

BC CHILDCARE SECTOR LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP: PHASE 1

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

Canada



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PRELIMINARY RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARY RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

The Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) presents this Research Synthesis as the third deliverable in the British Columbia (BC) Childcare Sector Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) project. The Study is Phase 1 of a larger Sector LMP project conducted with funding from the *Canada-BC Labour Market Partnership*.

This report presents a preliminary review of recent BC-specific childcare sector research reports and identifies key research themes and findings. A preliminary identification of research gaps, including secondary data and primary data gaps, leads to preliminary recommendations for further review of key literature and cross-jurisdictional opportunities, as part of a Phase 2 Sector LMP project.

This introductory section presents the project overview, project background and research synthesis methodology. The following five sections present the themes that emerged from the literature that was reviewed, the key issues within the literature, as well as the research gaps and directions for future study. In particular, Section 2.0 addresses Labour Market Challenges; Section 3.0 addresses Training and Career Development; Section 4.0 addresses Indigenous Childcare; and Section 5.0 presents Cross-Jurisdictional Research.

Section 6.0 Limitations and Gaps, presents an overview of the significant gaps evident in the literature, as well as the limitations of this preliminary synthesis. Section 7.0 presents the conclusions of the preliminary research synthesis, bringing together all ten recommendations from the preceding sections. The works cited are provided in Appendix A, with an Annotated Bibliography presented in Appendix B.

Please note that while the term *childcare* is used throughout the report, the nearly identical term *child care* is also used when the term is from an identified source, or the name of a stakeholder organization. Both terms refer to the non-parental care of children. The childcare sector as defined by this study encompasses licensed and unlicensed childcare and excludes other early years programming and in-own-home care.

1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

In BC, childcare is provided through a variety of settings, including group childcare, family childcare, in-home multi-age childcare, school age childcare, and Indigenous childcare. There are approximately 18,000 people employed in the childcare sector in BC, the vast majority of whom are certified *early childhood educators* (ECEs) and *early childhood educator assistants* (ECEAs).¹ Given the broad scope of childcare providers and licensing requirements, not all workers in the sector are certified ECEs or ECEAs.

¹ BC Labour Market Outlook (2015-2025). WorkBC. Accessed April 5, 2018: www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers/Browse-Career-Profile/4214

Recruitment, training, wage levels, and retention of a qualified childcare workforce are known as key factors that support high-quality early care and learning (ECL). In turn, these factors are also known issues for the sector, whereby difficulty to recruit and retain ECEs and ECEAs is identified as a key limitation, and low wages contribute to the difficulties in recruiting potential ECEs and ECEAs, as well as retaining them in the profession. Furthermore, burn-out due to heavy work-loads and difficult working conditions are often cited as key occurrences within the childcare field.

The ECEBC represents a membership composed of BC childcare early childhood educators, ECE students, and post-secondary instructors. Recent BC Government commitments to increase spaces and affordability of childcare in BC is prompting ECEBC to act as a conduit for the sector to identify labour market issues, both on the demand side (childcare employers), and on the supply side (childcare providers), as well as research gaps and potential research questions to support a sector led Phase 2 SLMP study, that will inform sector strategies and actions that align with government’s targets.

1.3 SECTOR LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP

The purpose of the Phase 1 component of the Sector LMP is to engage childcare sector stakeholders in order to build a shared understanding of key sector labour market issues, produce a preliminary BC specific sector research synthesis, and develop preliminary research questions, as well as leadership and governance structures to support a Phase 2 Sector LMP project.

The Sector LMP Program has five distinct phases described in the diagram below. Each phase is negotiated as a separate contract. Progress from one phase to another is based on demonstrated need and satisfactory completion of project deliverables outlined in the previous phase.

FIGURE 1: SECTOR LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP PHASES



1.4 RESEARCH SYNTHESIS METHODOLOGY

A Research Synthesis is a data collection tool whereby existing research is identified, reviewed, recorded, analyzed, and transmitted. In the present case, the Research Synthesis is preliminary in nature in that it is designed to serve as preparation for a fuller investigation in subsequent project phases.

The objective of this Research Synthesis is not to present a systematic or comprehensive review of all relevant and related literature, but rather to scan and synthesize key research and reports identified by the sector, in order to critically evaluate how and why further study is required.

The Preliminary Research Synthesis provides a review of the relevant reports, documents, and studies that focus on the key childcare sector labour market issues in British Columbia. The review of literature encompassed a full range of programs delivered across the province including Indigenous Child Care, Family Child Care, Multi-Age Care, Group Child Care and Preschools, and School Age Care. There is limited information on License-Not-Required childcare options.

The review followed the traditional methods of reviewing previous reports, documents, and studies on the childcare sector in Canada, and materials supplied by members of BC Childcare SLMP Project Phase 1 Steering Committee. From this starting point, additional information was gathered through Internet searches, government databases, and academic search engines. The reports, documents, and studies were reviewed and analyzed for key themes and findings, and to identify research gaps. The focus of this Preliminary Research Synthesis is to inform the research priorities of the Phase 2 Labour Market Partnership Program, which will address Labour Market Information.

2.0 LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

The childcare sector labour market was the primary lens through which all research was reviewed. Two dozen reports were identified presenting relevant labour market data for the childcare sector in BC, or for making policy recommendations that would have impacts on the BC context. There is wide agreement across the literature that the childcare sector is facing critical and longstanding labour market pressures that have clear impacts on the availability and accessibility of quality care options for families.

