

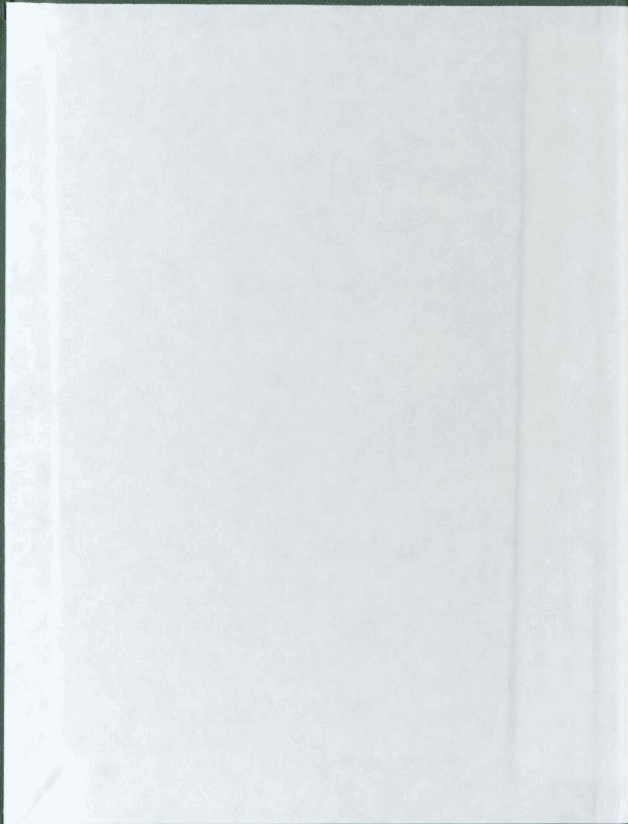
VIEWS ON THE ROLES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION FOUND IN SELECTED POST-SECONDARY
DIPLOMA PROGRAMS IN THE PROVINCE OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**Views on the Roles in
Early Childhood Education
Found in
Selected Post-Secondary
Diploma Programs in the
Province of
Newfoundland and Labrador**

by

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Abstract

A shortage of research findings into early childhood education programs has been a major drawback in the overall delivery system in Newfoundland and Labrador. This study, along with its relevant research, attempted to provide a solution to the problem of elucidating a clear definition of the relationship between early childhood educators as caregivers and as teachers of young children.

This research study chronicled the changes in the perceived roles of early childhood educators as post-secondary students expanded their training. This study also investigated the effect that this training had in making changes to the profession itself. Early childhood education programs need to be reviewed to ensure that the knowledge required of early childhood educators to function in these roles is offered within the program. Similarly, the program should be investigated in light of today's changing society and developed to reflect the integrative nature of teaching behaviours.

This study was one of a qualitative nature that focused on a person's occupation that consisted of assuming and learning particular roles. This research also investigated the roles that educators assumed as teachers of young children. It was anticipated that the findings would have the potential not only to enhance the profession, but to gain insight into the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that early childhood educators are required to possess in order to function as educators of young children.

The contradictions in this research study clearly outlined that the early childhood education profession was facing an identity crisis because the idea of being a teacher of young children was not instilled in these educators at the student level. As a result, the subjects either didn't know what they were teaching, or they were teaching and didn't know it. The use of observations, questionnaires, and interviews assisted the researcher to

determine that the students and the graduates did not clearly picture themselves as belonging to the larger profession as teachers of young children.

The participants in this study were ten students, four graduates, four instructors, and two department heads from the early childhood training programs at a public and a private college in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Based on this study, and because of the scarcity of prior research on college level diploma programs, it is recommended that further research be conducted:

- a) to better review whether the identity crisis identified in this study is indeed apparent and affects the quality of education for early childhood;
- b) to better determine the nature of teaching roles in early childhood education non-baccalaureate programs;
- c) to examine the role of play as an educational tool in early childhood; and
- d) to identify methods of instilling the concept of professionalism at the student level in non-baccalaureate programs.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapter I Overview of the Study	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Delimitations of the Study	7
Limitations of the Study	7
Research Questions	8
Definition of Key Terms	8
Chapter II Review of the Literature	9
Introduction	9
Research Related to the Importance of Quality Child Care for Children	9
Research Related to Early Childhood Education Diploma Programs	12
Research Related to the Roles of Teaching	15
Ethnographic Research Methods	16
Chapter III Research Design and Methodology	21
Introduction	21
The Sample	21
Description of the Daycare Facilities	22
Data Collection	24
Observations	25
Caregiving Role	26
Teaching Role	27

Questionnaires and Interviews	29
The Analysis Approach	30
Chapter IV Analysis and Discussion of the Data	33
Introduction	33
Perceived Roles of Subjects	33
Perceived Focus of Early Childhood Educators	35
Knowledge Base and Tasks Related to Role Perception	38
The Relationship of the Caregiving and the Teaching Roles	44
Discussion of the Data	52
Chapter V Conclusions and Recommendations	55
Introduction	55
Findings of the Roles of Early Childhood Teachers	56
Comparison of Roles Related to Research Data	57
Discussion of Educational Implications	61
Addressing the Identity Crisis	61
Defining the Teaching Roles in Early Childhood Education	62
Discussion of the Role of Play as an Educational Tool	67
Instilling Professionalism at the Student Level	68
Research Implications	72
List of References	74
Appendix A: Profile of Students	77
Appendix B: Profile of Instructors and Department Heads	79
Appendix C: Respondent Consent Form	81
Appendix D: Questionnaire	83
Appendix E: Interview Questions	85

Chapter I

Overview of the Study

Introduction

Many types of child care services have been offered in Canada since the need for child care assistance was identified more than 150 years ago. These services have been provided through a variety of arrangements such as religious groups, government agencies, public and private sector groups, or community groups. Prior to the mid-1950's child care was predominantly provided by charitable organizations which were comprised mainly of church and women's groups. For the most part, though, Canadian women usually stayed home and cared for their young children. Government involvement in child care began in 1942 when there was an urgency for women to enter the workforce during the Second World War. The Government of Canada entered into a cost-sharing agreement with the provinces to establish daycare facilities to allow mothers to enter the workforce.

Recent changes in our society have begun to raise questions about the influence of different methods of raising children. It is not uncommon for children to enter daycare at an early age and spend large amounts of time in the company of peers. As Edwards (1992) observed, "the increasing use of preschools, organized play groups, and child care arrangements has brought the age of access to peer relations down near the beginning of life" (p. 285). Edwards also noted that this trend was prevalent among the industrialized nations of the world.

The provision of child care services has changed in recent years and is increasingly viewed as a provincial responsibility within the social framework of Canada. However, each province operates independently and there have been no national standards of organization implemented for child care. Most recent child care needs included a growing

demand for daycare for infants and toddlers which suggested that comprehension of the developmental needs for a variety of age groups was necessary. The introduction of standards and the availability of training programs introduced a new meaning to the terms quality and professionalism in child care.

The recent rapid rate of growth in the field of early childhood education has been attributed, in part, to the increasing demand for child care outside of the home. It is reasonable to expect that individuals employed in child care services be required to have an assortment of skills (e.g., educator, leader, facilitator) that can be developed through training. Early childhood educators have largely been responsible for the programs and organization of activities for children under their care. Spodek, Saracho, and Davis (1991) suggested that certain personal characteristics were key to becoming competent childhood educators. These included a love of children, physical stamina, patience, knowledge of human development, and respect for individual personality.

Individuals who work with young children have traditionally been seen by fellow educators and parents, and have seen themselves, primarily in a "caring" role. The distinction between "teacher" and "child caregiver" was identified approximately 70 years ago by the authors of the 28th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. They viewed day nurseries, as child care centres were then called, as providing a relief function for families, rather than being primarily concerned with the educational development of young children (Whipple, 1929). However, these overlapping roles have also been viewed as central to providing a combination of meaningful play and learning experiences. Whether those who work with young children in child care centres should have higher, lower, or equal preparation to those who educate young children in a more formal setting was still being discussed a decade later (Beer, 1938) and continued as a debate in recent times (Morrison, 1995). Each individual or group had a unique and vital

role to play within the daily operation of the daycare system. Their individual members had been positioned differently in the system and, as expected, tended to hold different perspectives. Parents and educators each had differing views of the system of which they were a vital part. However, they shared a common belief that a daycare facility needed to be safe and should be interesting, fun, and available for frequent and easy access for children.

There has been an aspiration in the field of early childhood education to organize the services provided to young children and to eliminate distinctions between care and education. The term "educare" has been adopted to characterize a linking of the two into a unified service for children. While the idea was a worthy one, pressures abounded to keep these programs distinct. Not all improvements in the preparation of early childhood teacher education programs have been seen as providing all the solutions to problems facing the profession. Rather, practitioners tended to increasingly expect heightened levels of professionalism in the field.

Defining the roles as teacher and as caregiver required a practical exercise in establishing the knowledge base of emerging educators. "Who we are forms the foundation of the professional you will become" (Fenney, Moravick and Christensen, 1991, p.10). Prior experience with other teachers and educators had a direct influence in what was believed about teaching and related professions. Personal convictions about the roles as educators weighed heavily on determinations regarding the implementation of decisions within the field. The interpretation of the developmental or custodial roles for educators has impacted the image as educators and ultimately influenced how these roles have been perceived (Goffin and Day, 1994).

According to Morrison (1995), the early childhood education profession has been faced with an identity crisis. The profession has attempted to redefine itself as a vocation

with professional status. Early childhood educators have sought status other than baby-sitters, but work with young children without adequate training and “without an early childhood knowledge base” (p.17). Standards of practice and criteria for entry into this profession have to be established and monitored.

It has often been difficult to raise the public’s perception of early childhood educators as a professional entity when there are inconsistencies within the profession itself. For example, some daycare operations continue to employ individuals who do not have any relevant training or education in the field of early childhood education. Another problem arises from the days when early childhood education was viewed as custodial care for children from disadvantaged families and child care workers were perceived as baby-sitters.

In the past twenty years, there has been a tremendous improvement in the field of early childhood education, but the baby-sitter stigma has still been linked to the profession. The extent to which early childhood education programs become more professionalized and require standards of preparation will be determined by the actions of individuals and groups involved in the process (Phillips, Howes, and Whitebook, 1990). The research involved in this study has shown that the level of education and training of individuals as early childhood educators was therefore crucial to the overall understanding of the procedure. There are many systems of child care in Canada, of which daycare is one. Understanding one’s position as a student or as an educator within the systematic perspective of daycare and child care is important. The relationship with other key individuals linked to the daycare environment played an important part in developing the teaching and caregiving self. A systematic approach considers “children, parents, and early childhood educators and their relationship with the environment in which they work and live” (Yeates et al., 1994, p. 4).

Educators of young children have had a significant influence on the daycare system. Their training and experiences have been an invaluable part of what is offered to other members within the system. The views, ideas, and knowledge about working with children accompanied the educators as they entered the daycare field. Drawing on a combination of knowledge, skill, and disposition, these early childhood educators have the power to suggest and provide ideas which will create a quality environment for the children under their care.

The challenge in early childhood education is to find ways to generate the important processes for learning, including shared attention, interaction and communication, and symbolic thinking within a highly interactive and emotionally expressive relationship. The most important process needed for learning is that of attention. It is often the first observation made of a child. The most motivating force in all learning for children and adults alike is pleasure. It is important that learning be fun and children experience the things they enjoy. The ultimate goal of all childhood educators should be to make learning interactive and fun so that a relationship develops and provides the basis for further learning.

Qualifications for educators vary tremendously as do regulations for the number of trained educators required in a centre. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the provincial government has not instituted specific educator qualifications in its regulations. Instead, it has empowered its daycare boards to establish their own standards and policies for hiring directors and educators. However, these individuals received approval from the Daycare and Homemaker Services Licensing Board before they were appointed to their positions. The regulations did indicate that the board should hire individuals who were suitable candidates. The regulations also suggested that staff be encouraged to participate in training programs (Rudick & Nyisztor, 1996).

There have been a diversity of training programs available to early childhood students throughout Canada and they differ from province to province. Most programs placed a strong emphasis on the practicum/fieldwork component of the training program and saw it as an integral opportunity for students to integrate theory and practice. This study has explored the early childhood educator training programs in a public and private college in Newfoundland and Labrador. One area of this study investigated the role dimensions as early childhood caregivers in the training program, while another focus ascertained to what extent the role as teachers in each program has been identified in the training program.

