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The effects of an infant/toddler curriculum on literacy development for multilingual children

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THE EFFECTS OF AN INFANT/TODDLER CURRICULUM ON LITERACY
DEVELOPMENT FOR MULTILINGUAL CHILDREN

by

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ABSTRACT

The recognition, development, and implementation of appropriate curricula for infants and toddlers has been receiving increased attention recently in education research. As the population of early childcare classrooms becomes increasingly diverse, many factors affecting language development are in need of further investigation in order for educators to better meet the individual needs of the child. This paper examines the implications of a play-based, early childhood curriculum on language development for those children exposed to languages other than English. Through an ethnographic case study approach, this study aims to provide a detailed look at the effects of curricula on language acquisition, while examining literacy development for multilingual children in educare environments. The findings of this study point to relevant suggestions for consideration as to the structural and systemic changes that can be made to facilitate the nurturing and educational goals of the children, educarers, and parents in diverse Canadian educare settings.

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DEDICATION

For my toddler, Alexander…

My patient baby and my inspiration. You prove time and again that
at the end of the day, it's all been worth it.

"Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit

and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

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To my loving husband and confidant, Marinko; without you, there would be no possibilities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Every child should be valued and have the opportunities to develop his or her unique

physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and creative potential".

- Canadian Inter-governmental Conference Secreteriat, 2000.

<u>Early Child Care & Education</u>

In Canada, a significant number of children are enrolled in some type of child care

facility prior to their formal schooling. As such, the window of developmental

opportunity available for children from zero to three years of age cannot be ignored in

how child care facilities plan their daily activities to effectively meet the needs of these

children. As noted in a report commissioned by the Ontario provincial government in

1998 to focus on early child development, the *Early Years Study* by McCain and Mustard

(1999), emotional and intellectual development begin well in advance of a child's formal

school years. As such, it is crucial that children are intellectually stimulated from a very

early age, while simultaneously receiving nurturant care at home or when enrolled in a

daycare facility.

Existing preschool curricula, which is to presume that a standardized set of

curricula actually exist, are problematic in that they do not appear to account for many of

the socio-ecological factors presented by a diverse child population (Krogh & Slentz,

2001). Real issues that affect families, such as physical and emotional health and well-

being, economic status and financial supports, cultural belief systems and religious

background, are not always made relevant in early child care curricula design, program

planning, and execution. There is no nation-wide consistency in curriculum planning or

implementation in Canada. There is even a lack of consistency across facilities within the

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same city. Early child care curricula are not regulated by government or the public in general, nor are they monitored or assessed with clear protocol or guidelines. As such, Canadian daycare facilities can falter in their attentiveness to the needs of the Canadian population.

The purpose of this ethnographic case study is to examine the implications of a play-based infant/toddler curriculum on language development for multilingual children enrolled in an educare environment. Through an exploration of the effects of play in educare curricula on the lives of two children, their parents, and staff at a daycare facility in Southwestern Ontario, early childhood curriculum design and implementation will be further examined to provide a clearer understanding of how educators are striving to meet the cognitive needs of a diverse child population. Specifically, do play-based curricula allow for feelings of achievement in literacy for multilingual children and their families? This study is significant, not only on a personal level, but also due to its relevance to current trends in the development of Canadian pre-school policies, standardized curricula design and implementation, and the critical need for further investigation of the early child care arena. The results of this study are vital to the public's understanding of the imperative need for structural and systemic changes which must take place in order to facilitate the needs and goals of our children, their parents, and educarers in diverse educare settings.

<u>Overview of Study</u>

Beginning in Chapter One with the purpose of this study, a review of the main research questions, and the significance of the study, the limitations and assumptions I encountered as researcher are brought to the forefront with a discussion of my personal motivation behind the research topic. Following a section with definitions of terminology

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used throughout the study, Chapter Two provides an in-depth overview of policy matters and theoretical assumptions in a review of the literature that was consulted throughout this study. Focusing on the role of government in early child care, relevant funding issues, and the McCain-Mustard Report on childcare policy in Ontario, this section illustrates the importance of effective curricula design and implementation for cognitive development and the social well-being of our children. Drawing from the Day Nurseries Act and the most recent reports of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the state of early childhood education in Canada, this section also examines the philosophy and theory behind early child care and education.

Throughout this chapter, the meanings associated with educare, literacy, and early language development are explored in detail with reference to current theoretical assumptions on child development and learning through play. Early childhood curriculum is discussed with reference to the theoretical frameworks of Piaget and Vygotsky and how a focus on play-based learning relates to current early child care and developmental theory. This section also targets three popular curriculum outlines currently used in Canadian childcare facilities; the High/Scope philosophy, the Montessori method, and Reggio Emilio School. Although the three curriculum paradigms are compared though an elaboration on their similarities and differences with special consideration of the research questions, particular attention is given to the High/Scope Philosophy, the specific curriculum paradigm of the research facility at the time of this study. Chapter Two closes with a culmination of policy, theory, and practice, through a brief discussion of diversity and early language learning and how play is used to effectively meet the needs of the multilingual learner within the early child care classroom.

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Chapter Three consists of a description of the research design and methodology: essentially, a reiteration of the main research questions and objectives that drive this project, followed by a detailed description and rationale of the research method, the research tools and procedures that were involved in its creation. Chapter Four presents the two cases; an infant named Sara and a toddler named Marcus. In narrative, ethnographic form, these sections take an in-depth and comparative look at the children and their relationships with others, in particular with the educarers, parents, and staff at the research facility. Drawing directly from interviews and observations made at the research site, this chapter describes the children's experiences with literacy and delves into primary and secondary language acquisition, learning, and overall cognitive development with reference to the play-based programming, curriculum planning, implementation, and developmental assessment used at the research site. The physical learning environment is also described in detail here.

In Chapter Five, the value of play in early childhood education and care is examined with regard to the research findings and supporting literature. As part of this analysis, the issue of early language is revisited and the push for literacy is also discussed as it deals specifically with parental influence, presents the role of the educarer, and concludes with a summary of the main themes and findings from this project. The final section, Chapter Six, focuses on future implications of the study and relevant recommendations for possible immediate changes and long term goals for early child care policy and practice in Canada.

A Personal Journey

The overarching intent of this study is to investigate current trends in pre-school curriculum development and implementation as they relate to language learning for multilingual children. As the researcher, I would like to make clear that this study does not deliberately aim to reject outright, nor provide overwhelming praise for, current early child care efforts and initiatives. Though not free from personal assumptions, it is my objective to present the material and information I have gathered for this project in the hopes that it will serve as a means of raising awareness of the individual regarding issues surrounding the recognition and influence of language and literacy development for children in early education.

Children come in all shapes and sizes, developing personalities and traits that some may link to genetic predisposition while others proclaim the environment as key. As a mother, teacher, and researcher, I am able to empathize with both sides on the nature versus nurture battleground, and my early relationships with daycare facilities led me to question the established – or lack of established – daycare programs available to Canadian children and their families. Not only is the design and facilitation of preschool curricula obscure and inconsistent in Ontario facilities, but it is my opinion that they lack the inclusive capabilities to meet the needs of all who are included, particularly with regard to early language development.

As noted, this study is significant on a personal level, as my experiences with early child care and my background in education and teaching have prompted me to pursue this exploration of the value of play for language learning as an integral and critical component of early child care curricula. One memorable incident of a young Chinese-speaking mother not being able to understand the simple and exhaustive requests

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to *"bring in more diapers"* had sealed my fate in this project: if a parent cannot communicate effectively with daycare staff, and vice versa, about basic physical needs, then it is fair to assume that curriculum planning, program implementation, personal pedagogy, and effective cognitive development of the child, run the risk of being trundled to the side lines due to the lack of a common childcare discourse. Challenges in understanding language not only serve as a barrier to communication between parent, child, and caregiver, but may also undermine attempts to create change in programming and policy. It is not surprising then that both the provincial and federal governments are facing opposition with the implementation of new plans that continue to ignore the challenges faced by Canadian families and child care facilities. However, if one is not directly affected by the political choices influencing an area of one's daily life, then the area often succumbs to silence, as is evident in the continued lack of accessible, quality child care.

My specific research objectives are to examine established educare curricula and explore immediate changes and long term goals of educare programs, thereby problematizing issues surrounding the recognition and influence of multilingual children and their families on future curriculum development and literacy progression (Goffin & Wilson, 2001; Krogh & Slentz, 2001). The children under study are those for whom English was not the primary language to which they were exposed, and/or those who may be exposed to languages other than that which is dominant in the research facility. How do these children deal with the challenges of language differences they may face? How do the daycare facilities themselves modify curricula to meet the needs of such individuals and the goals of their families? The differences that exist between language acquisition at home versus their language learning within an educare environment must

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be acknowledged when setting out to develop appropriate play-based curricula. Effective educare curricula developed and implemented by compassionate educarers, will empower children and their families at this precious stage of development and well into their educational future. In order to initiate a common dialogue for the purpose of this project, I have included in the next section a list of definitions for the terms used throughout my study. Chapter Two follows with a background discussion of governments' role in early child care and the current state of child care policy in Canada, followed by an exploration of theoretical assumptions that frame the social-constructivist models of popular curriculum design and implementation.

Definitions of Terms

The following is a list of terms with a discussion of their definitions and an explanation as to how they are used throughout this study, and although the list is not exhaustive, it should provide some clarification for the reader. In detailing how these terms will be used throughout this study, it is my aim to create a clear frame of reference in early child care discourse for the reader, before commencing with a review of relevant literature in the next chapter.

Educare

Early child care settings are labeled as daycares, nursery schools, preschools, and have been given various titles dependent upon what they purport to accomplish in their teaching of and caring for young children. Child care facilities are not simply holding pens for children staffed by babysitters. They are *educare* environments – institutions that provide nurturing childcare *and* early education – with specialized curricula designed and implemented by trained early childhood educators (Bergen, Reid, & Torelli, 2001). The concept of educare recognizes that children's thinking develops through joint interactions

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with others in responsive social contexts (Smith, 1992). It is this opportunity to link education with care that is present in educare facilities, and the product of much early childhood education research.

Curriculum

In defining the term *curriculum*, one can draw from numerous meanings and debatable descriptions, all of which stem from philosophical arguments regarding the ways in which curriculum should be organized, what it should consist of, and how it should be implemented (Curtis, 1998). Common definitions of curriculum are derived from the Latin word "currere" which literally means a "racecourse". Such a literal translation centers on a narrow and specific conception of curriculum as the content of subject matter taught in school; a race to be run or a course of study (Carr, 1998; Connelly & Clandinin, 1992, 1988; Jackson, 1992). This first definition promotes a view of curriculum as a predetermined course and is limited in that it ignores the various factors that influence its design and implementation.

In contrast, the term "currere" also refers to the actual running of a course of living or a process of individual meaning-making (Pinar, 1995). In this way, one might define curriculum as broadly referring to a *process of learning*; as an "unfixed" entity, involving social relationships *as well as* the physical designing and carrying out of learning activities, all of which may differ from setting to setting and by individual perception (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). It is this second definition that I ask the reader to consider throughout this paper.

Literacy

For the purpose of this study, the concept of *literacy* is viewed as a *social practice*, referring not only to the popular understanding of the word which has come to

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refer solely to language acquisition and learning, in primary and secondary discourses, (Gee, 1987; 1991) but also to the *processes* of interactive experience involved as children develop awareness and participate in primary and secondary languages, both inside and outside of the classroom (Gillen & Hall, 2003; Viruru, 2003). For the children in this study, literacy involves more than the ability to *know* language, for it encompasses everything that they bring to the learning process, and is directly influenced by the relationships between them and their caregivers. For children, language frames the meaning making process as a conceptual tool for understanding whereas literacy can be viewed as an all encompassing term for this ongoing learning process.

Multilingual

Having the ability to speak several languages fluently is just one definition of the term *multilingual*. Although the cases presented in this study refer to children who have been exposed to languages other than English, they are by no means fluent in speech, or use of such languages due to their developmental ages. It has been my experience that to refer to these children as bilingual, would give the false assumption to Canadian readers that their *other* language is French. I decided that since the children are exposed to more than one language, regardless of fluency in use, I will use the term multilingual to refer to their overall experiences with language exposure and development with those languages other than English. These languages are present in the educare setting, in the home, and the community of which they are a part.

Play

Play is seen as a *social interaction*, a canon of meaning making for the individual learner as he/she develops a sense of self, through emotionally-charged achievement and realization of the world around him/her. Interpretations of developmental theory

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emphasize play – autonomous choice of activity – as the primary mode in which young children construct their understanding of the world (Jones & Reynolds, 1992). Whether structured or not, for the purpose of this study, play will be referred to as a social game of relationship and cognitive development, existing between the child and his or her environment. It includes not only the people present, but also the processes of meaning making at work within the child while learning is taking place. In this way, a play-based curriculum can be either autonomous or interactional, intrepid or daunting in nature, free and yet simultaneously structured in scope, with all those involved performing their part in the learning process.

Physical & Social Environment

For the purpose of this study, reference to the *physical environment* will consist of the actual research site, or a particular location of the participants. In my discussion of the *social environment*, I am specifically referring to the mood, atmosphere, and tone of the relationships under study: the social-emotional influence or undercurrent that is present between the children, the educarers, and parents in their everyday interactions. These relationships will be measured throughout my analysis of the relationships that exist at the research site.

Language vs. Discourse

Throughout this study, I will be referring to *language* and *discourse*, and it is my intention to be clear that although these terms often come together in my research, they are two entirely separate concepts when speaking about literacy. Language can be defined as a tool which is used to communicate, whether it is oral, physical, written or read, in English symbolic form or that of another. There are many different types of languages, each with its own variety of words and meanings, but all with the shared goal of

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communication. Discourse on the other hand, is what I define for the purpose of this study as a type of *social language*; a process of reproduction and transformation of language through constant construction and renewal of meaning making within a particular social context or environment, such as a school or child care centre (Gee, 1999; Larson & Peterson, 2003). A discourse consists of its own rules, norms, and preferences set in a specific context at a particular time, which one draws upon and modifies when producing and reproducing language. Discourse can be viewed as an active representation of the voice or voices that are reflected in and produced from an organized social context, such as the research site (Bakhtin, 1986).

Ethnographic Case Study

There are many similarities between *ethnography* and *case study*, and it is for this reason that I chose to incorporate both methods of inquiry in my research. I wish to acknowledge the fact that I make no claim for this study to be presented as "true" ethnography, where the researcher spends a significant amount of time in the field and becomes an active participant in that which he or she is studying. Rather, in defense of my adoption of this method, it is not necessarily the length of time spent observing but the detailed description of the site and participants involved that denotes ethnography.

Presenting my observations through descriptive, in-depth narrative and my subtle participation within the researched group, I believe that the details of the surroundings and the people involved can be best presented and reflected upon by the researcher through use of this narrative and reflexive method. It is my strong belief that within qualitative research, whether through phenomenology or case study, the rich textual narrative is the only method which can provide sufficient detail in order for the audience to become "involved" in the study, as though they were participants themselves

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(Creswell, 2003; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). This method allows for the researcher to be involved in reflective practice while observing, recording, and analyzing the gathered data through personal evaluation and interpretation of details. It is this attention to detail in the narrative, what anthropologist Clifford Geertz referred to as *thick description* that is necessary for the creation of credible, subjective interpretations of observations made by the researcher (Bailey, 1996).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"The most important determinant of the quality of children's experiences are the adults

who are responsible for children's care and education. "

- National Association for the Education of Young Children

Review of the Literature

Quality early childhood education and care programming in Canada has recently

come under public scrutiny due to issues of accessibility, accountability and consistency.

In this chapter, recent government funding initiatives, policy reports, and an outline of

three popular early child care curriculum models are each examined in turn with regard to

the purpose of this study. Throughout the literature review, it is my intent to explore the

impact of policy on practice in order to identify the factors affecting language

development for multilingual children, while concurrently addressing the influence of

theory on program design, and vice versa, and the implementation of effective early

education curricula in Canadian educare settings. Finally, through a discussion of

diversity and early language learning, the parents and educarers involved in educaring for

children are considered along side the influential role of government, the work of key

researchers, and curriculum frameworks that are relevant to this project.

Childcare as Educare

As is evident in their abundance of research in early child care and education, the

United States, with their structured policy guidelines and highly regulated educare

curricula, has been most influential in the design of Ontario's early learning

programming. However, there is a growing awareness among early childhood researchers

on this side of the border that early childhood curricula need to be articulated more

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clearly, and particularly from a Canadian perspective (Scale, Almy, Nicolopoulou, & Ervin-Tripp, 1991). Such custom-made curricula must be recognized as distinct from the customary, and often ill-perceived daily activities of public daycare or babysitting (Bergen, et al., 2001). To reiterate, the term educare is used to refer to the type of high quality child care provided at early childhood education facilities that focus on both the education and care of children. By using the term educare to describe curriculum construction, early child care and early childhood education become synonymous in focus. Early childhood researchers argue that by redefining the common meanings associated with child care, terms such as educare can empower the early child care culture as that of nurturing, emotion-centered relationships between children and the world around them, thereby allowing for effective and balanced curriculum design and delivery for constructive social and cognitive development (Bergen, et al., 2001).