Recruitment and Retention

The Literature Review Report prepared for the Child Care Human Resource Sector Council in 2008 by Malatest & Associates lists ten key human resource issues facing the Canadian childcare sector labour market.² These ten issues are repeated across the literature and constitute the central themes of all childcare sector labour market specific research:

1. Recruitment and Retention
2. Ongoing Professional Development
3. Compensation: Wages and Benefits
4. Attitudes/Respect for the Profession
5. Policy and Funding
6. Health and Well-Being
7. Aboriginal Children, Families, and Communities
8. Meaningful Inclusion: Diverse Children
9. Diverse Workforce
10. Gender

Beach and Ferns³, in their 2015 article “From Child Care Market to Child Care System”, identify the human resource issues that exist within the context of a market-driven childcare system. They argue that the impact of this on service development and management is significant: “With a few exceptions, where programs are located, who they are intended for, when services start up and when they close down are all primarily determined by the market.” Moreover, they argue that under this model, childcare funding is driven by the demand-side, which results in an environment characterized by inequitable access, minimal public funding, limited regulation, and a business model where increasing staff wages comes at the expense of raising parent fees.⁴

Wages are a primary concern across the literature. The Training and Retention in the First Nations ECE Sector: A Report from the Frontlines⁵ reports that ECEs and assistants on average earn less than other workers and less than most women in other occupations. This was based on 2006 data, and currently no pan-Canadian wage scales or approach to compensating child care workforce exists (p.37).

² Malatest, R., (2008). *Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada’s ECED Sector*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

³ Beach, J., & Ferns, C. (2015). *From Child Care Market to Child Care System*. Retrieved from Policy Alternatives

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Aboriginal Childcare Society. (2012). *Training and Retention in the First Nations ECE Sector: A Report from BC the Front lines*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

Economist Iglia Ivanova⁶ found that, “wages for qualified ECEs in BC are too low, contributing to financial insecurity and poverty among the families of educators, many of whom are women with children of their own” (p.18). Ivanova further ties low wages to retention issues, remarking that, “It is hardly surprising that high turnover and shortage of qualified staff have been longstanding challenges in the sector, as well-trained early childhood educators often leave the field to move into higher-paid public education system” (p.18).

The 2018 Surrey Community Child Care Task Force report also finds low wages are a key barrier to both recruitment and retention: “Low rates of pay for most early childhood educators limits the attractiveness of the field and constrains the ECE workforce” (p.11).⁷ For those who do enter and remain in the childcare sector workforce, many struggle with the cost of living outpacing their earnings. In fact, in a national study, Flanagan, Beach, and Varmuza found that, “Almost 25% of program staff worked at a second job. The main reason was the need for additional income” (p.9).⁸

While retention of staff is acknowledged as a significant challenge throughout the literature, and widely connected to low wages, there is an absence of analysis of other factors that may contribute to the phenomena of ECEs leaving the childcare sector. In particular, there is little focus on the role that benefits, pension, vacation time, or how the physical and emotional demands of the work may contribute to attrition.

More information is needed to understand the challenges around retention and to develop effective strategies moving forward. As Malatest concludes:

As noted throughout this report, recruitment and retention are intrinsically linked to most, if not all, of the other issues facing the sector. In actuality, all of the HR issues facing the ECEC are intertwined and should be thought of as so. Thus, action taken regarding one issue (e.g., recruitment and/or retention) would almost certainly involve action regarding other HR issues facing the sector (e.g., compensation, attitudes towards the profession, education). Thus, while no specific practices were identified to improve recruitment and retention capabilities of employers, there are several practices discussed in the sections below which would help employers with these issues. (p. 29)⁹

Perceptions of the Sector

Compounding the recruitment and retention issues stemming from low wages and challenging working conditions, Malatest notes that, “Societal attitudes towards (the childcare sector) are an important aspect of the current human resource challenges and have been recognized as an HR barrier for many years” (p.19). This problem of perception is recognized within many of the reports reviewed; however, it is not an avenue explored in any detail.

Likewise, while the gender dynamics of the childcare sector seem evident, a critical gender analysis exploring the implications of a predominantly female workforce is absent from much of the literature. Miller reports that in Canada, women make up over 98% of the workers in the childcare

⁶ Ivanova, I., (2015). *Solving BC’s Affordability Crisis in Child Care Financing the \$10 a Day Plan*. Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative BC Office.

⁷ Surrey Community Child Care Task Force. (2018). *Surrey Child Care Report*.

⁸ Flanagan, K., Beach, J. & Varmuza, P. (2013). *You Bet We Still Care! A Survey of Centre-Based Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

⁹ Malatest, R., (2008). *Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada’s ECED Sector*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

sector.¹⁰ The literature indicates that this is connected to long-held views about childcare constituting women’s work – work that women are biologically more suited to undertaking.¹¹ As a result, men are discouraged from entering the field.

Malatest makes the connection that the gender imbalance in the sector reinforces the traditional notion of childcare as women’s work, which contributes to early childhood education viewed as “no more than babysitting.”¹² This leads to the devaluation of the work overall. Beach and Ferns¹³ note that these negative perceptions are typical within a market-driven system. The literature shows that in countries like Denmark with a universal publicly funded early childhood education system, early childhood educators are held in much higher esteem.¹⁴ The literature assumes a connection between childcare and early learning which appears to elevate public perception of childcare workers to that of educators.