This study was undertaken to contribute knowledge and understanding about the many roles as caregivers in early childhood education in Newfoundland and Labrador. As knowledge and understanding was acquired, the knowledge base about the programs which might be utilized in early childhood education in Newfoundland and Labrador could be expanded. Through examination of archival material and demography data banks, observation, surveys, and interviews, this researcher examined the roles in which the early childhood educators functioned. This study was designed to examine two community college sites where the roles as early childhood instructors and as educators have played a major part in the personal and social lives of the students under their care.

Statement of the Problem

The limited amount of research into early childhood education programs and the preparation of students attending post-secondary institutions which offered early childhood education programs has been a major drawback in the overall delivery system in this field. The relative scarcity of research prompted this researcher to develop a study that would investigate the self-perceived roles of early childhood workers in contrast to that which would be attributed by teachers of early childhood programs and by administrators of the

schools which house the programs. This study, along with its relevant research, attempted to provide a solution to the problem of elucidating a clear definition of the relationship between early childhood educators as caregivers and as teachers of young children.

Delimitations of the Study

This researcher completed the data collection when the observations, interviews, questionnaires, and artifact data of the research subjects consistently depicted the same characteristics of the defined roles as early childhood educators. The research subjects consisted of students, graduates, instructors, and department heads from the early childhood education training programs at a public and a private college in St. John's, Newfoundland. A number of constraints had to be considered in the design of this study. First, the location of sites, the number of sites, and participants was limited due to time constraints and the availability of resources. The participants in this study were adults of varying age. They were male and female and ranged in formal education background from high school to university graduates. The sample size consisted of ten participants from each of the two sites. The respondents included ten students, four graduates, four instructors, and two department heads. The instructors and department heads were selected at random, based on their place of employment rather than their identified teaching or administrative characteristics.

Limitations of the Study

Given the limited scope of this study, the relatively small sample size, and the regional context, these research findings were limited to providing insight into problems that may require further investigation. This researcher could not control the experiences that the students had in their schooling at the time of the study.

Research Questions

This study examined three research questions:

1. What are the role dimensions of early childhood caregivers identified in the early childhood training programs in a public and private college in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?
2. To what extent are the roles of teachers identified in the early childhood training programs in a public and private college in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?
3. If the roles as teachers were identified in the early childhood training programs, to what extent are they influenced by the school ethos in a public and private college in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

Caregiver: one who cares for young children from birth through age 12.

Child care: a range of care/education arrangements for children under the age of 12 outside their immediate family and outside ordinary school hours (Friendly, 1994, p. 13).

Early Childhood Education: the education of young children from birth through age 8 (Saracho, 1993, p. ix).

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Everyone within a society shoulders some responsibility for quality daycare. Each individual has a vested interest in the future of all children and the system of child care. Achieving and maintaining quality child care are current and important issues related to the field of early childhood education. As the services of child care have evolved and as regulations are being established, daycare has become an integral part of our society. At one time, quality was seen as a luxury rather than a component of child care, but now, quality reflects and encompasses all elements that affect the daycare system. Quality daycare is a combination of many interconnected and interrelated attributes and features that influence one another. It is about the type of care and education that children should receive. It is concerned about the calibre of the centre's administration. The term "high-quality" suggests something that is desirable or meets more than minimal standards (Doherty-Derkowsky, 1995).

Research Related to the Importance of Quality Child Care for Children

The importance of quality care cannot be underestimated as a mechanism in the overall educational process. It is crucial and essential for children attending daycare centres because these children represent the future citizens of our society. Children spend many hours a day away from their homes and families in a daycare setting and this time should be utilized to help mould their minds to prepare them for entry into the formalized educational structure.

An examination of quality daycare life is relatively contemporary and is related to the increased demand for daycare services over the past quarter of a century. As daycare services have become fundamental in our daily lives, questions arise as to whether this service is important for children. Does daycare leave any long-term negative effects on children? These and other similar questions influenced many researchers who endeavoured to determine the indicators of quality daycare. The effects of daycare on young children vary, according to Spodek, Saracho, and Davis (1991). They felt quality daycare programs have had positive effects on children.

Most research was highly conclusive and implied that high-quality daycare was essential for children and that poor-quality daycare had adverse affects on children (Doherty-Derkowski, 1995). Subsequent studies identified those areas that influenced quality, namely educator qualifications, educator/child ratios, group size, and the environment (Vandell and Corasaniti, 1990; Howes and Marx, 1992; Howes, 1990).

Howes (1990) discovered that children entering poor-quality daycare facilities as infants had greater difficulty with peers as preschoolers. These same children seemed to be distracted more easily, less task-orientated, and were generally less considerate of others. Schiecker, White, and Jacobs (1991) conducted a study to determine if there were a correlation between children's understanding of vocabulary and the type of daycare centre they attended. Their study found that "those who were in high-quality settings had significantly higher vocabulary scores than those in low-quality settings" (p. 22). The findings of these studies and of other research clearly demonstrated the benefits of high-quality child care.

Canadian research into the quality of daycare services has been increasing and has focused on indicators similar to that of American studies. Degagne and Gangee (1988) conducted a study in Quebec involving all licensed daycare centres. The initiative for the

study was a result of the number of complaints that had been filed against profit centres. An Ontario study initiated by West (1988) focused on the compliance with the Day Nurseries Act of 431 daycare centres in the Metropolitan Toronto area. In 1992 Friesen investigated the sociological effects of daycare quality at 45 daycare centres in Alberta. The research focused on the quality of care that infants and toddlers received in profit and non-profit centres. In general, Canadian research has been primarily concerned with the components of quality and how these components were related in profit and non-profit daycare centres.

The responsibility to oversee the quality of the daycare environment and program content varied between profit and non-profit centres. In profit centres the owner usually established the standards for the various components. In a non-profit centre the board of directors had been responsible for ensuring quality child care. In either case, the centre's director and staff were given the daily responsibility to establish the goals and objectives deemed important for the well-being of the children under their care.

Understanding the connection of the research was crucial when working toward and developing high-quality child care surroundings. The provincial and territorial laws and regulations provided for minimum standards rather than optimum quality. The provincial and territorial governments established regulations that determined standards for health and safety rather than components for quality child care. Usually, quality child care necessitated surpassing the provincial and territorial laws. Meeting the provincial and territorial norms and regulations was only the first step towards establishment of a quality daycare. Quality daycare begins with the educators and research findings identified educator qualifications as a key indicator of quality in the early childhood education profession.

Research Related to Early Childhood Education Diploma Programs

As child care services continued to play a major role in the lives of a growing numbers of Newfoundland children, the question of who will care for them became increasingly significant. Phillips, Howes, and Whitebook (1991) pointed out:

As the research evidence accumulates that caregivers with child-related training are indeed the backbone of quality environments for young children, it becomes imperative that mechanisms be developed to attract and retain qualified staff despite the economic implications (p. 38).

Another inherent question was identified in the establishment of a title for the caregivers. Phillips, Howes, and Whitebook (1991) stated that “perhaps nowhere does the controversy about services for young children emerge as clearly as in a discussion of what to call the child care practitioner” (p. 26). This debate reflected strong differences of opinion related to philosophical and functional dimensions of the services provided by child care workers.

Depending on how the child care services were envisioned, different ideas about the educational development of practitioners emerged. Saracho (1993) identified the preparation of early childhood personnel in two types of programs:

Teachers who are hired in public school pre-kindergartens, kindergartens, and primary classes are prepared in 4-and 5-year programs in colleges and universities. Teachers in child care programs, along with assistants and aides, are prepared in 1- and 2-year programs in community colleges, and in vocational programs in high schools (p. 412).

The different roles as early childhood educators included caretaking, which provided children with emotional support and guidance, while instructing them and facilitating their learning. Ott, Zeichner, and Price (1990) stated that “the diversity of roles

among early childhood educators makes it difficult to identify a singular knowledge base for the field” (p. 127).

Educator training and qualifications were seen as crucial indicators in ensuring quality care. The *National Statement on Quality Child Care* developed by the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) stated, “Quality child care employs graduates in early childhood care as primary care providers” (1991, p. 3). Ideally, to secure quality, all educators within a centre should be graduates of early childhood education programs. However, many centres still hire untrained individuals as their provincial and territorial regulations do not require them to hire more qualified individuals. Given the reality of the profession, the CCCCf had also determined that minimum training included the study of child development, knowledge about developmentally appropriate practices, and supervised fieldwork experience (CCCCF, 1991). From a global perspective, it was evident that knowledge about child development was pivotal in the study of early childhood education. As Gestwicki (1995) stated:

Without that background, it is too easy for teachers and caregivers to fall back on making decisions based only on vague notions that are part personal belief, part memory, part experience, and part image of desirable behaviour (p. 6).

The contrast was apparent in the following anecdote:

A young child had taken a chair to the window and was standing on it.

Novice Adult (rushes over): Get down. You could hurt yourself.

Educationally Orientated Adult (moves quickly beside the child): What are you seeing outside?

This adult assessed the child’s focus, valued her curiosity and independence, encouraged descriptive language and observational skills, while remaining close enough to provide safety from falling.

Early childhood teacher education programs have come under close scrutiny to ensure that quality remained a component of the curriculum, which usually consisted of general education, professional education, and practical courses. Saracho (1993) recommended that teachers in early childhood education should be provided with a broad range of educational foundations. She further stated that "they need to know principles of growth and development and learning theory, as well as the cultural, social, and political contexts in which they will be working" (p. 416). This knowledge went beyond general education since it was applied in a professional context.

For example, McCarthy (1990) concluded that:

Identifying the components of the knowledge base is one part of the process of preparing early childhood teachers. The effectiveness of that process will depend on the nature of the teacher education program, how adult learners are viewed, and the type of relationship that is built with schools and centers cooperating in the field experiences (p. 97).

In early childhood education, the role perceived in the context as teacher was identified as an important area which should be integrated into the development of the curriculum itself. Providing a high-quality curriculum for young children proved to be a complex and demanding task (Lally, 1990; McLean, 1991). Children begin learning the moment they are born and it has generally been accepted that the first five years presents an optimal learning period. Further, if the desire to learn is stifled, or the variety of learning opportunities are limited, children may arrive in later life with neither the inclination, nor the ability, to benefit from that prior experience. In principle, the younger the children, the wider the range of the children's functioning for which early childhood educators must assume responsibility. There have been references in the early childhood education literature to the "whole child" which have alluded to this aspect of the early childhood

teacher's role. Namely, that teachers of children aged six or under must respond to, and accept, responsibility for a variety of emotional, social, physical, and intellectual needs and developmental tasks (Goodwin, 1996).

Caregivers in early childhood programs have provided an important influence in society. They typically assumed the role as models or mentors for the children and their behaviour was an example of the qualities which teachers communicated to others. The early childhood educators acquired a repertoire of alternative strategies and tactics, paying particular attention to the inclusion of play in the educational program. Other interconnected conditions for learning included inductive experiences, cognitive dissonances, social interaction, physical experiences, revisiting, and a sense of competence (Fromberg, 1995). Largely, early childhood educators were required to learn and assimilate knowledge and skills to the extent that the experience performed a transition from the personal to the professional level.

Research Related to the Role of Teaching

Anthropologists argued that school knowledge has not been a domain of "subject matter" that can be separated from the socio-political context in which it has historically been used and continues to be used. Eisenhart and Borko (1993) stated that:

The knowledge and behaviors taught and learned in the classroom are marked, inextricably then, by the social and political history of the society and by the structure and organization of schooling as an institution (p. 45).

This suggested that research about classroom teaching and learning be informed with knowledge of how aspects of the wider socio-cultural system were represented in classroom meaning and activities. As well, the literature provided evidence that all teaching and learning were culturally bound and context dependent.

Whole school curriculum planning was one of the most exciting and powerful ideas to emerge from the 1980's. However, in a climate where schools were obligated to compete with one another, and where school work was increasingly described in "the language of the city pages and business news" (Lawn, 1990, p. 388), there had been a danger that the educational task of understanding and strengthening the whole school way of working had given way to the task of measuring whole-school performance.

