are employed by school boards, while most extended day staff continue to work in the child care sector, with lower rates of unionization of about 21.5% and lower rates of pay (Human Resources Sector Council, 2012). This resulted in a reduction of about 10,000 full time public sector positions for RECEs in the education sphere. In addition, the province failed to legislate the RECEs to belong to the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario like their teacher counterparts, perhaps due to the initial backlash from elementary teachers who were opposed to having RECEs in kindergarten classrooms (ETFO, 2009). As a result of not having one professional educator union represent the new ECEs in FDK programs, RECEs are represented by various unions, and many of the gains anticipated for the RECEs in FDK including improved wages and working conditions have not materialized during implementation.
The designated RECE position was intended to function in the school with delegated authority from the principal to ensure the safe operation of the program before and after school hours. The RECE and teacher both report to the principal of the school, ensuring that they are equal partners in the program delivery. Yet, due to very little training and understanding of this new role in the schools, the RECEs have largely been left to negotiate their new professional co-teaching role in individual classrooms and schools based on their relationships with their colleagues and administrators. This lack of clarity in the role is perpetuated by the unions that represent the RECEs through grand-parented agreements that situate the RECEs as educational assistants in the classroom, rather than as co-teaching professionals.

In order to understand the way that the role of the RECE in FDK is evolving, this study draws on empirical data from practicing RECEs in FDK classrooms. The purpose of this segment of the study was to extend the previous work carried out in this thesis through document analysis, in order to bring to light the lived experiences of RECEs in FDK. The study documents the ways that the RECEs have experienced the implementation of the FDK program, specifically related to their professional role and status in the classroom, and the material gains and losses they experienced in relation to their wages and working conditions.

6.3 Methodology

6.4 Understanding Discourse through Content and Text Analysis

The discourses of professionalism and early childhood pedagogy continue to shape the role of RECEs as early learning professionals in the FDK program. Content analysis of the survey data provides a strong empirical basis for understanding the changes in the role, responsibilities and the working conditions of the RECEs in the education sector. Text analysis
of the qualitative data from the surveys and interviews (using organizational policy analysis and feminist legal approaches), uncover the discourses related to the professional status of RECEs in FDK program practice. For example, the stratification of the teaching team through discourses that perpetuates the gendered notion of care work as women’s work, with potentially less professional recognition within the education sector.

Discourse can be understood as the ways in which language in text conveys meaning and value about social goods (Gee, 1999). Fairclough (2003, p. 124) argues that “discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another – keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, dominating – and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another.” Similarly, Thomas (2005, p. 47) describes discourse analysis as “a movement between the analysis of texts to their broad social formations”. She proposes that analysis of discourse includes analysis of texts by the identification of features of the text through which discourses may be traced; the analysis of discursive practices engaged in the interpretation or production of texts and the relationships between them, and the analysis of the social and cultural practices surrounding the texts.

Using content and text analysis as a way to explore language and understand the way that meaning is attached to the new “professional” team teaching role and status of RECEs in FDK, this manuscript illustrates the ways in which the RECE’s professional role in the education sector is being shaped through the competing forces of law and policy as well as everyday practices. Undertaking content analysis with an organizational policy analysis lens, I am able to unpack the dynamics of discourses operating between text and culture. It uncovers the construction of everyday meanings of discourses in texts to the particularities of meanings assigned within social or cultural groups such as a profession or institution, which in turn give rise to new discourses or
forms of knowledge (Rautalin & Alasuutari, 2007). In this way, I analyze the new professional role of the RECE by looking at the social and political contexts within which these meanings are constructed and legitimized by the various actors in the discourse including unions, school boards, and other professionals in the education context.

In particular, this paper explores what is included and excluded in the text with respect to the “professional status” of RECEs within the FDK team. For the purposes of this manuscript, professional status includes the role and responsibilities of RECEs as well as the working conditions that contribute to professional practice such as planning time. It further explores how the discourses of professionalism are constructed through practice to position the role of RECEs in FDK, the ways in which certain authoritative voices are legitimized, and how these discourses impact the role and status of RECEs in FDK programs across Ontario.

6.4.1 Participants

This study draws on data gathered from surveys and interviews administered with RECEs in FDK programs across the province, as well as key informant (KI) interviews with RECE policy leaders. Early Childhood Educators were recruited from the first year of program implementation in 2010/2011 and throughout the five years of implementation of the FDK program in Ontario. The researcher independently recruited participants by distributing flyers at early childhood and FDK related conferences, and through professional and advocacy organizations. Fifty-one RECEs were recruited into the study. Participants came from a variety of schools and represent both public and Catholic schools across the province from urban centres and rural communities. All of the participants were registered members of the College of Early Childhood Educators and five percent of the participants were also members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in addition to having ECE qualifications. A majority of the participants
were recruited in the first year, with smaller samplings from the three following years of implementation.

In order to ensure that RECEs were comfortable sharing their experiences and to assure them that the study was independent from their employment relationships with the school boards, the decision was made not to recruit participants through school boards. A conscious decision was also made not to recruit participants through the unions, in order to maintain independence and neutrality in my research. These decisions may have had an impact on the number of participants who were recruited and the range of school boards or communities they represented across Ontario. Due to limitations with funding, travel to rural or northern regions of the province was not possible, which may also have had an impact on the recruitment of participants from more isolated regions in the province of Ontario.

Despite these limitations, the 51 RECE participants recruited for the study identified that they worked in 19 school boards across the province, including Bluewater, Dufferin-Peel Catholic, Durham, Durham Catholic, Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic, Kawartha Pine-Ridge, Niagara, Ottawa-Carleton, Ottawa-Carleton Catholic, Peel, Simcoe, Sudbury Catholic, Toronto, Toronto Catholic, Waterloo Region, Waterloo Catholic and York Region.

Over 90 percent of the 51 participants represented individual schools within these 19 school boards. Although most schools had more than one FDK classroom, many of the participants did not want to recruit other RECEs in their schools, in order to maintain their anonymity in this study. Most of the interviews were held in coffee shops, at the RECEs’ homes or at the University of Toronto. A follow up survey was distributed to all participants in the study.
in the spring of 2014, using an online survey tool, and 39 of the participants responded to this follow up survey.

Six key informant interviews were also conducted with early childhood and education sector specialists such as government and policy makers, professional and regulatory organizational leads, advocates and policy researchers. I contacted individuals who were identified as being involved in the development or implementation of the FDK program in Ontario through key policy documents and through early childhood professional networks such as the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at OISE, University of Toronto, the College of Early Childhood Educators and the Ontario Ministry of Education. These interviews helped identify pertinent policy issues and informed the development of the surveys used in this study. These interviews helped to identify pertinent policy issues and informed the development of the surveys and interviews used in this study.

6.4.2 Procedures.

Participants were recruited for this study using a flyer that was distributed throughout the early childhood community and education networks across the province of Ontario. The flyer was prepared and distributed at conferences, community events, through the early childhood advocacy organizations and training institutions. The researcher made a conscious decision not to recruit participants through the school boards, in order to maintain participant anonymity. In this way, the study made attempts to ensure that the participants felt comfortable in sharing their experiences with the researcher without any fear of repercussions or reprisals from their employer or colleagues. Fifty-one participants responded to the flyer or heard about the study by word of mouth, and contacted the researcher independently.
The survey and interview questions were developed based on my own experiences and informal conversations with RECEs regarding their concerns about their changing professional role. In addition, key informant interviews helped identify key policy issues related to the professional role and status of RECEs in the FDK program. Earlier studies by Gibson and Pelletier (2010) on the relationship between the teaching team also helped to highlight some of the issues that were addressed in the survey and interview questions. The follow up survey that was used in this study was later revised and used in another research study involving teaching teams in selected school boards across Ontario (Janmohamed, et. al., 2014).

The initial survey was developed on Survey Wizard, a software program that administers online surveys. The link to the initial survey was distributed to all 51 participants through their personal emails. The survey link was open for a period of one month, during which a follow up email reminder was sent to the participants. Hard copies of the initial survey were also distributed to some of the participants at conferences, and in some cases, the initial survey was administered prior to an interview with the participants. Thirty-four participants completed the initial survey, representing a 66% response rate. The initial survey was extensive comprised of three sections, and took approximately 45 minutes to complete. This may have been a factor in the online response rate, as some participants commenced the survey but did not complete it online. These data were gathered through Survey Wizard and downloaded into SPSS software for analysis. Data were analyzed by an independent source and checked by the researcher in order to ensure accuracy and oversight.

Similarly, semi-structured interviews with participants were held confidentially outside of working hours. Although I initially intended to interview all of the participants in the study, I reached a point of data saturation during the process, where common ideas or themes emerged in
the interviews. However, of all 51 participants, I interviewed all of the participants who expressed an interest in being interviewed. Twenty-nine interviews were completed throughout the study from 2011 to 2014. Many of the interviews were held at the University of Toronto, at participants’ homes, and coffee shops in the community to ensure that participants were comfortable to share their experiences. Interviews were recorded digitally and the interviews were transcribed by an independent service to ensure accuracy. The researcher also kept detailed notes during the interview and the transcriptions were compared to these notes to ensure accuracy and oversight.

The follow up survey was developed on Survey Wizard and the link to the survey was distributed to all 51 participants through their personal emails. The short survey was designed to take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey link was open for a period of one month, during which a follow up email reminder was sent to the participants. Thirty-nine participants completed the follow up survey representing a 76% response rate. The responses were coded and entered into SPSS for data analysis.

6.4.3 Measures.

Items in the initial survey included previous employment and current employment factors such as wages, benefits, employer, hours of work, vacation, breaks, training, preparation time and union representation. Items in the follow-up survey included perceptions of the RECEs related to program responsibilities such as play, literacy, numeracy, toileting, transitions, as well RECEs’ perceptions on their role in relation to program areas such as short and long term planning, assessment and reporting to parents.
Items for the RECE interviews included questions on the RECEs’ understanding of their new role and professional status in FDK, perceptions about the impact on compensation and job security, and RECEs ideas and recommendations for better professional recognition in the education sector.

6.4.4 Coding.

The quantitative responses obtained through the initial survey and follow-up survey were coded numerically and entered into SPSS software using either binary numbers for yes/no answers, or continuous numbers for multiple response answers. For example, participants were asked to rate items on a scale of 1-5 (1=strongly agree, to 5=strongly disagree) or indicate how frequently they engaged in specific work related activities in the classroom from 1-5 (1=always, to 5=never). Participants were also asked to select one of three following responses in a series of questions regarding area of responsibilities (1=more mostly teacher, 2=more/mostly RECE, and 3=shared equally). Similarly, in a set of questions related to perceived roles, the participants were asked to select one of the following responses (1=increased, 2=decreased, 3=stayed the same). Percentages of responses to the initial survey data were calculated and compared with similar sets of data in the follow-up survey groups of educators. Further analysis to determine statistical significance in responses was also calculated using SPSS software. In order to ensure reliability of the coding, the follow up survey responses involving subjective ratings (e.g. themes) were independently coded by a second rater who was trained in the coding procedures and a reliability rating of at least 90 percent was obtained. For example, responses related to the type of degree obtained were coded based on the subject matter specified by the participants, as either being related to child development or not (psychology vs. anthropology). Similarly, responses that required respondents to specify the type of pension plan they had were coded
based on themes that emerged (100% paid by employer, 50% employer and 50% employee, and no pension/in process).

The participants’ qualitative responses were coded thematically based on major concepts that emerged throughout the interviews. Themes that emerged in the interviews were grouped under the following major categories: (a) understanding the new RECE role in FDK, (b) the impact on compensation and job security, (c) recommendations for better professional recognition. Approximately 20% of the interviews were independently coded and a reliability rating of over 90% was achieved. Descriptive analysis was conducted with the qualitative data and statistical analyses were conducted with the numerical data using SPSS version 22 data analysis software.

6.5 Results: RECE Experiences in FDK programs

6.5.1 Initial Survey

The initial survey was completed by RECEs who were recruited to participate in this study beginning in the spring of 2011. The RECEs who contacted me during this initial phase were hired into the first year of the FDK program implementation in the 2010/2011 school year. However, the survey was administered to any newly recruited participants throughout the five years of implementation of the program.

6.5.1.1 Education

The results show that 97 percent of the participants (n=51) have a diploma in early childhood education. In order to be registered with the College of ECE, the college requires a diploma in early childhood, or a letter of permission in order to practice in the province. The
diploma programs in Ontario generally include two years of post-secondary study including courses in child development, working with families, and play-based program implementation.

Interestingly, 32 percent of the participants reported having more than the minimum level of education, with a four-year bachelor’s degree in early childhood or education, for example a Bachelor of Early Childhood (see Figure 1). A further 11 percent (n=51) had a graduate level degree (Masters or Doctorate) in child studies or Education such as an MA in Child Study. Many of these post-secondary degrees were in similar areas that strengthened their learning through the ECE diploma programs.

Results also show that 11 percent of the participants (n= 51) reported having a teacher education certificate (see Figure 1). Certified Teachers in Ontario can either complete a Bachelor of Education program generally in five years, or a four-year general arts or science degree and a one-year teacher education program to obtain their Bachelor of Education prior to certification with the Ontario College of Teachers. Respondents indicated that their degrees were in areas unrelated to child development, such as anthropology, literature, and math.
Figure 1. Participants’ Education. This figure illustrates the educational backgrounds of participants.

6.5.1.2 **Planning Time**

Results show that the participants in this study largely engaged in program planning either individually or with other RECEs in their schools, rather than with their teaching partner in the classroom (see Figure 2). For example, participants reported spending approximately 19 minutes per week planning alone, 17 minutes per week planning with other RECEs in the school, and only 6 minutes per week planning with their teaching partner.
Interestingly only 29 percent of the participants (n=51) reported being paid for their planning time in their current positions in FDK. Of these, 50 percent reported getting 30 minutes of paid planning time each week, and 50 percent reported getting 100 minutes of paid planning time each week. It is important to understand that the initial survey was administered to a majority of the participants in the first year of program implementation and that many of these RECEs were in the process of negotiating union contracts at the time. As a result, many of the RECEs did not have paid planning time in addition to their contact time with children in the program. During the interviews, the participants elaborated that they were often responsible for supervising children during their planning time, for example, accompanying children to the gym to support the teacher during physical education. As a result, many of them planned individually after paid work time in their homes.
6.5.1.3 **Union and Wage Rates**

The minimum wage for RECEs in the FDK program was funded by the province at $19.48 per hour when the program was first implemented in September 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2010). Results show that there is a wide range of starting salaries in the program largely dependent on the union that represents the RECEs. For example, the highest average starting salary was reported by RECEs represented by ETFO at $26.20 per hour, while the lowest average starting salary was reported as $20.01, which is only 52 cents above the minimum legislated starting salary for RECEs. Given that the OSSTF collective agreement indicates a starting salary of $19.48 (see Chapter 5 discussion) the 52-cent difference may account for two RECEs reporting a slightly higher salary in this category. These RECEs may have been previously employed by the school board in another capacity, likely as an Educational Assistant, and thus entitled to a higher salary based on their seniority. The ETFO collective agreement is the only one that provides for credit for up to four years of experience prior to date of hire including from prior employers (within and outside the education sector). The grid ranges from $20.09 per hour as a starting salary for one year of experience, to $26.27 for four years of experience. The fact that the survey results indicate an average wage of $26.20 indicates that most of the RECEs represented by ETFO were hired at the highest level of the grid. This corresponds to follow up survey findings that indicate that the RECEs in FDK have an average of about 10 year of experience in early childhood education.