In 2008, Malatest provided the positive that, “if research that details the importance of the early years and the positive impact the ECEC [Early Childhood Education and Care] can have on children, families and society at large continues to be published, this will help improve attitudes towards, and respect for, the ECEC sector” (p.30)¹⁵ While the literature anticipated a positive change in the perception of employment in the childcare sector, research and reports in the period from 2008 to 2018 do not indicate any marked improvement.

2.1 RESEARCH GAPS AND DIRECTIONS

While some labour market challenges are well documented across the literature, there is a lack of current quantitative information about the childcare sector in BC and many areas remain under-investigated. The following research gaps are identified as particularly important for further study.

- There is a need for a comprehensive description of the childcare sector in BC that includes basic labour market information such as the types and numbers of businesses, types of occupations, and workforce characteristics like wages, benefits, and pensions.
- While research on public perceptions of the childcare sector workforce exists, there is little information available about the strategies used in other jurisdictions to improve perceptions and to what degree those efforts have been successful.

¹⁰ Miller, C. (2015). *Attracting and Keeping Qualified Staff in Canadian Child Care: The National Environmental Scan*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Malatest, R., (2008). Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada’s ECEC Sector. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

¹³ Beach, J., & Ferns, C. (2015) *From Child Care Market to Child Care System*. Retrieved from Policy Alternatives

¹⁴ Malatest, R., (2008). Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada’s ECEC Sector. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

3.0 TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Surrey Community Child Care Task Force¹⁶ relates concerns with the quality of early childhood education training programs and the implications and impact of not having local opportunities for quality training (p.16). Stakeholders noted, “students receiving high-quality training in ECE programs outside of Surrey may be less likely to practice in Surrey due to wage differentials between communities and students may not make connections between ECE education programs, ECE practicum opportunities and child care operators” (p.18).

While a relatively small sample, a review of learning outcome reports for public post-secondary certificate or diploma ECE graduates indicates a high satisfaction rate with ECE education and transition rates to employment.¹⁷ This represents the feedback from the graduating educators’ perspective only, and thus does not provide the perspective of employers. See the figure below.

FIGURE 2: ECE GRADUATES SURVEY IN BC PUBLIC POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS (2015-2017)

<i>Institution (2015 – 2017)</i>	Quality of Instruction	Usefulness in Obtaining Work	Training Related to Job
<i>Northern Lights College</i>	100%	86%	93%
<i>Langara College</i>	95%	78%	79%
<i>Capilano University</i>	93%	74%	93%
<i>Northwest Community College</i>	100%	100%	100%
<i>University of the Fraser Valley</i>	100%	77%	75%
<i>North Island Community College</i>	98%	85%	84%

The Child Care Human Resource Sector Council¹⁸ employer survey for BC reported that 77.5 % of all newly hired staff had an ECE Credential (p.22). However, the literature provides little information on the experience for ECE employees once they enter the sector.

The Workforce Study for Early Years and Child Care Employees¹⁹ reported that fewer than half of survey respondents to their study understood the different settings across the early years and child care sector when they graduated. The next lowest rating related to post-secondary training was only 54% of graduates agreeing/strongly agreeing with the statement “My ECE post-secondary training provided me with a good understanding of the types of jobs available to me when I graduated” (p.26).

The Workforce Study further reports:

¹⁶ Surrey Community Child Care Task Force. (2018). Surrey Child Care Report.

¹⁷ Retrieved from www2.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Dashboard/

¹⁸ Flanagan, K., Beach, J. & Varmuza, P. (2013). You Bet We Still Care! A Survey of Centre-Based Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

¹⁹ Malatest, R., (2017.) Workforce Study for Early Years and Child Care Employees Final Report. Toronto: Ministry of Education.

“the sector is comprised of a mix of for-profit and not-for-profit; private, municipal, and publicly funded; home-based, centre-based, and school-based; and child care and EarlyON Centres. The work environment can vary considerably by type of organization, but many students are not aware of this before they graduate. As a result, they end up leaving the sector because it was not what they had expected. The challenge, then, is to ensure that students and new graduates understand their employment options and know what to look for when applying for jobs.” (p.26)²⁰

Occupational Standards

The preliminary review of childcare sector reports reflects an increasing interest in occupational standards, which are statements describing the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed in order to competently perform a job role. The development of occupational standards is undertaken as part of an effort to professionalize the childcare sector from within.

The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council²¹ created occupational standards for Early Childhood Educators. The rationale for creating standards is, “identifying the skills required for specific occupations” (p.3). Malatest in *The Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada’s ECEC*²² concurs stating that, “In order to enhance the size and capacity of the trained ECEC workforce, there is a need to define the core roles for early childhood educators and directors” (p.16).

A set of Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators were developed by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council and apply “to any ECE who provides education and care in programs for children aged 0-12 in a variety of age groupings, including infant and toddler care, preschool-aged care, school-aged care and inclusive care, in any of the following areas: Publicly funded child care settings; Privately operated child care settings; Home-based child care settings; Family resource programs; Other early childhood settings (e.g., nursery schools, kindergartens)” (p.3).²³ The report clarifies that knowledge may be, “acquired through formal education, on-the-job learning, self-study, experience or professional development,” and that they be used “for guidance in defining skill levels and knowledge for ECEs in specific settings or positions (p.4).