Public accountability had occupied the spotlight on whole school outcomes, but when attention was not given to the process of building a whole school ethos and way of working, researchers had found that models of institutional performance and student achievement had been constructed on very shaky foundations. The move towards a whole school focus has required considerable thought about such things as power structures and patterns of participation, the relationship between personal and professional values, the nature and importance of shared understanding, and the means of achieving some level of overall institutional self-knowledge.

To be considered a professional in the field of early childhood education, teachers were required to possess an educational foundation and acquire certain basic skills. In addition, professional educators needed to develop positive attitudes and outlooks that enhanced their careers and contributed to the well-being of the children under their care. Being a member of the teaching profession required individuals to go beyond the accumulation of methods, course work, and teaching experiences. Being a professional teacher suggested that a positive attitude about teaching was very desirable.

Ethnographic Research Methods

Ethnographic techniques have had a long and dependable history in the social sciences. The disciplines of anthropology and sociology have played a significant role in

this area and have inspired researchers in their efforts to comprehend and explain a given culture or group. Researchers in educational settings have discovered and utilized the extraordinary conformity between questions in the field and the techniques of the ethnographer. Qualitative research is very diverse, drawing on many theoretical and methodological traditions. It compels both researcher and those being researched to see themselves in a new light. Educational ethnographic research methods have served a dual purpose. Educational ethnography has been used to describe educational settings and contexts to generate theory and to evaluate educational programs. It has provided rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in educational settings. Such data has represented educational processes in context and their results as they naturally occur. In addition, ethnographic research is rarely limited to isolated outcomes.

Ethnography can be best understood by examining the theoretical assumptions which underlie it. Qualitative research is primarily an inductive process, commencing with less specified dimensions and becoming more detailed as the actual study unfolds. Ethnography is a rich description of a specified group, culture, or phenomenon, with the researcher observing intently and participating to some degree in the matter studied. The procedural steps in this type of study are detailed, including setting a preliminary design and selecting a purposeful sample.

This process can be seen in terms of the interpretive paradigm which attempts to understand and explain the social world primarily from the point of view of the people directly involved in the social process. The methods of investigation based on the

interpretive model seek to understand human beings, their inner minds and their feelings, and the way these are expressed in their outward actions and achievements. The subjective

realities of individuals thus become the focus of the investigator's attention (Goodwin, 1996).

The ethnographic researcher must learn first hand how the actions of others corresponded to their words. The main outcome is to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behaviours. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) stated that "participant observation provides the opportunity for acquiring the status of trusted person" (p. 39). Although participant observation ideally continued throughout the period of data collection, it was significant in the beginning stages of this study because of its role in informing this researcher about appropriate areas of investigation and in developing a sound researcher/other relationship. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) also stated that "the things we have seen and heard about the people are of interest to us, therefore they become the irritants around which we construct our questions" (p. 65).

The dynamics of change is a matter of great interest to ethnographers. Change is expected and is important to record, especially as it accompanies new or altered cultural or personal phenomenon. Patton (1990) phrased it well :

Naturalistic inquiry assumes an ever-changing world. This perspective is nicely captured by the observation in the ancient Chinese proverb that one never steps in the same Chinese river twice. Change is a natural, expected, and inevitable part of the human experience. Rather than trying to control, limit, or direct change, naturalistic inquiry expects change, anticipates the likelihood of the unanticipated, and is prepared to go with the flow of change (p. 53).

In fact, the emphasis is placed on the subjective reality of individuals and stresses the relative nature of the social world which can be understood by adopting the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be considered. This approach highlights the importance of knowledge as something which is

personally experienced and which can be best rationalized from the substantial experiences of individuals. Ethnographic research played an important role in this study because it highlighted the potential to give voice and visibility to early childhood practitioners who historically have not had a forum to relate their concerns.

Having acknowledged the types of questions typically suited to ethnographic inquiry, a researcher must delineate the characteristics of ethnographic techniques. When anthropologists first began codifying their rules for observing other cultures in the 1800's, researchers who practiced ethnography have relied principally on participant observation and interviews as the cornerstone of ethnographic study. The discipline of working on a daily basis over a period of time, in a social setting usually unfamiliar to the researcher, evolved into the extensive, fully documented method that is now able to be used in the work on curriculum research. Any question the researcher examines is influenced by the kinds of questions asked by the researcher in a particular social setting.

In this study, observation concentrated on a particular part of the day, setting, or social interaction and described in detail exactly what was transpiring with particular people in their own milieu. These observations were used by this researcher to pinpoint exactly what needed to be documented regarding various components of the social setting. All observations enabled this researcher to come to terms with the key elements which defined the world of those subjects under study and to probe deeply into critical issues.

The level of involvement by this researcher in this ethnographic study varied with the circumstances. In addition to observation and participation, ethnographic interviewing was a major cooperative technique. This researcher needed to know how and when to elicit information from the participants in their own words. The ethnographic research approach guided this researcher in conducting the investigation into the role dimensions as early childhood educators in a public and private college in Newfoundland and Labrador.

A program's practical aspect was assessed by recording observations of the program's intentions, while its effectiveness was supported with evidence about outcomes, which were provided by the students. A comparative approach to this study addressed the early childhood curriculum in terms of its internal, as well as external, politics.

At the outset of this study, the focus was placed on the effect training programs had on the ability of early childhood educators to function as teachers in the developmental process of their young students. The dramatic growth and public attention to child care programs, partially due to greater parental employment, has overshadowed the equally dramatic growth of private nursery schools and publicly funded child care services. Similarly, there had been a rapid growth of intervention programs for children with special needs. This diversity of settings and purposes had influenced the nature and structure of early childhood teacher education. The research related to early childhood teacher education had not grown in relation to the growth of activity in the field.

It has not been by accident that these research questions lend themselves to ethnographic techniques and analysis. Initially, it was decided that to best discover answers to these questions, a thorough examination of the experiences of people working in the child care profession would be required. Consequently, a study of both a public and a private post-secondary institution in Newfoundland and Labrador was undertaken. Both systems agreed to participate in this study.

Chapter III

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

Much of the early childhood development research has been focused primarily on the development of young children. The practice of educating young children was based upon the knowledge that early childhood educators developed from working directly in early childhood programs. Unfortunately, research related to early childhood teacher education has not grown in response to the growth of activity in the field. This study chronicled the development of early childhood educators in the perceived roles as caregivers and as teachers as they expanded their training. This study also viewed the eventual effect that this had in making changes to the profession itself. This study attempted to deal with the concept of role and the effect this played on individuals as they progressed through their training and eventually entered the field of early childhood education.

This chapter will begin with a description of the sample, the daycare facilities, the procedures adopted to collect the ethnographic data, and the analytical approach utilized in this research study.

The Sample

The research subjects for this study were selected using maximum variation sampling. Maximum variation required identification of diverse characteristics, identified by instructors and artifact data, in construction of this student sample. Pissanos and Allison (1993) concluded that a sample, as identified by the continua of student characteristics,

allowed no one selected student to represent the same combination of characteristics as any other student. The graduates, instructors, and department heads were selected based on cluster sampling. This is a form of participant selection employed by researchers who utilize random samples which represent large populations.

A profile of the students is presented herein as Appendix A, whereas a profile of each instructor is presented as Appendix B. The student profile displayed a resemblance to the typical post-secondary student as described by Bayless (1991):

A post-secondary student may be an 18-20 year-old who has just completed high school and is pursuing advanced preparation. Another student may be a former high school dropout who has now completed a GED program. Yet, another student may be returning to school to seek employment skills because of a change in the family environment (e.g. divorce, unemployment). A student may be changing careers for physical health reasons. The post-secondary classroom may include all of these students as well as others who encompass a wide range of ages (p. 5).

These research subjects were informed of the purpose of this research and granted informed consent (Appendix C). The subjects' confidences and anonymity were preserved throughout this study. Also, they were afforded unlimited access to the data throughout and following the completion of this study.

Description of the Daycare Facilities

The daycare facility at the public college consisted of three rooms designated for play which were administered by five early childhood educators supervising a total of 20 children. The main room featured prominent wall displays depicting the alphabet in upper and lower case letters, creative representations which allowed children the opportunity to

recognize objects by sight, sound and touch and a Go/Stop food illustration which pictured healthy and non-healthy foods. There were also art displays of drawings done by the children and containers for the equipment necessary for this activity. In addition, there was a water play area consisting of containers, boats, and fish, along with an inside gymnasium area with floor mats and an activity climber. This room contained a bathroom and a house corner of tables and chairs, in addition to cleaning and food supplies.

The second room was highlighted by many wall displays and featured creative representations of drawings and paintings. There were posters and signs centered around imitative and social relations, such as building relationships with adults and expressing feelings in words. There was a second water play area, along with a supply of books and a computer. The children stored their personal belongings in this room. The third room consisted of an open free play area and also contained mats and pillows for the children's nap time.

The daycare facility at the private college consisted of two separate areas. The larger area included a place for children to practice art, while a writing area contained wall displays of numbers and letters of the alphabet. A play area contained a play stove, tables and chairs, washer and dryer, dishes, sand table, water table, and assorted toys. There was also a reading area which contained wall displays, books, a computer, and mats and pillows for nap time. A science section contained puzzles and there was another section that had blocks, legos, and other manipulative toys.

The second area contained many of the items in the first section, but also included a music area complete with several instruments and a work area with workbench and small tools. A wall display contained upper and lower case letters and the numbers one to ten. There was also a display on safety. This area also contained an observation area, a

bathroom, and kitchen facilities. Window displays in both areas were bright and colorful and focused on friends, happy times, sunshine, and flowers.

Data Collection

This researcher transformed field experiences into data through participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews with the research subjects who were represented in chronological order from training through to employment. The data collection began with broad descriptions based on observations which were obtained by noticing the behaviours of early childhood educators at the two model daycare operations that were utilized by the post-secondary institutions for the practical portion of the training program. The emphasis was placed on a direct and personal means of data collection which was acquired from personal observations during fieldwork and from notes. This researcher entered into the data collection and attempted to understand the phenomenon as it emerged through the balanced reporting of all the data that was collected.

The initial observations and accompanying questionnaires enabled this researcher to alter course, at times, to pursue visible leads as they unfolded throughout this investigation. This allowed for flexibility of design which was one indicator of the nature of this ethnographic study. The general research process was initiated with the data details from fieldwork observations and interviews which allowed this study to propose a relationship with all the data collected.

Educational settings for preschool children encompassed a wider variety than was found in schooling at any other age. Therefore, as these settings were studied, it was important to take into consideration the characteristics of the different types of settings as well as the level of quality of programs within the setting. As the different settings were studied, an attempt was made to focus on the particular area of interest related to this research without losing track of the total picture.

The criteria that were used to defend the validity of this study included credibility, transferability, dependability, and triangulation.

- Credibility was established by investigating and comparing the role dimensions as early childhood care providers as determined by the educational training programs and the school ethos in a public and private college in Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Transferability was confirmed by connecting data analysis to the theoretical concepts of the role dimensions as early child care providers which were identified by Saracho (1984);
- Dependability was demonstrated by carefully accounting the conditions in which the research was conducted; and
- Triangulation was verified when the data obtained from observation, interviews, and questionnaires pointed to similar role dimensions as early childhood caregivers.

Observations

Early childhood educators were studied by observing and then collecting data through recorded interpretive observations which was later analyzed in an effort to understand the different components for each of the early childhood educators' roles. As a participant observer, this researcher carefully and systematically experienced and recorded in detail the many aspects of each situation. In addition, observations were continually analyzed for meaning and for evidence of personal bias because these were instrumental in attaining the desired research goals. Achieving this outcome required a lot of time and a learner's stance.

Observations provided a background for understanding the roles as early childhood educators. Observations were conducted at the private and public daycare facilities and, for the purposes of this research, were broken down into caregiver and teacher categories. The caregiver categories included physical needs of the children, safety measures, toileting, hygiene, and nurturing. Elements with a teacher-related foundation consisted of assessment techniques, planning, evaluation, vocabulary skills, letter concepts, building social skills, color concepts, and real life representations.

Caregiving Role

At the public and private college daycare centres, the early childhood educators began their caregiving role as soon as the children arrived at the facility. The immediate physical needs of the children consisted of assisting them with their clothes and boots and directing the children to place their belongings in their individual cubbies. One parent delivered special instructions for her child who would be leaving early to attend swimming lessons. Later that morning, the physical development of the children was promoted with morning exercises and stretching. The caregivers also assisted with clothing when it was time for children to play outside or leave for the day.