Educare environments are institutions that provide nurturing childcare *and* early education with specialized curricula designed and implemented by trained early childhood educators (Bergen, et al., 2001). In Canada, if we are to provide quality public child care programs in nurturing *and* educationally-appropriate settings, we must be cognizant of the needs of individual children, their different learning levels/abilities, and the desires and goals of their families, in the formative years. This holds particular ground with regard to language development, which begins as early as a child's first utterances, between 4 to 6 months of age (McCain & Mustard, 1999)[1]. With too much of a focus on funding, or a lack thereof, those involved in the development of educare environments and curricula underestimate their influence and the immediate changes that must take place in order to accommodate the needs of the children and their families (Hyson, 2004).

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[1] For further information regarding the findings of the McCain-Mustard Report, refer to pages 25-27.

There are many educare philosophies and models used throughout both private and public child care facilities in Ontario. To understand the various meanings and uses of different early childhood curriculum structures and frameworks, one must also explore the population for which the curriculum is designed. For a population of children who are predominantly middle class, second generation, Caucasians, what are the implications of introducing a curriculum that focuses on language development and literacy learning from an ethnically-diverse perspective? Should multilingual children in educare settings be encouraged to explore various languages and literacies, only to drop this newly acquired knowledge when they are introduced to the mainstream, English-dominated formal school system? How do the most popular early child care curricula address such issues within the educare environment?

This next section provides a brief review of literature that is of key importance to the discourse surrounding early child care and education policy and practice in Canada. The following pages are an examination of current political trends and early child care initiatives with reference to the government's latest funding programs and a discussion of how they are linked to the development and popularity of existing preschool curriculum models. Consideration is given to the recommendations and objectives of recent influential policy reports on the state of early childhood education and care, such as the McCain-Mustard Report (1999) and the O.E.C.D.'s Report on the State of Early Child Care in Canada (2006). The objectives of these reports are used to further explore curriculum design and implementation via three popular early child care curriculum models. The High Scope philosophy, the Montessori method, and the Reggio Emilio school are each examined in turn with regard to the purpose of this study, referencing the

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work of key researchers through an exploration of theoretical assumptions, and the main research questions.

There is a need for structural and systemic changes in order to facilitate goals of parents and educarers in educare settings (Bergen, et. al, 2001). I agree that program changes need to take place, but that there is a primary and paramount need to facilitate the goals of the children themselves. As such, it is critical to investigate current trends in Canadian pre-school curriculum design and implementation and discuss how they may effectively meet the needs of the individual learner (Doherty, 2001; Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2004). In order to better understand the factors affecting early childhood education and care, attention must be afforded to the role of current research, in particular within Canada; government initiatives, with respect to funding; and legislation, as seen in the Day Nurseries Act, R.R.O. 1990. Each of these elements will be examined in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Money Matters

In the 2005 Federal budget, the Liberal government promised $700 million to the provinces to jumpstart national childcare programs, with an additional $5 billion pledged over the next five years to set up a national early-learning system on par with medicare and public education (Aggerholm, 2005). Much of this promised funding would have been put to use in preschool programming – similar to the recently developed Early Years Centres and proposed Best Start programs in Ontario – which would provide childcare support for 3 to 5-year old children by helping to prepare them and their families for the transition to formal schooling. These programs, however, are being re-evaluated under the newly proposed annual subsidy plan developed by the Conservative party which replaced the long term goals for the creation of 650 new daycare facilities nationwide with an

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annual $1,200 supplement for daycare fees, to be paid directly to families in the amount of $100 per month, per child, under six years of age (Galloway, 2006).

This move began in July 2006, wiping out $3 billion of the original $5.7 billion in child care funding that was promised to the provinces. As a result, the need for more child care spaces will go on unfulfilled and the new plan puts the future of a national system of high quality early learning and care programs in serious jeopardy ("Child Care," 2006). Both funding proposals fall short in that they will have little effect on established early childcare programs and curriculum design for children aged zero to three years. The new Conservative plan is detrimental on all fronts as it does not take into account the individual needs of families, and will provide little assistance to families who pay upwards of one thousand dollars per month in full-time daycare fees ("Child Care," 2006). Without sufficient funding and attention to the development of high quality child care initiatives, daycare facilities may be susceptible to substantiating the public's indifference regarding child care needs for Canadian families. These views will be examined further in the concluding chapter of this paper.

As discussed in Chapter One, this indifference may be due largely to a lack of knowledge and understanding and could serve to further reduce the public and governments' interest in quality childcare. It is this supposed ignorance that has been the rationale for the commission of recent research and reports, such as the McCain-Mustard Report (1999), the O.E.C.D.'s Starting Strong (2004), the Health Council of Canada's Child Health Report (2006), the O.E.C.D.'s Report on the State of Early Child Care in Canada (2006), and the O.E.C.D.'s Starting Strong II (2006) which is the final summary report from the Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care begun in 1998. The influential role of the federal and provincial governments in establishing early child

care directives based on these reports should not be ignored. Upcoming provincial elections scheduled for the fall of 2007 might allow for opportunities of change, and important suggestions found in the popular McCain-Mustard Report (1999) and the O.E.C.D.'s Report on the State of Early Child Care in Canada (2006), may serve as the backbone of support for positive improvements to the Canadian educare system. For the purpose of this next section, I will discuss these two influential reports and why they are of significance to this study.

The McCain - Mustard Report

The *Early Years Study* by McCain and Mustard (1999) – a recent report on the state of childcare and development in Ontario commissioned by the provincial government in 1998 – outlines the importance of early developmental years and proposes recommendations for the improvement of the early child care system. Although some of the recommendations made by McCain and Mustard may come to fruition – such as the need for a *bridging* of daycare with formal schooling, which is currently being experimented with in the First Duty pilot project in Toronto, Ontario – the government has yet to adopt an established "process for setting standards and determining the administration, monitoring, and delivery [and assessment] of early child development programs", almost a decade following the commission of the report (McCain & Mustard, 1999). This disregard for some form of stability or consistency in early child care curricula design and implementation can have a negative impact on the cognitive development and social well-being of our children (Friendly & Beach, 2006).

Brain development is most intensive during the very early years. From conception to about one and a half years (infant stage), the crucial stimulation during this period comes from the parents or primary caregivers in a child's life, and brain development

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during this period is dominated by parenting practices and interaction with adults (Bergen, et al., 2001; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Meier, 2004). From age one and a half years onward (toddler stage), children have started to develop through social and play-based interactions with other children. This period of early brain development is still mainly driven by the quality of stimulation from parents (Mustard noted that children still spend most of their time with parents). However, with an increase in daycare enrollment, the interactive stimulation provided by play with other children, early environmental experiences, and early childhood educators, are all equally important influences on brain development (Bergen, et al., 2001).

It is critical to understand that children's cognitive development is complex and that many factors influence it. Research has shown that "throughout the entire process, beginning even before birth, the brain is affected by environmental conditions, including the kind of nourishment, care, surroundings, and stimulation an individual receives" (Shore, 1997). Elements of early brain development can be divided into five functions; socio-emotional, sensory/perceptual motor, gross motor, language and communication, and cognitive-based. These developmental learning outcomes are often, in one form or another, the basis for early childhood educational planning and programming.[2] One must be cautious, however, when applying such information to the planning and implementation of appropriate early childhood curricula. Most brain research is overenthusiastically applied to education, frequently in the forms of commercially developed educational materials, "kits", and parenting tools. Such products hold promises for children's cognitive growth, standardizing the learning stages of all children, and do not accurately reflect their individual needs and experiences (Kagan, 1998). For example,

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[2] Refer to Appendix E (page 116).

children participate in relationships with other children, adults, and their surrounding environment, and those relationships aid in the cognitive processes, not only in early development but continuously throughout a child's formal school years.

This interaction through relationships has a large influence on the development of core capability of the brain in literacy and language, numeracy, behaviour, emotional control and social skills (McCain & Mustard, 1999). However, when the majority of a child's time is devoted to interaction with those other than parents, as evidenced by the rise in early childcare program enrolment and latch-key/after school programs, consideration of how such programs can impact future literacy development should also be a paramount concern. In determining an appropriate path for early child care system(s) in Canada, consideration is often given to what government-driven efforts have succeeded in other countries. The O.E.C.D. – Organization for Economic Development – often reports on the state of various issues by making comparisons with those outside of Canada, and as such, has attained a reputable position for the recommendations it has made recently regarding the state of child care and education in Canada. The following section provides a look into one such report, providing a brief history of child care in Canada, and how its transformation points to the need for a nation-wide system of accessible child care.

O.E.C.D. Report (2006) – The State of Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada

Early childhood education and care in Canada began with the establishment of provincial-run infant schools in the 18th century. Developed mainly to offer nursery care and instruction for underprivileged children, these "schools" were followed up with the creation of private kindergartens which soon became commonplace across Canada (Friendly & Beach, 2006). Provincial funding aided the kindergarten movement, and with

the harsh economic fallout during war times, the federal government began offering child care subsidy through the Canadian Assistance Plan for those families in need (Mathien, 2001). As more mothers began entering the paid labour force, families with young children from all economic levels created a demand for increased early child care and education services. Although there were difficulties with the limited funding arrangements, the supply of regulated child care services grew dramatically throughout Canada as the provinces developed and refined service delivery, regulation, and accessibility in the 1970s and 1980s (Friendly & Beach, 2006).

Between the mid-1990s and 2001, the proportion of children aged six months to five years who were in child care increased significantly, where by 2005, the majority of more than 70 % of children with both parents (or a single parent) in the paid labour force were presumed to be in some form of early child care program (Friendly & Beach, 2006). This significant increase in early child care enrollment attests to the fact that more facilities are needed to compensate for the rise in numbers, and with an insignificant amount of capital available to facilitate the creation of child care spaces, there is a real threat to future program quality. Currently in Ontario, capital funding is either quite limited or not available, dependent upon jurisdiction regulations, eligibility, and accessibility (Friendly & Beach, 2006). In order to allow for a nationwide, fully accessible child care program, the federal government must play a leading role in re-examining the individual needs of children and their families, including the establishment of appropriate regulation and guidelines for those responsible for the design and delivery of educare curricula.

This O.E.C.D. report points out several policy recommendations under the categories of funding, accessibility, and quality improvements. Based upon this

framework, I argue that what is needed is a child care and education service which mimics the formal school system; developed through a substantial increase in public funding, with avenues for system accountability, providing equitable delivery by accredited professionals, in safe and nurturing learning (educare) environments. Many of these recommendations will be echoed in the final chapter, as they mirror my own concerns for the future implications of policy and practice in early childhood education and care, and especially how they relate to the increasingly diverse child population. In order for the changing dynamic to be addressed effectively through high quality, developed educare curricula, one must also be aware of the concerns that exist with regard to maintaining up-to-date legislation. Many early child care facilities operate without sufficiently organized guidelines for such a diverse population and simply continue to follow the minimum regulations as dictated by the Day Nurseries Act, which is discussed in further detail in this next section.

The Day Nurseries Act

In Ontario, publicly-funded educare environments continue to lack appropriate support and specific/standardized guidelines for curriculum development and implementation for infants and toddlers. The *Day Nurseries Act*, R.R.O. 1990 (amended to O. Reg. 287/05) describes national mandates for daycares and nurseries, detailing specific facility requirements such as building and safety codes, outdoor time, and health and nutrition considerations. In addition to this legislation, there are specific mandates set out by municipal and regional governing bodies, which some facilities may be required to follow. Even individual area supervisors and educare staff may have yet another set of *rules* or program planning in place that may or may not reflect all, or parts, of the *Day*

Nurseries Act. As such, it is not surprising that parents often have a difficult time deciding upon what constitutes an *appropriate* child care facility.

For example, the *Day Nurseries Act* mandates that children must be provided with a minimum of one hour of outdoor time, weather permitting, every day. From my observations at the research site, as well as other local day care facilities, I found that on average, the children were spending a total 30 minutes, in two, 15 minute sessions, of their daily time outdoors. Individual centres are permitted to alter the mandates based on the advisement of municipal and regional governing bodies, and the direction of supervisory staff. It is my view that such minimal impact renders the *Day Nurseries Act* ineffective in directing the initiatives and program planning of educare facilities, insofar as the facility is willing to follow its prescriptive details. The government must acknowledge the need for a more holistic approach to educare, one that recognizes the different needs of the children and the desires of their families (McCain & Mustard, 1999). By doing so, the government can take a more active and consistent role in providing appropriate curriculum direction for early child care facilities.

When Canadians were asked how important a role they believe governments should play in helping parents meet their child care needs, an overwhelming eight in ten (82%) felt that government should play a very (47%) or somewhat (35%) important role (C.C.A.A.C., 2006). These needs consist of more than financial assistance, and include child care space availability, program quality and delivery, and nation-wide accessibility. Should child care facilities wish to function via a smorgasbord of policy, various legislation, and individually adapted guidelines, it is often left to the parents discretion to sort out which facility offers an *appropriate* program for their child. Due to a lack of available child care spaces, parents frequently forgo reading the fine printed guidelines in

favour of short waiting lists and convenience of location (interviews with parents, 2005). In particular, the methods of curricula design and implementation currently in use appear to neglect the ethnically-diverse child population and as a result, educarers are often unable to effectively meet the needs of such diversity (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001). Addressing these concerns in the critical pre-school years often sets the stage for the transition to formal schooling, and the tone for the child's future learning and progress.

Attention must not only be given to government legislation but also toward the self-regulatory nature of child care facilities. Lobbying efforts to shine the light on policy makers frequently do not allow for the lens to be turned inward to the child care facilities themselves. Therein, perhaps, lies the necessity and immediacy of a *bottom-up* approach to effective and appropriate curriculum planning and delivery. This next section further explores the transition from thinking of child care as a fixed, basic needs form of child supervision to that of an educare setting, where both a nurturing and educational environment are mixed into one, allowing for the processes of learning to take place through relationships and meaning-making in the everyday lives of the children. The policy and regulatory aspects of early child care will be briefly revisited in the analysis chapter of this paper as they are tied into discussions of the theory and practice behind educare curricula.

This next section provides a discussion of three curriculum paradigms predominant in educare environments in North America today; the High/Scope Philosophy, the Reggio Emilia school, and the Montessori approach, as well as an overview of the defining characteristics and voices of early curriculum theory. Following a discussion of the theoretical background to early childhood education, curriculum planning and implementation, and research, I will visit each curriculum model in turn,

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and draw comparisons in how they attempt to incorporate play-based curricula for multilingual children in the stages of early language learning.

Early Childhood Curricula: Three Models Defined

For early childhood education, traditional definitions of curriculum as division into subjects present something of a challenge when we consider the need to *teach* in ways that are developmentally appropriate. Infants, toddlers and preschoolers do not view learning as divided into adult-defined categories. All of life is their school, and designating its parts into language, math, or science is an intrusion on their more integrated and self-defined approach to learning (Krogh & Slentz, 2001). According to Curtis (1998), early childhood curriculum is all-encompassing,

...[including] everything that affects a child in the learning environment, [both overt and covert]...it covers not only the activities, both indoors and outdoors, offered to children, but the attitudes of the staff towards the children, towards each other, to parents, and to anyone visiting the setting. (p.21)

Elements of this definition are common throughout the literature and the importance of three elements – the environment, the adults involved, and the formal and informal/hidden curriculum dynamic – is echoed by numerous authors (Kenner & Gregory, 2003; Makin, 2003; Reynolds & Jones, 1997; Ritchie, 1996). It is this series of concerns that are the main focus of this section.

Curriculum should be viewed as a guiding tool in learning that involves a variety of steps and procedures that may aid in the development, implementation, and evaluation/assessment of a variety of activities, and adaptations, for a variety of learners. According to Bergen, Reid, and Torelli (2001), an infant and toddler curriculum is "not a set of adult-directed planned activities but rather a dynamic interactive experience that

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builds on educarer respect for and responsiveness to young children's interests, curiosity, and motives, and to their families' goals and concerns." In this way, curriculum should not be viewed as a *fixed* entity, to be *learned* in stages or courses, but rather as a *process* that is continuously evolving and being enriched by experiences both inside and outside of the educare environment, by all those involved in a child's learning. Several early education researchers and developmental psychologists set in place the very first characteristics of appropriate and effective curriculum design, adaptation, and implementation through a theoretical lens known as social constructivism.

A branch of phenomenological sociology, social constructivist theory has dominated early childhood education and research (Clough, 2002; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). Broadly, this approach focuses on the processes by which a body of knowledge comes to be socially accepted as reality, whereby people continuously create and recreate, through their actions and interactions, a shared reality that is personally meaningful (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). Such a *system* or *culture* of shared meaning is exemplified in the educare environment, where children, through meaningful actions and interactions, create and recreate their world. During a child's formative years, it is of paramount importance that the interactions taking place on a child's journey of meaning making be appropriate, both by ability and cultural experience, while being guided and facilitated, not overshadowed, according to the child's needs. It is here that the value of play in a child's development, and in particular early language development, becomes a central mechanism by which understanding can materialize and learning can progress. By using this explanation of social construction in educare design, literacy for the multilingual children in this study can be viewed as the over arching language learning process, made up of the interactive experiences mentioned above. If one is to go about creating a high

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quality, effective educare experience, these socially constructed processes must be recognized and explored in the development of new policy and legislation. In this way, policy and regulation can merge with theory and philosophy in a concentrated effort to create educare environments that cater to the specific needs of our children.