It is significant that a number of RECEs reported having no union at the time they completed the survey. The initial survey was administered to the RECEs beginning in the first year of FDK implementation and unions were in the process of organizing membership drives, and negotiating first collective agreements with the employers at this time, which may account for this response. Similarly, some RECEs reported “other” unions, which largely characterize
professional associations and smaller unions in the education sector that represent RECEs in FDK in some school boards.

Figure 3. Wages by Union. This figure illustrates the average starting salary based on the union representing the RECEs.

6.5.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with RECEs who indicated an interest in being interviewed in the study. In total, 29 interviews were conducted between March 2011 and August 2013, representing ten of the 72 school boards across the province including Hamilton, Ottawa Carleton, Ottawa Carleton Catholic, Peel, Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic, Sudbury, Toronto, Toronto Catholic, Waterloo Region Catholic, and York Region. The interviews were conducted in person by the researcher, with the exception of four interviews conducted by telephone, due to the distance or remoteness of the participants’ location.
Interviews were recorded and transcribed and compared with the detailed anecdotal notes kept by the interviewer during each interview. Themes that emerged in the interviews were grouped under the following large categories, namely (a) understanding the new RECE role in FDK, and (b) the impact on compensation and job security, and (c) recommendations for better professional recognition.

6.5.2.1  Understanding the RECE role in FDK

The RECEs interviewed in this study all indicated that their professional role in FDK was poorly understood by their kindergarten teaching partners, administrators in the school, other teachers, and parents in the community. For example, the RECEs shared that:

My teacher partner and I both knew we are at very far ends of the spectrum about the program implementation, but I still feel like they really don’t have an understanding of what we do or where we come from.

I think that our teacher partners wanted something black and white saying this is what you have to do, this is what the RECE has to do and then we’ll go from there but no one ever gave us that. No one gave us job descriptions, no one gave us role descriptions, and no one said you were responsible for these areas. We kind of had to work through these problems as they came up. For example, the whole toileting issue where one of our members was told to change a child by an EA in the classroom who said, you’re an ECE so this is your job. The RECE had to explain that it was not her job and it became a board wide issue, with the board sending a memo that we are to be in line with the teachers, we are not to touch the children in that way or help them dress or do anything like that. This was huge for us because I wasn’t expecting that. I was expecting my role
to be the same as in child care where we do everything. But this was because we are represented by a teacher union.

Some of the RECEs felt that in practice, they functioned as an assistant in the classroom, rather than as a co-teaching partner as intended in the policy directives. For example, RECEs shared that:

I would say that my position now is more of I want to say an EA in the classroom. I am more of a helper, seen as the helper who will focus on some of the children who have behavior issues or follow them around. Clean up things. I do feel that I’m not valued for myself in this position and am frustrated with the fact that I’m not valued for my skills in the classroom.

I get the feeling that a lot of the RECEs are kind of bowing down and becoming assistants. And no one is coming out and saying that but that’s the impression I get when talking with my colleagues.

At the same time, the RECEs interviewed in this study have a strong sense of their role and were able to utilize discourses of professionalism such as training and professional experience in teaching to discuss their place as equal partners in the teaching team. The RECEs are also able to use the discourses of team teaching to advocate for their professional recognition in the classroom.

We’re definitely not equal partners. For the most part the teachers in my school have been friendly but they definitely don’t see us as being on par with teachers. And a lot of them still refer to us as assistants which we correct every time.
I find that EAs being grand parented into the RECE positions with some training, take away from the professionalism that RECEs bring to these positions. I’m coming in as someone with 17 years experience so I have already formed my philosophies. All ECEs have experienced emergent curriculum and play-based learning and inquiry based play in their centres. The EAs haven’t had that exposure. I don’t want them to lose their job but if I’ve been in the school board as an ECE for 25 years and was told to teach grade 8 history just to stay in the board, I don’t think I would want to.

Sometimes the principal will come in and he will ask the teacher a direct question and I answer before she does. And I make a point to do it because this is my room as much as it is hers. I’ve been here all year. You ask when the scientist in the school is coming in? They are coming in April 4th. I answer right away and he seems surprised that I know. Well why wouldn’t I know. I am the teaching partner.

There was an issue in another classroom because the teacher and RECE didn’t want to share a desk so they had two desks in that room, one for the ECE and one for the room teacher. The principal asked us if we wanted a separate desk, but we both said no. We share a desk and have a common space; because we both share the programming in that room. But I think it’s part of ownership rights in the classroom and it is how the administration sees it too. For example, for announcements, for a child’s birthday, Johnny’s 4th birthday is in Miss A’s class and that’s it. And there’s no mention of the RECE.

I’ve seen the FDK document and mostly it’s okay, but it needs to be more than just documents…you need education. Everyone in the school needs to know what training ECEs have and what they bring to the program.
The RECEs felt that the program intent of play-based learning was a struggle to implement because of the focus on assessments and the divergent pedagogical views between the teacher and the RECE. They are able to use the discourses of early childhood pedagogy and practice to describe their role and function in the team and have a strong sense of the skills and expertise they bring to the classroom. For example:

Teachers are bound by curriculum and assessments, which I don’t think is fair. I think the government has pushed these assessments so much to the point where we are only teaching what’s required of the children. I’ve tried to encourage more play-based programming, and she is very honest about what her perceptions are of free play and she doesn’t see where the learning would happen. She is very hesitant to implement these ideas because she feels that structure is the only way to teach some of the skills that the kids need. I just keep trying to show her through documentation that learning can happen through play, and over time she is recognizing that and she is starting to say I wouldn’t have seen that learning, so that is a huge step for her I think.

It doesn’t seem like the teachers have any training or knowledge of how this program should run. And I don’t think the principal does either. I feel like no one knows what to do with us. I feel we know what we are supposed to do but we’re not given that space to do it because they’re not aware of our expertise.

It’s very clear that the teachers are to do the reporting. They are in charge of the technical programming as well as writing report cards and all formal documentation. That’s very cut and dry. But everything else is kind of a grey area.
I did a little bit of that testing but I don’t have any input into the report cards. I write up some observations on sticky notes and put them on a board with all the kid’s names but I don’t get to assess them or have any input into the actual report card.

The kindergarten program can be very product versus process oriented. The children all make the same sunflower, or the same bird. For Mother’s Day I suggested that they do a painting and it was just paper and paint. They had to paint a picture of what they liked to do with their mom, and they were beautiful. All completely different and some don’t even look like people but that’s what the kids made and everyone loved it.

The teacher said this is the way you make a heart and it has to be red and you can’t have any other colours on it. And I said that I was really surprised to see that because in childcare we don’t do that, we just let the children do their own thing. She just looked at the RECEs, stormed out of the room and didn’t speak to us for two weeks.

The teacher is the focus of learning and I think that’s a problem. It shouldn’t be the teacher as the focus of learning; it should be the children’s interests.

Teachers often see learning only as basically numeracy and literacy often through actual concrete worksheets or books. They don’t see that children are learning math by building a structure in the block center or by filling containers in the water table or that they are learning social skills and negotiating language skills in the dramatic centre.

I did specify a bit of her philosophy using worksheets and how it differs from my philosophy of play-based learning. I find in daycare you could have differences of philosophies but you sit down and you work on it. But now we come in and it’s what the
teacher says. They are the leaders. We don’t have a say and even if we voice our opinions we are not seen as an equal.

It’s interesting because it’s almost like you are educating the teachers but also educating the parents because they’ve often come from backgrounds where schooling is viewed a particular way. My teacher partner enjoys being at the head of the classroom with children sitting and her teaching. With play-based curriculum, she doesn’t feel like a teacher anymore.

The issue of caring and nurturing with the children came up in the interviews because the RECEs felt that their role in FDK should include hugging children, holding their hands or cleaning the children up if they soiled themselves. These ideas articulated by the RECEs in the texts reinforce the professional qualities of the RECEs in the FDK teaching team.

I actually had a child once throw up his lunch on himself and he had to sit there like that for half an hour before anyone came and got him. I mean I physically pulled him aside and cleaned him up and cleaned his desk but I got in trouble for it because I was told that it is not my job. I think it’s hard to come to terms with those kinds of pedagogical differences. We are used to just doing that in child care and things are changing.

Teachers are hesitant to hug the kids. There is one little girl who still tries to sit on my knee every day and that’s hugely frowned upon. It’s all about the teacher’s protection but I have been trained to understand that children need to be hugged sometimes. The children know that they can approach us and hug us but they don’t try it with the teachers. Even the classrooms are a little bit…and I don’t know a good word to use but standoffish is the word that comes to mind. And it’s fear. It’s fear of oh my god if I hug
this child what’s going to happen. Whereas I believe that is part of child development. Physical contact. It’s just so natural for me when a child reaches out to hold my hand to take it.

I don’t stop them because I’m in ECE and it’s a nurturing part of the environment. Some of them are just three years old when they come to us.

The need for improved training was identified. For example, a more experienced RECE indicated that the current practices in kindergarten appear to be very “old school”. She stated that when she first went to college for ECE, there were certain parameters that are similar to how kindergarten is operated now. However, she cogently described how the advances in child development knowledge have changed practices in child care. For example, “we’ve realized that children don’t have the capacity to sit on the carpet for 20 minutes. If they don’t want to and they’re going to learn more by looking out the window, why can’t they do it?” However she felt confident that the integrated program was a way to shift these practices. For example, she comments,

When you read the FDK policy document there is a recommendation that teachers have a certain amount of time to get their ECE equivalency. There is no reverse saying the ECEs need to get something…so obviously that clearly indicates that RECEs have a lot to offer the FDK program implementation.

She indicated that in many other jurisdictions early learning professionals are respected for their skills and professional role, stating “It is taken so much more seriously in places like Finland and Sweden, and I personally think we should be paid more than university professors because we’re the ones that are doing the formative years”. The RECEs indicated that this shift
in their role in Education was a significant professional recognition. For example, an RECE shared:

I find the level of respect is not there in child care and I left child care because I knew I was never going to get it. We often talk about how parents in child care would think nothing of asking ECEs to babysit on a Saturday night. No one would ever dare ask a teacher - oh do you babysit on the weekend. There is a level of respect now that you work for a Board and you are in the education sector that you are never going to get in child care.

If you are going to work in an early learning program you need to educate yourself as to what an ECE is, what they do, what their level of expertise is and what they are bringing to the table. They are not just an EA. Don’t get me wrong, I love all of the EAs in our school but you only need a high school diploma to be an EA. I always wanted to put up my university degree alongside my diploma because I have my BA in child study as well. Maybe if people see that I have some education, they’ll give me a little bit more respect. I don’t think people in the schools even know that the RECEs have to take a two-year College program to be able to do this. It’s part of advocating about who we are…

I think that this is one of the best things for the early childhood educators. To be put into classrooms where teachers can see what an RECE is all about and how it actually does have a very relevant role in the school system because they are ECEs that are in our class. I think that the more teachers see what we’re doing, I see a big respect, teachers peeking in, watching, curious how it’s going, asking questions about how it’s going and I see that it is really fantastic for the kids too.
Being seen as a professional would mean that they would acknowledge that we are actually teaching children and helping them grow and develop as opposed to just baby-sitting them or playing games for no reason whatsoever.

These discourses demonstrate that the RECEs have a strong sense of their professional responsibilities in the program and that they are able to rely on the pedagogical skills they bring to the classroom to demonstrate their co-teaching role in the school environment. The language used by the RECEs to describe their role as co-teachers and early education professionals rather than care provides, suggests a deeper understanding of their role in the FDK classroom. The RECEs also felt strongly that they need more systemic supports such as training for teachers and administrators, as well as support for the role of the RECEs in order to feel more respected in the education sector.

6.5.2.2 Impact on compensation and job security

The RECEs interviewed in this study largely felt that they had not benefited from the move from child care into the education sector with respect to their compensation and job security. Many left more stable jobs in the non-profit sector to take ten-month contract positions with the school boards, not realizing that they would not be recognized as year round staff like their teaching partners. For example, one RECE stated “it is unfortunate because I left a great job to come to this. However, I don’t have any regrets because I feel its heading in a good positive direction. I still feel the value for the children and my colleagues as ECE professionals”. One RECE stated, “We were hired on a contract for 10 months, 19.42 an hour, no sick days, no benefits, nothing. If you didn’t work, you didn’t get paid. They didn’t even realize we weren’t getting paid for holidays”. Another RECE interviewed in the early stages of implementation reported:
If things don’t change, I’ll be looking for another job to be honest. If they came to us and said you are never getting sick days, you are never getting benefits, you are never getting a pension then I’m out of here. I’ve extended my benefits through my old plan because I have no benefits right now, and I have a family. I do feel like I’ve gone back a few years in terms of my salary and benefits. I had five weeks vacation, I had sick benefits, and I was making more money. Why would I give that up?

RECEs reported that they did not get paid for lunch breaks and that often; their supervision duties prevented them from taking a 30-minute lunch break. Some of the RECEs shared their experience as follows:

Once, the office asked me to cut my lunch 15 minutes short and work so I did but I never got any overtime. I never got any lieu time, nothing for that. I worked 15 minutes off my lunch for free on top of the bus duty. So eventually I may file something but right now I don’t want to rock the boat.

The other ECE didn’t get a lunch break because she needed to cover my lunch duty and her lunch duty so no one gave her a lunch break. Why didn’t the principal or somebody step in and give this RECE her half an hour break. We only get an unpaid half hour and no one gave it to her. That’s inhumane. That is how we got treated the first few months, when you are in a new job and a new role with no collective agreement.

It’s the same thing with staff meetings where we’re not getting paid. Perfect example, is a training session for half an hour over our lunch break. I was supposed to sign up, so I emailed my principal that I only get a half an hour for lunch, and asked him to provide the training at another time or provide coverage so that I can attend, because I was not
giving up my unpaid lunch break to do this training. And he didn’t really answer me. He said maybe if you are there for part of it that’s okay too, but it is so unrealistic because by the time you warm up your food or make a cup of coffee, there’s only ten minutes left. We should be getting paid for training.