Safety was always a major concern when dealing with small children and the importance of stressing safety measures was a daily occurrence for early childhood educators. In the role as caregiver, one educator at the public college daycare had to remind two groups of four-year-old children about being safety conscious. One child began to climb the gym activity centre with a doll in her hand and had to be reminded to climb without the doll to gain a secure hold and the doll would be passed up to her. Two other children were walking on bucket stilts and attempted to walk up some steps. The early childhood educators had to emphasize the dangers of walking up or down stairs on

stilts and that they must be used only on a flat surface. At the private college, one caregiver was always attentive to the children under their supervision while playing with any activity. One child had to be reminded not to put toys in the mouth and another child was asked to move away from the door because it could open at any time and the child could be injured. In a safety and health-related issue, all children in both institutions were reminded to wash their hands before snack and meals.

Nurturing was a very important caregiving role and it did not take long before a child fell during free play. The caregivers comforted the child and explained the dangers of running. On another occasion, when a new child started to cry after his parents left, one educator took the child to the office for a one-on-one drawing session. The drawing was displayed on a special place on the wall and the child was comfortable with this suggestion and the accompanying attention it garnered. At the private college, a similar situation arose where a child fell and it was handled in a similar manner. Another child who was not feeling well “cuddled up” next to one caregiver who was reading during story time.

Teaching Role

The teaching role displayed many relevant techniques which assisted in the overall development of the children in the public college daycare facility. Paint mixing taught children that a third color can be fashioned by mixing two different colors. Drawing, cutting, and pasting different shapes also helped in color identification. In another area, four and five-year-old children gathered their painting smocks and obtained the appropriate paints and brushes to assist in their particular drawing and painting for that day. The early childhood educators played the role as interested observers and offered guidance where necessary. At the private college daycare, one four-year-old child attempted to fit the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together. One educator showed the child that

the pieces had many shapes and could be fitted together in several ways. Another educator had the children count down the time to circle time, while a third educator asked the children to identify the number signs on the wall.

Vocabulary skills were introduced at an early age. Two and three-year-old children sat at the art table with an early childhood educator who asked each child the beginning letter of each of their names. The children also attempted to print their names and received positive feedback for their attempts. Later, this same group tried to name different dinosaurs from a book during reading time. The educator pronounced the names, showed the children the pictures, and the children were asked to repeat the names and identify the respective images. The teaching role also included an introduction to mathematical skills. Two three-year-old children played store with a cash register. One was selling bananas at \$20 each and the customer wanted to know how much it would cost for two. With assistance from the educator, the children figured out the cost of the bananas. Other children were pouring water into different shape containers as the educators explained that the same amount of water comes in many different forms. The concept of water freezing if left outside on a very cold day was also explained.

One of the major points of emphasis that was witnessed in the teaching role at the public college daycare was the attempt to develop the social skills of the children at an early age. After every activity, the early childhood educators asked the children to put away their toys in the appropriate places. The educators offered direction when asked where something should be placed and praised the children for their efforts. At quiet time, two new children were introduced to the group and made to feel welcome by the educators and the children. Children were also taught not to grab or touch each other. The early childhood educators reminded one child that when someone was doing something

they did not like, they should ask the offender to stop. The educators then prompted the child that did the grabbing that touching other people is unacceptable.

Early childhood educators at the private college operation spent time developing social interaction with their children. Urging children to share toys and other items was a priority, while others had to be reminded to take their turns when participating in various activities. Singing songs that called for the children to participate promoted a social awareness within the group. The older children at the public college facility were given the opportunity to participate in the planning of daily activities. When asked to plan their daily activities, one five-year-old child listed the house corner, the art area, and the music area. Another child contributed activities such as block building, drawing, and dressup. Some children did not participate and went along with the activities suggested by other children.

During snack time, which consisted of eggs, crackers, and milk, one early childhood educator availed of the opportunity to introduce a real-life representation. As the children poured their own glass of milk, they were asked "Where do eggs come from?" One child cried out, "Hens!" When asked about the uses for eggs, one child said her mommy used them for baking cakes and muffins, while another said they were eaten for breakfast. A third child added that his mommy put eggs in cookies to make them taste better.

Questionnaires and Interviews

The questionnaires used for this research adopted rating scales along a continuum which provided an estimate of the roles as early childhood educators. The participants estimated on a scale the degree to which they believed a specific behaviour or characteristic applied to the role as a caregiver and/or the role as an educator of young children (Appendix D).

The experience of learning as participant observer preceded interviewing and was the basis for forming interview questions (Appendix E). Participant observation did not always precede question making. Theory, implicit or explicit, was used to develop questions. The interviews were informal and open-ended. Data were recorded by handwritten notes and tape recordings which were conducted with the participants. At the end of each day, longhand written notes and the taped interviews were transcribed into a typed format. This researcher systematically experienced and consciously recorded in detail the many aspects of the situation. This process allowed for inferences to be made about what the subjects knew by listening to what they said and by observing their behaviour. This allowed for an evaluation of "what people do naturally" instead of program intents. The inherent realities of the research subjects determined the focus of attention for this study. The data collection was concluded when the observations, interviews, questionnaires, and artifact data of these research subjects consistently depicted the same characteristics of the role as early childhood educators.

The Analysis Approach

The perception that there would be large amounts of data to process in this study was realized shortly after data collection was initiated. This researcher desired to analyze the data throughout this study because the analysis linked the choices of theoretical frameworks, selection strategies, and data collection methods. Many of the strategies used depended on feedback from the field. This narrowed the research questions and this study began to make more focused observations as this researcher gained a deeper understanding of the culture under consideration and learned the meanings which these participants attached to things.

This study was also required to have access to a process that would question any assumptions that might be made and expose any biases that might develop. Accordingly, this researcher installed a software program for text analysis into a computer and transcribed and coded all the data. The text analysis program, called "Microsoft Works", allowed for reflection on the data from a naturalistic stance and developed analytical and conceptual coding categories. Working within the framework of segmenting and coding that LeCompte and Preissle (1993) articulated, this researcher catalogued the data in a sequence that allowed for more comprehensive analysis and joint coding.

Using the suggested codes of Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the data were indexed into classification schemes. The context category held the data that described the perceived roles of the subjects in the early childhood education program. The activities category retained the data that addressed the knowledge base and the tasks related to the perceived roles. The relationships category contained the data which included perceptions on relationships between the caregiving and the teaching roles in early childhood education.

Several inner themes which posed probing questions emerged from these categories. How does a person's occupation relate to assuming and learning a role? Do early childhood educators assume the role as teachers? These findings, which are provided in Chapter IV, have the potential not only to enhance the profession, but to offer insight into the knowledge, skills, and attitudes early childhood educators should possess to function as educators of young children.

This researcher ascertained that the early childhood training programs in the private and public colleges freely exhibited contrasting styles of delivery and varied forms of evaluation which would assist in proposing relevant changes to the overall early childhood education curriculum.

The conclusions of this study are presented in four stages:

1. A summary presentation of data organized into categorical models that addresses the subject under investigation;
2. Interpretation of data integrating findings within broader areas of interest and application and significance of the findings;
3. At the integration stage of the conclusions, the data is compared with the category system previously identified by Saracho (1984); and
4. Theory generated from the data may also suggest unanticipated empirical implications and policy applications.

Related to point number two, this researcher noted how categories of phenomena and their attributes were intrinsically related to one another. Interpretation of the data provided explanatory statements of cause and effect relationships for the questions asked.

Chapter IV

Analysis and Discussion of the Data

Introduction

From the onset of this investigation, it became obvious that the data collected would not enable the researcher to reach a simple conclusion. Transcripts from interviews, verbatim excerpts, and field notes were examined daily in reference to the research questions. From this daily analysis, new questions emerged that helped narrow the focus of this research. How does a person's occupation consist of assuming and learning a role? Do early childhood educators assume the role as teachers? In an effort to provide answers to these questions, this researcher analyzed the data to determine the perceived role as early childhood educators, the perceived focus as early childhood educators, the knowledge base and the tasks related to role perception, and the relationship of the caregiving and the teaching roles in early childhood education.

Perceived Roles of Subjects

In early childhood education, the issue of perceived roles should be one of growth along a continuum. This approach offered an inclusive, rather than an exclusive, view of how a person's occupation consisted of assuming and learning a role. Most caregivers entered the realm of early childhood education with some kind of relevant experience dealing with young children. It was this experience which formed a foundation on which to construct teaching theory and practice. All educators have experienced their own childhood memories and many have experiences of their own children which provided a starting point from which to begin their careers in early childhood education. It was from

these memories that initial perceptions were conceived in the minds of early childhood providers as they began their quest for learning in their roles as early childhood educators. This researcher observed the many facets of early childhood education and the roles performed by each of the subjects. This observation and interaction with the subjects led to the formation of the interview questions upon which some of this research was conducted. Students, graduates, instructors, and department heads in the public college sector held a slightly different opinion than their counterparts in the private college system when asked if education, training, and care were interrelated in all aspects of the development, learning, and experience of the children and their play. Most strongly agreed with the concept. When asked if all activities provided by early childhood caregivers required a caregiving and teaching focus, those in the private college system felt more strongly than those in the public system. One first-year student in the private college disagreed with this emphasis.

When asked if the primary focus of the early childhood education training program was as a caregiver of young children, subjects in the public college sector generally agreed with this concept. Subjects in the private college system generally disagreed with the question. The same held true when asked if the primary focus was as a teacher of young children. Private college subjects fared a little better, but one first-year student and one graduate disagreed with the concept. Most public college subjects agreed, with one second-year student being undecided.

Public college subjects unanimously agreed that the primary responsibility of early childhood caregivers was to perform as caregivers of young children. Three private college subjects were undecided on this issue and another two disagreed with the concept. When asked if the primary responsibility was to act as teachers of young children, all but two students, who were undecided, agreed with this concept. At the private college level, three

students were undecided on this topic and one disagreed totally with it. One public college instructor felt it was appropriate to be referred to as a baby-sitter by young children, but everybody else disagreed with this notion. When asked if it was appropriate to be called a teacher, most agreed, with two subjects from each of the private and public sectors being undecided.

When asked if early childhood caregivers assessed children's strengths when planning activities, the majority strongly agreed with this idea in both colleges. The same opinion held true when they were asked if the caregivers developed the curricula for young children under their care. When it came to evaluating the curricula and the resources available, all subjects were of the same opinion that their input and contributions to the program were taken into consideration. Both sectors were almost unanimous in their opinion that early childhood caregivers created an attractive learning environment for the children and guided the children's behaviours in educational tasks.

Graduates and instructors strongly agreed that their training programs prepared them for the role as caregivers of young children and were unanimous in their opinion that their training prepared them for teaching roles when working as early childhood educators. In fact, all graduates and instructors observed many early childhood educators fulfilling both roles during their training programs.

Perceived Focus of Early Childhood Educators

The perceived role of the subjects in this research varied when asked about the primary focus as early childhood educators. First-year students in the public college system perceived themselves more as educators because of the initial contact they had with students in a structured environment. Also, they felt their responsibility was to care for children as well as teach them in a preparatory role for primary school, modelling the role as teachers to guide children in a positive way.

After having a year of schooling under their belts, second-year students felt their roles were more as caregivers than as educators. Although some learning occurred, the roles of early childhood educators were fashioned to look after children. "Lack of a structured environment did not allow us to feel like we were teachers," commented one student. Another stated that "the children led the learning and the caregivers provided the materials." The focus of a particular daycare also had an effect on just how the activities of the daycare setting were going to be planned and supervised and what needs of the children were identified.

Graduates from the public college system envisioned themselves as caregivers and as educators due to the fact they provided activities and a positive environment to teach children in an informal manner. The emphasis in the particular daycare setting also played a major role in the delivery system provided by the early childhood educators. They felt parents were just as interested in the children's development as they were in their physical needs.

Instructors and department heads in the public college structure retained a more definitive outlook on their focus both as educators and as caregivers. One instructor felt "fostering the emotional needs of the children, nurturing them and providing a healthy environment is just as important as educating them in simple tasks." Some felt the roles were interchangeable and caregiving should not be sacrificed at the price of over-educating the children at an early age. Early childhood educators were taught attitudes and skills to care for children and to realize what to teach and when to teach. They felt a particular obligation to parents who brought their children to daycare seeking an enriched environment in which to learn. In their view, an ideal teacher of young children would be working on both the caring and the education of every child.