The predominant theoretical frameworks for early childhood philosophy and curriculum have been guided by the early works of Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). Piaget's theory asserts that development determines cognitive competence and influences what children are capable of learning. Children are viewed as investigators and explorers of the world around them, where autonomous learning is promoted with little interference from the adults who care for them. In contrast, Vygotsky's view of learning, as driving development and the development of thinking as a shared process rather than an individual one, emphasizes the social and cultural contexts of children's thinking. Under this premise, children are believed to be capable of far more in their learning experiences when they are provided with adult assistance in the role of facilitator, and reactive participant in their learning.

Vygotsky's theoretical framework challenges the laissez-faire free play curriculum that so many early child care facilities espouse, and advises that educarers need to take a more active role in stimulating learning for effective outcomes (Smith, 1992). With regard to language development, and the processes of meaning making present in the developing literacies of the cases presented in this study, Vygotsky's theory provides an alternative perspective to an integrated educare approach in the field of early child care. Vygotsky's well-known zone of proximal development – the distance between the *actual*, independent developmental level of the child and the level of *potential*, interdependent development of the child – reinforces the idea that children can perform

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much more skillfully with others than they can alone (Smith, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). In an educare setting, the relationships between educarer, parent, the child and their peers, are very active and sustained. In the Vygotskian classroom, the teacher does not wander around the room scanning children's activities and making the occasional comment or question directed at a child (Smith, 1992). It is essential that the educarer become an active participant in social interactions throughout the initial stages of learning, promoting negotiation and renegotiation of meaning (or creation and recreation of meaning, as declared in social constructivist thought, outlined above) in order to help the child make sense of his/her world.

Social constructivist theory remains the backbone of early childhood education, with many influential researchers, theorists, and psychologists having influenced its journey; Jerome Bruner (1915-), John Dewey (1859-1952), Fredrich Froebel (1782-1852), Howard Gardner (1943-), Arnold Gesell (1880-1961), Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994), Maria Montessori (1870-1952), and David Weikart (1931-), can all be referred to as the *founders* of current early education research. For the remainder of this section, I will focus on the three most popular curriculum paradigms – the High/Scope philosophy, the Montessori method, and the Reggio Emilia school – and how the views espoused by many of these researchers helped to forge the structure of early child care in North America as we know it. Further attention will be given to these theoretical frameworks in the analysis section of this paper as they are tied into the discussion of the value of play and the social development of the child.

There is a need for recognition, development, and implementation of effective curricula for infants and toddlers in educare environments (Bergen, et. al, 2001; Cadwell, 1997; Curtis, 1998; Makin, 2003). At the time of this study, the High/Scope paradigm (to

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be discussed below) was practiced at the research site, where children are the primary curricula designers, and the educare staff, through their communication with parents, provide the primary guidance and support necessary for its effective implementation. In this next section, this philosophy will be discussed and juxtaposed with the Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches in educare to further explore how adequately these popular early child care programs reflect the learning needs of children.

The High/Scope Philosophy:

Developed in the early 1960's as an "open-framework instructional model, the High/Scope Preschool Curriculum is based on Piaget's constructivist theory of child development blended with the experience of traditional teaching practice" (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2005). In my view, this description of the High/Scope curriculum dictates that Vygotsky's views on relationships and teacher/peer-guided learning should be merged with Piaget's beliefs on the process of independent learning to create the most effective means of early childhood education programming. Referred to as a curriculum, a model, a philosophy and even a paradigm, this particular preschool educational approach is described as an open-ended guideline that organizes the children and teacher's environment, daily routine, and interactions. Founded by David Weikart, whose psychology background promotes the idea of practical problem-solving in early learning, this framework is purported to be flexible enough to be adapted by educators in order to meet the unique needs of the local community and diverse groups of young children.

The High/Scope framework incorporates five elements: active learning, adult-child interaction, learning environment, daily routine, and assessment. As early child care providers plan, design, and implement daily activities for the children – under the

categories of Infant and Toddler Key Experiences of sense of self, social relations, creative representation, movement, communication and language, exploring objects, early number, space, time (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1998) – they simultaneously aim to fit the activities within the five-fold framework mentioned above.[3] For the multilingual learners involved in this study, the key experience of communication and language is of particular interest to me. In comparing the Reggio Emilia and Montessori curriculum models with the framework mentioned above, I will examine the similarities and differences they share in how "communication and language" are delivered to early language learners.

Originally designed as a Head Start intervention model, the High/Scope program is still very popular in both the United States and Canada (Howe, Jacobs, & Fiorentino, 2000). The particular educare facility involved in this study espouses the use of the High/Scope Curriculum for its Infant and Toddler educare programs, and attempts to focus daily activity planning around the various categories previously mentioned. The High/Scope daily routine is flexible but centers on a consistent schedule of *planning time, work time,* and *recall time*; children engage with adults to first determine what they would like to do during work time, when they are free to choose activity as the adult observes, supports, and encourages learning, with recall time bringing closure to the *plan-work-recall* sequence through a discussion and reflection of what was accomplished (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2000). The curriculum is "based on the assumption that children learn when they are actively engaged and involved in interactions with people and materials in their environment" (Research site "Child Care Services" registration brochure, 2004). Unlike some other schools of thought, the

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[3] Refer to Appendix D for samples of High/Scope documents used at the research site (pages 106-115).

High/Scope philosophy believes that more is needed to foster children's learning than simply providing uninterrupted free play in a safe, structured environment. While it is believed that children must become independent and achieve the ability to be self-directed and disciplined, these skills can only be acquired as a result of the encouragement and active stimulation they receive from those around them. I believe that the popularity of the High/Scope method lies in its continuous collaborative design, involving input from educarers, parents, and children. Such continual planning, delivery, and assessment creates a program that is highly adaptable and flexible to meet the differing and changing needs and abilities of the children.

Due to the lack of regulated, universal child care programming in Canada, many alternative curricula are now available to families through privately-run facilities. Founded abroad, from such areas as U.S.A. (High/Scope), Italy (Montessori, Reggio) and New Zealand (*Te Whariki*), these programs have spurred the curriculum debate forward, with new questions arising among parents, teachers and researchers, regarding what constitutes appropriate pedagogy and environment for early learning and child development. Once viewed as the preferred systems of child care by those from the upper rungs of Canadian society, the Reggio Emilia and Montessori private preschool programs are quickly gaining speed, as is evident in their growth and popularity with child care providers and parents throughout North America.

The Reggio Emilia School:

Hailed as an exemplary model of early childhood education, the Reggio Emilia approach advocates the commitment to the child's development of strong, confident self-concept in learning, where meaning making occurs when the child is surrounded by warm reciprocal relationships (O.E.C.D., 2004). Similar to the High/Scope method, the Reggio

Emilia framework views education as an inter-connection in learning based on the relationships between persons, ideas, and the environment. Founded by Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994), the Reggio curriculum is built upon the interests of the child; curriculum emerges as the children engage with the adults and children around them in group activity, with autonomous development being viewed as the result of these relationships (Howe, et al., 2000). Teachers and parents are viewed as partners in the learning process, participating in curriculum design, assessment, and program implementation. The reciprocity involved is believed to be of key importance for the child's creation of identity and understanding of the surrounding world. This identity formation is of particular concern for multilingual children who may be exposed to a variety of cultural and linguistic variations in their daily routines, and as a result, such meaningful relationships are essential in guiding and aiding the early learner in their understanding of the world.

However, maintaining such a strong focus on relationships as being the core of the learning experience, I find the Reggio approach too focused on adult involvement in learning. First, it underestimates the processes involved in independent play and the importance of self-directed, autonomous learning and development. Infants and toddlers, due to their developmental age, have not yet acquired the skills for effective cooperative play (Curtis, 1998; Scales, et al., 1991; Shipley, 1998). During this crucial period of language development, infants and toddlers are learning more through observation, modeling and mimicking than they are through organized, reciprocal play with adults or other children. Secondly, the interdependence on relationships and goals of family and educators can serve to create an imbalance in curriculum planning and delivery, where the wants and desires of the parent or facility could eventually overshadow the needs and abilities of the child. However, in my opinion this imbalance can exist in any form of

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preschool programming if the people involved are not cognizant of the affects of attention being shifted from the child to the program itself, as a determinant of early education success. Similarities in focus can be found between the above-mentioned frameworks and the Montessori method as well.

The Montessori Method:

The Montessori method, developed by medical doctor and pioneer educator Maria Montessori, shares many of the characteristics of the Reggio and High/Scope approaches through its constructivist base for learning through exploration. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) believed that young children had the ability to learn naturally and independently without formal instruction from an adult (Howe, et al., 2000). Montessori's theory, to adapt education for the developmental stages of the child through materials especially designed for exploration and self-discovery, encourages children to be active rather than passive learners, at all levels (Lillard, 1996). Montessori believed that children should be permitted the freedom to create their own little "societies in embryo": if children were trusted with self-government from a very early age, they would be less likely to conform to the philosophies and controls of others (Krogh & Slentz, 2001). I believe that it is this view that is responsible for the model's current popularity with middle-class, suburban families and their beliefs on mainstream education and how it equates to future social success.

Dissimilar to the Reggio Emilia school of thought, the Montessori professes a focus on independent learning and exploration for the child, seemingly free from the influence of adults and external relationships. In my view, the Montessori paradigm is completely, though not overtly, shaped and influenced by the educator. The physical environment, which is believed to promote self-directed learning and easily accessible

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materials is very structured, using child-sized functional furniture and activity centers made up of self-correcting cognitive toys, all organized in a neat and orderly fashion. In my view, this less than objective set up contradicts the goal of independent cognitive and social exploration and development. In fact, the Montessori approach has often been criticized for its heavy emphasis on structured, close-ended learning materials (with only one right answer) focusing primarily on cognitive and sensory concepts with little attention on creative development (i.e., art and music), emotional expression through pretend play, or opportunities for social interaction (Howe, et al., 2000). This calls into question just how well such a *fixed* framework can be adapted for effective utilization in diverse communities and various social contexts. How does limiting social interaction and emotional expression affect language learning for multilingual children at such a young developmental level? Despite the criticisms, the Montessori framework is still very popular in Canada, and is as well-received by parents as the Reggio and High/Scope approaches to early childhood education and care.

The Curriculum Triangle:

The High/Scope, Reggio, and Montessori frameworks have all greatly influenced current Canadian preschool curricula. All three models share a common goal of focusing on individual child development and learning through *the self*; self-discipline, self-esteem, self-discovery and exploration. These skills in the learning process, when connected to lived experiences and reciprocal relationships, are believed to help the child create meaning in his or her own life (Howe, et al., 2000). In all three curriculum models, it is critical that the focus remains in meeting the child's individual needs, whether or not those needs are consistent with those of parents, educarers, the learning environment, and the broader community as a whole. Too often, society dictates what is "good" for our

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children throughout the learning process. As children are cared for outside of the home more and more, and from an earlier age, careful attention must be paid to the diverse range of needs and wants of the individual child if their cognitive development, physical care, and social well-being are to be effectively met.

For the purpose of this study, it is essential to consider how such curriculum models reflect the current child population in educare facilities in Canada. How are the language needs of multilingual children being met in order to facilitate literacy development? According to Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (the space between the independent ability of the child and what the child can do with the support of others) literacy learning is best addressed through a balanced approach of independent experience and adult guidance. The Reggio approach views the importance of the adult's role in supporting learning as critical in building upon the child's knowledge base. The Montessori model tips at the other end of the scale, declaring that the adult must step aside in order to allow for the child to determine their own course of learning. Both of these views are shared within the High/Scope paradigm, but one is not enforced as the paramount element over another in early learning. In this particular model, the adult (adult as parent, teacher, community member) is afforded a number of roles, as active participant and supportive facilitator, while simultaneously a spectator and reflexive designer and assessor. In this case, the High/Scope model reflects a balanced approach to educare curriculum, based on Vygotskian views, where there is a balance in the learning and teaching process: a process that is determined by the sensitivity of the adult to the direction of the child and the social relationships that exist.[4]

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[4] It is important to note that while Vygotsky's ideas have been incorporated into some curriculum models, to date there is no specific Vygotskian curriculum (Howe, et al., 2000).

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Strongly influenced by Montessori, the High/Scope classroom design and pedagogical approach are child-directed, and although the physical environment is designed by the educators, it is done so to suit the desires and interests of the children and not based on a pre-determined set of cognitive milestones as deemed appropriate by the educators (Howe, et al., 2000). The Montessori method claims to allow for free expression through play and developmentally-appropriate activities that encourage independence and self-directed learning, and yet the design of the physical learning environment is in opposition to the goals of the philosophy as it segregates children from much-needed interaction and guidance. In contrast, the Reggio Emilia schools are built upon Vygotsky's notions of the ways in which children learn from peer and adult interactions (Howe, et al., 2000). However, with such a focus on top-down planning based mainly on adult input and design, one must reconsider how much of the curriculum is actually promoting self-guided learning for the individual child.

Given what is known of current early childhood education and care research and the development of appropriate curriculum models and practice, the question remains as to which programs Canadian educare environments should consider using. No one model or program is best, although in order to be effective, a balance is needed. Curricula should acknowledge and incorporate current knowledge of child development, learning styles, socio-cultural influence on learning, and reflexive responsiveness and sensitivity to a variety of children's needs, desires, and strengths.

Educare curriculum is in need of change. If delivered properly and adapted to the Canadian climate, children can only benefit from the emergence of flexible programming that incorporates elements from all schools of thought discussed previously. The types of changes are not to be superficial – for example, by adopting the Reggio approach to group

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interaction, or the Montessori environment layout without focusing on how the changes may affect the children, and whether or not they were necessary at all – but are changes that that dictate careful reflection and consideration of the way curriculum can best be developed or adapted for the well-being of the children (Howe, et al., 2000).

Since culture plays such a definitive role in children's language development, educarers must be aware of personal pedagogy and educare discourse in how it influences appropriate practice. In a situation where a child comes from an ethnically diverse background of experience, it can be challenging to create meaning through skills that differ from the dominant discourse. The following section focuses on issues of ethnic diversity that are present in the early child care classroom and how both educarers and the children themselves deal with the everyday challenges of diversity and its effect on language learning.

<u>Diversity in Early Childcare Classrooms</u>

Recent research limits its focus primarily to programs designed for English-speaking children, 3 years of age and above (Curtis, 1998; Reynolds & Jones, 1997). The growing number of children participating in infant/toddler childcare programs in Canada and who are exposed to more than one language at the early stages of language development, calls for the institutions themselves to restructure their educare programs to meet the needs of an ethnically diverse population (Kenner & Gregory, 2003; Reynolds & Jones, 1997). Not only must teachers be aware of these differences when designing curriculum, but they must also possess strategies in order to implement it effectively. Teaching children how to participate in their own culture, as well as others, is an important feature of early childhood education, as not only have they to learn that they are members of a family group but that they are also a part of the wider community. As such,

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they are active members of the various literacies that surround them, which can ultimately have effect on their social development.

The opportunity for children to develop social skills through communication with others begins in the very early stages of life. The skills they acquire are influenced, either directly or indirectly, by the knowledge presented throughout the learning process, both inside and outside of the home. Young children are egocentric by nature, and many who speak English in this country do not think about the fact that not everyone uses English as his or her first language (Kendall, 1996). In educare settings, children must be taught skills by role models who exhibit cultural sensitivity and awareness through the development and carrying out of daily routines and activities. For those children who may be characterized as *different*, due to their external position from the dominant literacy, the acquisition of such skills can be hampered when their needs are not met within an educational setting. As a result, the ways in which children deal with real-life situations can vary, and acknowledging the obstacles or challenges they may face, is an essential first step for the delivery of appropriate curricula. For example, a certain child may have a specific set of *tools* he or she uses when dealing with conflict. These tools may have been forged at home, influenced by the ways in which conflict is viewed and handled by the parents.

There may also be particular attention paid to religious belief systems when this family deals with conflict that were set in place generations ago by a grandparent, who is living out the last years with the family because nursing homes are viewed negatively as places of abandon according to that family's cultural views of the elderly. Also, there may be economic stressors present in the home. Such issues can cause a child to act out in a school setting, or instill an underlying message in the emotional state of the child so that

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the child feels undeserving. In this case, the child may be in need of more attention to correct the negative messages that have been conveyed relating to self-worth and self-esteem. All of these veins influence how a particular child *sees* conflict, deals with it, and perhaps just how far it escalates. It is the responsibility of the educarer to guide those tools, providing both the child and those around him or her, with the power to understand how they work, and how those same tools may injure or repair in many different ways for different people. It is the role of the educarer to facilitate such positive interactions through communication methods that do not superimpose one literacy, or one culture, over another.

Teachers working in monocultural areas often feel that they are unable to introduce a true anti-racist, multi-cultural curriculum, arguing that young children cannot grasp the concept of different countries or the relationships and correspondence among different cultural groups within a country (Curtis, 1998). In spite of children's inability to understand the spatial relations between towns and countries, I argue that they can still develop some form of understanding of cultural and linguistic differences from very early on. Studies have shown that infants, as early as 4 months of age, can distinguish between various languages that are spoken to them (Gandini & Edwards, 2001; McCain & Mustard, 1999). They can read facial expressions, judge differences between positive and negative tone of voice, and they can definitely *feel* being loved, nurtured, and cared for, versus feelings of abandon, lack of comfort and physical detachment from others. It has already been shown that children as young as two years of age can begin to develop negative stereotypes, and educators must try to integrate ethnicity in its various forms into the overall curriculum (Curtis, 1998). In majority-language contexts, as can be displayed

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by current schools and educare environments in Canada, the balance of power is heavily in favour of the dominant language and literacy.