The teacher takes their lunch and you are still there. We have to get the children outside on time in order to get our full half hour lunch break, because if they are not outside on time, then we lose it and no one comes to relieve us.

The teachers feel very differently because they view it as there is another person here I can use the bathroom whenever I want. I can go talk to teachers. I can go drop this off. Whereas we don’t have that luxury because either we don’t feel right about it or they are already out of the room so we can’t leave. My colleague will walk out of the room 100 times a day and I’m in there on my own.

Similarly RECEs reported that they did not get paid for professional development or training days. As a result, many of them felt that they needed to volunteer their time to attend training days with their local school boards. Interestingly, many of the RECEs reported that they were unable to attend training provided by the Ministry on the new team roles, because there were limitations on the number of RECEs who could attend. Many felt that every single team should undergo some form of training to understand the integrated curriculum expectations and the new role of the RECE in FDK programs. For example the RECE indicated that:

I think some ECEs don’t go to any of the training too because they don’t get paid. It’s all voluntarily. The teachers have attended more training than we have. They have more materials and resources than we have.
The Board provided six sessions on literacy, which was geared to the ECEs but unpaid. The teachers did not have to attend. Although it was not mandatory for ECEs, it was frowned upon if you didn’t go.

I used to go to staff meetings in the beginning, but then I realized that they have really have absolutely nothing to do with me. It goes back to the disconnect between our job and the administration because they really don’t include us in anything, even in emails. My teaching partner will come tell me that she has an email that totally has to do with the RECEs or with our class and the principal doesn’t even think to copy me or include me in it. That doesn’t make me feel like I’m a part of the team you know.

Planning time was a significant concern to most of the RECEs interviewed in this study. RECEs reported being paid for six hours a day, but being required to be on the job for up to seven hours including an unpaid half hour lunch break and lunchtime supervision or bus duty. One of them expressed their frustrations stating “we only get six hours and we’re supposed to be planning and programming and all of that and we simply shouldn’t be expected to do that on our own time”. Another stated,

My teaching partner never takes home a stitch of planning. She has 240 minutes or so of planning time a week and she gets all her planning done during the day, but I am expected to do my program planning at night or on my own time before and after school.

Many of the RECEs represented by non-teacher unions, questioned why the same union did not represent them along with their teaching partners. For example:
I don’t even know why we are in the support staff union. Really we should be with the teachers. I don’t see how we are ever going to be seen as being on par with the teachers or as equal co-teaching partners by being in the support staff union with the huge difference in wages and prep time. We will always be other than because we don’t get paid in the summer. We don’t get prep time with the teachers. We are in the support staff union with the janitors and the secretaries, so how can we get the same recognition as early educators?

The RECEs felt that the unions have not played a big role in supporting the new RECE role in FDK programs. For example, one of the RECEs stated, “I don’t think ECEs coming to the board realized what a union is or what a union does for us”. Another felt quite strongly that:

The union has hurt us actually. They issued a statement to members saying that they successfully argued that we don’t teach curriculum so that we could get EI in the summer. But our job description basically says – and those are the words, “implementing curriculum” and now they’ve argued that we don’t teach curriculum. So how is that helping us? In the process of arguing that we don’t teach curriculum so that we could collect EI, they are taking away from our professionalism or status in the classroom as co-teaching partners.

The jurisdictional legal issues related to Employment Insurance (EI) are discussed in detail in Chapter five of this thesis. However, the experiences of the RECEs bring to light the precarious nature of their jobs in the FDK programs. For example, an RECE described that she applied for EI, but didn’t have enough hours to qualify for the benefits, because she was working split shifts over the ten-month period. Another reported the hassles she experienced when she applied for EI benefits. For example, the RECEs shared:
I didn’t know I had to apply in December, so when I applied during March break, I had to start my waiting period from that time.

Another stated, we got paid for three stat holidays over the December break, so we served seven days of our two week waiting period, but had to reapply in March so that the remaining wait time was satisfied. I’m going to have to reapply again for it this summer.

The most significant aspect of applying and reactivating claims for Employment Insurance during the school breaks is that the RECEs are expected to be “ready, willing and able to work,” unlike their teaching partners who are classified as year round employees that are ineligible for EI. As a result, many of the RECEs who expected to have their summers off in this new professional role in FDK are finding that they are not able to travel with their families or be on vacation, because of the EI program requirements. For example,

No, I won’t get paid for Christmas and March break because I was out of the country. I find this unfair because we work as hard in the program but don’t have the summers and school breaks off, as we are required to be engaged in job search. We only get paid EI if we are not going away.

One of the RECEs summed up that:

I think a lot of the unhappiness for me does not stem necessarily from the job. It stems from the working conditions. If we get the collective agreement we want I think a lot of that will be resolved. At the end of the day what is important to me is that I get the respect that I want as a professional in the program. The kids are always going to love you no matter what, because we engage with them more closely.
6.5.2.3 Professional Recognition in the Community

Some RECEs interviewed in the study felt positively about the College of ECEs. These examples illustrate how the RECEs are forced to construct meanings of professionalism through practice by attempting to understand how their “professional status” is elevated through the CECE standards of professional practice. For example, they indicated:

I think the College of ECE is great for our profession to kind of elevate our profession, elevate who we are and what we do. I remember a lot of people being very angry when they had to join the college and pay fees, but I believe that this is what a lot of professions have that the community respects…standards and ethical practices that we have to abide by.

Another RECE shared,

I understand that the college basically protects the public right. So if the public has a complaint they can call them, we don’t call. So maybe it’s helping us to be seen more as professionals in the community and it is a step in the right direction, but I haven’t seen any leaps and bounds with promises that when we got this college we were going to be professionals and we were going to be self-regulating and the public is going to acknowledge us. I think it is going to take some time.

Many felt that the partnership between parents and the school community could be strengthened because they come from a pedagogical view that the family is integral to the child’s early development. Some RECEs commented:

I don’t remember the disconnect between home and school when I was a child. If it was there I don’t’ remember it. Some parents came in for the open house and saw the
classroom for the first time. It’s May, and you’ve never seen where your kid spends their whole day? That would never happen in child care.

In child care there is an open door policy and constant communication with the parents. This is very different in school where they line up at the door, are not allowed to cross or come in when they pick up the children. It’s like good morning, have a great day.

Often there is email communication but it’s between the teachers and parents, and they don’t include us. Sometimes the teacher has a meeting with a child’s parents and I find out about it afterwards. If I had known about it, I may have been able to help communicate with the parents or at least be asked for input.

I think the partnership between community parents and the schools will become much more powerful because the children are taking their learning home and it is important for parents to be engaged so that they are on board.

However, many felt that the school has a responsibility to ensure that the RECEs in FDK programs are recognized within the school community. For example, one RECE shared his experience of being left out of the planning of the welcome to kindergarten event held at the school. He felt that as an RECE and teaching partner, he should have been engaged in the open house, but he was excluded because the event was held after hours. Similarly another RECE shared her experiences:

They never mention us, for example in the welcome to kindergarten event, the principal pulled us out of class and introduced us but then we were supposed to go back. He let us stay for about 20 minutes and we mingled a little bit with the parents, but we didn’t have anything to do with set-up although the kindergarten teachers were released for set up and
for planning the event. I was just speaking to another colleague this morning about his school and he said they planned it completely without the RECEs and that they weren’t even invited to come. They weren’t even asked if they wanted to come. The event is kindergarten specific for parents. He was very upset that he wasn’t included as a co-teaching partner. If it doesn’t come from the Board and the school saying the RECEs are an essential part of this team, the parents will not fully understand and respect the new role of the RECE in FDK.

Another example was the fact that the communication with parents often does not recognize the RECE in the program. An RECE indicated that his name was left out of the letter to parents informing them about an upcoming field trip. He stated,

It’s a field trip, put my name on the bottom of the form, is that hard? A little something that would make me feel included. It just doesn’t happen.

Similarly the RECEs indicated that the class is often characterized as the kindergarten teacher’s class, rather than a shared classroom. For example, one of the RECEs shared the experience of picture day as follows:

Picture day rolls around and when the class photos are taken, you know you have little sign at the bottom that says so-and-so’s class and room number at the bottom. So in our case, all the kindergarten class photos had only the teacher’s name and none of the RECE’s names were included. We are supposed to be seen as a team working together but these little details show that we are not. It is these little things that count – put our name on the class photo to make us feel included as part of the teaching team.

Similarly, one RECE noted:
The other thing that frustrates me and this leads back to my point about undermining our role with parents is the drill, drill, drill that we are co-teachers, co-teachers, co-teachers. But when that report card goes home it only has one signature on it. And that bothers me because I had parents thinking until Christmas time that I was an EA, and I kept telling them I am the ECE. Well, if they saw the RECEs names on the report card as co-teachers, there would be less confusion about our roles.

By analyzing the discourses of the RECEs and how they describe their experiences in the FDK programs we can see how the professional role of the RECE is being discursively constructed in the education sector. The interview responses illustrate that there is a significant lack of clarity on the role of the RECE in the FDK classroom. While the administration and training employs discourses of team teaching, shared responsibility and collaborative practice it would appear that the RECEs are left to construct meanings of what their professional role and responsibilities are in the classroom, and concurrently how this reflects on their professional status is in the FDK program. There is a lack of clarity around the meaning of the word “professional” in the way that the RECE role is understood. The RECEs use strategies such as recurrent patterns in the structure and content of how they describe their pedagogical values and professional skills in order to create meanings. There are ambiguities in the understanding of their professional roles in the education sector that leave RECEs to construct meaning through everyday practices. They are left to deduce meanings of words such as collaboration or shared curriculum delivery, in order to negotiate a more professional role for themselves in the FDK team. As a result of these ambiguities, the RECE position in the FDK program is not fully understood as articulated in the policy documents and the RECEs have no institutional power to engage in a discourse that demands professional recognition and pay along with status as an equal to a teacher.
There is much that is left out of the description of the role of the RECE or their responsibilities in everyday practice. For example, many RECEs discuss their role as an assistant and not as a co-teacher as envisioned in the policy documents. This positioning leaves them vulnerable to a lesser professional status in the classroom. Many feel that they have to negotiate their new role within the classroom and offer suggestions on the systemic ways in which the classroom can be viewed as a shared space. For example, identifying the FDK classroom in the school with both educators consistently in communication and class activities, and having shared desk spaces for both educators are some of the simple ways in which the RECEs can be recognized as equal partners in the school and community. The complexities of the institutionalized education setting and the relative lack of power of the new professional RECE in the early learning classroom plays a significant role in their ability to advocate for a more professional role for themselves. Coming from the child care sector that is dominated by women and has been historically viewed as an extension of women’s work in the home, these RECEs are struggling to fully implement the co-teaching role that they envisioned in the education sector. These discourses are further affected by the legitimizing views of the union, administration and their teaching partners. For example, the RECEs represented by worker unions appear to have an assistant orientation, while those represented by teacher unions aspire to a co-teaching role with shared spaced and desks and shared curriculum planning and delivery responsibilities. Despite these challenges, the study illustrates how RECEs are engaged in discourses of professional practice, team teaching and shared early learning pedagogical leadership to help construct a more fulsome professional early learning teaching team that recognizes their professional role in the FDK team.
6.5.3 Follow-Up Survey

Participants in this labour study were invited to participate in a follow up survey in November 2013. The follow up survey was emailed to all participants who completed an initial survey and/or an interview in the study. Of the 51 participants in the study, 39 completed the follow up survey, representing a response rate of 75 percent.

6.5.3.1 Education

Results from the follow up survey show that about 30 percent of these participants have more education than the minimum requirement of a two year ECE diploma for the RECE position in FDK (see Figure 4). All of the respondents with higher levels of education indicated that these undergraduate or graduate degrees are in the area of child studies or education. Almost a third of the participants indicated that they have 15 or more years of experience in the early childhood sector (Figure 5). Of these participants five percent have prior experience as an Educational Assistants and five percent reported having experience as a teacher in Ontario.

![Figure 4](image)

*Figure 4.* Education. This set of figures illustrated the level of education and experience reported by the follow-up survey participants.
6.5.3.2 Previous Employer/Union

The results show that a non-profit child care provider previously employed almost 70 percent (n=51) of the RECEs. Approximately 10 percent indicate that their previous employer was a public school board, and only three percent indicated that they worked with a Catholic school board prior to joining the FDK program. This would have a significant impact on salaries because only one of the three union contracts recognizes prior experience outside of a school board in the calculation of the starting salary.

![Figure 5: Previous employer. This figure illustrates the previous employer reported by the participants.](image)

The RECEs were asked to respond to follow-up questions about whether their salary, benefits, job security, and professional status had increased, decreased or stayed the same, as a result of their move from the child care sector to FDK jobs in the education sector (see Figure 6). Approximately 42 percent indicated that their salaries had increased, while almost 60 percent reported that their salaries had decreased or stayed the same. This may account for the
significant level of experience that the RECEs hired into the programs had from their previous employment in the child care sector and because many of these RECEs had noteworthy supervisory experience in child care.

Similarly, while nearly 50 percent of the RECEs reported that their benefits had increased, over 40 percent indicated that their benefits had decreased. Although RECEs in the FDK programs are entitled to pensions and extended benefits, a comparison of their collective agreements (see thesis Chapter four) shows that in order for the RECEs to qualify for these benefits they must be working a full ten-month contract, rather than part time or split shifts. This may be a factor in the responses indicating a decrease in benefits. Furthermore, depending on the union that represents the RECEs, they may be required to pay for some portion of the benefit plan, such as extended health or dental benefits, which may also explain why many felt that their benefits have in fact decreased.

It is not surprising then to see that almost 60 percent of the RECEs reported that their job security has decreased by moving into the education sector. The interview responses suggest that these more experienced RECEs from the child care sector held more stable full time salaried year round positions in child care, with benefits. Given that the RECEs in FDK were classified as ten-month contracted employees, rather than full time year round positions like their teaching partners, they are laid off every summer and are recalled to their former positions in the fall, based on seniority. Some are even laid off for parts of the December or spring school breaks if the number of vacation days they are entitled to does not cover the whole period of the school break. As a result, the RECEs apply for Employment Insurance every school break and have a more precarious contract form of employment in the FDK programs, compared to more stable jobs in the child care sector, particularly for RECEs with more experience or in supervisory
positions. Despite these challenges, fifty percent of the RECEs felt that their professional status has increased by moving into the FDK jobs in the education sector. Many hope that the FDK jobs have improved recognition for their skills and expertise in early learning and that the integration of the RECE into the public education sector will create more understanding of the professional skills that RECEs bring to early education programs.