First-year students in the private college system primarily felt both teaching and caregiving roles were of equal importance. Although the focus was mainly on caregiving, some felt there was little teaching, and learning occurred by coincidence. They also intimated that supervision of children was very important. Others maintained that inspiring children to try and to learn new things played an important role in the teaching aspect in terms of the overall development of the child. "Children learn a little every day from the care and activities provided by the early childhood educators," said one student.

Second-year students in the private college were unanimous in their opinion that education played an important part in their daily activities. One student explained that:

Activity and curriculum planning inspired children to learn new things and early childhood education is the first step in their learning. Simple activities such as playing with blocks assisted us in teaching math skills and afforded children a chance to learn social skills through interaction with other children.

They felt learning was expanded through an unconscious awareness that arrived as children were stimulated by their surroundings. Daycare centres provided an opportunity for the initial education of young children to start them on the road as the future decision-makers of tomorrow. They likened themselves to primary school teachers in that they utilized the fun approach to learning, albeit in a more loosely structured environment.

These students held some reservations about the public perception of their roles, urging educators to initiate a more informative public awareness program to let the general populace know that a great amount of teaching did occur in the daycare setting. They felt many people had formed the opinion that early childhood educators can only work in daycare operations because of their limited knowledge base.

Graduates from the private college system underwent a transformation from the perceived role as caregivers upon entering the early childhood education program to one

as educators after two short years. They recognized their training provided them with the opportunity to be teachers of young children by providing challenges to develop their skills as well as providing competent care. In their view, they were required to differentiate between roles to accede to the conceptions of parents who looked at daycare as a place to care for young children and a place to educate them. Early childhood educators were often not recognized for their teaching talents, but looked upon as “glorified baby-sitters”. These students were also of the opinion that “daycare affords the opportunity for greater emphasis on the individual as opposed to primary schools which tend to cater to the average learning ability of the students.”

Instructors and department heads in the private sector felt they provided the necessary training for students to be caregivers, while at the same time, providing the expertise for students to be able to avail of all teachable moments. One department head stated that:

Encouragement of the development of the child and the effects of learning in everyday activities were emphasized to students to assist in the education of the children under their care. While caregiving is an important aspect of the daycare operation, development of the child is deemed to be of the utmost importance. Program restraints were often a result of the quality of daycare provided by the public and private sectors and the motivational forces behind each system.

Knowledge Base and Tasks Related to Role Perception

The introduction of courses, activities, and tasks to students and potential educators of young children played an important role and had a lasting effect on the development of early childhood educators in the public college system. In their initial year of study, students in the public college system were introduced to courses which identified

means of increasing self-esteem in children in daycare, identifying the needs of children, and coping with children of all ages and stages of development. These courses dealt mainly with educators in the role as caregivers. From a teaching standpoint, students said they “did a lot of observing to determine the actions of children and the reason for their methods for carrying out a particular task.”

The measured success of any program, whether in the role as caregivers or as teachers, depended on successful implementation of the tasks which were a major portion of the daily activities in the daycare setting. Tasks as caregivers included washing hands before meals, brushing teeth and personal hygiene, according to first-year students in the public college setting. One student also added that “tasks as a caregiver included a recognition of other cultures in our society.” From a teaching perspective, these students felt learning was attained through offerings in art, drama and music, and other activities that focused on hand-eye coordination. “We set up play activities that encouraged learning through play, such as blocks, reading, and coloring,” said one student. In the second year of instruction in the public sector, the caregiving roles were expanded to identify areas that affected quality care, while courses that assisted the educators to realize how children learned and how they developed from their birth were introduced. Since the children initiated many of the activities, one student felt “there was little direction from the point of view of the teachers and the courses were not identified as teacher related offerings.”

One student explained that “tasks related to caregiving included setting up of the play area, greeting the children and allowing children to participate in any activity that interested them.” Caregivers viewed their responsibilities as supervisors of children, to be there for them, and guide them in a positive way. Most students felt the children should be allowed to do things for themselves. This group had a definite opinion when it came to tasks related to teaching. One student commented:

I feel frustrated because I do not know what to do when it is time to teach the children. There are no activities that relate directly to teaching children. Activities are there for children to do what they want with them.

Another student in this group said, "At my present daycare, they are doing a lot of teaching things in small groups, but I do not feel prepared to handle it." Another felt "at school, we are taught that the child leads the curriculum, but at my daycare, we are expected to do the teaching." Other students were of the opinion that tasks related to teaching were those that the early childhood educators chose, rather than free play which was directed by the children. "Tasks that relate to the role as teacher are those where an adult explains the directions and the children follow," added another student.

Looking back on their time at school, graduates from the public college sector referred to courses in growth and development that taught them how to care for children and how to ascertain the needs of the children under their care. Their roles as caregivers were greatly enhanced by instruction in psychology and child development offerings. Methods on how to teach informally were derived from on-the-job training and early work experiences, while programming courses identified activities to encourage learning, but not teaching. "The reasons for particular activities and their underlying rationale were identified in child development courses at this level," stated one graduate.

Tasks related to the caregiving roles for graduates included meeting with parents, toileting, brushing teeth, and organizing play time during meals. "We were also involved in diaper changing, nurturing, and helping children develop their social skills," one graduate answered. Education related tasks included group sessions where educators told stories and developed picture files to assist children identify numbers, colors, and the names of animals. One graduate commented that:

The activities that we laid out were based on the needs of the children or something that they were interested in. We would also try and identify a task that children needed to build on, such as vocabulary. We depended a lot on parents to inform us of areas where children needed help and we would try and develop a task to assist in this area.

Public college instructors and department heads felt the roles as caregivers and as educators were blended in many course offerings. "The method of teaching often provided the children with the caring they so ardently cherished, while health and safety courses blended the nutritional needs and physical care of the children," explained one instructor. Most felt that course offerings blended both the roles as caregivers and those of educators.

One instructor felt "tasks related to the caregiving role included diaper changing, but learning must be maximized. For example, talking or singing during this activity helps increase vocabulary." Tasks related to the teaching roles included activities that were established on a daily basis. Interactions with children were seen as informal teaching methods that provided learning experiences for the children.

Growth and development courses identifying how to care for children of different age groups were offered to first-year students at the private college. Most of the courses were directed towards educating the children and suggested various methods for arranging activities that offered play time for children. There was very little instruction of activities for children that required a structured environment. Some course work in nutrition was also offered. Curriculum courses dealt with educating children and how to plan activities for them, while some sociology work prepared students to cope with the learning needs of different families. The caregiving tasks for this group included assisting the children with play, toileting, nurturing, and providing direction during all activities. The teaching tasks were "related to learning, involving story-time, singing, showing shapes for recognition,

and learning colors," said one student. Many tasks were centred around informal learning as educators strived to be role models for the children under their care.

Course work at the second-year level in the private sector mainly dealt with fostering roles as educators and as caregivers, but some course work in nutrition, health, and special needs did address the role as caregivers of young children. As far as preparing students to become teachers of young children was concerned, "curriculum and daycare management courses dealt with issues regarding educating the children and programs necessary to operate a daycare facility," explained one student. Caregiving tasks at this level related to comforting children, safety measures, toileting, nap time, and meal time, while some were also involved in diapering, basic personal care, as well as nurturing. Tasks related to teaching included planning activities, such as shape recognition, vocabulary, and social skills, while the use of blocks taught number concepts and color recognition.

Graduates in the private college felt most of their course work identified the care and safety of the children as of primary importance. One graduate felt that:

The physical, intellectual, and emotional development of the children received less focus, although growth and development courses presented a lot of theory on positive reinforcement and comprehension of the development level of children.

Sociology courses identified the different types of families and parenting practices and reinforced the position that all children should be treated the same regardless of their backgrounds.

Another graduate observed that:

Curriculum courses tackled all the areas that should be available to the children to encourage learning. Guidance courses taught us how to deal with behaviour and identified means to deal with issues in a positive way.

Graduates also felt growth and development courses identified activities appropriate for each age level, while curriculum courses provided program planning to allow caregivers the opportunity to target different activities for different needs.

Tasks related to the caregiving roles included meal preparation, diapering, nurturing, providing first aid when necessary, and ensuring a safe environment for the children under their care. "Most caregiving tasks have a teachable moment," commented one graduate. "For example, serving pizza can become a math activity." Tasks related to the teaching roles included the arranging of activities for children with the intent of providing a learning experience. "Instead of following a set curriculum, we deal with the teaching aspect on a daily basis through interaction, encouraging conversation and questioning," remarked one graduate. Activities were selected with a purpose in mind, to educate the children, to encourage motor skills, and to develop number concepts.

Instructors and department heads in the private system felt that courses on health and safety provided the students with the background knowledge on communicable diseases and relevant caregiving health and safety issues. "Nutrition courses placed an emphasis on the caregiving role, while administration offerings centred around regulations regarding child-caregiver ratios," said one department head.

With regard to the teaching aspect of course offerings, instructors and department heads from private colleges explained that program planning courses identified the rationale behind the selection of different programs. "Curriculum courses identified the 11 different learning areas found in a daycare setting and how activities can be developed to correspond to these learning areas," remarked one department head. Growth and development courses classified the efforts of children at each level of development and how to offer positive encouragement to foster a child's development. Students were also taught how to utilize observational methods to make any necessary adjustments in the

planning of daily activities. "We also offered a special needs option which did not identify so much the actual physical needs of the child in a wheelchair, but rather how the young children can be incorporated into the activities of the daycare," said one instructor.

Tasks related to caregiving roles included cleanliness of the children, provision of a safe environment, toileting, nutritional needs, nurturing, nap time, and basic personal hygiene. As for tasks related to teaching roles, one department head said, "All tasks in the daycare have a teachable moment and should be utilized to develop the minds of children to their fullest potential."

The Relationship of the Caregiving and the Teaching Roles

Early childhood educators make a significant contribution in the lives of the children under their care. For many of these children, the move to daycare facilities is the first contact with adults other than their parents or other family members. This change can be traumatic in the lives of young children as they are exposed to a different daily routine under the supervision of strangers. Daycare operations exist to meet the needs of parents, children, and society. Each daycare fits into the larger systems of child care in society and its components include human and physical resources which interrelate with one another. Educators meet children's needs through program content which is built on the theoretical foundations of early childhood education that have served as frameworks for educators within the daycare system (Schoenrock, 1995).

The ages birth to age five represent the most formative years for children and it falls to early childhood educators to develop a sense of curiosity for learning in these children. The early childhood educators have a very powerful effect on children and on the initial steps in their learning process. According to one instructor in the private college system, "this effect is greater than the early childhood educators, parents, or society

realizes." The relationship between practitioners acting in the roles as caregivers and as educators exposed an imperfect balance in the early childhood training programs which has been magnified by the comments of those involved in the system.

In an effort to delve deeper into this relationship, the subjects in this research study were asked about the contributions that the early childhood education system made in the lives of those under the care of educators. First-year students in the public college system felt daycare increased self-esteem, encouraged positive reinforcement, and offered the children the opportunity to learn better social skills. One second-year student in this system said:

Interaction with other children is a positive outcome of every daycare operation and the children are afforded opportunities to learn something which they may not get at home. Early childhood educators provide all the basic things children need to know at this age.

Public college graduates intimated that children enrolled in daycare facilities had increased interaction with other children through exposure to play and to other adults. Explained one graduate:

Daycare increases the socialization skills of children, increases learning through activities and decreases the separation anxiety from parents when the time comes for them to enter the formal school system. We do informal teaching in a professional manner. We develop a plan for selecting the activities that we do and the displays that we produce to foster a better learning environment for the children under our care. Our small group activities give the children a sense of cooperation and we hope the children will learn something from each activity, but it is not teacher directed. There is a purpose for each activity, but we do not look at it as teaching in the strict sense of the word. A lot of our time is spent on free

play which is conducted in caregiving and teaching roles because we are talking to the children, pointing things out to them and, at the same time, caring for them.

Instructors and department heads were concerned about the need for consistency of standards in the overall daycare system to allow for a smooth progression of learning skills for children. One department head in the public college system stated:

Parents who bring their children to daycare are looking to have them stimulated in a learning environment. We try and teach students to develop a relationship with their children which becomes a vital part of teaching that child. We make our assessments of what activities to do based on observations of the children and with input from them. We are always thinking of why we are doing a particular activity with the children. The activities are designed to teach the children, rather than creating activities just to keep them busy.