When language differences become obstacles to a young child's learning and development due to the fact that there is no curricula in place that recognizes and attempts to understand the challenges they may encounter, it is my view that language then is inadvertently used as a weapon of conformity in education. I argue that by neglecting to appropriately design or modify curricula to meet the individual needs of the child, particularly with regard to language development, full participation in learning at this early developmental stage may be stunted. If we are to truly understand the factors at play within early childcare and education, we must also be cognizant of the discourse that is used to promote its unfamiliarity and obscurity in the eyes of the public.

Children often resort to *code-switching*, *word transferring* and *decoding* in order to compensate for comprehension difficulties (Delpit, 1995; Gregory, 1996; Kenner & Gregory, 2003). Word transference or decoding occurs when concepts and ideas that children develop in one language, both in written and spoken form, can interact with those developed in another in order to increase understanding and awareness. As a type of guessing game, young children who are exposed to more than one language often use this process of creating and interpreting textual and verbal meanings to reach a better level of comprehension (Kenner & Gregory, 2003). Code-switching is a practice in which individuals alter their behavioral patterns to conform to the current environment. For example, African American youngsters may speak and behave in the Black English vernacular when interacting with African American peers, yet modify speech and behavioral patterns to coincide with the norms and expectations valued in more integrated settings. This behaviour demonstrates efforts to successfully navigate multiple and

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simultaneous cultural markers, norms, and values such that they engage in communication and behavioural patterns that are situationally appropriate (Celious & Oyserman, 2001).

In this situation, a minority-language child sitting outside the dominant majority-language circle is susceptible to being misunderstood, developing feelings of inadequacy, and low self-esteem. This can be compounded for those children who are only just beginning to realize what these feelings are, how to deal with them, and how to express emotion verbally. This same child is then part of a cyclone of mixed emotion, and if he or she faces educators who unknowingly demean the learning process by reducing exposure to multiliteracies to *help* them avoid language barriers, the effect can be threefold. Harboring low expectations for children is debilitating because it conveys to children a sense that they are inadequate. Furthermore, once children internalize this belief, feelings of inferiority abound, and children are more likely to view themselves as self-fulfilling prophecies (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 1996). As Kenner and Gregory (2003) point out, children tend to focus more strongly on the dominant literacy, as a means of *fitting in*, and this may limit development of their full potential as *biliterates* or *muliliterates*. The early learning experiences of children lay the foundations for later development, and for this reason it is important for educarers to pay attention to the young children's language development, particularly if there is more than one language being learned.

There are more types of early childhood programs today than at any time in the past in Canada (Mayfield, 2001). This proliferation of programs has meant not only more options, but improved potential for a better "match" between the needs and wishes of families, the abilities of children, and current programs. However, some have argued that with the growth of variety and diversity, the needs and desires that best suit *all* children

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can often be ignored. This can lead to a lack of coordination, universality, and integration of programs and services for young children across Canada. Such differing views can affect curriculum design and implementation, and could also lead to confusion and misinterpretation in policy and practice (Mayfield, 2001).

One such confusing element is that of how much focus should be given to early language development and the literacy needs of children in early child care programming. Literacy days, Story telling weeks, and Raising-a-reader programs, are gaining in popularity in the eyes of the public and exemplify the education systems' latest attempts to fortify early literacy success for young children across the country (Windsor Star, 2004). The next section reflects on the various meanings of literacy and how it is viewed by parents and educarers in early child care settings with regard to the importance of early language development.

Early Language – The Push for Literacy

Literacy is an organizing concept around which ideas of social identity and value are defined; what kinds of collective identity we subscribe to, what kind of nation we want to belong to, and not simply our ability to succeed academically, are encapsulated within this term. Literacy, in this sense, becomes a symbolic key to many of the society's gravest problems: issues of ethnic identity, conflict, achievement (or underachievement) can be diverted into accounts of how literacy acquisition can be improved and the distribution of literacy enhanced (Street, 1995). As Street argues, issues of poverty and unemployment are turned into questions about why individuals failed to learn literacy at school, or were not prepared properly for formal schooling in the early developmental years. They then refuse to seek remedial learning in adulthood, thus diverting blame from institutions to individuals, from power structures to reflections of personal morality.

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Literacy becomes more of a concept rather than a function or product of language learning. It can be viewed as interchangeable with life experience and opportunity.

Literacy itself is infused with particular social, cultural, and ideological ends; there is not literacy and illiteracy, but *literacies* which are formed and function in particular social contexts (Richardson, 1998). Children's learning environments have changed over the last few decades. With increasing numbers of children enrolled in educare environments, the early literacy experiences they are presented with will take place in a variety of contexts; home, community, and a range of early childhood settings (Makin, 2003). For a multilingual child, educare environments – if designed appropriately and pedagogically sound – may provide for *multiliterate* experiences as the child's development is supplemented by a variety of scripts (Kenner & Gregory, 2003). Today, parents are particularly concerned with the language development of their children, as the meaning of literacy has come to be equated with future life success (interviews with parents, 2005). Parents currently support a multi-million dollar early education industry with the purchase of preschool educational materials; DVD's, cognitive toys, and a variety of expensive preschool/afterschool tutorial and language immersion programming. This cognitive pressure that parents place on their children can be seen in their push to have children learn language at an early age by using such materials that promise their children will begin to read sooner, faster, and better.

Our current understanding of early language and literacy development has provided new ways of helping children learn to talk, read, and write; however, it does not advocate the teaching of these skills to younger children (Lerner & Greenip, 2003). Concentrated language instruction, as seen in early immersion programs, which pushes infants and toddlers to achieve adult models of literacy is not developmentally appropriate

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and may be counter productive causing children to begin associating reading, writing, and learning language skills with failure (Curtis, 1998). According to child developmental research, early literacy in educare environments should focus on the natural unfolding of skills, determined by the abilities and progress of the individual child and not the goals or desires of the parent or educarer (Gillen & Hall, 2003; Meier, 2000; Ollila & Mayfield, 1992). These early language skills, such as book handling, image and action recognition, sound recognition and imitation, will serve as the foundation on which children can learn to build literacy, through comprehension strategies that connect oral and written expression with real life settings and interactions (Makin, 2003). Many well-known early constructivist theorists and developmental researchers – G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924), Lev Vygtosky (1896 – 1934), Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), Erik Erikson (1902-1994), Jean Piaget (1896-1980), and John Dewey (1859-1952) – believed that these building blocks were best established through a play-based approach to literacy in early childhood settings. The effectiveness of play is an area that remains a centerpiece for consideration in early childhood curriculum planning and is the focus of the analysis section of this paper in Chapter V.

Language and literacy are connected to the ways that children make friends, solve arguments, think about the sunset, react to a funny story, learn English, hang on to a primary language, hold a crayon, and draw faces (Meier, 2004). In this way, it bears direct influence on educarer pedagogy, on opinions of the parent in their desires for their children's success, and ultimately, affects the ways in which a child comes to view his or her world. If curricula can be designed and implemented to effectively address and utilize various literacies in the early years of development, that same child as well as those around him/her, can only benefit even further from his or her experiences. Through an

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exploration of the effects of such curricula on the language development of children who are exposed to languages other than English, I have produced a narrative illustration of how these children, their parents, and those who *educare*, deal with challenges presented by linguistic and cultural differences. Prior to delving into the individual cases in Chapter IV, the following section provides a brief discussion of the tools and methodology behind this study and why such an approach was used.

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CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

"Study without desire spoils the memory, and it retains nothing that it takes in."

— Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519)

Research Questions

As outlined earlier in the introductory chapter, there were many questions that helped to form this study. The main question that drives this research is whether an infant/toddler curriculum creates language and comprehension obstacles for multilingual children at this early developmental stage. Specifically, what is the impact of infant/toddler curriculum on the literacy development of children who are exposed to languages other English? Do play-based, emotion-centered educare curricula allow for feelings of achievement in literacy for multilingual children and their families? How do children, educarers, and parents, experience language obstacles/challenges within an educare environment? What does literacy mean to both the educarers and the families involved in educare? These questions will be explored throughout the remaining chapters of this study.

Research Method and Procedures

This study adopts a qualitative approach, as outlined by Creswell (2003). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A qualitative study allows for a detailed account of the relationships and experiences of the participants and provides suggestions for further research in this area. Research involving young children and their families is extensive (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). However, research conducted on infant/toddler curricula is

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limited, and is mainly based on work done in the United States. As such, I feel it is imperative to present preschool curriculum models from a Canadian perspective. It was necessary to choose an appropriate approach to qualitative research that best encapsulates the experiences of, and factors affecting, all those involved in my study. For this study, I used an ethnographic case study approach, as outlined below.

<u>An Ethnographic Case Study</u>

An *ethnography* seeks to describe and interpret a cultural or social group with observable and learned patterns of behaviour, customs, and ways of life, whereas a *case study* explores a *bounded integrated system* or a case (multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 1998). Although there is an apparent overlap between the two – the former consists of an examination of a cultural system; the latter examines a bounded system – I feel that by using both the traditions of inquiry known as ethnography and case study, I can better understand and describe the *events* and the *sharing/group systems* that are involved. It was my belief that it would be beneficial to present the children, parents, and educarers I observed in great detail, using a case study approach: however, equally important was to discuss the educare environment itself, and the social structure that exists, in the form of an ethnographic narrative.

Ethnography, as it seeks a holistic perspective, is sensitive to the contextual features of the phenomenon being studied (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). Considerable attention is given to analyzing the research setting to obtain a detailed account of the social context, which is crucial for fully understanding behaviour and events taking place. Even though the length of time spent at the research site was no more than 3 months, which may not fit the prescribed criteria for the in-depth participant researcher required to

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become one with those under study, I assert that it was not a limitation and that sufficient time was spent observing so as to add a credible recounting of details and events that took place within the facility (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

The population from which I have drawn my sample – two children, their parents (4), and involved educarers (6), and the facility supervisor (1) – consists of administrative personnel, parents/guardians, and those educarers who design and implement infant/toddler curricula, within an educare facility in Windsor, Ontario. Following research approval, and subsequently obtaining assent/consent from participants, I began observations of the children over a two week period, following which, I spent an additional two weeks gathering documentation and conducting informal interviews with parents and educarers. After the two month-long observation period on site, I returned to the facility often while transcribing the interviews to consult informally with the educarers, support staff, and administrators, while making use of the resource library in the Ontario Early Years Centre. The details of these interviews are shared in Chapters IV and V, within the actual cases and the analysis portions of this paper.

Data collection for the study included relevant documentation (curriculum documents, calendars, activity and routine outlines, educarer/parent correspondence, program advertisement/brochures, developmental assessment/evaluation forms, and children's work)[5]; observations (rich, detailed descriptions of setting and participants, children's participation in various educare activities, reactions and responses, reflections as researcher)[6]; and informal, one-on-one interviews with educarers and parents (which

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[5] Refer to Appendices C & D (pages 105-115) for assessment tools & documentation samples from the research site.
[6] Refer to Appendix A (page 101) for the observation guides and checklists used in this study.

were audio-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed)[7]. Data collection and data analysis for this study have been completed simultaneously, where files were established for each child/case, allowing for consistent categorization, review, and retention of information gathered throughout the data collection process. This process of inductive analysis, where the researcher avoids fixed preconceptions and instead assembles possible concepts, meanings, and relationships throughout the research process, is continuous and internal in its search for emergent themes and discovery of insights (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). This dual process of collecting *while* analyzing allows for my own biases to be examined from the start. Actively seeking out my own misinterpretations and those of the participants, in an effort to present an open-minded representation of the data, allows for understanding and meaning of the phenomenon or culture under study to surface naturally and be recognized in a credible way.

The evolving nature of an ethnographic study makes its design flexible: the design takes shape as the fieldwork unfolds and changes in direction are imminent by-products of the research process. Researchers must prepare for the unexpected and be open to uncertainties and change (Goodwin& Goodwin, 1996; Simpson, 2001). The following section provides a discussion of some of the limitations and delimitations of the study and also reviews how verification methods are used throughout the data collection and analysis process.

<u>Limitations & Delimitations</u>

There are a few limitations encountered in this study that must be recognized prior to presenting the cases. This case study is specific to an educare facility in one location at a particular time. As such, generalizing from the findings to all daycare environments is

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[7] Refer to Appendix B (page 103) for the interview guide that was used in this study.

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not appropriate. Also, the study is delimited to specific participants (two children) with certain specified characteristics (exposure to more languages than English). There are several verification measures that may be used to establish authenticity and validity in the study. The length of time spent at the research site is one such measure. Throughout the two months spent building trust with the participants, learning about the educare "culture", and sorting through information and misrepresentations by both the participants and myself as researcher, I feel that the period of time spent working with the participants is what gives this study its credibility and strength. In order to avert bias and ensure accuracy in my research, the various data sources – document collection, observations, detailed description, and interview transcripts – were *triangulated* in order to build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell, 2003). In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 1998). The data collected were categorized chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and continually coded and re-coded for analysis according to emerging themes and patterns. These main themes – *the push for literacy, the value of play in early childhood curricula, self-perception and adult influence, and social development of the child through language learning* – have served as the main points of discussion throughout this paper and will be the focus of the Analysis chapter of this paper.

In the following chapter, my interpretations are presented in narrative form, including detailed description of the children involved, direct quotations from interviews of parents and educarers, a review of relevant documentation from participants, with a discussion of the literature and theoretical framework, woven in throughout. In a qualitative study such as this, evaluating the research for credibility can also be a

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challenge. In the following pages, I explore how the participants act, react, and interact, with regard to my research questions, in order to make sense of how the concept of curriculum occurs in, and affects, their everyday lives. Beginning with an in-depth description of the educare environment under study, the cases of Sara from the Infant room and Marcus from the Toddler room, are each presented in turn. Following this chapter, the main themes that were mentioned earlier will be visited in the Analysis section of this paper.

CHAPTER IV

THE CASES

"The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the

demands of the social situations in which he finds himself."

- John Dewey (1859 – 1952)

The Educare Environment

Perhaps the most essential, if not fundamental element to creating social and

emotional well-being of the child, the educare environment should provide an atmosphere

that is physically safe, comfortable, and nurturing, while being conducive to appropriate

cognitive and affective development. In identifying a curriculum for infants and toddlers,

one must recognize that the programming is inextricably tied to the program's physical

environment (including the arrangement of space, the equipment, objects, tools, and

materials) as well as the social environment (the number and types of people who are

present, their methods of social-emotional interaction) because environmental exploration

through play is a major educational activity for children in this age group (Bergen, et. al,

2001). Based directly on the information gathered through observations, this chapter

presents a detailed description of the research site and an in-depth narrative account of the

participants involved in this study.[8]

Located in a west-end Windsor neighbourhood, the childcare facility used for this

study sits on a large site, and houses children aged 3 months to 12 years of age, with an

average 1:4 ratio of teachers to children. A twelve-room building, the centre has two

recently renovated outdoor playgrounds, a large kitchen facility, and an EarlyYears

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[8] *NOTE:* All of the names of people or places used throughout this document have been changed to
maintain the anonymity of participants and the research site.

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Centre with a resource library for parents, E.C.E. students, staff and educators.[9] To better

set the stage for the cases presented in this chapter, the narrative that follows provides a

detailed account of my perceptions of the educare environment involved in this study.

Upon walking through the double sliding doors, I am immediately bathed in a

mixed scent of lingering cleaning solutions, the clean plastic of diapers, and the

unidentified lunch drifting from the kitchen. One of the only centres in the region without

a door security buzzer, the large foyer is flanked by bulletin boards, visitor sign-in sheets,

and posted health information of recent chicken pox outbreaks and government issued

pamphlets and brochures. The main administration offices stand to my left and the

resource library to the right within the Early Years Centre, which has on-site learning

support staff for the needs of the centre. Everyone is busy on the phone. It's Monday

morning.

Down a darkened corridor, lined with mailboxes labeled for each child for

communication between the parents and the staff, the first room to the left is the infant

room. At approximately ten o'clock, the room is still for the exception of a few lagging

infants being coaxed to the attached napping rooms. They are right on schedule. I peek in

to see the activity board, and am disappointed to see that today's plans have yet to be

noted. Normally, the board would list the days planned activities, under the categories of

Music, Language & Images, and Gross & Fine Motor skills. I catch the eye of one of the

infant educarers, and she smiles while ushering the children from the kitchen.

"Let's go...yes, time for a rest everyone," Rebecca says, in a sing-song voice.

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[9] Initiated by the provincial government in 1999, the Ontario Early Years Centres are no-fee, resource-filled
services open to the public in order to provide an open-door environment for parents who wish to come in
to play with their children or talk to qualified staff about parenting concerns.

My mind drifts to thoughts of my own son, and I am struck by the scene. *How can they do this with so many children?*, I wonder. I give a knowing nod, smile, and step inside.