![Figure 6. Compensation and job security. This figure illustrates the changes in salary, benefits, job security and professional status reported by the follow up survey participants.](image)

6.5.3.3 **Current Role and Responsibilities**

In an attempt to understand whether the policy intent to have both educators share the responsibility for program delivery has been realized, respondents were asked to comment on whether the different areas of responsibility were handled mostly by the OCT, mostly by the RECE or shared equally. The results show that responsibilities for areas such as literacy, numeracy and science that have traditionally been in the purview of the teacher’s responsibilities remain their primary responsibility (see Figure 7).
Similarly, the RECEs interviewed in this follow up survey indicated that they were primarily responsible for areas that would traditionally be viewed as child care jobs. For example, play, special needs, set up, transitions and cleaning. Given that the policy intent is to provide an integrated play based early learning program that includes opportunities for children to learn through play, it is disappointing that there is still significant division in the education versus care responsibilities. The results show that the gendered construction of care work as women’s work continues to shape the role of the RECE in FDK programs. The follow up survey was administered in 2013, during the fourth year of implementation of the FDK program, and it is discouraging that the RECE participants still feel that their role is more focused on the traditional care roles in the integrated program after two years of implementation. Given the time that has elapsed since the program was first implemented, more effective integration in the roles of both professional educators in the classroom is expected.

The follow-up interview responses indicate that while many RECEs understood their role with a shared responsibility to plan and deliver curriculum in all areas, they were still expected to focus on “play based activities” and jobs that traditionally fell under the realm of child care such as assisting children with special needs and supporting children through transitions. This ongoing dichotomy between the care and education roles of the educators demonstrates a lack of knowledge and understanding of the ways in which children learn and the integration play based approaches that could be supported by both educators in all areas of program responsibility.
Figure 7. Area of responsibility. This figure illustrates the RECEs perceptions about whether the area of program responsibility is shared equally or handled mostly by the RECE or the kindergarten teacher.

These findings are supported by the responses of RECEs with respect to how often they engaged in activities such as instructing the whole class, working with small groups, providing individual support, and engaging in short-term or long-term program planning. In this respect, the responses show that RECEs are overwhelmingly instructing small groups and providing individual support to students, rather than instructing the whole class like their teaching partners. While both educators should typically engage in small group activities with younger children to
aid optimal early development, teachers continue to engage in large group activities while RECEs engage in small group activities demonstrating the different pedagogical views of both educators and the ongoing hierarchy within the teaching team.

Importantly, more RECEs reported engaging in short term program planning versus long term planning in the classroom. The interview responses indicate that the RECEs were not being paid for any planning and as a result, they did not feel they were included in any long term program planning goals with their teaching partners or peers for the kindergarten class. These findings are consistent with Gibson and Pelletier (2010), and reinforce the power differentials in the teaching team. By excluding RECEs from long term planning activities, they are limited in their ability to share professional skills or undertake pedagogical leadership to implement the play-based curriculum together with their co-teachers.

![Figure 8](image)

*Figure 8. Role of the RECE. This figure illustrates how often the RECEs reported engaging in planning and instruction in their role while delivering the FDK program.*
Finally, the survey obtained data on the RECEs’ perceptions about whether they received adequate compensation, planning time, and professional development in their new jobs, and whether having a union has made a difference to their professional status in the education sector. An overwhelming 87 percent felt that they did not receive adequate paid planning time to fulfill their role in the FDK program. Given that the follow up survey was administered in the fifth year of implementation, this shows an ongoing concern with respect to the RECEs ability to fulfill their new professional role. It highlights the systemic inequalities in supporting both educators to achieve the maximum benefits in the program.

Similarly, 43 percent felt that they did not receive adequate paid professional development to fulfill their new role. Interview respondents indicated that the RECEs were expected to volunteer their time to attend professional activity (PA) day training sessions because unlike their teaching counterparts, they were not normally paid for these school holidays. Some of the challenges of implementation the FDK program in Ontario has included a shortage of qualified RECEs to fill supply positions to cover for RECE absences. As a result, many RECEs are not able to attend training, due to lack of supply staffing coverage, while their teacher partners are able to do so more easily with paid PA days, and ready supply staffing coverage.
Figure 9. Factors that impact professional status. This figure illustrates the factors that may impact the RECEs professional status in the FDK program.

6.5.4 Elevating the Status of RECEs in the Education Sector

The initial implementation of the FDK team teaching model through Bill 242 requirements can be viewed as an authoritarian approach to policy making and implementation through the Ministry of Education mandate to the Boards of Education at the local level. After consultations with stakeholders, the initial mandate expected the school boards to operationalize the seamless day program as intended, with the integrated team teaching model of overlapping RECEs and teacher. However, only two of the sixty-four school boards in the province (Waterloo District School Board and Ottawa Carleton District School Board) have chosen this staffing model. Rather than carefully considering the available options for the long term, the government of Ontario and Ministry of Education bowed to pressure from school boards and third party child care operators including organizations and private daycare companies that stood to lose their contracts with the school boards for before and after school care. As a result, Education Act amendments were quickly introduced in 2011 through Bill 173, to enable school
boards to contract out the before and after school components. This was a marked departure from the initial policy intent articulated in Bill 242 to establish a public and universally accessible early learning program for young children. Instead, it reflects an expansion of private sector child care and prioritizing the needs of private and non-profit operators over the needs of children and their families.

As a result of the contracting out provisions, the projected number of RECEs that were to be employed by the education sector was reduced by half from an anticipated 20,000 new full time public sector jobs to just over 10,000 new jobs in education. Similarly, the contracting out of these before and after school services meant that the full time public sector jobs that were intended never materialized. The change in policy maintained the disparate nature of the early learning education and care programs and reduced the effectiveness of the innovative staff team model in Ontario. The decision cements the split shifts and inconsistent curriculum delivery concerns with implementation, and closes the opportunities for RECEs to undertake team teaching. While school boards retain the responsibility to deliver the extended day program, the nature of the relationship between school boards and child care operators has changed significantly. Child care operators are no longer merely tenants in the school buildings, but are contracted by the school board to provide the extended day service. As a result, there will undoubtedly be a large differential in wages and benefits, based on the core day RECE being a public sector school board employee and the before and after school RECE being the employee of a child care operator in the private or non-profit sector.

The FDK policy implementation has done little to establish a more effective system of wages and working conditions of the RECEs in the FDK program, because the implementation is focused on establishing the program quickly and efficiently by school boards, rather than on the
underlying policy goals of ensuring an integrated staff team with consistent planning and curriculum in the long term. It fails to take into consideration the multiple levels at which implementation can be affected, including how the school boards, unions, teachers, parents, child care operators, governments, and the RECEs themselves influence the FDK program. While the school districts have the power to enable or constrain policy reform, this study demonstrates that system-wide change is affected by multiple actors, including the RECEs, teachers, administrators and unions, as they interact with accountability measures and local school and community needs, which in turn can hinder or support reform efforts.

While Pascal’s report and recommendations on integrated staff teams are based on considerable research on the need to reduce transitions and stress for children, it has not necessarily lead to substantive and informed decision-making on the ground as evidenced by the experiences of a majority of school boards across Ontario. According to the Ministry of Education, school board operated FDK programs elevate RECEs from their traditional role as care providers in the child care sector to a professional early educator with curriculum and pedagogical responsibilities. The contracting out of extended day programs continue to maintain precarious employment for RECEs through split shifts and contracting out of public services. This contributes to the precarious nature of women’s work in the province, given that the childcare sector is almost entirely a female workforce. This failure to recognize the broader context and important dynamic shaping forces in the FDK program and policy implementation has contributed to the uneven outcomes in program implementation and more particularly in RECE wages and working conditions across the system.

Clune (2009) provides some useful perspectives to understanding organizations, actors and their impacts on policy implementation and outcomes. He helps us to understand the
relationships that influence policy implementation and outcomes at the school level, by looking at the ways in which schools modify policy to fit what was already in place. In this way, Clune focuses on the modifying process by looking at the local histories of schools and the actors that influence them. He presents three perspectives of schools as policy mediators, policy critics and policy constructors. He argues that these perspectives all suggest that schools and teachers must be actively engaged in the exercise of constructing policy outcomes and that “scripted” policy may not be the best way of translating sophisticated policy goals into practice.

If we were to look at schools and school boards as organisms that have some agency or as policy critics as described by Clune, we could better understand the way that school boards are modifying the policy to fit their particular histories, agendas and contexts. In this way, these school boards are seen as capable actors who can understand, interpret and implement the FDK policy with the goal of improving access and quality for children and families, as well as improving the professional status of RECEs as early educators in the education sector.

If schools are seen as policy mediators as described by Clune, then policymakers would argue that the role of the RECE in FDK is being contested by a variety of actors that are having a profound impact on school board implementers. Policymakers would typically view school boards in this way that foregrounds the policy in the implementation process. In this way, the results of these local concerns on the rollout of FDK programs being stalled to stem the job losses and instability in the child care sector would be blamed on the school boards’ inability to implement the policy mandate. Policymakers who view schools as mediators, expect them to mediate the conflicting agendas and priorities of third party operators and resort to stronger mandates and prescriptions for implementation. In this way, the initial policy intent to provide universally accessible publicly funded better quality programs for children are being eroded and
it appears that privatization and economic goals are emerging to support third party child care providers in schools. School boards are being blamed for not mediating the interests of the local actors effectively, despite the conflicting policy outcomes of being child and family focussed or preserving the child care sector.

If policymakers understand that policy work can be taken up in a different way that foregrounds school boards as co-constructors, we could see policies that respect local decision-making and school contexts as important predictors that can have powerful outcomes for children and ultimately the role that RECEs play in FDK classrooms. For example, two school boards have implemented the integrated seamless day model, to improve access and reduce transitions and stress for children and families in their communities. This study also illustrates the discourses of professionalism that get taken up by the educators themselves in their everyday practices in the schools and the ability for policy goals to be co-constructed at all levels of implementation.

RECEs who were interviewed are frustrated with the lack of clarity in their role and professional recognition. While RECEs feel well equipped to work with children and implement play-based curriculum, they are often limited in their ability by the relationships with their teacher partner, and the lack of supports within the school. Lack of planning time with the teaching partner was identified as a significant barrier to inter-professional collaboration and mutual respect. These systemic issues highlight the ways in which the gendered role of the RECE as care providers and support staff is perpetuated through implementation. A more balanced approach to systemic reform that recognizes the co-construction of policies through implementation can help to develop more systemic supports for RECEs professional recognition in the education sector.
School boards have a role to play in taking up the extended day programs so that RECEs in FDK and extended day have the same respect and working conditions as their professional counterparts. Implementing the seamless day model rather than contracting the before and after school components to third party private sector providers, would create more public sector jobs for RECEs and improve universal access to early learning programs for young children and families. School boards also have a role to ensure that RECEs and teachers have adequate shared planning time, and that the RECEs have access to paid professional development like their teacher partners. Unions play a critical role in ensuring that the co-teaching role of the RECE in FDK programs are differentiated from previous assistant roles in the education sector, and fully supported through collective bargaining and contract provisions.

RECEs need stronger training in understanding the education sector and union processes, in order to be more effective in advocating for themselves in the school environment. Professional organizations also need to take up the discourses of RECE professional practice, and advocate for the role that school boards and unions play to support these discourses and carve out a more professional role in the education sector, and potentially better wages and working conditions for RECEs.
Chapter 7

7  Policy Considerations for Improving the Professional Recognition and Status of RECEs in FDK

I began my doctoral research when FDK was in its first phase of implementation in Ontario. I had the opportunity to engage in conversations with colleagues and professors in the Early Learning Cohort of graduate students at the University of Toronto, who were involved in the program design, and had their fingers on the pulse of the issues and the policy implications. At the same time I was helping to organize RECEs employed by school boards across Ontario with one of the major education sector unions. There was much optimism and hope for the opportunities that public sector school board employment could create for the professional recognition and improved status of RECEs. At the same time, these seismic shifts in early learning in Ontario created waves of challenges at every level of the system, from governments to school boards, classrooms to educators, and most importantly from the child care community, families and children. The program has continued to evolve throughout the first five years of implementation, while addressing these challenges in creative ways. As a result of my background in law and my interest in labour issues, I was intrigued by the workforce policy implications for RECEs in FDK programs. While much of the focus on the new team teaching model was on the relationship between the teacher and RECE, the destabilization of staff in the early childhood sector, or the quality outcomes in the program, there was not much discussion about the impact on the RECEs’ professional role and status through the introduction of the team teaching model and the shift of RECEs employment from the private and non-profit sector to the sphere of public education. I was determined to explore these themes in my doctoral work.
7.1 Policy Implications

It is not surprising that RECEs’ status and working conditions are inconsistent across the province, given the large-scale reform that the FDK program involved across 72 school boards, three major unions, professional associations and the child care sector. Through systematic analysis of the legal and policy texts, this study demonstrates that the RECE’s professional status is affected by various actors including unions, school boards, third party child care operators, and the teaching team at the school level. The following figure illustrates the factors that have shaped the policy development and implementation stages in the study, and shows the connections made through the triangulation of sources such as law and policy texts with survey and interview data, to illustrate the impacts on the professional status of RECEs.

Figure 1. Policy Process and Outcomes. This figure illustrates the factors that influence the policy process and the study components documenting the outcomes on the professional role of the RECE in Ontario.
Datnow and Park (2009, p. 359) suggest that a more complex co-construction approach to education reform involves “a dynamic relationship, not just among structures, but also among cultures and people’s actions in many interlocking settings. It is this intersection of culture, structure, and individual agency across contexts that helps us better understand how to build positive instances of educational reform”. Understanding the professional role of RECEs in a mutually adaptive, dynamic process that includes the individuals as well as the cultures and systems that influence them, we can see that the professional recognition of the RECE in the FDK program is not only determined by the Education Act provisions at a macro level, but also by the everyday practice of the ECEs at a micro level and by meso system factors such as professional training, unionization and the job market. For example, Darling-Hammond (1987, p. 48) discusses the role that unions played in humanizing schools and asserting the teachers’ role in decision making along with wage issues. Her perspective on effective education reform includes organizational structures and processes that “come closest to conveying the complexities, uncertainties, and processes of teachers’ lives in “real” settings” (Darling-Hammond, 1987, p.68). In this way, this study demonstrates a more nuanced perspective of the policy process that includes meso system factors that is useful for analysis of the problem of RECEs professional status in FDK programs.

The initial Education Act amendments (Bill 242) required school boards to operate the FDK program and extended-day before and after school components. At a macro level, the policy intent articulated in the policy documents at the policy development stage, was to offer a publicly funded, seamless day program for young children from 7:00am to 6:00pm, with a strong mandate to achieve consistent curriculum, fewer transitions for children and reduced stress for families. School boards were given a transitional phase of two years to operationalize the integrated model including the extended day program. Ontario’s program, designed with a
unique team teaching model, was expected to raise the bar for teaching young children in the education sector by integrating the child development knowledge and skills of the RECE into the education sector.