Career Pathways

The Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators²⁴ set out the skills and knowledge of child care administrators across the spectrum of governance models, size, structure and location of operation and jurisdictions. A childcare administrator is an individual who is responsible the day to day operation of an early childhood education and care for children aged 0-12 in a range of publically, privately, home based or family resource programs.

Malatest argues that workplaces are becoming more diverse and need to find a common knowledge necessary for an effective workplace while leveraging the strengths of a diverse staff.²⁵

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. (2010). *Occupation Standards for Early Childhood Educators*.

²² Malatest, R., (2008). *Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada’s ECED Sector*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

²³ Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. (2010). *Occupation Standards for Early Childhood Educators*.

²⁴ Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. (2013) *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators*.

²⁵ Malatest, R., (2008). *Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada’s ECED Sector*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

This can be challenging for childcare administrators who often lack skills and training in human resource management. The Malatest Literature Review concludes:

One of the most significant findings of this literature review is that the ECEC sector is extremely complex, with various intertwined human resources issues and challenges. Staff recruitment and retention challenges, issues regarding training and professional development, wages and benefits and attitudes towards ECEC are closely linked. All of the HR issues discussed are embedded within policy, funding and infrastructure of ECEC nationally, provincially/territorially and locally. While there is a significant research base detailing the human resources needs facing the sector, there are few resources that specifically focus on the “employer” in ECEC. (p.31)²⁶

In addition to the lack of training and supports for childcare administrators and managers, there is a lack of information in the literature about the career pathways open to childcare workers that lead them into these positions. It seems the shift from employee to employer is often abrupt without many stops along the way. More information is needed about career development and pathways including quantitative information about graduation rates from all early learning training programs, and the training that childcare managers and administrators have if it is outside the early learning field. Better understanding of training and career development in BC childcare will be critical for developing effective strategies for dealing with the current labour shortage.

3.1 RESEARCH GAPS AND DIRECTIONS

Preliminary review of the literature on standards for childcare sector occupations reveals several gaps in the literature and important directions for future research:

- While there is currently a focus on occupation standards within the sector, there is a gap in assessing the match between training programs and industry needs, which would be critical for determining the quality of the available training programs and practicum processes.
- There is a need for a comprehensive inventory of ECE training programs in BC that includes their capacity, graduation rates, specialties, and upgrading options, as well as potential barriers to accessing training. This should also include information on conversion rates for ECEA to ECE certification.
- There is a need for a more nuanced understanding of available career pathways within the sector including retention rates.

²⁶ Ibid

4.0 INDIGENOUS CHILDCARE

A preliminary review of BC childcare sector literature reveals a strong focus on Indigenous childcare. This has been a clear area of interest for all levels of government, First Nations, and the broader childcare industry.

Occupational Standards

The *Occupational Standards and Fair Wages for BC First Nations Early Childhood Education* report from the First Nations Early Childhood Development Council²⁷ identifies the key themes drawn from stakeholder engagement on standards including: the need to integrate cultural and traditional teachings and languages into program development; the importance of the involvement of Elders; incorporation of nature-based learning and modalities; and the skills needed to build trusting relationships in First Nations programs (p.7). In addition, the report identifies the need to understand the impact of colonization of First Nations people.

The First Nations Early Childhood Development Council²⁸ utilized the Child Care Human Resources Sector professional standards as a framework for the discussions and first step in the development of First Nation standards (p.1). Through this work, they articulate a five-level system for classifying First Nation childcare sector workers (p.11):

- Level I – (First Nations) early childhood assistant (First Nations ECA)
- Level II – (First Nations) early childhood educator (First Nations ECE)
- Level III – (First Nations) infant toddler educator (First Nations ITE) and First Nation special needs educator (First Nation SNE)
- Level IV - senior (First Nations) early childhood educator (senior First Nations ECE)
- Level V – (First Nations) early childhood manager (First Nations EC manager)

The conclusions of the report state that the “realities of First Nations early childhood educators suggest a level of professional practice that requires both respect and recognition. Simply put, we can demonstrate our value as First Nations ECEs (and ECEs generally) through high quality professional preparation that addresses the complexity of their work and adequate remuneration for their professional efforts. Both can be best accomplished by clear and comprehensive occupational standards and clear and equitable wage benchmarks that reflect those standards and respond to the present economic realities” (p.28).²⁹

Indigenous Programming

The *National First Nations Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Policy Framework – Draft*³⁰ (the Framework) states, “We have entered a new political climate—one which brings unprecedented opportunity for transformative, systemic change for First Nations peoples” (p.1). The Framework

²⁷ First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (2014). *Summary Report: Occupations and Fair Wages for BC First Nations Early Childhood Educators*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ BC Aboriginal Child Care Society. (2017). *National First Nations Early Learning & Child Care (ELCC) Policy Framework – Draft*.

recognizes the need to, “come together to create a comprehensive First Nations ELCC system, one implemented and coordinated by regions and communities” (p.1).

The Framework recognizes quality childcare programs and services as one of six guiding principles and goals: “Early learning and child care programs, services and supports are diverse and of high quality. They emulate the distinct languages and cultures in which they are situated and are evident in children’s learning and physical environments, education and remuneration of early childhood educators, inclusion of Elders, and family and community engagement” (p.3).