There was a feeling among this group that graduates who worked with older children in after-school programs did not conduct formal teaching with these children because they had been in school all day and needed a respite from structured learning. They felt the learning occurred in an informal style through exploration and guidance by the early childhood educators.

First-year students in the private college were of similar disposition and said daycare encouraged socialization, interaction with other children and adults, while preparing children for kindergarten. "Daycare also encourages independence and teaches children how to follow directions," commented one student. A student enrolled in the second-year program at the private college remarked that:

Each activity in daycare has a different importance. For example, reading increased vocabulary and strengthened the confidence level of the children. Children also

developed new ideas which broadened their learning and assisted parents to improve the education and learning process of the child.

Other students felt the children's creativity, social skills, and confidence levels were also greatly enhanced by daycare programs.

Providing learning opportunities for young children was seen to be the major contribution of daycare to the education of the children, according to one graduate from the private college system. This graduate felt the focus was divided between educators and caregivers, but maintained that the children were being educated while being cared for by adults. Another graduate stated that:

Children learned how to socialize with other children and adults and learned how to share. I think our main focus is as an educator. I felt I was a caregiver when I entered this program, but our training has prepared me to be an educator of young children.

Instructors and department heads in the private college structure held pretty strong views as to the contribution daycare has made to the overall development of the children under their care. One department head explained:

The employers want graduates who meet the requirement of provincial legislation, but the employer may not necessarily be doing what was taught the students. Economic concerns played a major role here and often dictated what was being taught in the daycare facility. The graduates were often faced with practices that were contrary to what they were taught in the training program. They feel helpless to do anything about it because it could jeopardize their jobs. This often led to dissatisfaction in the workplace.

Others referred to the increased demand for early childhood educators during the past several years. They felt daycare operators realized they were better off hiring trained

workers, even if the legislation did not require that everyone who was working in a daycare facility have the required training. This had its drawbacks, however, according to one instructor:

The turnover rate in a lot of daycare facilities is high because of a high stress level. The untrained people often do not last as long as the people who have proper training and see themselves as professionals. Low wages and lack of benefits often led to a high turnover rate.

While daycare operators were looking for educators who performed as caregivers and as educators of young children, most were privately run businesses and the quality of daycare depended on how much parents were willing to pay for this service.

Early childhood educators have been likened to primary school teachers in several areas and this research attempted to ascertain any similarities and differences that were conceived in the minds of the subjects. One first-year student in the public college system felt:

Both have the same goal of providing children with a better way of learning, but the methods are different. For example, a primary school teacher may send a child to the corner for inappropriate behaviour, but an early childhood educator would try and use positive reinforcement to handle the situation.

Some felt primary school teachers operated in more of a structured teaching environment, while early childhood educators allowed more freedom for the children to learn. "Both systems use activities to enhance learning, but early childhood educators utilize more free play to encourage socialization," offered one student. Preparation of both disciplines also differed. One student stated:

Primary school teachers are exposed to more education courses, but early childhood educators develop more fieldwork experiences. I think we need to do

some of both to be effective educators of young children. While primary school teachers learn how to teach, early childhood educators learn the developmental roles to assist children.

Most students agreed that children in daycare had a greater choice in activities and educators were more flexible with the daily schedules than primary school teachers, although it was deemed similar that both systems were interested in the overall development of the children.

Second-year students in the public college felt primary school teachers and early childhood educators were similar when compared to daycare operations that maintained a focus on teaching rather than caregiving. They also seemed to think that there were more choices for children in daycare than in primary school, even though a lot of the activities might be similar. The difference in levels of structure highlighted the differences in both systems. One student commented that:

In daycare, children can learn at their own pace, while in school, they must accomplish a certain number of skills over a period of time. School is a lot more structured. In daycare, children learn through play and they choose what they want to play with.

Graduates in the public college system also felt both groups participated in similar activities, but the formal school setting was more structured. One said:

In daycare, we ask the children at the start of the day what activities they want to do, but the primary teacher decides on the activities in school. The training we received had a bearing on how we relate to children. The amount of training for early childhood educators and primary teachers is different, but a lot of the activities are the same. Also, if I wanted to changeover to become a primary teacher, my courses are not transferable.

Instructors and department heads in the public college system considered there to be very little difference in either system. As one instructor commented:

There should not be much difference between early childhood education and primary school teaching because their goals are similar. However, primary school teachers are more pressured to complete a set number of skills and activities in a given time frame. As early childhood educators, we do not have the same pressure of a set curriculum, but we do have the responsibility to work on the social and emotional development of the children. We are the only teachers in the children's lives who have the time to work on that aspect of their learning experiences.

Most in this group thought that the activities of the daycare should flow easily into primary school because both focused on learning through experimentation. One department head, who perceived a move of the primary teaching role towards the early childhood educators' method of teaching, said:

The best practices of primary teaching reflect early childhood education practices. In addition, primary schools are now starting to use the curriculum that has been in operation in daycare centres for a number of years. Also, the physical environment of the primary school is more closely aligned with that of the daycare with the use of tables and chairs as opposed to desks.

Most instructors continually reinforced the notion in their students that they were teachers of young children and offered hope that society would interpret the term teacher in a broader sense.

In the private college, first-year students found a major difference in the two roles based on the curriculum that primary teachers had to follow, while early childhood educators had no set agenda for daily activities. "Both systems are similar in that they

direct young children in their learning by the use of play time and methods," one student commented.

Second-year students in the private college system deemed "the knowledge base of early childhood educators is different than that of the primary school teachers", but remarked that activities in daycare were similar to those in early primary school grades. One student felt the use of the term early childhood educator as opposed to daycare worker had increased the public awareness of the teaching role that these workers incorporated into their daily activities. Another student said:

At the daycare, the children refer to me as their teacher. This makes me feel good because I think I can contribute something to their education. I do not hesitate to say that I teach young children.

One graduate from a private college suggested:

The differences between primary school teachers and early childhood educators are found in the type of curriculum used. Teachers have a very structured curriculum, while ours in daycare is directed towards the children and is very flexible. The similarities in both systems are found in the materials used and the approach taken to lead the children in a valued learning experience. Children in daycare have a choice of what they want to learn, but in primary school the learning is teacher led.

Another graduate commented that learning occurred in daycare through fun, while the same learning was perceived as work in the primary school setting. A different graduate saw the gap between daycare and primary school narrowing as children in both systems were learning from modelling appropriate behaviour and guidance provided by adults as opposed to strict textbook learning.

Instructors and department heads in the private college system observed more similarities than differences in early childhood education and primary school teaching. One instructor remarked that:

One of the biggest differences comes from the expectations that the primary school teacher has a certain amount of learning that must transpire in a certain time frame rather than allowing the children to progress at their own level and particular need. There should be more similarities between daycare and primary school. The school setting needs to be less structured. Young children are not meant to sit in seats for long periods of time. Structure should progress with age and I see practices in primary school moving towards a daycare style of learning environment.

One department head commented that the similarities in both systems were closely united "if the teacher in the primary school is a recent graduate. This enhances the focus on learning through exploration." Most felt children learned better through a hands on approach which changed dramatically in primary school to the amount of work that was expected to be accomplished in a certain time frame.

Discussion of the Data

The intent of this study was to identify the role dimensions in early childhood education. This researcher observed and interviewed students, graduates, instructors, and department heads at a public and private college in Newfoundland and Labrador in order to describe the roles assumed by early childhood educators. The role as caregivers fostered the emotional needs of the children, nurtured them, and provided a healthy and safe environment. The role as teachers included an assessment of children's needs, the value of play in a planned environment, the importance of play to foster cooperation and develop

language, in addition to enhancing fine and gross motor skills. More importantly, early childhood educators utilized play to help the children understand concepts, promote creativity, and develop a sense of autonomy.

The results from this study indicated that there was an imbalance in the perceived roles as caregivers and as teachers in the early childhood education profession. First-year students at the private college felt there was an equal focus on the roles as teachers and as caregivers, but this study determined they could not clearly define either role. Second-year students, graduates, instructors, and department heads in the private domain totally agreed that their training placed the primary focus on teachers of young children, while their counterparts in the public college did not identify the training presented as clearly. They either felt there was an equal focus or it was geared more to the caregiving role.

All subjects felt their training offered courses in how to provide care for young children. Respondents in the private college added that the same held true for courses in how to teach. But students and graduates in the public sector stated unanimously that they did not perceive any courses that assisted them in becoming teachers of young children. This contradicts their responses when asked if they acquired and utilized various tasks to assist children in their learning. This research concluded that they did not clearly identify learning with teaching.

Despite the contradictions in defining their roles, most subjects felt that caregiving and teaching did occur at all levels of their training. The teaching roles in early childhood education were compared to the teaching roles of primary school teachers. Most subjects felt they both had the same goals, but there were different training methods utilized to achieve these goals. This study disclosed that the research subjects felt there was a more structured training and teaching program in the primary school, while early childhood educators utilized the concept of play to a greater extent. The differences in curriculum

and the knowledge base were also cited as differences between the two teaching methods. One department head in the public college system believed the early childhood program was more beneficial for young children and perceived a shift towards this type of program at the primary school level.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings of this study which are relative to the knowledge and understanding of the roles as caregivers and as teachers in early childhood education in Newfoundland and Labrador. It answers the research questions on which this study is based and includes a discussion on relevant educational implications, the issue of professionalism in the early childhood education profession, and possible future research on the topic.

In recent times, the visibility of child care has been increasing at a rapid rate due to the many child care agencies and centres that have been opened. Early childhood educators continue to organize delivery services for the provision and learning of young children. Faced with the many challenges of providing quality care on a daily basis, these educators are dedicated to providing quality care and education for young children. This research clearly showed that there was great variation in the role perceptions of early childhood educators and this would have a significant effect on the quality of daycare that was provided. Early childhood educators had trouble distinguishing between themselves as caregivers, or as caregivers and as teachers.

Outcomes from this research depicted varying degrees of roles and expectations. The roles as caregivers and as teachers of young children can be influenced by the quality of relationships that the children were able to form and sustain with the early childhood educators and their own peers in the child care facility.

Findings on the Roles as Early Childhood Teachers

In this study, the roles as teachers supported the following roles as early childhood teachers as defined by Saracho (1984):

1. *Diagnostician.* Early childhood teachers needed to assess children's strengths and needs in order to plan the proper match of successful learning experiences for children. It addressed the question of exactly what children need in order to reach their maximum learning potential.
2. *Curriculum designer.* Teachers developed curricula for young children within their capabilities, based upon theory and practices of early childhood education as well as the learning which the community considered important.
3. *Organizer of instruction.* Teachers used the outcomes of long-range and short-range planning to organize classroom activities to achieve the educational goals. Teachers inquired about appropriate available resources and tried to utilize these resources to the maximum.
4. *Manger of learning.* Teachers facilitated learning by creating a learning environment and offering learning experiences which were relevant and of interest to the children.
5. *Counsellor/Advisor.* Teachers continuously interacted with children and provided them with caring, emotional support and guidance as well as instruction. Teachers also helped children to learn socialization skills.
6. *Decision-maker.* Teachers constantly made decisions about children, materials, activities, and goals. Some were instantaneous decisions, while others were reflective decisions as teachers planned, selected, and implemented their activities from among various alternatives (p. 26).

Comparison of Roles Related to Research Data

The results of this study suggested that, functioning as diagnosticians, early childhood educators assessed children's learning capabilities and difficulties. Early childhood educators were obligated to be competent diagnosticians in order to provide the proper match of successful opportunities for the children and to understand the children's potentialities and limitations.

As curriculum designers, the early childhood educators guided and directed, in one way or another, the nature and character of the learning exercises in which children participated. Young children often gained an insight into some interesting information selected by their early childhood educators about a topic which initiated the quest for knowledge that prompted them to want to know more. The subjects that were interviewed generally perceived the significance of the early childhood education program and the activities led by early childhood educators in the decision-making process. The significance of the curriculum was important at this stage of the children's development.

Early childhood educators in this study felt they should consider the ages of the children when developing strategies for learning, but the method of delivery was a process of interaction between the early childhood educators and the children. As curriculum designers, early childhood educators attained an awareness of the purposes of the educational goals that were established for children in the daycare. They were also able to identify the strategies that could reasonably be implemented to achieve these goals. The early childhood educators acquired knowledge of the development in children of language, intellectual processes, and physical and social skills.