The recommendations of the Early Learning Advisor included full time employment for RECEs through the school boards, a unique professional classification for RECEs within school boards as teaching partners, requirements for kindergarten teachers to complete an early childhood Additional Qualification (AQ) course within five years, a specialized early years degree for people working with children and families from birth to age eight, and preparation and planning time for both educators. Although the report recognized the inimitable skills of RECEs and the fact that most OCTs did not have early childhood training, the team approach was chosen as an efficient way to bring child development skills to the FDK classroom, while avoiding a conflict with the teacher unions. As a result, the staffing model was comprised of a kindergarten teacher and two early childhood educators who are charged with a “duty to cooperate” (Education Act, 2010) in delivering a consistent play-based curriculum throughout the day. These policy documents clearly establish a co-teaching role for RECEs that elevated their status from previous assistant positions in the education sector.

The recommendations would have seen school boards employ two full time RECEs each working 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. shifts that overlapped and provided opportunities for shared curriculum planning and pedagogy with the OCT that was in the classroom from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. RECEs would also have access to better wages and benefits (the report suggested a starting salary of $47,000 annually) while working for the education sector as full time salaried staff, rather than in the child care sector that continues to struggle with lower wages and benefits.
The application of the seamless day plan varied in implementation based on the various actors and their influences in implementing the policy, due to political pressure from the child care community and because school boards were only funded for one of the two RECE positions. There was an expectation that parent fees would cover the cost of the second RECE in the seamless model (Pascal, 2009). School boards lacked early learning administration expertise and the lack of adequate provincial supports provided little inducements to the school boards to operationalize the full team teaching in the extended day model. There was mounting pressure from the child care community which faced a loss of revenue as four and five year olds went into full time schooling and child care staff were enticed by the better wages, benefits and improved working conditions offered by school boards. As a result, most school boards chose to implement a team with a core day RECE and kindergarten teacher from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and contracted out the before and after school components to a third party operator, moving away from the policy goal of a fully integrated teaching team.

The Ontario government responded to the pressure by reversing its initial policy stance, making further amendments to the Education Act in May 2011 in order to continue delivery of extended day programs through the child care sector. Bill 173 made it optional for school boards to contract out the before and after school components of the early learning programs to third party operators, including private providers. This legislative amendment resulted in a marked departure from Bill 242’s original public policy intent of (1) a public universally accessible seamless day program operated by the school boards, (2) reduced stress for kids and families through consistent space and curriculum, and most importantly (3) team teaching with full time positions, better wages and working conditions for RECEs. Contracting out the before and after school components to third party operators has resulted in the unintended policy outcomes of lower wages and benefits for half of the program staff that are employed in the child care sector.
In addition it has expanded the number of split shifts jobs (7:00-9:00 a.m. and 3:00-6:00 p.m.), and reduces opportunities for RECEs to cooperate with the school day team of teacher and RECE to provide a consistent program and curriculum.

Interviews and surveys with the RECEs in schools illustrate that the professional role of the RECE is poorly understood at the micro system level in schools. Given the lack of consistency in program implementation, it can be difficult for the RECEs in the extended day components operated by the child care sector to have the same recognition of their school board RECEs in FDK programs because they do not have the same responsibilities for shared curriculum planning and delivery with the teachers in the FDK program.

7.2 Presentation and Discussion of Manuscripts in this Thesis

My primary research question was to explore of impact of legislation, jurisprudence, policy and practice on the professionalization of RECEs in Ontario’s education sector. I did this by exploring the following research questions:

1. How does legislation, jurisprudence, policy and practice impact the systemic gendering of early childhood work in the education sector?

2. How is the new professional role of RECEs in Ontario’s education sector being constructed through practice?

3. What factors (professional status issues such as unionization, compensation, certification/regulatory bodies, and professional development such as increased training requirements) affect the new “professional” role of the RECE in Ontario’s education sector?

I initially explored how the historical gendering influences of early childhood educators being portrayed as caregivers in the child care sector, continue to shape the role of RECEs in the
education sector. This work involved a literature review on the dichotomy between care and education as well as my initial interviews with RECEs about how their role was being shaped by divergent pedagogical views that differed from their teacher partner. The results discussed in chapter three of this thesis, indicate that the historical construction of early childhood education as care work undertaken by women, continues to shape and inform the role of the RECEs in FDK programs.

The study demonstrates that there is an ongoing false dichotomy between play and learning (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2009) despite what we know about the benefits of integrated playful environments for learning (Mustard, 2008). The pedagogical differences between the RECEs who bring social developmental values in their practice contrasts with the assessment and curriculum driven practices of their teaching counterparts. These pedagogical values and beliefs can serve to reinforce the schoolification of care if systemic supports are not put in place to support inter-professional knowledge sharing and respect for the role that RECEs play in the FDK program delivery.

The unions have played a role in promulgating no touch environments in spite of clear policies from the Ontario College of Teachers that include standards for caring and nurturing practice. While the newly established College of ECE has similar standards, it is not promising that the RECEs will be able to infuse their knowledge and professional practice into the classroom without systemic supports to ensure inter professional collaboration and shared pedagogical practice, given their relatively lower status in the teaching team (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Similarly, results show that the RECEs continue to negotiate their role and status in the classroom at an individual level, because of the lack of clarity about their role, and because of the lack of systemic supports such as joint planning time and shared professional development
opportunities for the FDK teaching team. In this way the RECEs discourses of professional recognition and knowledge sharing, reinforce Hoyle’s (1982) understanding of professionalism, which includes the need for improvement of status through better recognition of their particular professional skills, and improvement of skill or professional development.

My work with unions engaged my curiosity about how labour continues to shape the role of the RECE in school boards. The introduction of RECEs into FDK classrooms involved negotiations between school boards and unions about whether these new jobs were part of existing union agreements because of legacy contract issues where the unions previously represented ECEs in non-teaching positions within the school boards. The analysis of three union contracts in chapter four of this thesis, illustrates that the wages and working conditions intended in the initial policy recommendations for RECEs in FDK have not materialized. While the education sector jobs were intended to create better wages and working conditions, the legislation appears to have been written to protect the teacher’s role in the teaching team. The government regulated starting wage rates and two year probationary periods, however, its silence on the issue of representation was detrimental to the way that that the RECEs professional role has evolved through union representation. RECEs were not legislated to belong to a professional union like their teaching partners, and this has had an impact in creating a less than equal partnership in the team teaching model that is unique to Ontario.

The results of this study illuminate the ways that unions can influence the role of the RECE in FDK. For example, the study found that professional unions such as ETFO have stronger language and better contract provisions to ensure the professional recognition of the new RECE role in FDK through shared professional development and planning time. However, worker unions that previously represented ECEs in non-teaching roles do not appear to have
fully recognized the newly elevated status of the RECEs in FDK teams in their collective agreements. Not surprisingly, despite the large-scale reform of having roughly 10,000 RECEs join the education sector in these new roles, the new FDK early educator role is categorized as an hourly paid ten-month contract position, with less stability and fewer benefits than their teacher counterparts. For example, while teachers receive about 240 minutes of planning time, RECEs were given only 30 minutes of planning time by one professional union, and the other two unions had no provision for planning time at all. RECEs articulated that planning time and paid professional development continue to be strong indicators of support for nurturing and sustaining inter-professional collaboration with their teaching partners.

According to Statistics Canada (2011), women still make up 97 percent of the early childhood workforce and earn about 44 percent of the national average annual earnings. Despite the obvious increase in hourly wages in these public sector jobs, the RECEs in FDK have more precarious employment with fewer working hours, no paid school breaks and the instability of being laid off each summer. As a result the average annual salary of the RECEs in FDK are not as high as anticipated in the recommendations that were proposed based on full time year round jobs. This reinforces the characterization of the RECEs in FDK jobs as similar to their child care sector counterparts, where only 51% of the workforce works in full time salaried positions (Statistics Canada, 2011). These facts demonstrate the persistent gendering of the workforce and the relative instability of the workforce, despite the shift of a significant number of experienced RECEs to the education sector. The fact that some unions previously represented RECEs in support roles appears to inform how the new RECEs in FDK are categorized in some contract language. For example, there is no separate job classification for the RECE in FDK despite their legislated co-teaching role to plan and deliver curriculum alongside their teaching partners. This study demonstrates that the role of the RECE is still being contested in the education sector and
that despite the opportunities to elevate their status, unions have not stepped up to the plate to fully realize the new RECE role in FDK programs. As a result, the role of the RECE is reproduced in a gendered construct within the education sector, as one that is concerned with caring of children and an extension of domestic duties undertaken by women, rather than the recognition of the professional early education knowledge and skills of the RECE that was intended by the integrated team teaching model.

The common law has had an important role in refining issues that are unclear in the legislation and regulations. Case law and legal interpretation of the legislation has had a significant impact on defining the new designated role for RECEs in FDK. Fudge (1993) warns that legal rights do not always translate to material rights for marginalized women workers. My background in law was useful to unpack the jurisdictional challenges that the shifting role of RECEs raised through the common law, which is presented in chapter five of this thesis. The characterization of the RECE role as an hourly paid or ten-month contract position, has led to conflicts between federal and provincial law. While the Education Act amendment in Ontario requires RECEs to plan and deliver curriculum, the federal Employment Insurance Act prohibits teachers from accessing any EI benefits because they deliver curriculum. Teachers are considered full time, year round salaried employees, and while they are not required to work over the summer months, their salaries are pro-rated through the year. As a result, they do not experience periods of unemployment during school breaks and summer holidays like the RECEs in FDK. This conflict in the law created a crisis for the RECEs who were delivering curriculum like their teacher counterparts and therefore exempt from EI benefits, but were also not paid during these breaks.
The study illustrates the role that teacher unions have played to marginalize the RECEs – rather than advocating for year round salaries and benefits because RECEs were delivering curriculum like teachers, the unions fought for RECEs to get EI benefits. While this served the immediate needs of RECEs, it did nothing to elevate their status in the sector in the long term. In fact, it forces RECEs to be available for work during the summer months, in order to qualify for EI benefits, and establishes a stratified co-teaching team with very different working conditions from their teaching counterparts.

Smith and O’Day (1990) argue that the vitality and creativity of bottom up change at the school site can only be effective with more enabling and supportive structures at centralized levels of the system. The results of this study demonstrate the need for more effective legislation and policies that support the new role of the RECE. For example, The Ministry of Education initially required school boards to offer full day extended day model but later reneged from this position, allowing school boards to contract out these services to third party providers. This created split shifts, and less full time employment for RECEs. Similarly, the government did not legislate the RECEs to belong to the professional teacher unions, which would have also provided more incentives for their jobs to be categorized as full time salaried professional educators alongside their teacher counterparts.

Finally my study included valuable feedback from RECEs themselves, and how they experience the implementation of FDK, which is presented in chapter 6 of this thesis. Through surveys and interviews the RECEs discourses of how they experience professionalization at the school level, provides rich examples of how the RECE role and status continues to be negotiated. The study demonstrates that there are a number of factors that continue to influence the role of RECEs. The participants’ experiences in the classroom and school illustrate that while the
RECEs feel their status has improved, they continue to have less power in the classroom. For example, RECEs engage in support roles with respect to program delivery responsibilities and are largely responsible for play-based activities, transitions, and hygiene, while teachers tend to be more responsible for literacy and numeracy activities. The research suggests that in order for the RECEs to improve their status and position in the workforce, there must be a significant change in the power dynamics, memberships and values of the communities of practice to which early years practitioners belong (Simpson, 2010). Similar to Bascia and Jacka (2001) who suggest that low status teachers are forced to continually renegotiate their professional status and re-establish their credibility as a visible team player when structural conditions marginalize, RECEs in FDK are struggling for better recognition of their professional skills and expertise in the new FDK teaching team. Osgood (2006) argues that practitioners are not passively shaped by social structures, but that they are actively engaged in challenging, negotiating and reforming the discourses through which they are positions and defined. In this way, the RECEs use of professional discourses demonstrate their agency and capacity to carve out a more professional co-teaching role for themselves in the teaching team.

OECD (2010) reviews found a number of common weaknesses in staff integration including low recruitment and pay levels, particularly in child care services; lack of certification in specialist early childhood pedagogy; excessive feminization of staff; and lack of diversity of staff to reflect neighbourhood diversity. This study similarly demonstrates the need for systemic supports at all levels in order to create a more professional status and recognition of the new RECE role in the education sector. As Smith and O’Day (1990) suggest, government operated systems are in the best position to leverage other aspects of education, such as the system factors including the training, wages and working conditions of the newly minted professional RECEs across Ontario. However, as we have learned in this study, unions and school boards, as well as
administrators, teachers and training institutions also have a large role to play in recognizing the elevated status of RECEs in FDK classrooms, and ensuring there are adequate systemic supports in place in order that RECEs can fulfill this new role effectively. While wages and benefits have increased, there is a need for more stable employment with better planning time and access to professional development to support a more professional co-teaching role for RECEs in the education sector.

7.2.1 Integration of Care and Education and Implications for Professional Practice

The foundational aspects of the integrated FDK program include a caring, nurturing and play-based curriculum framework. The importance of early education professionals with child development expertise was a driving factor in having an RECE as part of the teaching team in Ontario. A unified pedagogical approach was introduced called Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT, 2007). ELECT proposes a range of principles including knowledgeable, responsive and reflective early childhood practitioners who reinforce the evidence on attachment in the early years. However this study illustrates that the pedagogical differences between care and education persists in the program. While RECEs and OCTs have similar professional standards of care and codes of ethics, their practice has been influenced greatly by the sectors they have worked in.

It is clear that unions have prejudiced the caring and nurturing practices of teachers in the education sector. While the Standards of Professional Practice of both colleges champion the nurturing of children’s social and emotional development, there is some divergence in the day-to-day pedagogy and practice of both professionals. This may be attributed to a small number of
litigation and complaints against teachers that have created a culture of suspicion and mistrust. RECEs in this study reported struggling with the cultural shift from early childhood environments where children thrived with caring and nurturing relationships with their educators, to “no touch” school environments. Many RECEs described their frustrations with their inability to transfer their knowledge and skills on child development from the child care sector into the education context.

The integration of the FDK program provides an opportunity to bridge the gendered gap between the pedagogical practices of care and education that persists through the integrated FDK program. It is critical to acknowledge both teaching roles in the integrated model, although the learning is acquired differently and may be executed differently. It is imperative to reflect on the systemic issues that get in the way of caring and nurturing in early learning practice when the education sector is focused on literacy and numeracy outcomes. Given the complexities of the institutionalized education setting and the relative lack of power of the RECE in the classroom, great care must be taken to ensure that the policy and program intent articulated in the FDK policy documents with respect to care and nurturing in early child development is not lost.