In order to accomplish this vision for quality programs and services, the Framework sets forth that there must be sufficient, appropriate and sustainable funding to support quality programs and services including language programming, and that human resource strategies must be developed and implemented that focus on valuing ECE staff and their education. A key facet of valuing ECE staff is ensuring they receive appropriate remuneration.³¹

Governance

The *First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Regional First Nations Engagement*,³² which reports on the consultation process led by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society in 2017 under direction of the First Nations Leadership Council and the Assembly of First Nations, identifies governance and jurisdiction of childcare as critical considerations to ensure quality childcare.

Where Indigenous peoples are concerned, Indigenous governance ‘works’ and can avoid the institutional mismatch that besets much Indigenous social policy. Jurisdiction and governance must not be sidestepped for the immediacy of administrative challenges and ‘reform,’ for Indigenous leadership and control are the only viable non-assimilative ways to support the raising of Indigenous children. Non-Indigenous licensing, fragmented policy regimes at various uncoordinated levels of (non-Indigenous) government, and neglectful and discriminatory funding are common ways of undercutting Indigenous authority in ELCC. Quality [childcare] in an Indigenous context will be realized through more Indigenous control in responsive and flexible capacity development in education, professional development, research, and community development support (p.7).

The key conclusions arrived at through the *First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Regional First Nations Engagement*³³ are that Indigenous communities want childcare for Indigenous children to be rooted in Indigenous cultures and languages and for authority and responsibility to rest with First Nations. “The key barrier to achieving this is identified as lack of funding, staff retention, and inadequate capacities...and the unavailability of language speakers” (p.15). In particular, the need for funding that is, “stable, equitable, responsive and flexible [and] subject to First Nations input and control and are accountable to communities—regardless of whether children are on or off-reserve, and also subject to the TRC³⁴ calls to action” (p.15). Likewise, pay equity for childcare workers was also a key consideration.

³¹ *Ibid*

³² BC Aboriginal Child Care Society. (2017). *First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Regional First Nations Engagement*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission

This vision is echoed in a report from the First Nations Early Childhood Development Council,³⁵ which calls for the integration of cultural and traditional teachings and languages into program planning, curriculum development, and activities, as well as involving Elders in program planning and activities (p.7).

The review of the literature reveals that a significant amount of research and community engagement activities has led to a clearly articulated vision for Indigenous childcare and early learning, and comprehensive identification of the barriers to achieving this vision. The key reports outlined above indicate considerable effort and coordination between the federal government, First Nations, and Indigenous organizations. This collaborative approach will be essential to moving the vision forward.

As the work of implementing the Framework is undertaken, there will be a need to monitor progress and develop evidence-based recommendations for improvements. As programs shift towards a focus on Indigenous culture and language, there will need to be focused effort and investment in supporting the Indigenous childcare sector workforce. The Framework cannot be implemented without an adequate supply of appropriately skilled workers. Currently there does not appear to be any Indigenous focused childcare labour market studies related to the Framework. This gap in research will need to be filled in order to strategically direct resources in support of the Framework implementation plan.

4.1 RESEARCH GAPS AND DIRECTIONS

The following research gap and directions for further study has been identified:

- The abundance of literature and research on Indigenous childcare affirms that this is an area that warrants careful consideration and focus for future BC childcare sector labour market studies.
- Given the 2017 Policy Framework and Community Consultations Report and the commitment to collaboration and engagement on Indigenous childcare there is a need to examine the specific labour market issues related to supporting the training, certification, professional development of Indigenous ECEs, as well as cultural and language program development.

³⁵ First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (2014). *Summary Report: Occupations and Fair Wages for BC First Nations Early Childhood Educators*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

5.0 CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL RESEARCH

There are several reports which present a national perspective on childcare with breakdowns by province. For example, the following reports all present comprehensive surveys or scans of childcare from a national perspective: The Early Childhood Education Report 2017³⁶; Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada³⁷; You Bet We Still Care! A Survey of Centre-Based Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada³⁸; and Early Years Study 3 Making Decisions Taking Action.³⁹

Through the Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements the Federal Government has returned to investing in early education and childcare. BC has moved forward with a new policy framework (p.107).⁴⁰ In February 2018, the BC Government entered into a three-year bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada, in which BC will receive almost \$153 million. The funds will contribute to initiatives including accessibility, quality improvement, training, and under-served communities.⁴¹

Increased government attention to the childcare sector presents opportunities for making systemic improvements. While there is a plethora of issues, research data, and recommendations contained within the literature, the fragmentation of childcare oversight under multiple Ministries and agencies emerged as the key theme with significant opportunities for further investigation.

In 2003, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released its report Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: *Country Note for Canada*, which identified the fragmented governance of the childcare sector as having considerable unintended impacts on early childhood service delivery in many Canadian jurisdictions.⁴² The impacts of multi-agency involvement in childcare governance are confirmed by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society Report addressing First Nations Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), which argues:

Provincial education and social services bureaucracies seek to ‘provide for’ Indigenous child and family support in the early years through an enormous profusion of programs and services that share in common a lack of coordination (in what are commonly called ‘silos’) with an endemic absence of Indigenous control and direction (for many, a continuing colonialism in contemporary administrative form). (p.8)⁴³

The OECD notes that countries that have been progressing toward publicly managed, universal services focused on the development of young children are seeing the benefits. In these countries,

³⁶ Akbari, E., & McCuaig, K. (2017). *The Early Childhood Education Report 2017*. Toronto, ON: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

³⁷ Friendly, M., Larsen, E., Feltham, & Turiano, M. (2001). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2001*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

³⁸ Friendly, M., Larsen, E., Feltham, L., Grady, B., Forer, B. & Jones, M. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

³⁹ McCain, M., Mustard, & J., McCuaig, K., (2012). *Early Years Study 3 Making decisions Taking action*. Toronto: Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Foundation.