As curriculum designers, early childhood educators endeavoured to create programs based upon the learning considered important by the community and within the capabilities of the early childhood educators. In order to perform the tasks of curriculum

planning and implementation, caregivers began by assessing the children and the program environment. As observers of behaviour, they were able to recognize appropriate and inappropriate responses for children of different ages. Additionally, they developed an understanding of the range of needs within the population of children under their care.

This investigation revealed that, as organizers of instruction, early childhood educators interviewed in this study planned daycare activities, using time, space, materials, and human resources appropriately. Knowing how to select, as well as how to arrange, instructional materials for children's use was also considered important. They also formulated results from long-range and short-range planning. To organize the daycare activities related to the educational goals, they needed to consider all available resources and put these resources to their best uses. They also directed activities which involved the direct participation of the children which occurred at different times during the daily schedule. When early childhood educators directed activities which occurred during free play, the children were afforded the flexibility of joining in or participating in something else. When these activities were accomplished in activity time blocks, then all children were encouraged to participate as a group, but some children found this difficult.

One important factor that early childhood educators had to remember when planning activities during free play was that there were times when all children wanted to participate and this required some activities to be repeated. This researcher recorded many theoretical approaches and frameworks that were used to organize programs for young children. The level of instruction was perceived to be dynamic and adaptable to change, which allowed for new knowledge to be imparted to the children. The early childhood educators, as the decision-makers, planned and implemented learning opportunities and produced an assortment of decisions about children, materials, activities, and goals.

Early childhood educators interviewed in this study, as managers of learning, stated that they faced many exciting challenges and encountered many typical problems when working with young children. They felt they were not always well treated and were often criticized by administrators, other staff, and even parents. The practitioners appeared to be aware of child development and the appropriate learning and teaching strategies that were useful in early child care. Early childhood caregivers, as qualified managers of learning, created a learning environment and provided learning experiences in a way that was accessible to children. Caregivers continually instructed and coached the children and modelled the activities to achieve these ends.

As counsellors and advisors, the early childhood educators in this study understood the needs of children and knew how to provide physical, social, and psychological support for their well-being. Group care was observed as a critical variable in the emotional and intellectual development of any children who were cared for outside the home. Many of the young children spent large amounts of time as part of a group and much of their behaviour and emotions were influenced by this group experience. A close relationship between early childhood educators and children, and conditions that fostered the development of the children's sense of security, confidence, and identity, were observed as essential to quality care. This type of quality care emerged from a compassionate understanding of development and respect for each child as an individual with personal needs and inclinations. Finally, the early childhood educators acted as counsellors and advisors in order to assist the children to acquire desirable behaviours, learn to deal with others, and cope with individual feelings.

Previous learning experiences which were gained while working with young children assisted early childhood educators to form a foundation in which to construct teaching theory and practice. In addition, people who worked with children every day

collected new data to add to their bank of knowledge. This research identified many competent early childhood educators who met the specific needs of a group of young children in a child development setting by nurturing the children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth by establishing and maintaining a proper child care environment and by promoting good relations between parents and the daycare. Now more than ever before, the diverse child population in our country needs well-trained and competent educators who reflect the cultural and social differences in every community.

The findings in this research study indicated that early childhood educators valued and respected diversity and individual differences. Their performance skills were interrelated with a body of knowledge and theory in which early childhood educators needed to be immersed. These were applied as they planned and evaluated daycare activities. Also, knowledge facilitated the selection and sequencing of learning activities, methods of instruction, and the development of educational goals for young children.

These research findings indicated that early childhood professionals were well positioned to provide a positive learning environment for children. As well, reaching children through quality early education programs and strategies to help children achieve success in daycare and lead healthier, more productive lives, was apparent. A broad look at the effects of both positive and negative influences on children's development afforded this researcher some insight into why some children gained some knowledge in daycare while others did not. It also identified the many challenges that early childhood educators faced in understanding and taking a proactive stance on the critical issues affecting children's development.

In considering the results of this study, it must be kept in mind that teaching is a creative process, not mechanical art. It requires that its practitioners do more than merely assimilate the behaviour of role models. Teaching is a multifaceted activity and the

broadest definition of what is expected does not always match the eventual behaviour that each practitioner is expected to utilize on a daily basis.

Discussion of Educational Implications

The results contained in this research provided some insight into the effects of teaching at the early childhood level and suggested a number of points that would require more in-depth research. The descriptions of the different roles as teachers of young children seemed to provide a new focus for early childhood education training by preparing novices to function in the different roles. Based on the knowledge required to function in these roles, early childhood education programs can evaluate their goals, contents, and field experiences.

In this study, educators of young children performed a variety of roles, such as facilitating development, providing emotional support and guidance, managing children and other adults, mediating peer conflicts, and instructing. The emphasis particular early childhood educators placed on these roles and the values that were associated with them varied with the quality and goals of the program and the individual daycare facility, personal teaching philosophies, and work experiences. Based on interviews with the subjects, although not specifically stated, this researcher concluded that as children become older, the roles as teachers increased and the roles as caregivers decreased.

Addressing the Identity Crisis

This research did not clearly outline just how the subjects defined themselves and the career paths they had chosen. While the roles as caregivers and as teachers were addressed, students and graduates did not clearly picture themselves as belonging to a larger profession as teachers of young children. It would appear that sufficient focus did

not exist in their training that clearly outlined the teaching roles in early childhood education for which they were training. Emerging educators are members of the profession of early childhood education, but, if their training is reflected in their thoughts, these professionals may be indicating that there exists an identity crisis in their practice. To be professionals in the field of early childhood education is a challenging task. Professionalism requires an educational foundation and certain basic skills. The inconsistencies within the profession have had an adverse effect on the public's perception of early childhood education. The fact that some educators were hired without any relevant training or education did little to enhance the profession and relegated some educators to the status as baby-sitter.

It is the responsibility of everyone working in the field of early childhood education to elevate the status of the profession. Training programs generally only bring educators to an initial level of competence and professionalism. The research findings suggested that there was little realization, from students and graduates, that they were members of a teaching profession. They appeared to regard themselves as anything more than early childhood educators working in isolation from the rest of their peers. Educators themselves have a responsibility for the overall enhancement of the profession and to provide daily quality care to the children. The approach of each individual person to the role as an early childhood educator is important. A professional, who maintains a positive attitude, can develop proper attitudes in children. This includes organizing materials for those in daycare and drawing on all available resources for support and assistance.

Defining the Teaching Roles in Early Childhood Education

Early childhood educators need to acquire a broad range of educational foundations. They need to become aware of the history and traditions of early childhood

education. They need to know principles of child growth and development, as well as the cultural, social, and political environment in which they work. This knowledge goes beyond general education since it is applied in a professional context. Early childhood education training programs need to be reviewed in order to ensure that the knowledge required of early childhood educators to function in the teaching role is offered in each program. Similarly, these programs can be examined in light of a changing society and a schedule developed to reflect the integrative nature of teaching behaviours as opposed to fragmented courses offered in isolation to one another.

Educators of young children have a significant influence on the daycare system. The training and experiences garnered through proper schooling play an invaluable part in offering quality instruction in the daycare setting. Early childhood educators have to draw on their knowledge, skills, and disposition to offer suggestions and provide ideas toward creating a quality environment for children. This allows for the training of these educators to complement the purpose of the daycare operation. In this light, most of the subjects interviewed felt their training programs served as a solid foundation for acquiring relevant knowledge and developing practical skills to prepare them for roles as caregivers of young children, but the roles as teachers of young children were not as apparent.

In becoming early childhood educators, practitioners in the profession generally utilize existing teaching methods and explore a variety of materials to acquire the knowledge necessary to provide for the children under their care. Some teaching methods in early childhood education have a long and distinguished, but neglected, history. With the recent surge in utilization of technological innovations, teachers have been hampered by the time, energy, and material requirements needed to serve the early childhood education program differently than they had served these same programs in the past.

Early childhood educators are also avid story tellers. Children's literature has been part of this knowledge base, as is some form of oral tradition. The subjects in this study reiterated the view that early childhood educators captured the imagination and aspirations of young children through stories.

The level of education and the experiences accumulated by early childhood educators have a bearing on the quality of child care that is provided. This research did not disclose how much of an effect education and experience had played in this area, but the subjects did feel that direct experience with children did, to some extent, influence how early childhood educators perceived their roles. As more and more children spend extended time in child care surroundings, the roles as educators to provide sources of emotional support become more important. Young children tend to form attachments with their providers and the results of these attachments have implications for the overall development of the children in the daycare setting.

The designs and varieties of training programs are often linked to the individual provincial requirements and regulations. It is important to recognize that provincial regulations do not assure quality, but only provide the minimal standards under which daycare facilities may operate. These regulations place more emphasis on health and safety issues rather than the educational development of children. Because of this focus, the development of training for early childhood educators should go beyond the realm of provincial and territorial regulations.

Post-secondary institutions which offer training in early childhood education could have an impact on the role dimensions of students who are preparing for careers as early childhood educators. The findings of this study suggested the transfer roles as teachers of young children can be investigated through the curriculum. Courses should be designed to

reflect the changing knowledge base, skills, and attitudes that students will require to be prepared to enter the early childhood education profession.

To be effective decision-makers, teachers of young children should be aware of the curriculum of early childhood education and the methods in different subject areas. The theories related to play can assist early childhood educators in their daily planning. In addition, early childhood educators may be better informed when they recognize and utilize the related research findings in the field. Above all, they should be fully aware of their roles as teachers in the early childhood setting. This researcher discovered that organization of the daycare facility is one of the most important skills that these educators can acquire early in their careers. It allows for methods and materials to be matched with the ages of the children and helps utilize all the materials available in the facility. Early childhood educators need to view play as an educational tool, while developing teaching styles that are beneficial to the providers and children alike.

The process of child development and learning and the various evaluation methods available to assess various programs can be instilled in students at post-secondary institutions to allow early childhood educators to fundamentally organize their own instruction for the betterment of the program. The knowledge of the effect of certain procedures on children and educators can assist in the development of materials and resources for individual programs. The findings in this study indicated that educators of young children need to evaluate materials, resources, and equipment, along with themselves, to maintain an acceptable level of practice in their profession.

Courses which explain the theory of curriculum and child development can be implemented in post-secondary institutions that prepare students for early childhood education careers. These students can achieve the ability to constantly adapt program content to encompass individual differences in the daycare setting. Materials and

equipment can be selected with regard to each individual in the program to assist them to identify both short and long-term goals. This study allowed the researcher to suggest that these goals can then be matched to teaching experiences and techniques. Knowledge is able to be attained by a greater comprehension of the philosophy of childhood development and a broader utilization of innovations in the curriculum designed especially for children.

Child development also allows the practitioner to discern the individual differences that are prevalent in the daycare surroundings. An awareness of the individual skills, abilities, interests, and behaviours of young children will permit educators to select appropriate experiences, materials, and equipment for the enhancement of the children's learning. The creation of an attractive educational environment, as indicated by the research findings in this study, is crucial to understanding the individual differences in learning styles, interests, and needs of the children. Early childhood educators have a responsibility to guide the behaviour of children in the performance of educational tasks. Early childhood educators are capable of learning how to present a wide range of learning alternatives utilizing various educational tools and informative displays.

Early childhood educators should be taught the importance of creating an environment that motivates the children's exploration and discovery talents. Helping children make decisions about their activities provides emotional stability and trust within the group and promulgates the individual personality of each child in a positive way.

Early childhood education programs that prepare students to be teachers of young children can be flexible in their design and their approach to assist prospective educators to introduce their individuality into their teaching methods. This researcher received feedback from students and graduates that implied their early childhood education content was based on specific ideals and values, but those ideals and values were not made explicit. As

a result, it left the subjects in this study uncertain as to their role dimensions as teachers of young children in the actual daycare setting.

Discussion of the Role of Play as an Educational Tool

One of the unfortunate adages educators have failed to implement is that “play is the work of children.” Educators in the early childhood situation seemed eager to begin making distinctions between work and play, as well as individual differentiation between these activities at an early age. The findings in this study suggested that the roles as early childhood educators should not be focused on maintaining the distinction between these pursuits, but should retain as much enthusiasm and status as possible for both work and play concepts. As children grow, they are taught to value all forms of human activity as they become part of the society into which they are presented. From observation, few activities can surpass those we call “working” or “helping Daddy or Mommy” in some authentic activity, as signs of unbounded enthusiasm, commitment, and effort. Early childhood educators themselves need to participate in some exploratory work with materials and supplies, hopefully in the presence of children.