It is important to recognize the value of a collaborative and complementary co-teaching environment, which was intended in the FDK program (Ministry of Education, 2010). The findings point to the importance of a shared belief system, mutual respect and an understanding of roles as critical to the practice of co-teaching. The educators in this study recognize that sharing values and knowledge, supports collaboration. However, there are ongoing structural challenges to establishing stronger partnerships between the educators that would allow for cross-pollination of pedagogical approaches. Successful integration and professional recognition require joint learning opportunities that can support reciprocal learning. Systemic issues such as
uneven planning time for the educator teams, and large FDK class sizes with many operating above the recommended 26 children per class, contribute to the challenges. In schools where early childhood educators have already been part of the staffing team, ongoing discussions about how the role is changing with the emphasis on caring and nurturing play-based environments to support developmental outcomes for children are critical to developing a clearer understanding of the new RECE role in FDK.

7.2.2 Union Influences and Jurisdictional Challenges

As the largest unions in the education sector, teacher unions significantly influenced the early learning vision outlined in the advisor’s report. Initially the unions opposed having RECEs as partners in FDK classrooms. While the unions abandoned outright opposition, many of the union’s recommendations were adopted and integrated into the legislative changes that created FDK. As a result, the Education Act amendments are designed to protect the role of the teacher in the team teaching model while there is lack of clarity regarding the professional status of the RECE. The fact that RECEs were not legislated to belong to a teacher union like their teaching counterparts has created significant challenges in how RECEs professional status and working conditions are being negotiated by the various unions that represent RECEs in FDK programs. Ontario’s reticence to recognize the professional status of RECEs in FDK through stronger labour-related legislative provisions is a lost opportunity to develop stronger links between the two professionals.

There are a number of challenges in the contracts of RECEs that contribute to the precarious nature of the status of RECEs as professionals. Analysis of large education sector union contracts (Canadian Union of Public Employees, Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, and Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation), that represent RECEs in FDK
programs was undertaken in this study. The findings illustrate that the historical and gendered construction of RECEs as care providers rather than early educators continue to influence the existing contracts of unions that represented RECEs in non-teaching support staff roles in the education sector. Unlike teachers, who are guaranteed a full year salary, vacation plans, and paid professional development, RECE contracts are characterized by hourly salaries, less job security, and a potential for split shifts. This significant variation in how RECEs are positioned within union contracts continues to influence their professional status and working conditions in the education sector. Regardless of which union represents RECEs in FDK, there needs to be stronger language in union contracts to reflect RECEs’ team teaching role, their elevated responsibilities of curriculum planning and delivery, and their professional role in FDK programs.

This study demonstrates that unions have been an authoritative voice in legal decision-making. Analysis of Employment Insurance (EI) case law clearly reflects the union and employer’s view of the RECE professional. While the EI Act has not changed, this decision has an important impact on the future eligibility of RECEs in this new role to get Employment Insurance during periods of unemployment and layoff. This changes the scope of the RECE in FDK from a professional teaching partner to a seasonal support staff similar to Educational Assistants who previously qualified for EI. Materially, this translates to less monetary compensation in the form of year round salaried positions, fewer benefits such as paid planning time, and ultimately less recognition as equal professional partners in the early learning teaching team. The decision is further legitimized by the views of the RECE themselves, even though the conflict between their former role as an educational assistant and their current role as an RECE in FDK is not addressed in the legal decisions.
7.3 Future Considerations

There are many lessons that can be learned about workforce policy from the implementation of Ontario’s FDK program. The new designated role of the RECE in the kindergarten classroom was established through an amendment to the Education Act, but the professional status of the RECE is not explicitly recognized in the new amendment. While the role of the RECE is outlined, the Education Act amendments primarily protect the role of the teacher in the classroom, by ensuring that “nothing in this section limits any duties of teachers under this Act, including duties related to report cards, instruction, training and evaluation of the progress of pupils in junior kindergarten and kindergarten, the management of junior kindergarten and kindergarten classes, and the preparation of teaching plans” (Education Act, 2010, s. 264.3). This lack of clarity on RECEs’ professional role to plan and deliver curriculum leads to inter jurisdictional conflicts in the law about RECEs’ professional status in the program.

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that the policy intent of an integrated FDK program is realized. Policy implementation should include clear regulations and directives not only in program and curriculum, but also with respect to staffing policy. Recognizing the shared responsibility of the RECE and the teacher will involve putting the RECE position on an equitable footing with their teaching partners, with respect to how the job is characterized. The government should revisit the decision to allow school boards to contract out the extended day components of the integrated program. This would allow RECEs to be employed by the school board with better wages and benefits, and create a better environment for co-teaching and mutual respect amongst the teaching team. If RECEs are employed by school boards in the public education sector alongside their teaching partners, there are more opportunities to develop a mutually respectful co-teaching early learning team relationship through consistent program
goals and visioning, inter-professional collaboration, shared training and planning time, as well as shared space. One characterization of the lack of professional recognition can be that RECEs are not legislated to belong to a professional union like the teachers. Legislating RECEs in FDK programs into a teacher union would be an effective way for the government to ensure that both professionals were recognized as early education specialists in their own respect.

Unions have had a significant role in how the role of the RECE has been shaped and this has contributed erosion in the professional recognition of RECEs in Ontario’s FDK programs. Unions have been working to improve the working conditions of RECEs through collective bargaining, and there is much more to be done in this regard. While the unionization in the child care sector is very low at about 21.5%, having 10,000 or more new members move into the public education sector where unionization is high, should motivate unions to become better advocates for RECEs as professionals. Unions need to do much more to support their new member RECEs in designated FDK jobs. While RECEs in the FDK jobs are involved in program planning and delivery like other RECEs in the child care sector, there is a legislated requirement for the FDK RECEs to plan and deliver curriculum like their teacher counterparts. There is new jurisprudence that supports this notion. For example, in a recent legal decision on class sizes, the arbitrator states:

I am satisfied that the Education Act (as complemented by the policies and guidelines contemplated by that Act) requires that the ELP be delivered by a team consisting of a duly appointed or assigned teacher and at latest one designated ECE working side by side in the classroom for the entire instructional day…the legislated requirement that an ECE designated for and appointed to a JK or K classroom for ELP purposes must be in the classroom for the entire instructional
period during a school day takes precedence over any collective agreement provision (Windsor Essex Catholic School Board v. Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, 2014).

Interestingly the union in this case does not represent RECEs, but represents the Catholic teachers and wants to ensure that the class sizes and ratios are maintained in the FDK classroom, while the school board was attempting to schedule breaks for RECEs during the instructional day. This is another example of the complex ways in which the role of the RECE is being shaped in the FDK context. While the policy intent behind this legal challenge was to ensure that the teacher was not left alone in the classroom, this legal decision plays a role in reinforcing the Education Act requirements for the teacher and RECE to work side by side as a team to deliver the program, and inadvertently recognizes the role that RECEs play in the classroom as co-teachers. Equitable recognition of the professional skills of RECEs does not necessarily translate into equal pay as teachers, which may be the underlying fear of major unions. While pay equity challenges may evolve in the future based on the similarities in the job responsibilities of the kindergarten teacher and the RECE, it is unlikely that there is any political momentum from teacher unions to undertake any such reforms at a time when teacher unemployment is very high in the province.

At the same time, unions have a role to play in bridging the gap between teachers and RECEs. It is time for unions to put aside the historical gendered views between care and education and move to a place that recognizes the professional status of RECEs in their new role. Unions that blindly refuse to recognize the differences between the designated role of RECEs in FDK, and former roles occupied by ECEs as support staff in the school system, do nothing to bridge the divide between education and care in this integrated program model. For example,
RECE jobs in FDK programs should be classified as full year round salaried positions so that they are not considered ten-month contract-staff that are laid off every year in the summer. This will allow RECEs to function in the education system as early education professionals similar to their teaching partners, and other professional staff. This will also ensure that RECEs do not need to activate their Employment Insurance claims during the December and March school breaks in order to count these days towards their EI waiting period, creating a more precarious employment relationship.

Similarly, school boards and administrators have bowed to funding and community pressures and moved away from implementing the fully integrated FDK, which has also had a negative impact on the working conditions of RECEs in the education sector. It is difficult to establish effective programming and optimize inter-professional collaboration with the educator teams without shared planning time between the teacher and the early childhood specialist. This study demonstrates that RECEs who have moved into the education sector have extensive professional experience, and a significant number have more education that what is minimally required. RECEs’ education is more focused on child development training than most kindergarten teachers, but the RECE has less respect than the kindergarten teacher in the classroom and in the school because of the power dynamics between the teacher and the RECE. The RECEs’ ability to use this knowledge is limited because there is a perception in the school system that RECEs engage in play, manage behaviour, and deal with toileting and transitions; while teachers do the actual teaching in literacy and numeracy. Administrators and unions that represent both RECEs in designated FDK roles as well as RECEs that work in the school boards as Educational Assistants should be mindful of the significant differences in these roles, and work to establish these differences through negotiated provisions in their collective agreements. For example, RECEs in designated FDK positions should be considered a separate job
classification, based on the increased responsibilities to plan and deliver curriculum in the FDK programs.

Likewise, the RECE does not have access to the same professional development opportunities as kindergarten teachers and both unions and administrators have a role to play in ensuring that this is changed. RECEs should have access to paid professional development and be included in training events that teachers attend for the kindergarten program. A legislated expectation to plan and delivery curriculum in a co-teaching environment should be supported by shared training to reinforce these expectations with the teaching team.

In July 2014, the College of ECE introduced the new continuous professional learning program, a framework to assist RECEs to engage in self-reflective ongoing learning that relates to their professional practice (CECE, 2014). The program is voluntary, but employers are encouraged to support the CPL program so that RECEs can meet their ethical and professional practice requirements. Unions and administrators can ensure that there is adequate provision for release time to allow RECEs to access such training and meet the regulatory requirements of their profession. Administrators have a responsibility to implement the integrated seamless day model and can choose not to contract out the extended day components, in order to improve the FDK program delivery and staffing integration.

The RECE’s professional practice in FDK classrooms is fraught with the politics of interpretation and implementation on the ground. In order to ensure that the role of the RECE in the program and classroom is fully understood, training should be offered to all of the stakeholders in the program’s implementation. For example, teachers and administrators need to have a clearer understanding of the skills and expertise that RECEs bring to the classroom and more workshops can focus on how these skills can be better utilized in the team teaching model.
Teachers and administrators who understand the benefits of play-based learning are more likely to optimize the skills of the RECE in the FDK program environment. The recommendations of the Early Learning Advisor to require all teachers in the FDK program to undergo child development training should be implemented. Similarly, RECEs also need training on understanding the landscape of working in the education sector and the curriculum and assessment goals that drive the programming. Given the number of RECEs who are employed by the education sector in Ontario, ECE training programs should include more specific courses on understanding kindergarten curriculum and assessment tools, as well as courses on the legal and policy perspectives around the differences in the education and child care sector. For example, courses should be offered to help ECE candidates understand how labour organizations work, how they can impact their status and in the school boards, through not just compensation but professional recognition of their skills and expertise in union processes. Similarly the policy recommendations to offer training on child development to kindergarten teachers should be implemented in order for the teaching team to benefit from these shared pedagogical views.

While Ontario was the first in Canada to implement an innovative team teaching model in the integrated program, it should not be left to RECEs in these roles to negotiate the terrain of these new jobs. A strong policy infrastructure is necessary to ensure that children across Ontario get similar benefits from the program. Staffing policy has been known to drive program quality in early learning environments. It is critical that all the stakeholders including governments, unions, and administrators continually work to optimize staffing policy to ensure quality outcomes for the teaching teams and ultimately for the children in Ontario’s FDK programs.
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Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, OISE/University of Toronto.


Appendices

Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Labour Research Study: Early Childhood Educators in Full Day Early Learning Programs in Ontario

• Are you a Registered Early Childhood Educator (ECE)?
• Are you working for a School Board in an Early Learning Kindergarten Program as a Designated ECE?
• Are you interested in the changing role of the ECE in school settings?
• Would you like to participate in a research study with other ECEs in similar situations?

Participants are needed for a research study to explore the new professional role, wages and working conditions of Registered Early Childhood Educators within schools in Ontario.

We would like to hear from you about your experience in child care and in the ELP...

This Doctoral study will explore the changing role and working conditions of the new professional Designated Early Childhood Educator in Ontario’s Integrated Full Day Early Learning Programs. Information on your previous employment, role and working conditions will be collected and compared to your new role and working conditions within school boards across Ontario.

Participants will be asked to:
   a. Complete a confidential survey.
   b. Participate in a focus group discussion (or an individual interview).

Please note:
• Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and your confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
• Participants will receive a summary of the research findings.
• Participants in this study will be contacted after a period of 1-2 years, to collect information on any future changes to your role, wages and working conditions.
• Reimbursement for reasonable expenses to participants such as child care can be arranged.

If you are interested in participating in the labour research study, please contact Romona Gananathan at romona.gananathan@utoronto.ca or Janette Pelletier at janette.pelletier@utoronto.ca.

Thank you for your interest in this study and for helping to understand the early childhood profession.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Labour Study: Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in the Ontario Full Day Early Learning Program

Person conducting the study: Romona Gananathan, PhD Candidate, Department of Human Development Applied Psychology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Romona Gananathan because you are an Early Childhood Educator who is currently employed by a school board in Ontario in a full day early learning program classroom. In order to decide whether or not you want to be a part of this research study, you should understand what is involved and the potential risks and benefits. This form gives you detailed information about the research project, which will be discussed with you. Once you understand the project, you will be asked to sign this form if you wish to participate. Please take your time to make your decision.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?
This research is being conducted to develop a better understanding of the experiences of ECEs working in the full day early learning program and explore the differences in the wages, working conditions and the professional role of the ECE in school settings in Ontario.

This study aims to track the improvements in your role and working conditions over time. In order to be effective, we would like to follow a group of ECEs in the first year of FDEL implementation to see how your role and working conditions change over time. As a result, we would like your commitment to participate in the study and we would like to contact you again over the next two years to collect information on changes you may experience in your role and working conditions.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
This study aims to explore the labour and policy implications of implementing the integrated staff teams in the Full Day Early Learning Program by exploring the new professional role and working conditions of the DECEs. Factors such as education, work experience, compensation, supervision, and access to training will be explored within the framework of legislation/policy changes, professional development and unionization.
This study will focus on the following questions:
1. What are the labour-related legal and policy issues related to the implementation of an effective integrated staffing model with a new professional Designated Early Childhood Educator role within the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program in Ontario?
2. Are there differences between the wages, working conditions and professional recognition of the new DECE and other ECEs working in the school environment?
3. Do the wages, working conditions and professional role of the new DECE in the education sector have any effect on the wages and working conditions of the broader child care sector?
4. How does labour organization (unionization) affect the development of the professional role of the Designated Early Childhood Educator, including their wages and working conditions?