⁴⁰ Friendly, M., Larsen, E., Feltham, L., Grady, B., Forer, B. & Jones, M. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

⁴¹ Canada. (2017). *British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*. Government of Canada..

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Aboriginal Childcare Society. (2012). *Training and Retention in the First Nations ECE Sector: A Report from BC the Front lines*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

childcare is also expected to play a significant role in creating and maintaining social cohesion, alleviating the effects of child poverty, improving child health and screening, supporting better parenting practices, and encouraging family engagement in education.⁴⁴

When the OECD report was released in 2003, no Canadian jurisdiction had merged childcare governance under one ministry; however, by 2017 eight out of thirteen jurisdictions had taken this step. The Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador all now include policy and oversight for child care and related early years within their education departments (p.3).⁴⁵

Akabi and McCuaig note in 2017 that (p.2):

The OECD provided a prescription for countries to improve their early childhood services:

- Pay attention to governance. Responsibility for services for young children are scattered among different departments. Give one ministry the lead and hold it accountable. Spend more, but spend wisely. Children need good early years services, while economies need working parents. Organize ECE to meet the needs of both.
- Invest in the workforce. It needs better training and care. Give it the same level of leadership, career opportunities and resources that are provided to public school teachers. (p.2)⁴⁶

The research provides multiple visions for a more unified and effective childcare sector, however there is little research showing the impacts of various policy approaches on the workforce. For instance, Flanagan, Beach and Varmuza recommend that future research is needed to understand the impacts of government policy on wages and job satisfaction, as well as an analysis of job satisfaction, wages, and education levels in jurisdictions with different policy approaches.⁴⁷

As BC is currently in an era of unprecedented investment in childcare and government prioritization of the sector, understanding promising practices and lessons learned in other jurisdictions would be a valuable exercise.

5.1 RESEARCH GAPS AND DIRECTIONS

The preliminary research synthesis pertaining to childcare governance reveals two key gaps in the research which provide important directions for future study:

- Cross-jurisdictional analysis is needed to understand the impacts of various childcare policy approaches on wages, job satisfaction, and education levels. Further investigation is needed to identify promising practices, professionalization, and governance models that have had positive impacts on labour supply.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Akbari, E., & McCuaig, K. (2017). *The Early Childhood Education Report 2017*. Toronto, ON: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Flanagan, K., Beach, J. & Varmuza, P. (2013). *You Bet We Still Care! A Survey of Centre-Based Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

6.0 LIMITATIONS AND GAPS

There is very little labour market information available for the BC childcare sector. As a result, a very limited compendium was consulted for this preliminary research synthesis. Additionally, many of the documents reviewed were developed for very specific purposes and are not broadly applicable to the sector. As such, there are significant limitations and gaps in the available literature.

The preliminary review and synthesis of childcare sector research reveals consistent absences, which may reflect gaps in the available data. There is a dearth of quantitative demographic information available about the current childcare sector workforce and the key issues they face including wages, benefits, training, and certification. While qualitative data is more common, there is still significant gaps in the literature around recruitment and retention practices, perceptions of the sector, and working conditions.

More generally, it appears as if the childcare sector research trends towards a focus on licensed childcares over unlicensed childcares, and towards not-for-profit centres over for-profit centres. For instance, there are no available statistics on how many unlicensed childcares are operating within the childcare sector in BC, or how many children they serve. This absence of information is likely connected to how data is collected, how or why it is reported, and by whom.

For instance, the BC Ministry of Health has information on all of the licensed childcare providers. The Ministry collects data through the regional health authorities; these bodies may collect and report data in different ways. The Ministry of Children and Family Development has information on the childcare providers which have opted in to the new Childcare Operating Fund. In order to get the full and accurate picture of the BC childcare sector, all of these various data are required. In order for the data to be optimized without bias, Phase 2 research will need to collaborate with the various Ministries in order to access and understand the available data.

The focus in the research is on centre based childcare centres and there is little data or analysis on whether the same labour market issues exist within the family childcare sub-sector. Likewise, there are assumptions within the literature about family childcare that appear to be untested. For example, the perspective that unlicensed childcare providers are less expensive.⁴⁸

In addition, because unlicensed childcare providers often work in isolation, the challenges they face around accessing training and securing substitute teachers are not well articulated. The working conditions – hours, wages, time off - are not as well understood. Because a larger proportion of families in rural and remote areas – especially in the north – use unlicensed childcare providers, the lack of data around unlicensed childcares amounts to a lack of understanding about the childcare sector in these areas. This skews the data towards larger population centers.

The available data is also focused on the demand side. As Friendly, Larsen, Feltham, Grady, Forer and Jones observe, “There are no current or recent data outside Quebec that tell us who is using child care, what kind of care it is, or how much is being used”⁴⁹(p.xi). More research is needed in

⁴⁸ Ivanova, I., (2015). *Solving BC’s Affordability Crisis in Child Care Financing the \$10 a Day Plan*. Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative BC Office.

