



ENGAGING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE CO-PRODUCTION OF PROVINCIAL CHILD CARE POLICY: AN ALBERTA CASE STUDY

Childcare 2020 – Research Symposium
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Engaging Early Childhood Education and Care Stakeholders in the Co-production of Provincial Child Care policy: An Alberta Case Study

- A partnership between private and public philanthropy and the Government of Alberta
- The engagement of ECEC stakeholders in the development of a draft provincial framework design for ECEC
- Presentation Focus
 - Background to the work undertaken
 - A co-production model for the development of ECEC public policy
 - The engagement of ECEC stakeholders in public policy deliberations
 - The political context in which ECEC policy is shaped

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- **Toward a Provincial Framework for ECEC in Alberta – Background**
- Fall 2010 to Spring 2011 ECEC stakeholder discussions sponsored by public and private philanthropy
- Supporting discussion paper: In the Best Interests of Children and Families
- An overview of ECEC in AB and possible strategies to advance the field
- A search for common understandings and shared directions going forward
- Engagement with Government Ministries –sharing the learnings

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- **Toward a Provincial Framework – Design and Implementation**
- Alignment with Provincial Government work on a provincial Social Policy Framework
- Partnership between private and public philanthropy and the Ministries of Human Services and Education
- The engagement of ECEC stakeholders in the draft design of a provincial framework for ECEC in Alberta
- Stakeholder consultations supported and framed through discussion papers (framing for deliberation)
- Joint hosting of consultations with local hosts – commitment to open, non-position/organization based discussions
- Broad commitments to document and share discussion findings
- Development of a draft framework design
- Reflection of framework ideas in provincial government planning documents and Ministry business plans – challenges of inertia and momentum

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5

- **The Co-production of Public Policy – a good fit with ECEC**
- Elevated levels of interest in ECEC
- Complex area, differing interests, values and technical considerations
- Models of Policy development: 'Decisionist', 'technocratic', co-production (or co-evolutionary)
 - A Co-production Approach
 - Social Policy field characterized by competing values/interests
 - Different rationale for investments in ECEC – complex translation of research into practice
 - The determination of public goods – stakeholder input and engagement
 - Contextual nature of ECEC discussions and understandings

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6

- **The Authentic Engagement of ECEC Stakeholders**
- Weak traditions in ECEC policy
- The erosion of organizations and processes to engage stakeholders in policy level work – forms of consultation
- The growing gaps between the academy/researchers, policy makers and the field – the interpretation of research findings
- The capacity of ECEC stakeholders to participate in policy deliberations
 - Overcoming barriers to stakeholder engagement
 - Improving the quality of stakeholder engagement
- Deliberative framing of policy options
 - The role of private and public philanthropy in civil discourse
 - Deliberative framing versus framing to persuade
 - Stakeholder access to and understanding of research findings
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7

- **The Political Context for Discussions of ECEC in Alberta**
- Long-term incumbent provincial government – with differing forms of conservatism
- 2006-11 – a focus on economic concerns, managerial, health governance
- 2011-14 – A more progressive conservatism (social policy framework). ECD a major priority, interest in Alberta's position in a broader landscape
- 2014 onwards – uncertainty, potential rise of fiscal conservatism, accountability
- Arguments Shaping ECEC Policy Considerations
- Prevailing influence of economic arguments
 - Human capital v broader economic development (labour force)
- Early Childhood Development
 - Neuroscience – the 'hard' science of early biological brain development
- Public Choice v Public Services
 - Parental choice as powerful political narrative (social conservatism) – tensions with public management and oversight
- Fiscal Concerns and the Accountability of Public Services
 - Public taxation, universality v targeting and results based budgeting

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8

- **Related Documents**
- (Available for download from the Muttart Foundation web-site)
- In the Best Interests of Children and Families: A Discussion of Early Childhood Education and Care in Alberta
- Toward a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Care in Alberta: A Draft Framework Design for Discussion
- Toward a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Care in Alberta - What We Heard: A Report on Fall 2012 Consultations with ELC Stakeholders