Each room is set up in a similar fashion, with washrooms and/or change tables, lockers and cubby holes for the children's belongings, and age-appropriate furnishings and toys. The classroom design is influenced by the Montessori model, with functional child-sized furniture and easily accessible materials, yet there are no specific centers established confining the activities of the children. The infant room boasts its own kitchen, with counters, sinks, a microwave, and two refrigerators to hold the children's prepared foods and bottles from home. There are lockers for each child and there is a "shoe change" area – the staff have *work shoes* they put on upon arrival, to keep outside dirt and bacteria off the floors – where parents are requested to cover their shoes with surgical slippers before entering the room since children at this age group lay on the floor or crawl. I grab a pair of slippers, bid good morning to one of the other educarers in the infant room, and unlatch the gate to the play area.

The space is large and dimly lit, due to the napping hour. There are mirrored paper objects, large cut-outs of shapes and animals, and laminated pictures of the children and their family members affixed to the walls. I was told by Rebecca that all of the wall hangings are at "infant eye-level" for the children to be able to access them.

"Each child has a wall space for their family pictures," she explains, "It's nice in case they get upset or miss their parents, then they can see the pictures. We try to *decorate* the room so it's individualized...you know, family oriented and based on their particular interests. I think it helps the parents cope with leaving their children, too."

I crouch down and look at the a board hanging in front of me; photos of a smiling couple, a black lab, which I assume is a family pet, and more photos of a blue-eyed,

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smiling baby. The photographs have been covered by flaps made from cloth and paper, to promote a game of peek-a-boo and independent discovery, and there are other materials affixed to the board that I recognize as pathways for tactile exploration and fine motor skill development. I can't help but wonder just how much influence parents have on the design and implementation of the curriculum.

"That's Jeff and his family", Rebecca says, her back to me. Before I can ask more, she is gone to check on the children. The research site uses the High/Scope Curriculum, and I can immediately see evidence of the influence of this philosophy in how the room is designed around the key experiences; under the categories of Infant and Toddler Key Experiences of sense of self, social relations, creative representation, movement, communication and language, exploring objects, early number, space, and time (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1998).[10]

There is a *soft play area* – intended to promote various experiences with movement – which has a single mattress and some exercise floor padding, where the infants enjoy "bouncing up and down" to the tune of "Little Red Wagon". Across the room there is a plastic play structure housing a pretend phone, sink, and gate. Hanging from above, streaming ribbons, handcrafted mobiles, and mesh onion bags that hold balloons, serve to visually occupy the children in their experiences of exploring objects. The floor-to-ceiling windows are covered in cling-on butterflies and bees. Board storybooks line the window ledge, serving a dual purpose as both literacy and language learning tools and to prevent curious infants from climbing up. The view of the playground is sun-drenched and there is the endless echo of children's laughter outside. I look at my watch. It's outdoor time for the toddlers.

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[10] Refer to Appendices C & D (pages 105-115) for samples of High/Scope documentation.

Linked to the infant playground is the toddler yard, complete with a race track that encircles the area and a newly constructed playground all atop high quality epoxy-resin flooring, and covered with a retractable awning. According to the *Day Nurseries Act*, R.R.O. 1990, early child care environments are mandated to provide a specific amount of time for children to be out of doors: one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon is the listed *minimum*, weather permitting. According to the High/Scope daily routine, *outside time* consists of thirty minutes, where "children engage in vigorous, noisy outdoor play, with adults participating and supporting children's play in the outdoor setting" (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2000). Again, my thoughts drift back to my own son. The centre he attends, which is actually municipally-run, only gives twenty minutes of outdoor time. Subsequently, I cannot help but question why school-aged children are only given fifteen minutes. A series of questions go through my head: *Who decides what time is allotted? What is the rationale behind limiting outdoor time, and how does this affect the interactions between the children? What does this say of the value placed on free play? Why create legislation, with a restricted minimum, when there are no means in place to monitor compliance?* As I watch through the window, my thoughts dissolve when I see the toddlers lining up. They are coming back inside.

Leaving the infant room, I continue further down the hall. There are two toddler rooms, kitty corner from the two preschoolers and two school age rooms, all of which are colour-coded to prevent confusion in communication between the staff. Raised voices of the staff articulate commands from every corner and the laughter and shouts of the children seem to reverberate from the walls. At the first preschool room entrance, I catch the last goodbyes between a mother and her son. They were speaking Chinese, I think, but

I could see that it was a reluctant goodbye, nonetheless. I wave to the centre's cook, Maria, as I pass the kitchen and make my way to Toddler Yellow.

The toddler rooms, Toddler Blue and Toddler Yellow, are situated next door to one another with attached cloakrooms open to the playground entrance. Both rooms are equipped with child-sized tables and chairs, soft couches lean against the walls next to beanbag chairs and book racks line the walls, filled with age-appropriate storybooks. In Toddler Yellow, there is a sand table and a water table with a painter's easel in between. Toddler Blue is a smaller room, so the easel and creative tables are confined to the closet until they are needed. I find this fact disturbing in that accessibility to materials allowing for the "key experience" of creative representation is restricted. The issue then becomes one of [a lack of] space: interestingly, the very focus of critical recommendations made to the government for improvement of child care and education by the McCain and Mustard report published over a decade ago. An open concept washroom is attached to each room with toddler-sized toilets, sinks, and amenities that foster independence in the children's habits while educarers are able to interact and guide them through the processes. Soap and paper towel dispensers, affixed to the walls within the children's reach make for easy cleanup where the children learn the importance of hygiene and autonomy in caring for themselves. Children are taught "bathroom songs" that instruct and guide them through the steps of using the washroom. As pointed out by Vygotskian theory, this encouragement of independent exploration through the scaffolding actions of the educarer, is crucial to a child's development and learning (Smith, 1992).

I watch from the doorway as the children filter inside. The site has an "open door" policy, where baby gates are installed to block the entry ways, but visibility is clear to the hall. After watching numerous parents struggle to leap over or unfasten the gates, I asked

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one of the educarers why they were used. The response I received was confusing, leading me to wonder if and how certain aspects of the design of the educare environment were considered at all:

"The doors are only closed during rest time, because of the noise. It's more of a safety issue, really. We can see what is going on out there. It's supposed to allow for the children to see each other, and for the staff to communicate easily, too. Honestly, I think it just provides better airflow…these rooms are just too small!"

The smell of sunscreen is strong and as one of the toddler educarers, Varsha, is directing the children to line up to wash their hands, another named Sophia is setting up carpet squares for circle time (influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach to "small group time"). There is an early childhood education student in the room. She will be completing her practicum here over the next few weeks, and I notice her face is flushed as she nervously prepares the props for her circle time activity. Sophia grabs a notepad, and with a serious demeanor, situates herself nearby to document and evaluate the student's progress. Clearly seeing that she was not impressed with the lesson, I inquired at the end of the day:

"These kids come in here and they're blown away! They need to take it seriously, and they need to prepare their materials and activities. We're not just changing diapers here, you know. Well, you're a teacher and a mom, but even *you* don't know how much we do here. I'm not an E.C.E worker. I am a teacher *and* a caregiver. I'm the best of both worlds, and even a student doesn't realize how important that is to these children."

I could see immediately that a facet of early child care and education that I had not considered before was beginning to surface: the adults themselves had concerns about their roles as educarers, and about how others perceived them. *If the part an educarer*

plays in the life of a child is undervalued by others, what does this mean to the quality of care a child receives? What would this disempowerment mean for the adults involved? Could this disenfranchised attitude ultimately affect pedagogy and curriculum design, thereby providing confirmation and promotion of a lack of change in program quality and funding from the public? These questions form yet another area to be explored. Following this next section where the cases are presented, Chapter V will also deal with educarer self-perception and the influence of parents on curriculum for multilingual infants and toddlers.

A curriculum for infants and toddlers is based upon opportunities for active learning through play with objects in the physical environment and with family members, educarers, and peers in the social environment. In the following section, I will explore the daily lives of Sara and Marcus, the two multilingual children from the research site who are involved in this study. Each child has his and her *own* story to tell; therefore, I have given each case its own section, and will draw from my observations, participation, and the interviews, in order to examine the interactions of the children, educarers, and their families. This precursor to the final section of analysis and recommendations will follow the narrative style seen earlier, and includes a reflexive exploration of my own role and interpretations throughout the process.

<u>Infant Room - SARA</u>

Sara is a rambunctious 14 month-old, with a cunning smile and curious eyes. Walking well on her own, gentle and seemingly furtive in her demeanor, she enjoys interacting and exploring with her playmates in the infant room. Sara shows little attention to the educarers, unless they are singing or dancing. Two of her favourite past times, each is guaranteed to make her inquisitive expressions turn from somber concentration to unconfined smiles. This is the first morning that Sara has been dropped off by her father without crying. He is stunned and is uncertain whether to stay and watch awestruck, or leave quickly and take the chance that she might unravel. She leans around the corner and watches him, past the latched gate, and as he waves goodbye, with a final glance to the educarer for reassurance that he is *doing what's right*, he disappears from view. She then turns to one of the educarers Anna, and smiles widely. Although she appears concerned, and continues to look towards the direction of the gate, her expression is one of having been set free.

A hug for Anna, and then it is time to go exploring. Soon she is off to the plastic playhouse where her friends have gathered to open and shut the mailbox and peek-a-boo through the windows. She tires of the game quickly when more children become involved, as though their mere presence has diminished her ability to use the equipment properly. I find this intriguing to see in practice having read that infants and toddlers, due to their developmental age, have not yet acquired the skills for effective cooperative play (Curtis, 1998; Scales, et al., 1991; Shipley, 1998). During this crucial period of language development, infants are learning more through observation, modeling and mimicking than they are through organized, reciprocal play with other children. Instantly Sara has her attention diverted by the nearby bookshelf, and after carefully selecting a cloth book,

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a very adult-like process that has taken almost two minutes of selecting and discarding, she finally sits down and begins casually flipping through, while intermittently scanning the room to investigate what has led to a playmates tears. This process of book handling is a literacy behaviour outlined as a critical stage of early language learning, albeit culturally specific (Lerner & Greenip, 2003). She watches the images and points to them. She is not actively seeking the attention of one of the educarers, but does look up from her book when Rebecca walks by. A main focus of the High/Scope curriculum, and should be for any form of preschool programming, is ongoing observation and anecdotal assessment (Howe, Jacobs, & Fiorentino, 2000). It is unfortunate that Rebecca has missed the opportunity to record Sara's independent interaction with the reading material, but there will be more opportunities throughout the day. Furrowing her brow, Sara leaves the book, and rejoins the playhouse group, taking full charge of the mailbox.

One of the educarers in the infant room, Anna, goes to the desk to document in Sara's file the interaction taking place at the playhouse, as she will continue to do for all of the children throughout the day. At this particular childcare facility, everything is documented in detail on specific forms dealing with mealtimes, diaper changes, and noteworthy accomplishments, and they are set in each child's clipboard available for examination and feedback by parents at the end of the day.[11] Communication tools such as these are common in childcare centres: however, their appearance, use, and effectiveness, can vary from facility to facility. Likes and dislikes, favourite foods and allergies, health and developmental observations and concerns, attitude and behaviour notes, and general concerns or directions from the parent or educarer, are a few of the

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[11] The information documented consists of observations, anecdotes, and comments to be used by the educarers and parents as a means of communication. See Appendix D for samples (© 2002 High/Scope Educational Research Foundation).

elements reported and documented on a daily basis. Often due to time constraints, documentation regarding the attainment of intellectual milestones is not carried out and as such, its importance can be overlooked by both parents – rushing drop off to make it to work on time – and the educarers, who would rather communicate orally when their hands are tied with the children. Main parental concerns focus solely on the physical well-being of the child, with cognitive development taking a backseat, especially if the child is not feeling well or their have been changes made to their diet.

Such oversight, however, can have costly repercussions. When an educarer was asked about the literacy and language development of infants, the response was unsettling:

Researcher: "How do you feel about the activities you develop and implement with regards to language and literacy?"

Educarer: "Well, in this room there isn't much of a focus on literacy. I mean, essentially, these children have no language. They are only just beginning to develop in that area. So, we don't really focus our activities on that. Like, we can't pay too much attention to that because at this stage, they're what's known as *pre-literate*."

Throughout the interviews with the infant room staff, when asked about what activities they would design/implement for the children with regards to language, they repeatedly told me that "at this age level, they don't really *have* language yet" or that "they're *pre-literate*". I have difficulty comprehending this, perhaps because the definition of literacy used for the purpose of this study is broader than what is common for those who have not studied early language development. Researchers claim that children as young as 4-6 months can distinguish language differences through social interaction, such as tonal quality changes, one-word commands, and even reading facial

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expressions. I really feel as though they are missing the opportunity, through music especially, to *give* children language at this early stage. This is one example of how a curriculum framework, such as the High/Scope model with its focus on the experience of early communication and literacy, is only as effective as its delivery. In many cases, curricula can be altered by the adults involved, based on their own personal assumptions.

Watching Sara closely now, perhaps due to the fact that she has realized I am watching her, Anna follows her to the kitchen where another educarer is giving a child a snack in one of the high chairs. Sara has found the young boy's shoe laces to be of particular interest, and receives smiles from him as she tugs at his feet. Soon, the action becomes too forceful. Anna quickly yet gently pulls her away from the action without reprimand, and placing her pointed hand to her mouth, asks Sara if she is hungry: I realize that Anna is using sign language to communicate with her. Mimicking the sign for "hungry", I am amazed to see Sara walk over to where Anna is now standing at the fridge and takes a look inside. Seeing nothing of interest, she abandons Anna and returns to the shoe laces. This time Anna calls a stern "No", and before she can reach her, Sara is off to the playhouse again, laughing and still making the sign for "hungry".

Kay Rush, in her article "Using Sign Language in High/Scope Programs" (2006), notes that teaching all preschool children sign language assists them in literacy and learning a second language. Signing is a kinetic act that stimulates activity in both the right brain, which is responsible for visual-spatial reasoning and long-term memory, and the left brain, which is responsible for processing language. When you are signing with hearing children, you are not only reinforcing their existing language, you are also giving them another way to express a concept they already know, thus creating another connection to that information in their brain. This process also helps to establish two

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storage places for language memory on the brain's left side: one for the native language of the user, the other for sign. So children who use both spoken language and sign language develop a back-up memory, storing the same word in two different ways in separate areas of the left brain (Meier, 2004). Using sign language increases children's vocabulary in a relatively pressure-free manner. Many reports suggest that hearing children who use sign language in their preschool classes scored better on vocabulary tests and attained higher reading levels than their non-signing peers (High/Scope, 2002; Rush, 2006; Shore, 1997).

Gaining in popularity with parents and preschool programs, sign language is yet another form of language that Sara is exposed to. Due to the ethnic background of her parents, and her close contact with her Cantonese-speaking grandparents, Sara is also exposed to Cantonese within the home. In an interview with Sara's mother, learning more than one language was viewed as a definite advantage:

Parent: "I feel that it would be beneficial for her to know more than one language."

Researcher: "Why do you feel that way?"

Parent: "It's very important for us to have her learn Cantonese, because of her background and to communicate with my parents when they are babysitting...even for her future success and career path I feel it would be a definite advantage. Although, we debated whether or not this was the right time. I have some colleagues who have placed their children in special language schools and are now debating the benefits because it may cause confusion at such a young age. Well, I think that any skill that can be taught early, especially early socialization, is critical to her development."

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Clearly, Sara is multiliterate, and her parents understand that an essential part of these developing literacies is the learning of early socialization skills that are necessary for her language development and overall well-being.

Nearly noon, Anna has returned to the infant room from her lunch break. Sara, seated in a high chair, is finishing her drink of milk as she watches the educarers clean up the left over lunch dishes. Anna begins to escort the older children to one napping room while the youngest are being rocked to the gentle musical tones of Mozart as they finish the last of their bottles.

"The music drowns out the outside hallway noise while they nap", Anna informs me. "Unfortunately, it makes us sleepy too!" laughs another one of the educarers, Rebecca, from a rocking chair. Sara is helped down from her chair and Anna, who I soon learn is also of Cantonese background, is asking her a question:

"Fun-gow time, Sara? Fun-gow?" she asks. Sara smiles, teasingly walks toward the napping room, and then immediately spins around in an attempt to move out of Anna's reach. "Come on, fun-gow", Rebecca gently repeats, blocking Sara's path to the carpeted play area. Seeing Rebecca speaking in a language other than English, Sara seems awestruck. She laughs hysterically, turns again, and finally decides to join her classmates as they filter into the other napping room. I am amazed at the interaction and how easily Sara's comprehension of *who* speaks Cantonese and *who* speaks English had been unbalanced by what she had witnessed. I came to learn later that the word "fun-gow" is Cantonese for "sleep". The lights have been dimmed, and finally the blank daily activity board in the infant room is being addressed by one of the educarers. After putting the children to bed, Anna has pulled out their files and begins filling out daily observation

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sheets that the parents will look at when they come to pick up their children. It's nap time for everyone at the centre.

"See you after lunch," Rebecca calls over her shoulder as she heads down the dimly-lit hallway.

Toddler Room - MARCUS

The sun shining through the large windows of the Toddler room has attracted Marcus'
attention. He extends a pointed finger and glances around to see if anyone else is
witnessing his discovery of a brown finch perched upon the playground fence. At 23
months, Marcus is showing the beginnings of his independence by wandering and
exploring around the room alone.