⁴⁹ Friendly, M., Larsen, E., Feltham, L., Grady, B., Forer, B. & Jones, M. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

order to quantify the existing childcare sector in BC and to understand how it is meeting the existing and potential future demand.

Upon preliminary review, it is evident that research results are sometimes biased because they only include specific types of childcare providers. Because data collection happens in different ways across different ministries and agencies, the available data can be inconsistent. As a result of this complexity, most sector research reports simply acknowledge the challenges with the data but are unable to resolve the challenges.

A key limitation of this preliminary research synthesis is that it captures only the literature and research that is available publicly and does not necessarily reflect the dynamic work currently underway in the sector. In addition to the gap between research being conducted and being made available publicly, there is also always a gap between research and current activities. That is, the existing literature does not reflect the actions that have been taken as a result of the research. As such, comprehensive labour market research will require collaboration and consultation with government and key organizations in order to both identify what research activities are underway, and what shifts in policy and practice have been enacted.

6.1 RESEARCH GAPS AND DIRECTIONS

The noted gaps in the research that indicate the need for further study revolve around the following research directions:

- There is a need to quantify the number of unlicensed childcares operating within the childcare sector in BC, both registered and unregistered. It may also be useful to consider the role of Domestic Workers – both foreign and domestic – and how they impact current and future labour demand. Additional investigation is also needed to understand the labour market issues within the unlicensed childcare subsector.
- As the sector is in a current state of dynamic flux, in part due to the proposed new funding model, several research efforts are currently underway or proposed by various BC Government agencies, and other stakeholders. There is a strong need to coordinate efforts with those studies, so as to build upon the existing data, and to avoid unnecessarily duplicating efforts.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The preliminary review of the childcare sector research was synthesized in order to draw out central themes and identify areas for further investigations. As a part of this research synthesis over two dozen sector reports were analyzed. The resulting synthesis produced five key areas of inquiry, each with recommendations for a Phase 2 Labour Market Information research project.

LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

1. There is a need for a comprehensive description of the childcare sector in BC that includes basic labour market information such as the types and numbers of businesses, types of occupations, and workforce characteristics like wages, benefits, and pensions.
2. While research on public perceptions of the childcare sector workforce exists, there is little information available about the strategies used in other jurisdictions to improve perceptions and to what degree those efforts have been successful.

TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

3. While there is currently a focus on occupational standards within the sector, there is a gap in assessing the match between training programs and industry needs, which would be critical for determining the quality of the available training programs and practicum processes.
4. There is a need for a comprehensive inventory of ECE training programs in BC that includes their capacity, graduation rates, specialties, and upgrading options, as well as potential barriers to accessing training. This should also include information on conversion rates for ECEA to ECE certification.
5. There is a need for a more nuanced understanding of available career pathways within the sector including retention rates.

INDIGENOUS CHILDCARE

6. The abundance of literature and research on Indigenous childcare affirms that this is an area that warrants careful consideration and focus for future BC childcare sector labour market studies.
7. Given the 2017 Policy Framework and Community Consultations Report and the commitment to collaboration and engagement on Indigenous childcare there is a need to examine the specific labour market issues related to supporting the training, certification, professional development of Indigenous ECEs, as well as cultural and language program development.

CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL RESEARCH

8. Cross-jurisdictional analysis is needed to understand the impacts of various childcare policy approaches on wages, job satisfaction, and education levels. Further investigation is needed to identify promising practices, professionalization, and governance models that have had positive impacts on labour supply.

LIMITATION AND GAPS

9. There is a need to quantify the number of unlicensed childcares operating within the childcare sector in BC, both registered and unregistered. It may also be useful to consider the role of Domestic Workers – both foreign and domestic – and how they impact current and future labour demand. Additional investigation is also needed to understand the labour market issues within the unlicensed childcare subsector.

10. As the sector is in a current state of dynamic flux, in part due to the proposed new funding model, several research efforts are currently underway or proposed by various BC Government agencies, and other stakeholders. There is a strong need to coordinate efforts with those studies, so as to build upon the existing data, and to avoid unnecessarily duplicating efforts.

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Surrey Community Child Care Task Force. (2018). *Surrey Child Care Report*.

APPENDIX B: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aboriginal Childcare Society. (2012). *Training and Retention in the First Nations ECE Sector: A Report from BC the Front lines*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

Completed in 2012 it is research that gathered first-hand information from professionals in the field of Aboriginal ECE. Summary of findings were:

- developing a strategic training plan to increase the number of qualified workers
- exploring the costs and benefits of implementing a living wage standard for First Nations ECE employees
- adapting existing human resource management “best practices” tool kit to provide guidelines and standards for First Nations licensed child care and Head Start employers
- exploring minimum standards for the “Aboriginal Perspective” designation given to ECE training institutions
- revising basic ECE training so that it includes instruction on working with exceptional children and on human resource management
- securing government funding that supports regional training opportunities for First Nations ECE staff

Aboriginal Supported Child Development (2017). *Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development Programs in British Columbia Provincial Data Collection Report*.

The report for 2016/2017 provides detailed information on programs for Supported Child Development Program and Aboriginal Support Child Development Program.

