

**Issues in ECEC Professionalization**

**What Can We Do Now?  
From Early Childhood Educators' Level of Declarative Knowledge of Developmental Milestones to Program Review or Professional Development?**

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**RESEARCH PROBLEM**

**Consistent High Quality**

The quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs greatly impacts children's development and well being (Friendly & Prentice, 2009; Goelman et al., 2006; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2002a; 2006).

Past studies found that the majority of settings were of **mediocre or minimal** quality across Canada and in specifically in Quebec.

**Canada:**

- *You Bet I Care* (YBIC) (Doherty et al., 2000; Goelman et al., 2000; Goelman et al., 2006).

**Quebec:**

- Quality Counts (Japel et al., 2005)
- *Grandir en Qualité* (Drouin et al., 2004)

Recent reports suggest that the quality of ECEC settings in Canada still needs to improve with qualified ECE and lead educators, developmentally appropriate and common pedagogical approaches and learning environments (ChildCare2020, 2014).

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ECEC Quality requires best practices and a developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) from educators and DAP requires strong knowledge of child development.

PD ?  
OR  
PR ?

↑ Knowledge of Child Development = ↑ DAP = ↑ QUALITY

(Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009a; 2009b)

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Best practices in early childhood education are “... based on knowledge—not on assumptions—of how children learn and develop” (NAEYC, 2009, p. 1)

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**HOW TO INCREASE QUALITY?**

**Educator Knowledge**

**Structure → Process → Outcome**

Early Childhood Educators are a key indicator affecting the quality of classrooms since they influence both the structural and process quality (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2002).

Strong correlations between ECE level of education/degree of specialization and quality of interactions and environment

Recent early childhood frameworks across the country highlight the importance of understanding child development (Ontario, Ministry of Education, 2014).

**Educators' education and training** (part of structural quality) shapes **educators' attitudes, skills and knowledge** which form educators competencies, which in turn impacts interactional performance (part of the process quality), which in turn impacts **children's behaviours and development** (part of child outcome) (Fukkink & Lont, 2007)

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**RESEARCH PURPOSE**

Present study explored specific characteristics of early childhood educators that were hypothesized to impact the quality of the classroom.

**Examined Educators':**

- Declarative Knowledge of Developmental Milestones (KDM)
- Declarative Knowledge of Appropriate Play Materials (KPM)
- Beliefs of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (BDAP)
- Practice of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (PDAP)

**Research questions**

1. What is the relationship between educators' knowledge of developmental milestones (KDM) and the knowledge of appropriate play materials (KPM)?
2. What is the relationship between educators' knowledge of developmental milestones (KDM) and their beliefs and/or practices of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)?
3. What is the relationship between educators' knowledge of appropriate play materials (KPM) and their beliefs and/or practices of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)?

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**DECLARATIVE KNOWLEDGE**

**Declarative knowledge (knowledge about):**

- "Knowledge you can retrieve when prompted to state what you know about" (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006, p. 106) a specific topic which is what most academic programs/institutions through subject-matter tests and

**Procedural knowledge (knowledge of):**

- "Requires the individual to have the ability to take action and know how to do something". (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006, p. 106)

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**METHODOLOGY**

**Design and Data Collection**

**Non-experimental, survey research**

**Online Survey: 156 questions**

- Section 1: Demographics
- Section 2: Knowledge (Match Developmental Milestones to appropriate age group and play material).
- Section 3: Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Beliefs and Practice) (adapted from: Charlesworth et al. 1991; 1993; Burts et al. 2000; Kim, 2005)

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**METHODOLOGY**

**Participants**

**Sample:** 308 early childhood educators  
(Full time: 92.9% )

**Type of Child Care:**  
Centre de la petite enfance in facilities (CPE) (7\$) : 67.2%

**Regions:** All 17 regions of Quebec

**Language:** French (92.2%), English (7.8%)  
**Gender:** Women (98.1%), Men (1.9%)  
**Age:** 25-39 years (85.6%)  
**Training:**

- College Diploma (3years) 45%
- College Diploma-Attestation (1year) 6.9%
- University Certificate 10.1%
- B.A. 13.3%

**Recognized training:**

- College Diploma-Attestation in ECE 31.5%
- College Diploma in ECE 25.6%

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**FINDINGS**

**Descriptive**

**WEAK: Total Knowledge: 40.5%**  
Knowledge of developmental milestones (KDM)  
(scored 44.06%) (7.05 out of 16)

Knowledge of appropriate play materials (KPM)  
(scored 36.94%) (5.91 out of 16)

**STRONG: Total DAP: 74.42%**  
Beliefs (BDAP) (77.9%)  
Practices (PDAP) (71%) of developmentally appropriate practice.

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**FINDINGS**

**Relationships**

**KDM** ↔ **KPM**  
 $r(306) = .120, p = .035$

**BDAP** ↔ **PDAP**  
 $r(306) = .589, p = .000$

**KDM** ↔ **PDAP**  
 $r(306) = .131, p = .022$

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**CONCLUSION**

**Implications for ECEC**

Early childhood educators in Quebec reported having strong developmentally appropriate practice but weak knowledge about developmental milestones and appropriate play materials.

The findings suggest that there should be an increase in course content and professional development on developmental milestone (e.g., child development) and appropriate play materials (e.g., learning environment) (Bigras et al., 2004; Tout et al., 2006; Zaslow et al., 2009).

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SO....

What can we do now?

Program Review for ECE post-secondary programs

**Declarative Knowledge**

Increasing course content on understanding how development and learning occurs, and knowing the skills that come before and after.

- ECE must be able to identify skills (know what they are seeing) to interact and plan accordingly

Consistent cross-discipline connection between child development content and practical courses.

**Procedural Knowledge**

In service mentoring or modelling during PD is the best indicator of **change**.

Offer supported practice identifying children's skills (evidence based practice) and appropriate interactions and planning.

But...time and cost consuming.

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what lies at the top depends on you

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