"Birdie, birdie!", he chimes and manages to grab the attention of Varsha, one of
the educarers in the room.

"Yes, that is a bird, Marcus. Is he singing a song?", Varsha draws out the sound of
each word, deliberately placing emphasis on the consonants. This supportive modeling of
phonetic emphasis will aid Marcus in his attempts to acquire the necessary memory for
vocabulary and speech skills for early conversation (Meier, 2004). She kneels down to his
eye level, and they both watch as the finch hops along the fence.

"Birdie, birdie sing!", Marcus replies, and leaves the window to hop around the
room, clapping his hands and laughing. "Birdie sing me!" he shouts.
Varsha smiles and quickly turns toward the sand table to mediate a confrontation between
two other toddlers. The moment is over as quickly as it began, and without further
attention from the educarer, Marcus' attention is easily diverted. He notices a fire truck
left unattended and is quickly distracted from the view outdoors.

"Beep, beep!" he shouts.

He loves anything that moves fast – cars, animals, trains, airplanes – and spends
his time flitting effortlessly from one activity to another with little interaction or support
from the educarers in the Yellow toddler room. The fire truck he is playing with has not
gone unnoticed by its previous operator, and soon there is an altercation between Marcus

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and another boy. Normally quiet and shy, Marcus begins screaming at the other child, quickly catching the attention of an educarer nearby named Christina. Both children are holding onto the truck, yet as she approaches, Marcus lets go:

Christina: "Now Brian, you need to wait for your turn. Marcus was playing with the truck first. After he is finished, then it will be your turn."

Brian: "No, it was my turn!"

Christina: "Oh, okay, Marcus, you will have to take a turn when he is finished."

Marcus, with his hands behind his back, stands solemnly, watching as the boy moves away to play on the carpet with the fire truck.

Christina, although she misinterpreted the scenario, dealt with it according to Vygotsky's belief that adult intervention and help with negotiation can aid children in learning how to resolve conflict (Smith, 1992). Squatting down to their height while making eye contact, she speaks calmly to the boys and models how to best resolve the disagreement. Unfortunately, due to the way Marcus handled himself, as well as his inability to verbalize how he was feeling, the educarer misinterpreted the situation. He slowly walks away from the scene of the altercation and hastily grabbing a book from the shelf, makes his way to the couch. A friend joins him and soon he has forgotten about the incident, while she points out to him the different animals on the pages of her own book. Soon, they are laughing and switching books with one another in order to name what they each see.

As critical a skill self-discipline and independence can be, it came to me that in the case of Marcus, it was working against him having a quality educare experience. Due to his independent nature, I often noticed that Marcus would go *unnoticed* by the educare staff. This educare phenomenon was something I witnessed with my own son, who has a

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quiet and independent personality similar to Marcus. I cannot help but wonder how much of Marcus' cultural background has contributed to his self-regulatory behaviour. Considering the fact that Marcus needed little intervention or support from those who care for him, and because he was not the type of child to instigate conflict with others, I witnessed that he was frequently ignored by educare staff who were concerning themselves with maintaining order and providing guidance to the other children. More questions began to surface: *If a child is independent and strong in self-discipline, listens to and obeys authoritative figures, and does not cause conflict, how do educarers ensure that the child is not ignored? No matter how positive the feedback is to parents about their children's behaviour, does the child have feelings of accomplishment and pride in his/her learning and skills? How do these feelings affect language development?*

Marcus is exposed not only to the English language, but also to French and the language of his parent's ethnic background, Chinese. Having an older sibling who is attending a French immersion elementary school, and studying rudimentary Spanish at home with her parents' guidance, Marcus is being encouraged by his family During my observations, I was amazed to see that he was able to code switch at such a young age. Having the ability to switch his behaviour, and even which language he is speaking, based on who he is talking to has placed Marcus in a position of exploration and understanding about his own language learning. His knowledge of, and participation in, the various literacies that he is exposed to, create an unexpected shift in my study. Uncertain as to the validity of the commonly held belief that infants and toddlers have a far greater understanding of language than we credit them with, Marcus proved to me that being multiliterate is not reserved for a specific age group or language/cognitive ability level (Hall, Larson, & Marsh, 2003). As a multilingual child, Marcus is not confused by his

exposure to various languages: they are a part of his identity, allowing him the opportunity to create and recreate meaning in his everyday life, and throughout the learning process.

The invaluable stories of Sara and Marcus, two children who on a daily basis, learn, structure, reflect and renew their experiences with different languages, are critical in developing an understanding of educare curricula: How it is established, what or who, influences it, and where it can go from here in becoming better suited to cope with requirements of the individual child, the goals of the families, and the responsibilities of the educarer. Finally, we have come to the Analysis section of this project, where the main themes that emerged from this research – the value of play in early childhood curricula, social development of the child, educarer self-perception and adult influence, and redefining literacy for multilingual children – are each examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

"The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their

motivations and the richer their experiences."

- Loris Malaguzzi, founder of Reggio Emilia

The Value of Play

Prior research in early childhood education and development is plentiful, with a

wealth of information focused on the value of play in stimulating early cognitive growth

(Erikson, 1963; Montessori, 1964; Piaget, 1952; 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). Throughout this

study, I noticed that the value of play in early child care and education became a central

theme worthy of further attention in this section. To reiterate, for the purpose of this

study, play is seen as a *social interaction*, a canon of meaning making for the individual

learner as he/she develops a sense of self, through emotionally-charged achievement and

realization of the world around him/her. Interpretations of developmental theory

emphasize play – autonomous choice of activity – as the primary mode in which young

children construct their understanding of the world (Jones & Reynolds, 1992). Social and

emotional development is connected to the *self-teaching* that takes place through play-

based curricula (Cadwell, 1997; Gillen & Hall, 2003; Reynolds & Jones, 1997). The

growing awareness of Vygotskian-derived theory has resulted in more concentration

being placed on the role of adults in facilitating growth of the child through the co-

construction of meaning. Play and imitation are important parts of Piaget's theory of child

development as well, where play through assimilation and accommodation interact in

order to unite the individual child to the constructed environment and the child's reality.

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Recent research provides convincing evidence of the importance of emotion and play in early development and learning, and about the role caregivers and affective environments have in supporting emotional competence (Hyson, 2004). Within an educare environment, the social interactions crucial to early cognitive development are tied to the expressions of emotion through social relationships, thereby directly influencing the design and implementation of effective curricula. A curriculum for infants and toddlers is also tied to the program's physical environment (i.e., the arrangement of space, the equipment, the objects and materials used) and the social environment (i.e., the number and types of people who are present, their methods of social-emotional interaction) because environmental exploration and play are major educational activities of young children (Bergen, et. al, 2001; Goffin & Wilson, 2001). The effectiveness of the educare environment is a critical aspect of curriculum development, and curriculum designers must be particularly attentive to such external influences.

Educare environments which provide materials, equipment, space, time, and understanding adults, allow for children to organize ideas, feelings, and fantasies into a plan for play. Such a constructivist model can offer the child – especially the multilingual child, for whom various types of communication may seem all of the sudden new and overwhelming – a safe place to work through the conflicts and relationships of daily life and experience. In the preschool years, children become truly constructive and symbolic, both in play and in language. Throughout this time, the social line of development progresses from associative play to true, co-operative play (Sheridan, Foley, & Radlinkski, 1995). It is during this time that the role and influence of a child's surroundings are most important.

In selecting a child care facility, many parents have flocked to the reassuring proclamations of early childcare success exhibited by such programs as Montessori and Reggio Emilia, which promise non-repressive *free-play* and compassionate educare for *all* children (Gandini & Edwards, 2001; Krogh & Slentz, 2001; Reynolds & Jones, 1997). These programs claim to allow a child to feel independent and successful in their control of learning through unstructured play, and yet it has been my intention to argue that the programs themselves are built upon a set of hidden curricula that are *very* structured in design and implementation by the adults involved. As discussed earlier, the Montessori method claims to allow children the right amount of freedom in learning, whereas the Reggio approach promotes learning through social interaction and relationships. Both curriculum frameworks lack a balanced approach to educare and although they claim to allow children "free choice" in the learning experience, their success and effectiveness is determined on how much "structure", or lack thereof, the educarers bring to the daily experiences. The High/Scope model used at the research site seems to have this balance, adult guidance and independent exploration merged with structured activities and opportunities for free play. Such a balance promotes flexibility, and I believe that this balanced approach to learning can best meet the literacy needs of a diverse infant/toddler population.

It is my belief that current preschool curricula are assembled with outcome-based objectives, including the organization of everything from the routines and materials accessed, and the languages spoken, to the literacies provided, and the very design of the educare environment. To label the successful learning process as "unstructured" and promoting "free play" as a sole means for appropriate child development is to ignore the social interactions taking place that affect learning. The respected curriculum models

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outlined earlier in Chapter II claim to incorporate autonomy *with* social interaction, but I argue that to characterize them as *free* or *unstructured* is to offer false representation. Multilingual children, like Sara and Marcus, need a balanced approach to their early learning in order to foster their development and comprehension of the world outside of the educare facility. Even though they may and should, have opportunity for autonomous cognitive growth, they are not learning in isolation, nor are their experiences and relationships paramount to independent play. In particular, the process of language learning and the communication of literacies, are an integral part of the lives of these children, where "structure" is used to help guide and nurture the cognitive journey.

At the research site, autonomous activity and exploration, or "free play", is encouraged by the educarers. However, once a trend or personal interest is witnessed, the educarers formulate and establish daily activities to meet the individual desires of the child, seeking out ways to alter, or "structure" methods of play, the educare environment, or learning materials as a means of fostering and catering to that particular trend. Designing a non-repressive, play-based curriculum for infants and toddlers has many advantages for early language learning. First, it would provide opportunities for children to learn language from each other through daily interaction. Aside from providing occasional support for comprehension, adult involvement would be kept to a minimal, thereby removing any subordination a child might feel in his or her attempts to gain knowledge and power through language (Scales, et al., 1991). For example, the development of specific social skills for the purpose of instruction or negotiation are best acquired through peer interaction where a child does not feel restricted by adult literacies, possibly creating the need to *switch* his/her language or behaviour due to a lack of confidence in using language.

Secondly, a play-based program would allow for children to practice what they have learned through imitation, as witnessed by the early development of speech by infants by using rhyme and rhythm, on through to preschoolers' organization of role play and beginning conversation. Although adults are involved to give situational guidance and support in this process, the child is empowered by what they have learned without the restrictions of adult literacy *rules*. For the multilingual child, this play is essential as it encourages the child to acquire and practice strategic language used in social relations where adults or more powerful partners do not control them (Scales, et al., 1991). In this way, children are free to organize thoughts and plan, determine meanings to better understand, and to negotiate or argue for their positions, in the ways *they* want, without being made to feel that they are wrong. For the multilingual child, this self-directed, empowering process of learning language through play is a valuable tool that can be carried with them throughout their entire learning journey.

When asked about their opinions of the value of play in the educare setting, the parents of Sara and Marcus were in agreement that it is critical to the appropriate delivery of cognitive and social instruction and opportunity:

Researcher: "How important do you feel *play* is for Sara and her language development?"

Parent: "I think that it is very important for children to play at this age. To get a head start, children need to have some structure, yes, in order to advance to new challenges and feel successful when they reach milestones. In Sara's class, I noticed that they get a lot of free play time, and she enjoys being with the older children...I think that because there is such a vast difference in their development from one month to the next, they should have a variety of challenging materials for those older children...um, the sign language is

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great, and we do it at home too…Flash cards and picture books would work well, help expand vocabulary, and Sara loves to look at pictures.

Researcher: "How important do you feel *play* is for Marcus and his language development?"

Parent: "I think his language development is on track…we were not sure whether to expose him to more than one language at such a young age, but we read about it and it worked well with our daughter…personally, I do not invest much in the use of sign language as they do here at the centre, but I know that Marcus uses it here…not really at home...but I trust that they know what they're doing. I know that playing is much more important to his development…my daughter was in Montessori but, I don't really think I should say. Well, the teachers were sitting in the office instead of playing and interacting with the children and that's not right. That's why I put Marcus somewhere different."

In both cases, the value of play – when balanced with structured activities and opportunities for independent exploration – was at the forefront of adult views on what is important to include in an infant and toddler curriculum. I argue that for multilingual children, this balance is absolutely imperative, as it allows for flexible curriculum guidelines, while promoting individualized cognitive and social skills, in a supportive and sensitive educare environment run by attentive and nurturing adults. The next section focuses on another main theme that emerged from this study: the influence of parents on children's early learning and their role in curriculum development.

Exposure & Parental Influence

The critical role of a child's parents, or guardians, cannot be overlooked within the workings of an educare environment. Often the primary caregivers in a child's first year, their influence and impact upon the social, mental, and physical well-being of a

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child is indisputable (McCain & Mustard, 1999). Schools have designated parent councils in order to better meet the needs of their students while simultaneously recognizing the goals and desires of their parents. Report cards, parent-teacher interviews, letters, volunteering, and phone calls are the common, everyday communication tools used in grade schools. One would expect then that educare facilities, in that they deal with the needs of very young children, at various developmental stages, and at a time of unsurpassed growth and opportunity in learning, would have similar parental advisory groups organized for their essential input in the lives of their children. Unfortunately, aside from paying fees and asking questions about their child's basic needs, parents remain an untapped resource. Aside from completing daily logs and recording anecdotal notes which I observed the educarers doing at the research site, communication between the parent/guardian and the educare staff/facility was minimal.[12]

Focused mainly on the basic developmental needs of the child, I noticed that communication between the parent and the facility is limited at the research site to food requirements, health concerns, and observations based on reaching physical and mental milestones such as walking and talking. This is not to say that evaluation of these elements of physical and social well-being are not important; however, I noticed that there was a distinct lack of attention paid to assessment of cognitive abilities, and in particular, language development. Although I did witness educarers assisting both the infants and toddlers with speech and vocabulary, there was no distinct method established, or perhaps it was simply not used, for recording such progress. Upon further investigation, I learned that such procedures and guidelines do exist. Unfortunately, they

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[12] This is not to claim that parents/guardians are discouraged from communicating with the child care centre, as noted from registration brochure: "We want you to feel welcome and supported in our joint effort and to talk with us on a regular basis".

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are not used unless a parent distinctly requests a formal assessment be completed for his or her child.

Following the interviews I conducted with the parents of Sara and Marcus, I was confused by how little they were involved in the day-to-day activities of the educare facility. Both sets of parents spoke very highly of the staff and seemed confident in their abilities as educarers. There was a general feeling of trust and respect for the educare profession, bordering at times on parents feeling somewhat *out of place* to comment on the cognitive needs of their children. However, when I asked them about what activities, learning materials and routines they thought were beneficial, or could be beneficial, to their children's literacy learning, they seemed just as qualified to design and deliver appropriate curricula as their parenting counterparts:

Researcher: "What kinds of activities do you think would help Sara to communicate and help with her language development?"

Parent: "Well, she loves to read, so books are a definite must-have. She loves the pictures and can sit for a long time going through them...I'm sure with help from the teachers, she would be able to learn a lot of words. She also needs more stimulation, and one-on-one time with adults to talk with her, and more exposure to older kid toys...I don't want her to get bored because she is almost ready for the toddler room and much of what they have in her room is for babies. But I'm sure they know what they're doing in there...they say she's doing fine, developmentally."

As part of the High/Scope preschool curricula, assessment instruments – such as the Child Observation Record (C.O.R.) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (E.C.E.R.S.) – are used to help the educarers and parents to better understand each

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child's development.[13] I found it very interesting that when I asked the staff at the research site about these documents, I was shown only a C.O.R. booklet, published in 1992 by the High/Scope Press. I was disturbed a little by the feelings of being an *outsider*. Later, I was told by Liz, an educarer in Toddler Blue, the possible reason why the documents were outdated and therefore, not willingly divulged to me:

"We don't really use them if we don't have to", she said. "...You know, only if there's a problem that we suspect with a child's physical development, or parents ask, that sort of thing. Mainly, we bring them out only when we need documented proof for the parents that their child id not doing well in the program...otherwise, it just gets put on the back burner. I don't think anyone uses them consistently, like everyday. We have our own anecdotal notes and record sheets that we use to communicate daily with parents." When I asked to see a sample of those documents, I was met by hesitation again.

"Well, they're kinda personal, only between the staff and the parent. Maybe Sue (the centre supervisor at the time of my study) can give you some more information."

Throughout this study, I quickly became aware of how I was viewed as the researcher. For certain requests, I was met with cooperation. I was okay, an *insider*. While for others, I was met with uncertainty and mistrust, particularly by the parents, even though I am a parent as well. I found that a similar uncertainty existed between the parents and the educarers. I find that it is rare that educare facilities purposely seek out the formal counsel or involvement of parents, particularly with regard to the design and implementation of their curriculum and daily teaching practices. From my observations, this was not due to the fact that they were not willing to be more involved in their

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[13] The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation has many assessment tools, evaluation and training materials available for sale to educators.

children's care, but more so because the educarers themselves do not always ask for the parents input, as can be seen from the following interview excerpt:

Researcher: "Do you attempt to involve parents in what you do here?"

Educarer: "Well, yeah. Parents can be very helpful, but they really don't know what we're going through here...like, they don't always know about the *educational* side of daycare, or they look at us like we're just here to baby sit while they work, as though our jobs are somehow easier than theirs, and so... Sometimes, when we've tried to involve them, they can't be bothered and in a way, it's better because they have too much emotion invested...they trust us, I guess. I think it's a time issue, too. "

R: "Do you believe that parents have something valuable to contribute?"

E: "Absolutely, but it's almost like they don't care...like, they care about their kids of course, but they don't really pay too much attention to what goes on here, unless there's a problem, you know, like little Johnny had a tantrum, or little Jane hates peas, or their behind on their fee payments...it sounds trivial, but sometimes I don't feel that their concern goes beyond that."

The negative connotations are hard to ignore in the above excerpt which exemplifies what is essentially a relationship barrier between the parent and the educarer. Overall, parents trust the educarer, a trained professional that they must allow to take over in parenting their children. However, the educarer feels as though her role in the childrens' lives is not fully realized or appreciated and that her responsibilities are frequently misunderstood by the public (Mayfield, 2001). This promotes a detachment between the primary caregivers of the child and can seriously affect the ways in which children are viewed and approached in their learning, both at home and within the educare facility, with the possibility of negative long-term effects. If the multilingual

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child is to be fully acknowledged and effectively supported through the early learning process, I argue that such detachment must be eliminated through collaborative efforts in curricula design. A supportive parent will cooperate for the sake of the child. Most educarers would do the same, but also for the sake of their profession as well. The following pages contain a discussion of a third and final, central theme to this study: the role of the educarer, and how self-perception and reflection have an effect on curriculum, pedagogy, and the early childhood education and care profession.

<u>Self-Perception & Reflection – The Role of the Educarer</u>

Early childhood educators invest in the critical importance of their work. Research shows that studies in early childhood education at the post-secondary level are a key factor in quality programming (Mayfield, 2001). Yet, an ongoing concern in early childhood education and care is the perception of the field as a profession – from the perspective of both the public, and of early childhood educators themselves (Mayfield, 2001). In this study, I found that the responses of the educarers to my question of *how they see themselves* was met with contention and debate, and I noticed that the response from Rebecca, a recent E.C.E. graduate working in the infant room, differed significantly from Christina's, perhaps due to her seasoned twenty-six year career:

Researcher: "Do you see yourself as a teacher?"

Christina: "Yes, definitely…through the years, I've faced criticism, been called a babysitter, you know…to which my response has always been a cordial, *Well, I have yet to be employed as a babysitter.*"

Researcher: "Do you see the term educarer applying to your role in what you do?"

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Christina: "I would like to be called an educarer, yes, but I think that most teachers are. I think there's not much of a difference for us, all of us, including elementary teachers, and parents, we are all educarers.

Researcher: "Do you see yourself as a teacher?"

Rebecca: "Absolutely, absolutely...well, I have to qualify that though, not always in the infant room. Here we're more about meeting needs and supporting learning, like in the High/Scope philosophy, and less about cognitive instruction...more child-directed and less teacher-directed."

Researcher: "Do you see the term educarer as applying to your role in what you do here?"

Rebecca: "Sure...because we are caring and educating. A lot of public see us as babysitters, but that's because that's what we used to be as nursery schools. But not here, because we're like Montessori. We don't just change diapers...some don't see us like that, even teachers don't. I'm not sure that will change, even though we're trained just as well as they are, just different."

Educare staff are interested in catering to the needs of the children through the development and implementation of appropriate curricula, listening to the goals and desires of the families, and the creation of a healthy and safe educare environment. However, as educators they are also very self-aware, continuously reflecting on their roles, both inside and outside of the educare facility. Attempting to designate themselves as educators – not simply babysitters – they desire recognition and praise from their employers; the parents, guardians, and the general public. Due to the diversity of the field of early childhood education and care, the potential roles for the early childhood educator are also varied and diverse; nurturer, manager, caregiver, facilitator, teacher, and professional, are just some of the terms used to refer to the particular functions and

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behaviours that teachers are expected to perform and exhibit (Mayfield, 2001). There is a need for a revision in our understanding of the traditional definition of the early childhood educator in order to build esteem, recognition, and appreciation of their roles as educarers.

A recent O.E.C.D. Report on the State of Early Child Care in Canada notes that provincial/territorial training and educational requirements for the staff in child care centres range from none to a requirement that two-thirds of the staff must have a college diploma in early childhood (Friendly & Beach, 2006). The pedagogic responsibilities and qualifications of the educarer are often overlooked by the public and as such, educarers may experience self-deprecation on a daily basis, both inside and outside of their place of employment. Deficiencies in public funding and a lack of governmental support only serve to promulgate the devaluation of the early childcare arena, resulting in an overall lack of respect for the vital role they play in nurturing the children of our future.

These feelings of disempowerment were seen to have an affect on the educarers under study. I noticed that educarers in the infant room were very attentive to the basic needs of the children and followed the schedules that were set by the parent/family. However, as mentioned earlier, they did not give much feedback to the parents (perhaps because those that were employed at the time of the study were recent graduates of the E.C.E. program and did not have as much work experience?) and they did not give any recommendations to the parents as to what to work on or try at home with the children, unless they were directly asked. Many educarers feel that the public's perception of the importance of what they do is inaccurate, and yet much of the activity witnessed at the research site seemed minimal and lunch room conversations reflected dissatisfaction with how their work is perceived by others.

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Daily documentation that I witnessed was plentiful, and helpful when the educarers and/or parents did not have time to stay and talk during drop-off/pick-up times. However, most of what was documented centered on meeting the daily physical needs of the child. Perhaps due to the feelings of inadequacy, or out of fear of the notions of the parent as employer, the educarers seemed to maintain the basic requirements without going too far in educational delivery and assessment. Many believe that for infants and toddlers, such diagnostic support is pre-emptive and should be left to the elementary school teachers in the formal schooling years. This is unfortunate and has a detrimental affect on the pedagogic principles of the educare profession. For Sara, I feel that her parents would have benefited from hearing more about her beginning use of language as they are uncertain in their plans for her educational future involving other languages.

I found that the educarers in the toddler rooms were more attentive to the needs of the children in their classrooms in comparison to those in the infant room. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the children themselves required more attention from them as they move from dependency to autonomous learning and exploration. Also, with the development and use of speech, children in this age group often require conversational attention from adults around them – this is, after all, how they learn to converse (Meier, 2004). Frequently, the staff in the infant room talked to one another (about their weekend plans, what new word Jenny was trying to say, etc...) as opposed to talking to/with the children, to foster dialogue and phonetic awareness. Even though they effectively communicated with each other regarding the children, scheduling, and goings-on at the facility, which is absolutely essential, I found that the staff could have used their time more productively with the children in helping to develop their language abilities, as is outlined in the High/Scope philosophy of the educare facility. As mentioned earlier, a

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common view of the infant educarers is that language is not the focus at this early stage of *pre-literate* development, and that language is something the toddler educarers *did*, contrary to what has been reported on early brain and language development (Bergen, et al., 2001; Hall, et al., 2003; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Meier, 2004).

Conversation that occurred between the educarers in the toddler rooms dealt directly with the welfare of the children or specific concerns brought to attention for that particular day. (e.g.; "Johnny's mom said he had a rough night last night so he may not be up for a lot of excitement today."). Throughout the interviews with the toddler room staff, when asked about what activities they would design/implement for the children with regards to language, they repeatedly told me that "at this age level, everything that they do on a daily basis is a *language* or *literacy* activity". I agree with this statement, but only to a certain extent. It is true that through their everyday conversing, the toddlers are exposed to language and are given the opportunity to *use* language in ways that they feel comfortable to them. However, I feel that they are being disserviced by the facility whose curriculum espouses rudimentary writing and reading activities to be done with the educarer on a daily basis, particularly when the parents believe that this structured language focus going beyond story time, is taking place (High/Scope, 2000; 2005).

In no way do I aim to dismiss the care the children do receive, for these educarers are very attentive to the basic needs of the children. It is my view that through a more collaborative approach, consisting of clear communication between parents and educarers, early language preparation will not be taken for granted as *simply occurring* through normal conversation. For multilingual children like Sara and Marcus, who are dealing with creating and recreating meaning in more than one language, specific attention to their developing literacy needs would be beneficial for all those involved. The

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cases of Marcus and Sara serve as evidence of the essential preliminary goals for those involved in the creation of appropriate play-based educare curricula for multilingual infants and toddlers. As we observe the increasing shift in the ethnic make-up of children enrolled in child care facilities, the experiences explored throughout this paper no longer seem unique. The educare curricula of the future must be collaboratively designed, adequately funded, and culturally sensitive, as it will be necessary to incorporate more than minimum policy guidelines and undervalued professional training if the cognitive needs of our children are to be fulfilled and cultivated. The educare of the future must be revisited, remedied, and redefined to meet the individualized developmental needs of children.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"If education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere

transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it in the bettering of man's

future. For what is the use of transmitting knowledge if the individual's

total development lags behind?"

- Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952)

Implications of Policy & Practice

On March 19, 2007, the federal government announced the budget plans for the

upcoming year. It is not surprising then that newspapers across the country were filled

with political promises regarding the reinstatement of child care funding the week prior to

the announcement, while simultaneously focusing on the possibility of a spring election

instead of the fall. If educare in Canada is to take a front seat with policy makers and

practitioners as an area of focus and concentration for quality and accessibility

improvements, there are essential steps that must be taken to aid in the re-evaluation of

preschool curricula. Only then, through active participation from government, parents,

educarers and the community, can we hope to create the necessary improvements to a

lagging system of early childhood education and care.

By examining the effects of curriculum at the early stages of curriculum

development, and whether or not early childhood education and care programs have an

impact on future literacy progression for multilingual children, the results of this research

could point further toward the possible need for structural and systemic changes in

Canadian educare settings. Based on the findings of this study, I have concentrated on

five main factors affecting policy and practice that are in desperate need of change if we

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are to meet improvement goals; policy review, adequate funding, community involvement and public cooperation, valuing the educare profession, and the redefining of literacy in early learning . These key elements are the focus of this section. Although they have been examined throughout this paper, they will be summarized here as recommendations for what I argue should be the future direction of educare curricula in Canada.

First, there is a desperate need for policy review and adaptation. Guidelines and recommendations that are currently in use are out of date, too broadly defined, not easily monitored nor appropriately evaluated, and fall short of adequately addressing issues of diversity in early learning (O.E.C.D., 2006). Starting Strong (2006) is a recent comparative analysis of policy developments and innovative approaches to early child care and education across the globe, which notes particular strategies for consideration regarding policy review and revision. One such proposal notes that current early childhood education guidelines must be based on clearer ideas at government level of the qualifications required by staff to engage effectively with rapidly changing social and family conditions. This includes designing effective curricula that is not solely based on a schedule of daily routines and the minimum requirements of the *Day Nurseries Act* (1990). For the multilingual learners in this study, educare policy should address not only the basic, physical developmental needs of the child but also the challenges they may face as they are exposed to a variety of literacies throughout their cognitive development as well. The current needs and goals of the individual facilities, when coupled with the influx of multi-literate children with diverse needs, set in motion a re-evaluative process for early child care and education researchers and policy makers. In order to meet the practical goals of educare facilities while recognizing the ever-changing dynamics of the child population, proper policies and procedures must be put in place, monitored and

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assessed frequently, and continually adjusted to meet the needs and goals of all those involved.

Secondly, there is the issue of funding. Linked not only to accessibility, program quality improvements, and the potential for a re-evaluation of the educare profession, funding is essential to creating and maintaining public support for the early childhood education and care arena (Bergen, et al., 2001; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Prochner & Howe, 2000). The effect of monetary support for preschool programming is threefold. Primarily, it aids in the design of quality, accessible child care spaces. It also promotes respect for the child care profession, building upon educarer esteem which can serve to enrich the experiences of children enrolled in educare facilities. When educarers value themselves and their work, the results can be seen in how they physically, emotionally, and cognitively support the children in their care. Finally, this monetary support emerges throughout the community as it translates into active parental/public participation, creating opportunities for and encouraging further research in the area.

This public support is a third area for consideration. Obtaining involvement from the local communities cannot be overemphasized as a critical step in appropriate curricula design. By investing in the future of educare practice, the development of parent and public councils can benefit the creation of quality preschool programming. As a result, one can then witness the building and maintenance of constructive relationships that should exist between educarers, parents, supervisors, and the public. This cooperative planning process would in turn add value to the educare profession, increasing feelings of self-worth and esteem amongst those who educare, resulting in the inevitable filtering down of well-rounded, individualized and compassionate education and care for our

multilingual children (Mayfield, 2001; Shipley, 1998). This fourth area for consideration is crucial to the creation of curricula and early child care and education research that is innovative in its approach to future goals, while still being shaped by the recognition of embedded cultural and taken-for-granted thinking (O.E.C.D., 2006).

Finally, these four steps merge to form the ideal educare environment for multilingual learners, as educarers learn to re-evaluate their current understandings of what it means to children to be literate at such a young age. Creating positive literacy learning environments consists of a movement towards greater contact between early childhood centres and schools, and a necessary evolution in the use of national curricular frameworks in the early child care sector (O.E.C.D., 2006). This would build upon a national emphasis on the importance of literacy teaching and learning, opening the doors for the formation of new early childhood discourses. It would remind us that education does not function in a vacuum and that pedagogical practices and curriculum design and implementation, are influenced by forces within the wider external environment, including the availability of high quality early childhood education (Makin, 2003). These changes are crucial to the development of infant and toddler curricula that are attuned to cultural goals and values, educarer ability and respect, parental involvement and understanding, and in particular, the overall developmental needs of individual children.

Many researchers and facility supervisors believe that change needs to come from the government initially, in the form of program funding while others feel that the onus lies with people at the local level, namely parents, educarers, and program planners, to generate effective change (Bergen, et al., 2001; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Page, 2000). Moving top-down or using a grass-roots approach is not the issue. If society does not begin to take responsibility for the development and well-being of its children from the

very early years, the opportunity for investment in laying the foundations for effective education may be lost. The implications of changes to policy and practice outlined above can provide for limitless expansion of our understanding of the diverse needs and aspirations of young children and eventually move Canada forward in redefining educare.

Reconceptualizing Educare

The findings of this study point towards a movement for future research into the development of infant/toddler curriculum that reflects both care and education. To integrate care and education in praxis is a professional skill that requires both initial and ongoing training and research (O.E.C.D., 2006). The ability of early childhood professionals to consider their feelings towards the future of educare and attitudes towards their roles in shaping the future is fundamental to the effective translation of policy into practice in early childhood curriculum frameworks (Page, 2000). Despite increased awareness that practitioners must respond to the impact of culture and language on the educational process, teaching materials and curricula that adequately address diversity remain limited. Although educarers' curriculum practices are based on their knowledge of young children's development and learning, they are also influenced by the values, cultural practices, and caregiving contexts of the children's families (Bergen, et al., 2001). In addition, the pedagogical implications of low educarer esteem cannot be ignored as such views can play a critical part in undermining the ways in which educarers see themselves and the importance of their work.

Educare professionals must develop a type of *skilled dialogue* to serve as the core for nearly any early childhood curriculum (Barrera & Corso, 2003). This dialogue must be open, consistent, and accessible to all those involved, including the children within the educare facility, regardless of background. Educarers must be aware of the different

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dialogues needed to address the reality of cultural diversity, seeing it not only as an *area* to be studied and understood, but as a fundamental ingredient in relationships and communication. Skilled dialogue does not negate the value of specific knowledge; however, it emphasizes the need to anchor such knowledge in concrete and particular circumstances and relationships with multilingual children and their families (Barrera & Corso, 2003). Such dialogue would also be influenced by the mainstream educare discourse: as long as educarers remain cognizant of the power structures involved in educare, and remain open to exploring how relationships and communication can be improved through such understanding, high quality educare programming can be made available to children from various backgrounds.

In urban, rural, and suburban locations, the makeup of both educarer staff and families are beginning to reflect the myriad of cultures and viewpoints present in contemporary society (Bergen, et al., 2001). This diversity calls for educarers to become more sensitive to their own biases of the *unknown*. By making a conscious effort to use terms such as educare and educarer, we can create a comfortable arena for early child care design and research. Revisiting words like curriculum, literacy, and diversity while further exploring the meanings associated with them, creates an opportunity for open-minded dialogue between parents, educarers, and policy makers. This open dialogue may call into question who, if anyone is, or should be, viewed as *expert* in the field of educare? Perhaps the re-evaluation of early childhood care and education should consist of a renewed approach to *who knows best* where instead of competing for who should be most influential in curricula planning, development, and implementation, *all* parties involved see themselves as master players and experts in their own right. This re-creation of the educare environment could spur further re-evaluation of the possible challenges,

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and opportunities, multilingual children may face on a daily basis. Recreating the early childhood education discourse is essential to preparing young children from all backgrounds for a complex world of educational challenges. Accessible educare environments can become cornucopias of opportunity for abundant learning. They can provide a podium for change of societal priorities and to empower families regarding the education and care of preschool children. Overall, the successful future of educare would allow children to develop special skills and acquire a variety of literacies with which to better understand the world of which they are a part.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Observation Guide & Checklist

During the observation period, attention was given not only to the specific

children involved in the study as they interact with those around them, but also to the

child care staff, as they developed and implement infant/toddler curricula. The following

is a broad list of what was concentrated on during the observation periods:[14]

*Please note that although they are categorized, certain behaviours/elements from either

group may overlap.*

Infants

✓ **Emotion and eye gaze:** recognition of feelings, smiling, laughing, following
gaze, seeking attention/approval, responses to a variety toys/pictures and sound or
voice tone/inflection, recognition of or reaction to different people.

✓ **Communication:** voicing need for assistance or attention, mimicking sounds or
behaviours, pointing, babbling or word use, displaying awareness of differences in
a variety of sounds and expressions.

✓ **Gestures:** handling of objects, showing objects to others, communicating through
hand gestures, pointing to objects/sharing his/her interest in objects with others.

✓ **Understanding:** recognition of his/her name, names of objects, simple commands
or instructions, with or without gestures.

✓ **Object use:** interest level in playing with a variety of objects, mimicking object
use or role play.

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[14] The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation publishes its own materials for observation recording
and assessment (COR – the Child Observation Record) for children between the ages of 2 ½ - 6 years.

Toddlers

✓ **Emotion and eye gaze:** recognition of a variety of feelings, following gaze, watching others to see if he/she is being observed, seeking attention/approval, responses to a variety toys/pictures and sound or voice tone/inflection, recognition of different people and their varying characteristics.

✓ **Communication:** voicing need for assistance or attention, mimicking voice tone, sounds or behaviours, pointing with speech, word use and inflection in English or another language, awareness of differences in language sounds/tones or ways of speaking, attempting to elicit laughter/smiles from others.

✓ **Gestures:** handling of objects, showing objects to others, communicating through hand/body gestures, pointing to objects with speech, sharing his/her interest in objects with others.

✓ **Understanding:** wider word or name recognition, understanding or giving simple commands or instructions, with or without gestures, mimicking actions/voice while participating in other activities, reactions to the interactions of others, recognition of the feelings of others.

✓ **Object use:** interest level in playing with a variety of objects, mimicking object use or role play, attempts in sharing/turn-taking with gestures or verbal communication.

Child Care Staff
Although the child care providers were not directly observed, I have listed some of the aspects I will consider when watching the children presented in the cases interact with them:

✓ Overall interaction with children
✓ Verbal communication and gesturing
✓ Responsiveness and awareness
✓ Development, modification and implementation of activities
✓ Reinforcement
✓ Improvisation (looking for new ways to teach/challenge on the spot)
✓ Communication with colleagues and families
✓ Daily routines and methods

APPENDIX B

<u>Interview Guide</u>

   The following questions served as prompts in order to facilitate the interview

process. While they were not all asked/answered directly as shown, they will provided

the interviewer with a frame of reference during the interviews.

Educarers:

  1.) Why did you decide to become a child care provider?

  2.) Do you see yourself as a teacher? Why or why not?

  3.) How do you see the term *educarer* as it applies to your role?

  4.) As an *educarer*, what components of the curriculum are you responsible for?

  5.) How are the daily activities that are set for the children developed and implemented?

  6.) How are the parents informed about these activities?

  7.) What particular aspects of the established curriculum focus on language development?

  8.) How are these activities adapted to meet the children's individual needs?

  9.) Are the children evaluated in any way?

  10.) What assessment tools are used to evaluate language development?

  11.) How, if at all, are language activities adapted for children who struggle with (English) language development?

  12.) What types of activities do you feel would help children with English language development?

  13.) How is free- and/or structured-play used to facilitate language development?

  14.) Is there anything that you thought I might ask but did not? Is there anything that you would like to discuss more?

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Parents/Guardians:

1.) Tell me a little bit about your child. How old is he/she? What kinds of things does your child like to do? How long has he/she been enrolled at the daycare?

2.) What language(s) do you speak at home with your child?

3.) Do you feel that your child is able to communicate easily in English? Is this important to you?

4.) Do you feel that your child is at a disadvantage/advantage in the daycare because of language differences?

5.) Have you noticed any problems with your son/daughter being able to participate in activities with other children (at daycare or other places) because of language differences?

6.) How well do you feel that your child's language is developing?

7.) What kinds of activities do you think would help your child to communicate in English?

8.) As a parent, how important do you think it is for children to play? Why?

9.) In the best of all possible worlds, what is the one thing that you would like to see changed or done differently?

APPENDIX C

Environment Assessment Tools & Checklists

Many of the elements that were included in the development of this environment
assessment checklist can be found in the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale*
(Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005) which was consulted in my design of effective
environmental assessment tools. In planning daily activities, the research site also
referred to various conditions within the *E.C.E. Rating Scale*, which is very similar to the
High/Scope Environment Assessment Guideline documents used and viewed at the site.

		1		2		3	
Space & Equipment							
Language & Understanding							
Relationships & Interaction							
Activities – Fine & Gross Motor Skills							
Program Structure							
Parents & Staff							
Personal Care, Health & Safety							

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APPENDIX D

<u>Documentation Samples & Communication Forms</u>

The following pages consist of reproductions of a variety of forms and documents that are used in the research facility for the purposes of monitoring and reporting behaviour and milestones in learning, communicating with staff and parents, and assessing the cognitive development of the children. Although most of the documents are assessment tools and checklists currently available through the High/Scope Foundation, the samples shown here were those that were disclosed to me by administrative staff at the research facility. I feel that it is essential to include these forms as examples to better illustrate my argument in the analysis and concluding sections of this report, regarding the importance of documentation and reflexive assessment both for the children and the educarers in helping to effectively shape appropriate curriculum for early educare in the future.

High/Scope Infant and Toddler Key Experiences

(06/09/99 — Draft)

Sense of Self
- Expressing initiative
- Distinguishing "me" from others
- Solving problems encountered in exploration and play
- Doing things for one's self

Social Relations
- Forming attachments to primary caregivers
- Building relationships with other adults
- Building relationships with peers
- Expressing emotions
- Showing empathy toward the feelings and needs of others
- Developing social play

Creative Representation
- Imitating and pretending
- Exploring building and art materials
- Responding to and identifying pictures and photographs

Movement
- Moving parts of one's body (head turning, grasping, kicking)
- Moving one's whole body (rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, balancing)
- Moving with objects
- Moving to music

Communication and Language
- Listening and responding
- Communicating nonverbally
- Participating in communication give-and-take

Communication and Language (continued)
- Communicating verbally
- Exploring picture books and magazines
- Enjoying stories, rhymes, and songs

Exploring Objects
- Exploring objects with one's mouth, hands, feet, eyes, ears, and nose
- Discovering object permanency
- Exploring and noticing how things are the same or different
- Exploring and noticing how things can be grouped together

Early Number
- Experiencing "more"
- Experiencing one-to-one correspondence
- Using number words

Space
- Exploring and noticing the location of objects
- Observing people and things from different perspectives
- Filling and emptying, putting in and taking out
- Taking things apart and fitting them together

Time
- Anticipating familiar events
- Noticing the beginnings and endings of time intervals
- Experiencing "fast" and "slow"
- Repeating an action to make something happen: experiencing cause and effect

INFANT ROOM
DAILY SCHEDULE

7:30 – 8:00	ARRIVAL, GREETING CHILDREN AND PARENTS
8:00 – 9:00	MORNING SNACK/CLEAN-UP, LAUNDRY
9:00 – 9:30	DIAPER CHECK AND NAPS IF NEEDED
9:30 – 10:45	PLAY TIME
10:45 – 11:00	DIAPER CHECK
11:00 – 12:15	LUNCH/CLEANUP
12:15 – 2:00	SPECIAL ACTIVITIES, WALKS, OUTSIDE, ETC. (1:00 – 1:30 DIAPER CHECK/NAPS)
2:00 – 2:30	AFTERNOON SNACK/CLEAN-UP
3:00 – 5:30	WORKTIME, OPEN CHOICE WITH SHELF/FLOOR TOYS/NAPS, UNTIL PARENTS ARRIVE

NOTE:
ALL INFANTS WILL BE ON THEIR OWN SCHEDULES AS DISCUSSED WITH THEIR FAMILIES. DURING MORNING SCHEDULE FOR EXAMPLE, INFANTS MAY BE SLEEPING AT TIMES. THIS SCHEDULE IS DESIGNED TO BE FLEXIBLE AND TO ACCOMMODATE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.
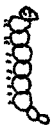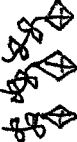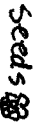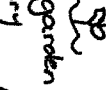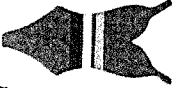
* IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER, CHECK THE SIGN OUT SHEET ON THE OFFICE DOOR, AS OTHER ACIVITIES WILL BE PLANNED FOR CHILDREN TO MEET THEIR NEEDS AT THE TIME I.E.:

1. THE SCHEDULE WILL BE CONTINUED AS IT IS SIMPLY OMITTING OUTSIDE TIME OR SHORTENING IT, AND REPLACING IT WITH GYM, AND/OR LIBRARY TIME

2. OUTSIDE TIME MAY BE REPLACED OR SHORTENED AND ADDITIONAL WORK TIME ADDED INSTEAD

*** *SWIM* IS AVAILABLE_____, SO PART OF THE GROUP CAN SWIM, INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING THE REGUAR SCHEDULE – SEE THE SIGN OUT SHEET ON THE OFFICE DOOR. ONLY PART OF THE GROUP MAY SWIM AND ONLY IF THEY HAVE A VOLUNTEER TO ASSIST

Revised Sept. 23/05

April 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	Happy Spring			Please Welcome our E-C-E Student Nav. March 28 – April 22nd. Kites for Small group	*Show + Share — 1	2
Spring ahead — Daylight Saving time — 3	Outdoor Walk through landscaping + green houses — 4	We will plant seeds — 5	We will fly our kites outside — 6	parachute games — 7	Show + Share — 8	9
10	Hungry Caterpiller story — 11	Grocery Store on the play ground — 12	Butterfly Small group — 13	Swim 10-11 — 14	Show + Share — 15	16
17	Barney's garden story — 18	Bird Watching — 19	20	Swim 10-11 — Happy Birthday Braxton — 21	Show + Share — 22	23
24	We will fill our bird feeder — 25	Paper airplanes — 26	27	Swim 10-11 — Nav's last day — 28	"Are you my Mother?" Book and gummy worm treats — Show + Share — 29	30

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TODDLER
DAILY SCHEDULE

7:30 – 9:00 AM	ARRIVAL/SNACK/WORKTIME/DIAPER CHANGES
9:00 – 10:00 AM	OUTDOOR TIME
10:00-10:45 AM	WORK TIME/ DIAPERS
10:45 – 10:55 AM	CLEAN UP
10:55 – 11:15 AM	CIRCLE
11:15-12:00 PM	LUNCH
12:00-2:00PM	REST TIME
2:00-2:30PM	WAKE UP/SHOES ON/ DIAPER CHANGES/WASHROOM
2:30-3:00 PM	SNACK TIME
3:00-3:30 PM	SMALL GROUP/WORKTIME
3:30-4:30 PM	WORKTIME
4:00-4:30PM	DIAPER CHANGES/WASHROOM
4:30-5:30PM	OUTDOOR PLAY

We will be going SWIMMING every _____. Some of the children will be go swimming (alternating weeks with all the children),or all of the children might go swimming, it depends on the number of children and the number of volunteers available.

In the event of inclement weather and the classroom is unable to go outside, one of the following will occur:
The schedule will extend its day omitting outside time.
The outdoor time will be replaced with additional work time.
The classroom may go to the gym (if available).

Revised Sept. 22, 2005

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CHILD CARE CENTRE
MINOR INCIDIENT REPORT

NAME:_____DATE:_____TIME:_____

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:_____

INCIDENT   BITE   ☐

                       BUMP   ☐

                       SCRATCH ☐

CIRCUMSTANCE:_____

_____

_____

_____

FIRST AID:_____

_____

_____

_____

SIGNED:_____SIGNED:_____

      (Supervisor & Staff)   (Parent or Guardian)

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CHILD CARE CENTRE
INFANT DAILY RECORD

Name: _____ In: _____ Out: _____

Date: _____ Diapers Needed: _____ Wipes Needed: _____

Comments on Arrival: _____
_____

How was your child's night? _____
_____

How much did your child eat last night? _____
_____

When did your child eat last? _____
_____

What time did your child wake up? _____
_____

Medication Reminder: _____
_____
_____

DIAPERING

	TIME	VOID	DRY	STOOL	COMMENTS
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

ACTIVITIES

_____
_____

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Child Care Services
Classroom:_____
Parent Sign In/Out Record
* Required by the Ministry of Community and Social Services

Today's Date: *2004*

Full Name of Child	Time In	Parent/Guardian Signature	Time Out	Parent/Guardian Signature

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Brain Development & Learning Outcomes

       The chart below was developed using information from early brain development

research, as noted in the McCain & Mustard Report (1999), and curriculum planning

documentation from the research site. It is my intent that this chart serve as a framework
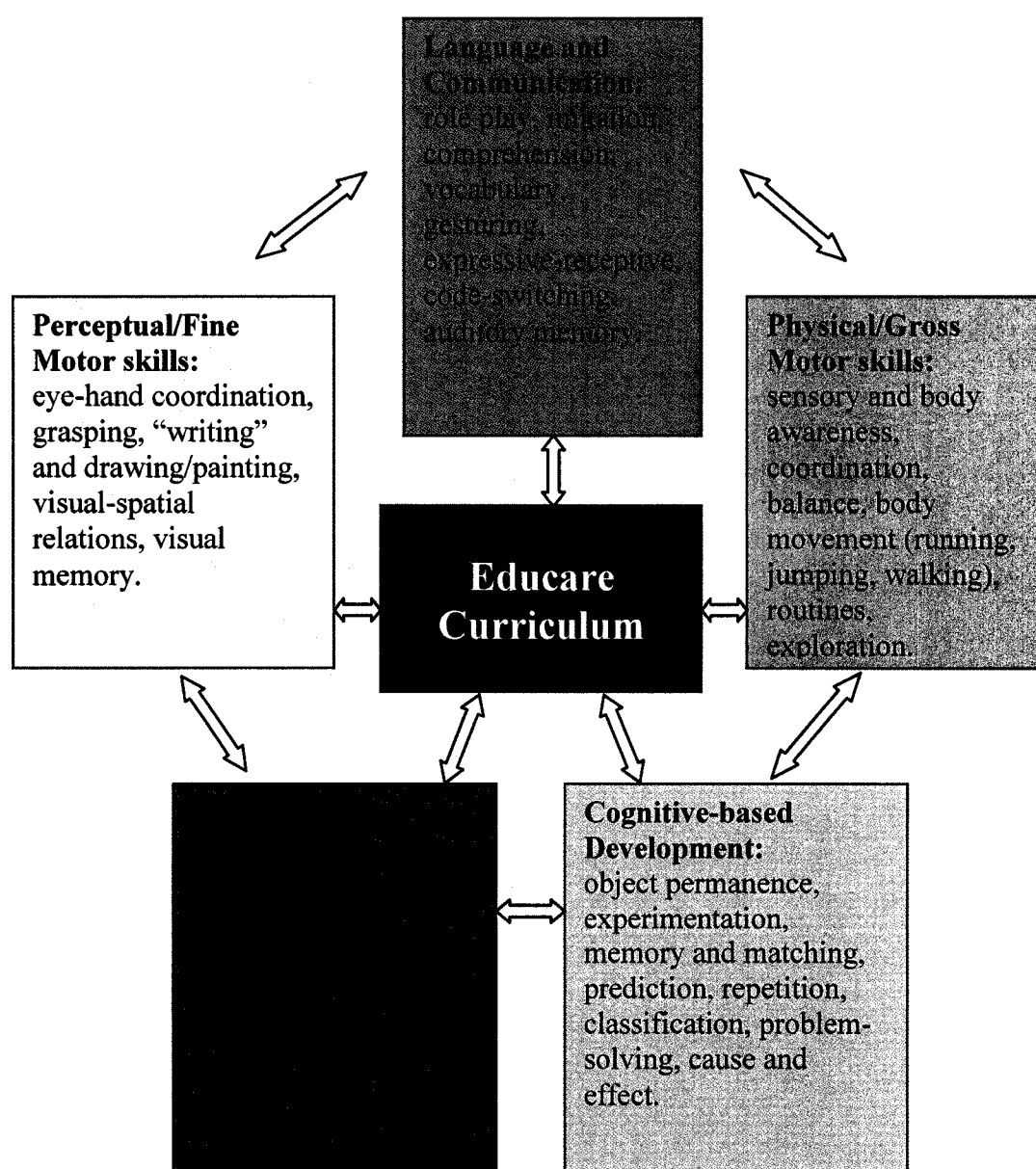
for clarifying the stages of development currently used in the design and implementation

educare curriculum at the research facility.

**Language and
Communication:**
role play, imitation,
comprehension,
vocabulary,
gesturing,
expressive/receptive,
code-switching,
auditory memory.

**Perceptual/Fine
Motor skills:**
eye-hand coordination,
grasping, "writing"
and drawing/painting,
visual-spatial
relations, visual
memory.

**Physical/Gross
Motor skills:**
sensory and body
awareness,
coordination,
balance, body
movement (running,
jumping, walking),
routines,
exploration.

**Educare
Curriculum**

**Cognitive-based
Development:**
object permanence,
experimentation,
memory and matching,
prediction, repetition,
classification, problem-
solving, cause and
effect.

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