WHAT ARE PARTICIPANTS EXPECTED TO DO IN THIS STUDY?
If you volunteer to take part in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
• You will be asked to complete a set of survey questions on (a) your education/qualifications; (b) your previous employment; and (c) your current employment in an early learning program with a school board.
• You will be asked to participate in a one-hour semi structured focus group with other early childhood educators to discuss your experiences of working in the full day early learning program. The goal is to conduct focus groups with 8-10 early childhood educators in various communities in Ontario where there are groupings of ECEs and to conduct interviews with individual ECEs where distance and travel may be a barrier to participate in a focus group.
• You will be contacted in 1-2 years and asked to complete a follow up survey and participate in a focus group or interview on your current employment at that time.
• The aim of the study is to focus on your new professional role as a Designated ECE and explore the wages, working conditions, training and supports that enable you to function in this new role in a school setting. You will also be asked to comment on your work experiences and your understanding of your role as a Designated ECE.
• This research study has no budget for compensation. Where appropriate, I will provide refreshments for the participants in the study. I am able to cover any costs related to child care, and local transportation to enable the participation in the study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
I do not anticipate there being any physical or psychological risk or discomfort related to you participating in this study; however, for some people, talking about their professional work experiences and changing role may be difficult. If you feel any discomfort or distress due to taking part in this study, please inform me immediately and know you can withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS FOR ME AND/OR FOR SOCIETY?
I cannot promise any personal benefits to you from your participation in this study; however, possible benefits will be that your contributions may improve and strengthen the early childhood educators’ role and working conditions in the education sector.
I hope this study helps to inform how early childhood educators in school settings are recognized as professionals and supported in their work with children and families. I also hope that this recognition and support leads to improved quality in early learning program environments in Ontario.

COMPENSATION AND COSTS
Unfortunately, I am unable to compensate you for your participation. There are no costs associated with participation but I will cover any child care expenses and local travel such as public transit or parking for the duration of the meeting time with the researcher.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
During the focus group discussion, participants will be asked to share experiences without naming the early learning program where they work, the families that they work with, or the sharing the name of their colleagues. During the focus group, in order to ensure confidentiality, participants will be asked not to discuss the information shared by other participants outside the focus group.
Your personal information will not be shared with anyone except with your consent. Your personal information will not be attached to any of the data gathered. The data will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office. The audiotape your interview will be transcibed. All audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription. The only people who will have access to the audio recording and transcribed notes are the researcher and the thesis supervisor. All of your data will be destroyed 5 years after the last report has been made of the results of the study.
The results of the study may be published in scholarly publications or may be presented at academic conferences. If this is the case, your name will not be used and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent to the disclosure. Any risk of harm to the participant or others will be reported to the law or other proper authority.

IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS, WHOM CAN I CALL?
The University of Toronto Research Ethics Board has approved this project. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office Research Ethics Board, University of Toronto at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact the researcher Romona Gananathan at Romona.gananathan@utoronto.ca or by phone at (416) 463-5217 or Janette Pelletier (Thesis Supervisor) at janette.pelletier@utoronto.ca by phone at (416) 934-4506.
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

☐ I have read this form and my questions, if any, have been addressed. I have also been given a copy of this form.

☐ I would like a summary of the research data.

___________________________________________________________
Participant signature  Date

___________________________________________________________
Researcher signature  Date

CONTACT INFORMATION

PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION BELOW, SO THAT WE MAY FOLLOW UP WITH YOU ABOUT THIS STUDY. YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL.

Name: ___________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________

Cell/Alternate Ph: ________________________________

Email: ___________________________________________

Alternate Email: ___________________________________________

We appreciate the time you are contributing to this study.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
Appendix C

INITIAL SURVEY: PART A - QUALIFICATIONS

1. What is your educational background? (please check all that apply):
   1. College Diploma (2 year college program)
      a. ECE
      b. Other area (please specify): _____________________________________________
   2. Degree (4 year college or university program)
      a. BA in Early Childhood Development
      b. Bachelor of Education
      c. Other area (please specify): _____________________________________________
   3. Masters/PhD:
      a. MA in Child Study & Education
      b. MA in another area (please specify):
      c. PhD (please specify topic): _____________________________________________
   4. Teacher Education Certificate
      a. Elementary
      b. Secondary
   5. Other training/Professional Development (please specify):
      a. ___________________________________________
      b. ___________________________________________
      c. ___________________________________________

2. Please list your professional certification: (Please check all that apply)
   1. Member of the College of ECE
   2. Member of the Ontario College of Teachers
   3. Other (please specify): ____________________________________________________

3. How many years of paid professional work experience do you have? (Please check all that apply and indicate number of years of work in each category)
   1. ECE _________ (# of years of experience as an ECE)
   2. Supervisor _________ (# of years of experience as a supervisor)
   3. Teacher _________ (# of years of experience as a teacher)
   4. Ed. Assist. _________ (# of years of experience as an Educational Assistant)
   5. Other _________ (# of years of experience)
   6. Other (please specify): ____________________________________________________

4. Please list your volunteer or unpaid work experience (Please check all that apply)
   1. Student placement (eg. student work in training) _________ (# of years of experience)
   2. Child care (not counting care of your own children) _________ (# of years of experience)
   3. Child care Board or committee volunteer _________ (# of years of experience)
   4. Research _________ (# of years of experience)
   5. Other (please specify): ____________________________________________________

Thank you for completing this survey. We appreciate the time you are contributing to this study.

If you would like more information about this study, please contact:
Romona Gananathan, Doctoral Candidate, Early Learning Cohort
Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, University of Toronto/OISE
Email: romona.gananathan@utoronto.ca
INITIAL SURVEY: PART B – PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

*Please complete this section based on your previous ECE job just before you started working as a Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE) in the Full Day Early Learning (FDEL) Program. If you worked in more than one ECE job at the same time, please complete this section for the job that you worked the most amount of time in, immediately prior to working in the ELP.

GENERAL/ROLE:
5. What was your most recent job prior to being hired into the FDEL Position?
   1 □ ECE  2 □ Supervisor  3 □ Teacher  4 □ Educational Assistant
   5 □ Other (please specify): ____________________________

6. Who was your previous employer? (Please check all that apply):
   1 □ Public School Board  2 □ Catholic School Board
   3 □ Private School  4 □ Non-profit
   5 □ Private operator  6 □ Municipal government
   7 □ Other (please specify): ____________________________

7. How long did you work with this employer? (Please enter month and year):
   From: [_____ (month)] [____ (year)] To: [_____ (month)] [____ (year)]

8. How long was your probationary period in your previous position?
   1 □ No probation  2 □ Three months  3 □ Six months
   4 □ Nine months  5 □ One year  6 □ Other (please specify): ____________________________

9. How would you characterize your previous ECE position? (please check all that apply)
   1 □ Contract  2 □ Permanent  3 □ 10 Month (Sep-Jun)  4 □ Year round
   3 □ Part time  4 □ Full time  5 □ Supply/Relief
   6 □ Other (please specify): ____________________________

UNIONIZATION
10. Were you represented by a union in this position?
    1 □ Union certification in process  2 □ Yes If yes or in process, which union?
        a □ CUPE  b □ ETFO  c □ OSSTF  d □ OECTA
        e □ Other (please specify): ____________________________
    3 □ No. If no, did you receive a contract letter from your employer regarding your wages and working conditions in your previous job?
        a □ Yes  b □ No

11. Did you help to organize union activities in your workplace?
    1 □ Organizing members  2 □ Executive member of your local
    3 □ Collective bargaining with the employer  4 □ Professional development activities
    5 □ Other (please specify): ____________________________

COMPENSATION:
12. What were your wages in your previous position? (please include any wage grants that were part of your annual or hourly salary)
    1 □ Hourly rate (specify): ________/hour
    2 □ What is your total gross annual salary for this job (specify): ________/year

13. How many hours are you paid to work?
    1 □ Enter number of hours per day  2 □ Enter number of hours per week

14. On average, how many hours do you actually work?
    1 □ Enter number of hours each day  2 □ Enter number of hours each week
15. What benefits coverage did you receive in your previous position?
   - Health
   - Dental
   - Life Insurance
   - Pension
   - Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________

16. Did you receive a paid lunch break in your previous job?
   - Yes
   - No
   If yes, how many minutes each day
     - Enter number of minutes each day

17. Are you responsible for supervising children during your paid lunch break? (For example, are you required to eat lunch with the children during your lunch break and not given any other time for yourself)
   - Yes
   - No

18. Did you receive paid breaks each day?
   - Yes
   - No
   If yes, how many minutes each day
     - Enter number of minutes

19. How many days of paid vacation did you receive in your previous job? (please enter “0” if you were not paid for any vacation days)
   - Enter number of paid days per year

20. Which holidays were you paid for in your previous job? (please check all that apply)
   - Easter Monday
   - Civic Holiday
   - March Break (one week)
   - Summer Break (June-September)
   - December break
   - Other (specify): ____________________________________________________________

21. Did your employer pay the membership fees for your professional certification?
   - Yes If yes, which ones?
     - College of ECE
     - College of Teachers
   - No
     - Association of Early Childhood Educators (AECEO)
     - Other (specify): _____________________________

SUPERVISION

22. In your opinion, your supervisor in your previous job was: (check all that apply)
   - Familiar with your work
   - Approachable
   - Supportive of you

23. On average how often did your supervisor in your previous job each month: (enter amount 0-99)
   - Visit your classroom?
   - Observe your activities?
   - Provide feedback?

24. How often was your work performance formally reviewed? (please do not include day-to-day feedback)
   - Never
   - Once a year
   - Twice per year
   - 3 or more times per year

25. How often did you attend centre-wide staff meetings in your previous job? (Choose one option that is most accurate).
   - Weekly
   - Bi-weekly
   - Monthly
   - Never
   - Other (specify): ____________________________________________________________

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

26. On average each year, how many hours of professional development training did you participate in?
   - In-house training provided by employer: _________ (please specify number of hours)
   - Off site training or workshops: _________ (please specify number of hours)
   - Conferences/professional organizations: _________ (please specify number of hours)
   - College university courses/training: _________ (please specify number of hours)
27. How many of these hours were paid?
   1 □ None  2 □ 0-5 hours  3 □ 5-10 hours  4 □ 10-15 hours
   5 □ 15-20 hours  6 □ 20-25 hours  7 □ 25-30 hours  8 □ More than 30 hours

28. Please indicate the content of all your professional development activities over the past year:
   1 □ Child development  2 □ Parents/families  3 □ Equity/diversity
   4 □ Learning through play  5 □ Special needs  6 □ Staff roles/teamwork
   7 □ Program administration  8 □ Curriculum planning  9 □ Health and safety
   10 □ Other (specify): ____________________________________________________

29. What incentives does your employer provide for you to improve your skills and qualifications?
   1 □ None  2 □ Encouragement/guidance
   3 □ Tuition or payment of workshop/conference fees  4 □ Paid time off
   5 □ Salary increased that are tied to training

30. Were you required to undergo any training/professional development to continue in your job?
   1 □ Yes, (specify): ______________________________________________________
   2 □ No

PROGRAM PLANNING
31. How often did you attend classroom staff meetings in your previous job? (Choose the one option that is most accurate).
   1 □ Weekly  2 □ Bi-weekly  3 □ Monthly  4 □ Never
   5 □ Other (specify): ____________________________________________________

32. Were you involved in program planning for each day’s activities in your previous job?
   1 □ Yes  2 □ No  3 □ Not applicable (there was no program plan)

33. Were you paid for planning time involved in creating the program plan for each day’s activities in your previous job?
   1 □ Yes  2 □ No  3 □ Not applicable (there was no program plan)

34. On average, how many hours of paid planning time did you receive weekly? (please indicate “0” if you were not paid for any planning time, or if planning was done throughout the workday, for example when the children were sleeping).
   1 □ Enter number of paid hours per week

Thank you for completing this survey. We appreciate the time you are contributing to this study.
If you would like more information about this study, please contact:
Romona Gananathan, Doctoral Candidate, Early Learning Cohort
Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, University of Toronto/OISE
Email: romona.gananathan@utoronto.ca
INITIAL SURVEY: PART C – CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

*Please complete this section based on your CURRENT employment, immediately after being hired as a DECE to work within the FDEL program with a school board. If you currently work for more than one employer at the same time while working within the FDEL (separate school Boards as supply staff, or one ELP job and other non-ELP jobs), please complete this section for the job you work in most).

GENERAL/ROLE:

35. What is your current job in the FDEL Program? (please check one)
   1. ECE
   2. Supervisor
   3. Teacher
   4. Early Learning Coordinator
   5. Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________

36. Who is your current employer? (please check one)
   1. Public School Board
   2. Catholic School Board
   3. Private School
   4. Non-profit
   5. Private operator
   6. Municipal government
   7. Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________

37. How many ELP Classrooms are in your school for the 2010/2011-year?
   a. Enter number of classrooms this year

38. How many DECE’s are working in your school for the 2010/2011 year?
   a. Enter number of DECE’s this year

39. When were you hired into your current position in the FDELK Program?
   From: _______ (month)/_________ (year)

40. Have you worked with this employer previously?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   If yes, when: (Please enter month and year):
   a. From: _______ (month)/_________ (year) To: _______ (month)/_________ (year)
   b. In what position (please specify): _______________________________________________

41. How long is your probationary period in your current position?
   1. No probation
   2. Three months
   3. Six months
   4. Nine months
   5. One year
   6. Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________

42. How would you characterize your current position? (please check all that apply)
   1. Contract
   2. Permanent
   3. 10 Month (Sep-Jun)
   4. Year round
   5. Part time
   6. Full time
   7. Supply/Relief
   8. Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________

UNIONIZATION

43. Are you represented by a union in this position?
   1. Union certification in process
   2. Yes If yes which union; if in process, which unions are competing to represent you?
      a. CUPE
      b. ETFO
      c. OSSTF
      d. OECTA
      e. Other (please specify):
   3. No. If no, did you receive a contract letter from your employer regarding your wages and working conditions in your previous job?
      a. Yes
      b. No

44. Are you helping to organize union activities in your workplace?
   1. Organizing members
   2. Executive member of your local
   3. Collective bargaining with the employer
   4. Professional development activities
   5. Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________
45. Were you automatically included into an existing collective agreement in your current job?
   a) Yes  b) No  Not applicable: non-unionized workplace

46. When did you become a member of the union in your current job?
   (month) (year)  Not applicable

47. Did you participate in a vote to choose a union to represent you in the FDEL program in your current job?
   a) Yes  b) No  Not applicable

COMPENSATION:
48. What are your wages in your current position?
   1) Hourly rate (specify): __________/hour  2) Annual salary (specify): __________/year  3) Other (please specify): ______________________________________________________