Akbari, E., & McCuaig, K. (2017). *The Early Childhood Education Report 2017*. Toronto, ON: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Released in 2017 this is the third assessment of provincial and territorial frameworks of early childhood education in Canada. Each jurisdiction was measured against a series of 19 benchmarks, organized into five equally weighted categories.

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society. (2017). *First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Regional First Nations Engagement*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

Published in 2017 the report on the First Nation Engagement for the development of First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

Beach, J., (2013) *Overview of Child Care Wages 2000-2010*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

Reported in 2013 the report provides an overview of the changes that have taken place in child care wages for the period 2000 to 2010.

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Provides a current update of the government initiatives with respect to childcare.

Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. (2010). Occupation Standards For Early Childhood Educators. Retrieved from www.ccscc-cssge.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/ECE-Post-Secondary-docs/OSECE_2010_EN.pdf.

Published in 2010 the report provides a comprehensive set of skills and knowledge intended for ECEs working in an early childhood education and care environment.

Early Childhood Learning Agency. (2009). *Expanding Early Learning in British Columbia For Children Age Three to Five*. Victoria: Ministries of Education & Children & Family Development.

Published in 2009 the report examined the feasibility of full day kindergarten for five-year olds as well as the option for full day preschool for three and four-year olds.

Early Childhood Educators of BC. (2012) *Summary 2012 Provincial Membership Survey*.

Published in 2012 it is a survey of ECEBC members designed to inform the development of ECEBC strategic plan.

First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (2014). *Summary Report: Occupations and Fair Wages for BC First Nations Early Childhood Educators*. West Vancouver: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

Published in 2014 the report undertook to develop fair wage principles, a wage grid, and occupational standards. The advisory group accepted the occupational standards developed by the Canadian Child Care Federation and Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

Flanagan, K., Beach, J. & Varmuza, P. (2013). *You Bet We Still Care! A Survey of Centre-Based Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

Published in 2013 this is a survey of employers and employees who work in the early childhood education and care that collected data wages, working conditions, and human resource issues in regulated child care centres.

Friendly, M., Larsen, E., Feltham, & Turiano, M. (2001). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2001*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

Published in 2001 the book provides a state of ECEC in Canada. Includes policy history, and federal and provincial services.

Friendly, M., Larsen, E., Feltham, L., Grady, B., Forer, B. & Jones, M. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

Published in 2018 it is a compilation of cross-Canada data on child care, kindergarten, maternity/paternal leave, and other information of importance to childhood education and care in Canada.

Government of British Columbia. (2009). *Making Linkages: How the British Columbia Early learning Framework Links to Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching*.

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Ivanova, I., (2015). *Solving BC's Affordability Crisis in Child Care Financing the \$10 a Day Plan*. Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative BC Office.

Published in 2015 the paper presents a framework for transforming BC early childhood education and care program in a universal day child care program.

Malatest, R., (2008). *Literature Review Report Supporting Employers in Canada's ECED Sector*. Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

Published in 2008 the report is a review of the literature related to the human resources related issues facing employers in the early childhood education and care sector.

Malatest, R., (2017.) *Workforce Study for Early Years and Child Care Employees Final Report*. Toronto: Ministry of Education.

Published in 2017 this is a study of the Ontario workforce in early years and childcare educators in the licensed child care and early years system. There are 7 recommendation and action items.

McCain, M., Mustard, & J., McCuaig, K., (2012). *Early Years Study 3 Making decisions Taking action*. Toronto: Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Foundation.

Second Printing of this report was in 2012, following on previous reports this report is focused on changing the national conversation of the provision childhood programs.

National First Nations Early Learning & Child Care (ELCC) Policy Framework – Draft. (2017).

Published in 2017 the framework is focused on creating a comprehensive national First Nations ELCC system by providing a vision, principles, and strategic action.

OECD Directorate of Education (2003). *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Canada Country Note*. Retrieved from OECD www.oecd.org/canada/33850725.pdf.

Reported in 2003/2004 it was an intensive review of early childhood policies and services in Canada. The findings are summarized in the reports following statement. Despite these strengths, it is clear that national and provincial policy for the early education and care of young children in Canada is still in its initial stages. **Care and education are still treated separately and coverage** is low compared to other OECD countries. Over the coming years, significant energies and funding will need to be invested in the field to create a universal system in tune with the needs of a full employment economy, with gender equity and with new understandings of how young children develop and learn.

Ontario Public Service. (2017) *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework*. Retrieved from www.ontario.ca/edu.

Published in 2017 this addresses the creation of 100,000 more spaces in Ontario in licensed child care for children aged birth to age 4.

Sinha, M., (2014). *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey Child care in Canada*. Retrieved from Stats Canada www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2014005-eng.pdf

The report utilizes the GSS on Families to overview child care in Canada, focusing on overall use, factors influencing use, type of child care arrangements. Child care as uses refers to non-parental care provided by someone other than a parent or guardian.

Spicer, N., & Kreda, J., (2011). *A Municipal Survey of Child Care Spaces and Policies in Metro Vancouver*. Metro Vancouver: Technical Advisory Committee Social Issues Subcommittee.

Published in 2011 the paper presents a region-wide survey on policies and regulating to provision of child care spaces. Of particular importance because municipalities regulate land use.

Surrey Community Child Care Task Force. (2018). *Surrey Child Care Report*.

Published in 2018 the report highlights the difficulties of finding childcare for Surrey families. The report outlines issues with spaces, training, and workforce concerns.

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