Students interviewed in this study, in both the public and private colleges, were required to select courses which focused on the theory and function of play to assist in fostering the developmental needs of children. Students were introduced to program planning, preparation, and implementation of methods of play as a useful educational tool. Particular emphasis was given to the provision of well-balanced programs to meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of the children. One department head in the private college said these courses were introduced to help students understand the importance of play, to foster cooperation, develop language and enhance fine and gross motor skills. Children utilize play to understand concepts, develop creativity, express their

feelings, and develop an initial sense of autonomy. This research revealed that many students did not understand that appropriate activities, provided in a pleasurable environment, translated into work for children. The activities, whether child directed or educator led, resulted in meaningful learning experiences which helped the children develop a trusting relationship with adults.

Instilling Professionalism at the Student Level

Early childhood educators in this study served in a variety of roles and provided an array of services to young children. One of the major challenges facing the profession is the definition of professionalism itself. Sound professional development strategies can address the methods in which educators become skilled, confident, and competent in communicating with the various stakeholders in the profession. The onus for developing these strategies in Newfoundland and Labrador falls to the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador. Early childhood educators, as this study demonstrated, encountered various social and educational problems on a daily basis and their decision-making abilities ought to be diverse enough to handle any situations that were presented to them. The ideological concept of treating everyone alike does not always work in an early childhood setting. Children express their needs and concerns in many different methods and an individualistic approach, utilizing the skills of observation and assessment, will assist educators to address individual problems in a more professional manner.

Preparation of early childhood educators in a sound professional development system relies heavily on the involvement of professionals who demonstrate knowledge and are able to perform in the educational field. Findings in this research suggested that early childhood educators should have a concept of their goals for the programs which serve

young children. The professionals need to strive to reach their goals of having all children taught by knowledgeable and qualified educators who will be held accountable for responsible professional practice. Striving to attain these goals will attract bright and energetic educators who will help raise the standards of the early childhood education profession. A strong professional organization will also assist its membership to become recognized as a viable entity within the educational community.

The value of the knowledge base related to early childhood educators is the one that society retains as a moral guide and builder of character. Early childhood educators are required to comprehend and act on prevailing moral principles. From acting as intermediaries in disagreements to advocating the sharing of toys, this research disclosed that these dynamic educators engaged in morally driven activity. From a training point of view, emphasis on sensitizing future educators to ethical issues should be given a high priority. It is unclear how these knowledge bases fit into the present curricula. That may be an advantage if educators are serious about visualizing the knowledge that is of great value to educators of young children. For without this knowledge base and expected standards of professional performance, teachers of young children will continue to receive little consideration for their efforts.

Educators are expected to provide appropriate programming for the children under their care and they need to have the materials and resources to fulfill this responsibility. Phillips, Howes, and Whitebook (1991) found there was a direct correlation between educators who were not satisfied with their job and their failure to provide adequate programming. Their survey found that the quality of work environment was important to the maintenance of high standards in the field of early childhood education. Because salary and benefits are seen as the initial attractions for positions in the field, these items become an important part of the job. The benefits have to be lucrative enough to

attract more professionals into the field. A good working environment, which was indicated by the research findings, is essential and must be provided by the daycare facility operators. Low salaries and the lack of perceived potential for career advancement may cause many practitioners to leave the profession. These are significant barriers which hinder the enhancement of early childhood education within the present system.

There is little incentive for individuals working in child care centres to seek specialized preparation for jobs that pay little more than minimum wage. To attract and retain qualified adults to work in early childhood programs, viable career options that provide opportunities for continued professional development and increased compensation can be made available. Individuals who have not yet acquired the necessary credentials would be permitted to work in early childhood settings under the supervision of qualified professionals until they acquired their certificates. In addition, there should be increased recognition and remuneration for professionals who have achieved higher levels of expertise.

Early childhood educators can be provided with access to various resources that protect the health and safety of the children under their care. Educators can be made aware of the special needs of all their children and be active participants in the learning process to be able to identify these needs. Early childhood professionals, regardless of their roles, have to develop methods to accept and nurture all children and provide the conditions necessary for the healthy growth and development of the children.

Quality daycare would not exist if it were not for the professionals working with the children. It is therefore important that the stakeholders ensure a high quality working environment in the daycare which reflects the quality care that has been established for the children. Daycare centres can establish quality educator-child ratios and appropriate group

sizes to provide quality situations for the children and to provide the right environment for the educators to carry out their jobs.

An understanding of the implications of this research is crucial when working toward and developing quality child care. Quality child care begins with the early childhood educators, and the components of quality that affect the educators also significantly affect the well-being of the children. Ideally, to instill quality and consistency in the application of good practice, all educators within a facility should be graduates of early childhood education programs. The level of quality in daycare facilities will maintain its present status until the provincial legislation is changed to require all educators to have some formal training. In the formal education system, all teachers must attain a certain standard or they cannot teach in a school system.

The research findings in this study pointed out the value of having trained professionals in the field and the provincial legislators should move to these desired ends to truly make the system of early childhood education a recognized profession. Gestwicki (1995) recommended that standards have to be set for the required experience with each age group and guidelines have to be established for all daycare personnel, including directors, supervisors, and educators within the facility.

Regulations regarding qualifications for educators and directors vary among provinces and territories and there are no set standards as to how many qualified educators should be employed in individual daycare facilities. This situation in Newfoundland and Labrador needs to be fully addressed in order to enable daycare facilities to provide quality early childhood education for everyone. At present, there are no specific educator qualifications and this has led to the establishment of mediocre standards and policies being utilized throughout the province. While daycare operators comply with the directive to

hire suitable candidates, the standard of daycare provided is often dictated by an overriding economical consideration rather than an educational one.

Unfortunately, quality daycare is relatively expensive. Educators' salaries and daycare expenses are linked directly to the fees parents pay and this creates a problem for those attempting to create better daycare environments. Provincial agencies have to be approached in an effort to attract more money for educators' salaries to help bridge the gap that now exists. Greater organization at the professional level is needed and all stakeholders and professionals involved in the daycare system should be encouraged to work together to create and sustain quality environments for the children. This will involve difficult decisions, but they have to be made.

Research Implications

Based on this study, and because of the scarcity of prior research on college level diploma programs, it is recommended that further research be conducted:

- a) to better review whether the identity crisis identified in this study is indeed apparent and affects the quality of education for early childhood;
- b) to better determine the nature of teaching roles in early childhood education non-baccalaureate programs;
- c) to examine the role of play as an educational tool in early childhood; and
- d) to identify methods of instilling the concept of professionalism at the student level in non-baccalaureate programs.

The results in this study provided implications for research, education, and enhancement of the profession. Further research should be conducted with larger numbers of early childhood educators and within the different working roles they experience,

particularly with those who are employed in various daycare settings. Lastly, an exploratory study is recommended to ascertain the extent to which the roles as early childhood educators are met in relation to what they actually do. These roles could then be compared to what experts propound as constituting effective and developmental child care.

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Appendix A

Profile of Students in Public College

	Year of Study	No. in Prog.	Gender	No. in Prog.	Age	No. in Prog.	Have Own Children	Previously worked with Children	Educational Status			
Characteristics	1st yr:	2	Male:	1	<25:	5	None:	4	Yes:	5	Did Not Complete High School:	0
	2nd yr:	3	Female:	4	25-35:	0	<8yrs:	1	No:	0	Completed High School:	3
					>35:	0	>8 yrs:	0			Previously attended a post- secondary institution:	2

Profile of Students in Private College

	Year of Study	No. in Prog.	Gender	No. in Prog.	Age	No. in Prog.	Have Own Children	Previously worked with Children	Educational Status			
Characteristics	1st yr:	2	Male:	0	<25:	3	None:	2	Yes:	5	Did Not Complete High School:	0
	2nd yr:	3	Female:	5	25-35:	1	<8yrs:	2	No:	0	Completed High School:	1
					>35:	1	>8 yrs:	1			Previously attended a post- secondary institution:	4

7.1

Appendix B

Profile of Instructors, Department Head in Public College

	<u>Instructor A</u>	<u>Instructor B</u>	<u>Dept. Head</u>
Occupational Training	Degree in Psychology	Degree-Elementary Education	Degree-Psychology
Occupational Experience	15 Years	23 Years	15 Years
Teaching Experience	12 Years	25 Years	12 Years
Post-occupational Education		M. Ed.	
Other Related Experience	Associate Director Day Care Inservice Parents & Staff		Associate Director Day Care Inservice Parents & Staff

Profile of Instructors, Department Head in Private College

	<u>Instructor A</u>	<u>Instructor B</u>	<u>Dept. Head</u>
Occupational Training	Diploma E.C.E.	Diploma- Nursing	B. Ed, M. Ed.
Occupational Experience	9 Years	9 Years	15 Years
Teaching Experience	4 Years	4 Years	7 Years
Post-occupational Education			B. Ed, M. Ed.
Other Related Experience	Part-time Studies - MUN Member- AECENL	Board Member- AECENL	Part-time Studies Board Member - AECENL

Appendix C

Consent Form For Students

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. I will be interviewing students at your college to investigate the role dimensions of the early childhood caregiver as identified in the early childhood curriculum. I am requesting your permission to take part in this study. Your participation will include: being observed, a series of tape recorded interview sessions each lasting approximately 30 minutes in duration as well as the completion of a series of opinion questionnaires. Following the study handwritten notes of observations, the recorded tapes and questionnaires will be destroyed. All information in this study is confidential and at no time will individuals be identified. I am interested in the role of teacher as a function of the early childhood caregiver. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education's Ethics Committee. The results of my research will be made available to you upon request.

If you are in agreement to participate in this study please sign below and return one copy to me. The other is for you. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at home, 747-3726 or my supervisor Dr. G. Haché, 737-7630. If at any time you wish to speak with a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Linda Phillips at 737-3402.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours truly,
Fran Abbott

I _____ give permission to take part in a study, undertaken by Fran Abbott, to identify the role dimensions of the early childhood caregiver as outlined in the curriculum. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Appendix D

Questionnaire

Using the scale below, please rate the following statements as they apply to you.

[5-Strongly agree] [4-Agree] [3-Undecided] [2-Disagree] [1-Strongly disagree]

1. [] Education, training and care are interrelated in all aspects of the child's development, all areas of learning and experience, and all aspects of the child's play.
2. [] All activities provided by early childhood caregivers require a caregiving and a teaching focus.
3. [] The primary focus of the early childhood education training program is as a 'caregiver' of young children.
4. [] The primary focus of the early childhood education training program is as a 'teacher' of young children.
5. [] The primary responsibility of an early childhood caregiver is as a 'caregiver' of young children.
6. [] The primary responsibility of an early childhood caregiver is as a 'teacher' of young children.
7. [] It is appropriate for children under your care to refer to you as 'their baby-sitter'.
8. [] It is appropriate for children under your care to refer to you as 'their teacher'.
9. [] Early childhood caregivers assess children's strengths when planning activities.
10. [] Early childhood caregivers develop curricula for young children
11. [] Early childhood caregivers evaluate curricula and resources.
12. [] Early childhood caregivers create an attractive learning environment.
13. [] Early childhood caregivers guide children's behaviors in educational tasks.

Appendix E

Interview questions

1. Does your training program primarily focus on the role of the early childhood caregiver or the early childhood educator?
2. What subjects focused on the role of 'caregiver'?
3. What subjects focused on the role of 'educator'?
4. Do you view yourself as a caregiver of young children? If so:
 - a. What tasks relate to your role as a caregiver?
5. Do you view yourself as a teacher of young children? If so:
 - a. What tasks relate to your role as a teacher?
6. Do you feel your training program is adequately preparing you to care for young children? If so how? If not, why?
7. Do you feel your training program is adequately preparing you to teach young children? If so how? If not, why?
8. What significant contributions do you believe good early childhood education programs can make in the lives of young children?
9. In your opinion, what are the similarities between an early childhood caregiver and a primary teacher in the public school system?
10. In your opinion, what are the differences between an early childhood caregiver and a primary teacher in the public school system?