49. How many hours are you paid to work in your current position? (please include paid hours only including paid lunches or breaks)
   1) Enter number of hours per day  2) Enter number of hours per week

50. On average, how many hours do you actually work in your current position? (please include both paid and UNPAID hours)
   1) Enter number of hours each day  2) Enter number of hours each week

51. Are you paid the same as other DECEs in the same job working in your school board?
   1) Yes  2) No

52. Is your pay determined by a salary scale, based on the number of years of experience you have with your employer?
   1) Yes  2) No
   If yes, please specify: ______________________________________________________

53. What benefits coverage do you receive in your current position?
   1) Health  2) Dental  3) Life Insurance  4) Pension  5) Other (please specify): ______________________________________________________

54. Do you receive a paid lunch break in your current job?
   1) Yes  2) No
   If yes, how many minutes each day  a) Enter number of minutes each day

55. Are you responsible for supervising children during your paid lunch break? (for example, are you required to eat lunch with the children during your lunch break and not given any other time instead?)
   1) Yes  2) No

56. Do you receive paid breaks each day?
   1) Yes  2) No
   If yes, how many minutes each day  a) Enter number of minutes each day

57. How many days of paid vacation do you receive in your current job? (please enter “0” if you were not paid for any vacation days)
   1) Enter number of paid days per year

58. Which holidays are you paid for in your current job? (please check all that apply)
   2) Easter Monday (not a statutory holiday)
   3) Civic Holiday (first Monday in August – not a statutory holiday)
   4) March Break (one week)
   5) Summer Break (June-September)
   6) December break
   7) Other (specify): ______________________________________________________
59. Does your employer pay the membership fees for your professional certification?
   1 □ Yes If yes, which ones?  a □ College of ECE  b □ College of Teachers
   2 □ No  c □ Association of Early Childhood Educators (AECEO)
   d □ Other (specify): ______________________________

SUPERVISION
60. In your opinion, your supervisor in your current job is: (check all that apply)
   1 □ Familiar with your work  2 □ Approachable  3 □ Supportive of you

61. On average how often does your supervisor in your current job each month? (enter amount 0-99)
   1 □ Visit your classroom?  2 □ Observe your activities?  3 □ Provide feedback?

62. How often is your work performance formally reviewed? (please do not include day-to-day feedback)
   1 □ Never  2 □ Once a year  3 □ Twice per year  4 □ 3 or more times per year

63. How often do you attend school-wide staff meetings in your current job? (Choose one option that is most accurate).
   1 □ Weekly  2 □ Bi-weekly  3 □ Monthly  4 □ Never

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
64. How many hours of professional development training did you participate in this year? Which year
   1 □ In-house training provided by employer: __________ (please specify number of hours)
   2 □ Off site training or workshops: __________ (please specify number of hours)
   3 □ Conferences/professional organizations: __________ (please specify number of hours)
   4 □ College university courses/training: __________ (please specify number of hours)

65. How many of these professional development hours are paid?
   1 □ None  2 □ 0-5 hours  3 □ 5-10 hours  4 □ 10-15 hours
   5 □ 15-20 hours  6 □ 20-25 hours  7 □ 25-30 hours  8 □ More than 30 hours

66. Please indicate the content of all your professional development activities over the past year:
   1 □ Child development  2 □ Parents/families  3 □ Equity/diversity
   4 □ Learning through play  5 □ Special needs  6 □ Staff roles/teanwork
   7 □ Program administration  8 □ Curriculum planning  9 □ Health and safety
   10 □ Other (specify): __________________________________________________________

67. What incentives does your employer provide for you to improve your skills and qualifications?
   1 □ None  2 □ Encouragement/guidance  3 □ Tuition or payment of workshop/conference fees
   4 □ Paid time off  5 □ Salary increased that are tied to training

68. Are you required to undergo any training/professional development to continue in your job?
   1 □ Yes, (specify): ____________________________________________________________
   2 □ No

PROGRAM PLANNING
69. How often do you attend classroom staff meetings in your current job? (Choose the one option that is most accurate).
   1 □ Weekly  2 □ Bi-weekly  3 □ Monthly  4 □ Never
   5 □ Other (specify): ____________________________________________________________
70. Are you involved in program planning for each day’s activities in your current job?
  1. Yes  2. No  3. Not applicable (there was no program plan)

If yes, do you do this planning:
  a. By yourself  b. With the teacher in your classroom
  c. With all ELP staff  d. Only with other DECE’s in the school
  e. With others (please specify): __________________________________________

71. Are you paid for planning time involved in creating the program plan for each day’s activities in your current job?
  1. Yes  2. No  3. Not applicable (there was no program plan)

72. On average, how many hours of paid planning time do you receive weekly? (please indicate “0” if you are not paid for any planning time, or if planning is done throughout the work day, for example when the children are sleeping or in another class such as music or gym).

  1. Enter number of paid hours per week

73. Was there anything that surprised you in your new role as an ECE in the integrated staff team?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

74. Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not touch on in this survey?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing this survey. We appreciate the time you are contributing to this study.

If you would like more information about this study, please contact:

Romona Gananathan, Doctoral Candidate, Early Learning Cohort
Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, University of Toronto/OISE
Email: romona.gananathan@utoronto.ca
Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your role in the ELP in Ontario?
2. How is this similar or different to your role previously in the child care sector? (if you did not do any paid work as an ECE, you can discuss your placement work)
3. How is your role as an ECE recognized (or not) within your classroom and within your school?
4. How do you think the College of ECE has affected your role?
5. What kinds of supports did you receive to fulfil your role as an ECE in the ELP (professional development, resources for classroom, curriculum support, support from ECE colleagues, teachers, principals, others?}
6. Did you participate in any training or professional development related to your work? (Prompt: such as the ministry, school boards, unions, professional associations or child care resource centres)
   a. Who provided this training?
   b. What topics were covered?
   c. How useful was this training to you and why?
7. Do you receive any coaching or support from anyone? (Prompt: such as the principal in your school, your teacher partner, another teacher, another ECE, friends who are ECE’s)
   a. Who provided the support?
   b. What types of support?
   c. How was this useful to you?
8. What kinds of policies or written rules are in place in your school or school board that help you in your new role?
9. What kind of unwritten rules and practices are in place in your school or classroom that help you in your new role?
10. Have you had any individual issues or concerns about your role in the school?
    a. How did you resolve these concerns?
11. Have you had any individual issues or concerns about your wages or working conditions in the school?
    a. How did you resolve these concerns?
12. What do you think would help you fulfil your role and duties in the ELP better?

We appreciate the time you are contributing to this study.
If you would like more information about this study, please contact:
Romona Gananathan, Doctoral Candidate, Early Learning Cohort
Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, University of Toronto/OISE
Email: romona.gananathan@utoronto.ca
Exhibit E

Labour Study: Professionalization of ECEs in FDK Follow-Up Survey

Thank you for your interest in the professionalization of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in Ontario's Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) Program. Full Day Kindergarten involves legal and policy changes for the ECE profession and makes school boards major employers of RECEs. This survey is part of a doctoral research study being conducted to understand the experiences of RECEs working in school board operated FDK programs, and the impact of these legal and policy changes in Ontario on the professional role and status of RECEs in the education sector. You are being asked to complete this survey because you may have completed a previous survey and interview with this study, or you may have expressed an interest in this study.

To participate in this survey, you must be a Registered Early Childhood Educator currently working in a school board operated FDK program. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your personal information will be held confidential and your responses will not be linked to you. By completing this survey, you are providing your consent to participate in this study. However, you may withdraw your participation at any time by contacting the researcher.

We appreciate your participation and hope your input will help to improve the professional recognition of RECEs in Ontario's FDK programs.

For more details on the study, please contact:

Romona Gananathan, PhD Candidate, OISE/University of Toronto at romona.gananathan@mail.utoronto.ca OR

Dr. Janette Pelletier, Thesis Supervisor at janette.pelletier@utoronto.ca

1. Education: What education have you completed? Please choose all that apply. For example, if you have an ECE diploma and a Bachelor degree in another field, please choose both ECE diploma and Other Bachelor degree.

Please select all that apply:
- ECE diploma (2 years)
- Other college diploma
- ECE degree (4 years)
- Bachelor of Education
- Other bachelor degree
- Graduate Studies in education
- (Masters or PhD)
• Other graduate studies

2. ECE experience: How many years of paid work experience do you have as an ECE? (please include experience as a child care supervisor)

_________________________________________

3. EA experience: How many years of paid work experience do you have as an educational assistant (EA)?

_________________________________________

4. Teaching experience: How many years of experience do you have as a certified teacher?

_________________________________________

5. Previous Employer: Who was your previous employer?

(Please select the type of employer you worked for before you started working with the school board. If you had more than one job, please select the employer that you worked the most number of hours with)

Please select one of the following:
  • Public school board
  • Catholic school board
  • Non-profit operator
  • Private operator
  • Municipal government
  • Other (including non child care)

6. Current Employer: Who is your current employer?

Please select one of the following:
  • Public school board
  • Catholic school board
  • Non-profit operator
  • Private operator
  • Municipal government
  • Other

7. Hours: What are the hours you normally work in the FDK program?

Please select one of the following:
  • School hours (approximately 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.)
  • Morning or afternoon shift (approximately 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. OR noon to 6:00 p.m.)
  • Before or after school only (not during school hours)

8. School breaks: Please indicate whether you are scheduled to work with your current employer
on the following school breaks (please choose all that apply).

Please select all that apply:
• PA days
• December break
• March break
• Summer break

9. If you do not work with your current employer during some or all of the school breaks, please indicate which of the following applies:

Please select one of the following:
• These days are part of my vacation entitlement
• I am not paid for these days by my current employer
• I apply for EI (Employment Insurance) benefits to get some compensation for these days
• I work with another employer during this time

10. Union: Which union are you currently represented by?

Please select one of the following:
• CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees)
• ETFO (Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario)
• OSSTF (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation)
• OECTA (Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association)
• Other union
• No union

11. Perceived Role: Please choose the most suitable description from the following to describe what you think your role as an RECE should be in an FDK classroom. This is not necessarily how you currently function in your job, but what you believe an RECEs role SHOULD BE in an FDK classroom.

As an ECE, I believe that my role in the classroom should be to:

Please select one of the following:
• Plan and deliver play-based activities on my own (or with other ECEs) to complement the kindergarten program
• Plan and deliver a comprehensive play-based curriculum in the classroom together with the teacher
• Assist the teacher with the kindergarten program that s/he plans and delivers

Responsibility: In the following section, please indicate who is currently responsible for each of the following program areas in your classroom. Please select one of the responses, based on the person who has the most responsibility for each area (teacher OR RECE). If both the teacher and RECE share the responsibility, please indicate "shared equally".

12. Play: Who is responsible for play based activities?

Please select one of the following:
• More/mostly teacher
• More/mostly RECE
• Shared equally
13. Literacy: Who is responsible for literacy activities?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

14. Numeracy: Who is responsible for numeracy activities?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

15. Science & Inquiry: Who is responsible for science and inquiry based activities?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

16. Gym: Who is responsible for supervision during gym?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

17. Yard Duty: Who is responsible for playground supervision?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

18. Lunch: Who is responsible for lunch supervision?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

19. Hygiene: Who is responsible to assist students with toileting and hygiene routines?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

20. Set up: Who is responsible for setting up activity centres?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally
21. Transitions: Who is responsible for supervising transitions between indoor and outdoor activities (e.g. helping children dress to go outside)

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

22. Clean Up: Who is responsible for cleaning up?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

23. Special Needs: Who is responsible for helping children with special needs support?

Please select one of the following:
- More/mostly teacher
- More/mostly RECE
- Shared equally

Duties: As an ECE in my classroom, my current duties are as follows:

(Please choose the most suitable frequency from the following for each activity...always, sometimes, never)

24. Instruction: I instruct the whole class...

Please select one of the following:
- Always
- Very often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

25. Small Groups: I conduct small groups...

Please select one of the following:
- Always
- Very often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

26. Individual Support: I work with children individually

Please select one of the following:
- Always
- Very often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
• Never

27. Short Term: I engage in short term program planning...

Please select one of the following:
• Always
• Very often
• Sometimes
• Rarely
• Never

28. Long Term: I engage in long term planning...

Please select one of the following:
• Always
• Very often
• Sometimes
• Rarely
• Never

29. Parents: I report to parents verbally about their children's progress...

Please select one of the following:
• Always
• Very often
• Sometimes
• Rarely
• Never

30. Input: I provide input on student assessments...

Please select one of the following:
• Always
• Very often
• Sometimes
• Rarely
• Never

31. Report Cards: I participate in completing report cards...

Please select one of the following:
• Always
• Very often
• Sometimes
• Rarely
• Never

32. Partner Teacher: I work with the kindergarten teacher in my FDK classroom...

Please select one of the following:
• Always
• Very often
• Sometimes
• Rarely
• Never
33. Partner ECE: I work with other RECEs in my FDK classroom...

Please select one of the following:
- Always
- Very often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

In the following section, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements.

34. Compensation: My salary and benefits reflect the level of professional responsibility that I am expected to handle as an RECE in the FDK classroom.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

35. Professional Development: I receive adequate paid professional development training from my employer to do my job as an RECE in FDK.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

36. Planning Time: I receive enough paid planning time to complete program planning for my role in the classroom.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

37. Families/Role: The families of the kindergarten students understand my professional role in the FDK classroom.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

38. Teacher Support: I feel supported by my teaching partner to function in my role as an RECE
in the classroom.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

39. Supervision: I receive adequate supervision and feedback from my principal in order for me to do my job.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

40. Respect: I feel respected in my role as an RECE in the FDK classroom by other professionals in my school.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

41. Having a union in my workplace has helped improve my working conditions as an RECE in a school board operated FDK program.

Please select one of the following:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In the following section, please comment on whether you think your compensation (salary, benefits, job security) and professional status has increased, stayed the same or decreased since working in the school board operated FDK program.

42. Salary: How has working in a school board operated FDK program affected your salary?

Please select one of the following:
- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased

43. Benefits: How has working in a school board operated FDK program affected your
benefits (vacation, health, dental, pensions)?

Please select one of the following:
- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased

44. Job Security: How has working in a school board operated FDK program affected your job security? Has your job become more stable (increased), stayed the same or has it become more precarious (decreased)?

Please select one of the following:
- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased

45. Professional status: Overall, how has working in a school board operated FDK program affected your professional status as an ECE?

Please select one of the following:
- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased

46. Is there anything else you would like to share about your professional life as an RECE working in a FDK program?
Copyright Acknowledgements

Two articles are reproduced with permission in chapters three and four of this compilation thesis. These articles have previously been published in the following peer reviewed journals:
