

## A. PROJECT TITLE

Understanding Young Children's Career Development  
as a Developmental/Relational Process: Engaging  
Parents, Schools, and Community

## B. PROJECT PARTNERS

1. CERIC



2. Memorial University of Newfoundland



**Date of Submission:** October, 2017

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## C. THE PROJECT TEAM

1. **Dr. Mildred Cahill** (Principal Researcher) is a Professor in Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. She has worked in education for over 35 years as a teacher, counsellor, teacher-educator, and counsellor-educator. Her research includes issues in counselling, cultural diversity, career development, and programming for individuals, groups (including career drifters, children, youth, and adults in rural and remote contexts), and communities.
2. **Dr. Edith Furey** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. She is a K-12 educator with 28 years of experience as special education teacher, school administrator, school district and provincial program consultant for special education, and assistant school district director/CEO. Her post-secondary teaching, research, and writing have primarily focused in areas of exemplary programming practices for adolescents with exceptionalities.
3. **Sandra Taylor** (B.Sp.Ed., M.Ed.) and **Mary Kelsey** (B.Sp.Ed., M.Ed.), the Research Assistants working on this project, are highly skilled teachers/counsellors, who have more than 30 years of experience in education. Both Sandra and Mary have had distinguished careers in the areas of teaching, counselling, program planning, policy development, and professional development.

**Memorial University of Newfoundland:** As Newfoundland and Labrador's only university, Memorial is a multi-campus, multi-disciplinary, public, teaching and research university committed to excellence in everything we do. We strive to have national and global impact, while fulfilling our social mandate to provide access to university education for the people of the province and to contribute to the social, cultural, scientific, and economic development of Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond. <http://www.mun.ca/>

**CERIC:** CERIC is a charitable organization that advances education and research in career counselling and career development in order to increase the economic and social well-being of Canadians. It funds projects to develop innovative resources that build the knowledge and skills of diverse career professionals. <http://www.ceric.ca>

## **D. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **D.1. Need or Gap to Warrant Project**

This exploratory research aimed to understand the process and nature of young children's career development. The study was motivated by the need to address identified gaps in both developmental theory and practice of career development for preschool and kindergarten to grade three children, their parents, educators, and community. For example, two extensive literature reviews (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005; Watson & McMahon, 2005) identified the need to focus on the process of children's career development, and to embed children's career development within the context of children's social environment. Hence, researchers adopted the perspective that career development is an interactional developmental process situated within the larger context of family, school, and community, including the media (Watson & McMahon, 2005, p.129). While we know parents are important influences on children's career and educational development, more research is warranted on the nature of this influence. This study was intended to add to the academic discourse on the theory and practice of children's career development, and provide some assistance to key stakeholders involved in supporting career development/literacy in children. Additionally, it will help in the training of practitioners, counsellors, and teachers of young children in preschool, daycare, primary, and elementary schools.

### **D.2. How does this meet CERIC's mission, vision, and strategic priorities?**

This project was linked directly to the mission, vision, and objectives of CERIC and Memorial University. The researchers worked in partnership with CERIC to address significant gaps identified by the applicants in the theoretical and practical applications of career development for young children, their parents, and educators. CERIC has delineated "early intervention" to assist children's career development as one of their research domains. The Faculty of Education, Memorial University, emphasizes early intervention throughout its undergraduate and graduate programs, particularly within the counselling program. Both current research and practice spheres within career development recognize the deficit around young children's career development. This research acknowledged and engaged parents and educators for the significant roles they play in informing and directing young children's' career development. CERIC recognizes the need for a cross-sectorial professional service community of counsellors and parents in promoting career counselling research. Memorial University also fosters a culture of connectedness and community building to address local and international needs. Accordingly, our research goal for dissemination of research findings supports CERIC and Memorial University's recognition of the importance of local, national, and international accessibility of research findings and educational materials about career development.

### **D.3. The Project Purpose, Goals, and Objectives**

This study examined the extent to which children's career development is formed in relation to the family and school, and the nature of these influences. The research on young children (preschool, kindergarten, grades 1, 2, and 3), their parents, and educators, and the interventions will contribute to the theory, research, and practice of children's career development.

The objectives of this exploratory study were:

1. To examine children's awareness and understanding of career development context and process (e.g., constructs of self, work, parents'/guardians' work, and hopes and dreams for future).
2. To examine commonalities and differences in career development among children of different ages (three to eight years) and contexts.
3. To examine parents'/guardians' perceptions of the nature and process on young children and their role in this process.
4. To examine educators' (daycare workers, preschool and primary school teachers) perceptions of the nature and process of career development on young children and their role in this process.
5. To represent findings of the study in strategies and guidelines in booklets targeting parents/guardians and educators (daycare workers, preschool and primary teachers) to understand and support children in their career development.

#### **D.4. Target Audience, Stakeholders, Partners, and Collaborators**

Stakeholders included: preschool and K-3 children, their parents/guardians, and educators. Additionally, this research targets multiple researchers, educators (including teacher and counsellor educators), and practitioners within educational institutions (universities, colleges, schools, and school districts) and the community (early educational centres, community and family centres, and private spheres).

#### **D.5. Deliverables**

The nature of the deliverables did not change.

1. Guidebook for Parents/Guardians
2. Guidebook for Educators (pre-school and primary school educators, early childhood educators, and daycare workers)
3. Brochure for parents/guardians
4. Brochure for educators
5. Project final report
6. 2 articles to CJCD (see abstracts in Appendix C)

#### **D.6. Was the project carried out as intended?**

Some changes/adaptations were made:

1. Our intention was to conduct focus groups with 30-40 children, but increased to 436 children. In grounded theory analyses, we adapted the scope to accommodate the multiple constructs and themes that emerged. Hence, ten (10) different constructs and variables emerged. These constructs were spread among the 436 children. To that end, it enriched our data set and findings, particularly as we set out to gain insights into young children's career development – the process and content.
2. We set up to conduct focus groups with 15-20 parents/guardians, but increased to 41 parents/guardians.
3. We set out to conduct focus groups with 15-20 educators, increased to 51 educators.

4. We had wanted to begin a longitudinal study but changed to a cross-sectional design. Gaining access to children proved to be a longer process than anticipated. A longitudinal study requires more resources and co-operation from the many stakeholders involved.
5. While we had participants from Labrador included in the quantitative phase, we were unable to conduct focus groups in this area of the Province and regret this. Why? We mailed out requests and followed up with telephone calls but did not receive positive replies. Perhaps, seeking advocates within the individual communities could help pave the way for increased participation.

#### ***Change to timelines:***

Unfortunately, we had to change the end date from April, 2016 to August, 2017. There were a couple of reasons for this delay. Firstly, the upfront process took much longer than anticipated. Conducting the literature review and developing the protocols needed to be done prior to submission to the Ethics Review Board. This process proved onerous as we were seeking to conduct face-to-face focus groups with young children, ages three to eight years. Understandably, parental permission was needed in order to access the children. The whole permission process to work with children, access schools and daycare centres, and other contexts proved time-consuming. When we sought permission to access daycare centres, we had to apply for clearances (Code of Conduct and Vulnerable Sector Check). Procuring ethical review clearance and gaining access to children through schools resulted in loss of time on the front end. Secondly, we encountered the usual interruptions in scheduling visits to research sites, especially during winter seasons.

#### ***Anticipated outcome:***

In line with our overall goal, we were able to address children's understanding and awareness of specific constructs, including, present and future selves, their interests, strengths, self-efficacy, and the construct of work. It is hoped that the findings have enriched the theory and practice of career development.

Secondly, we sought data from parents/guardians and educators, both quantitatively (through surveys) and qualitatively (utilizing focus groups) as to their perceptions of the importance of career development, their roles in the process, and how they felt it should unfold, particularly on parenting and schooling.

The guidebooks for parents and educators articulated the findings from the study into knowledge and strategies addressing young children's career development.

## E. THE NEED FOR PROJECT

### *Theoretical/conceptual framework:*

This study builds upon the important research and development evidenced in the existing career development literature. Prior to the construction of both surveys designed to measure the perceptions and beliefs of parents/guardians and educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers), an extensive review of the literature was conducted. This review resulted in an accumulation of data on both traditional and contemporary theories, models, and frameworks of career development. A sizeable literature exists on career development as a broad, life-span construct that begins in early childhood and continues throughout adulthood. Childhood is a period of play, fun, and fantasy with critical developmental processes taking place (e.g., identity development, motivation, and prosocial development). Children are growing up in a dynamic ever-changing world characterized by fundamental shifts in technology, information, and globalization. These and other interactional environmental forces, such as family, school, peers, community, and the media, shape, and are shaped by, children's development.

Numerous developmental and contextual theorists have accentuated childhood as important in a child's career development, including awareness and understanding of self, development of self-efficacy, knowledge of world of work, and engagement in both present and future problem-solving and choice-making. Nonetheless, in practice, career development in early childhood is often downplayed, even neglected. Schultheiss (2008), for example, refers to the fragmented nature of its theory, research, and practice. The literature authenticates the focus on childhood as integral to career development. This study is guided by the career development theories and models by prominent researchers, including (but not limited to): Bandura (2012); Cinamon and Dan (2010); Gottfredson (1981; 1996); Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000); Magnuson and Starr (2000); Nurius and Markus (1986); Savickas (1997, 2012); and Howard and Walsh's (2011) career choice and attainment model.

There are numerous definitions of career and career development emanating from the theory, research, and practice. For our purposes, career is a lifelong journey that begins in early childhood and takes place over the course of one's life. We adopted the construct of 'career as story' from the work of Savickas (1997) and others. Children write/author their own stories. There are many co-authors along the way, family, school, peers, community, and media. Parents and educators are significant co-authors, integral in the whole process. The roots of career development begin early in a child's life. Young children need parents/guardians, educators, and significant others to support and encourage them.

In conclusion, this study had both a theoretical and practical *raison d'être*. Career research and interventions typically have focused on youth and adults. Fewer studies have targeted young children (three through eight years). It was our goal to add to the research and development on young children's career development. In our study, career development is viewed as a dynamic, lifelong process, beginning in childhood, interactional, and embedded within the larger context of family, school, community, and media. Hence, we expanded our scope beyond children, to include the school and the family. Finally, we had hoped to explore the rudimentary beginnings of the process of children's development – that is, to hear children's voices, to capture their feelings of self and their worlds, and maybe to be able to discern some developmental trends or patterns in their career utterances. Conversely, in the literature, childhood perceptions, attitudes, and narratives are usually represented retrospectively from adults' and youth's memories. No less important were the goals directed at examining the perceptions and attitudes of

parents/guardians and educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers) on the influences (including their own) and the role of family, school, media, and community on children's career development. Undoubtedly, there is a huge need to design, implement, and evaluate interventions and models/frameworks based on sound theory and practice. Our exploratory, mixed methods study is described in the sections below.

## F. PURPOSE, GOALS, OR OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature and process of young children's career development. The research addressed the significant gaps evidenced in the literature on this domain within career development. Additionally, while we know that parents and educators influence young children's career aspirations and choices, there was a need to explore the nature of these influences. Hence, the study investigated parents'/guardians' and educators' (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers) perceptions on the nature and process of children's development, their influences, their role, and knowledge of the process. Additionally, these findings were articulated in guidebooks for parents/guardians and educators.

Specifically, the objectives of this exploratory study were:

1. To examine children's awareness and understanding of career development context and process (e.g., constructs of self, work, parents'/guardians' work, and hopes and dreams for future).
2. To examine commonalities and differences in career development among children of different ages (three to eight years) and contexts.
3. To examine parents'/guardians' perceptions of the nature and process on young children and their role in this process.
4. To examine educators' (daycare workers, preschool and primary school teachers) perceptions of the nature and process of career development on young children and their role in this process.
5. To represent findings of the study in strategies and guidelines in booklets targeting parents/guardians and educators (daycare workers, preschool and primary teachers).

## G. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

### *Partners:*

CERIC

Memorial University of Newfoundland

English School District of Newfoundland and Labrador

Daycares, Early Learning Centres, and Family Resource Centres throughout Newfoundland and Labrador

### *Execution of the project:*

This project was made possible by the financial support of CERIC. We appreciate the financial and moral support.

In order to execute this project, there was considerable coordination and collaboration with the various schools, the educators, principals, and directors of daycares, preschools, and family resource centres.



Many preschools and daycare centres provided time, space, and toys/play materials within their settings. This was particularly important as we were observing and interacting with children in their natural environments. Often, we were able to procure the service of an educator or administrator within the various settings to schedule focus groups and to keep on schedule as multiple focus groups were conducted simultaneously.

Key informants were utilized both at the school boards and within advisory and steering committees of daycare and family resource centres. Again, they assisted in procuring parental permission to access children. The study would not be possible without the generous contributions and co-operation of the participants, the schools, centres, and institutions.

***Non-financial support from CERIC:***

The support (e.g., encouragement, interest, motivation, etc.) from CERIC is immeasurable, including dissemination and marketing after the project is finished (August, 2017).

## **H. ACTIVITIES AND/OR RESEARCH METHODS**

### **H.1. Research Methodologies**

The project adopted a mixed methods design. Strategies of inquiry employed grounded and action theory research methodologies that comprised focus groups, quantitative survey data, and review of the literature (Glaser & Strauss, 2006; Stebbins, 2001; Hill et al., 1997). We attempted to derive developmental themes regarding the nature of young children's career development, and to lay out practical guidelines for the development of career development interventions targeting parents and educators.

Complementary quantitative and qualitative research methodologies aimed to understand the content and process of young children's career development, as well as factors affecting the development (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The quantitative data provided a broader perspective of parents and educators' understanding of young children's career development and the importance of influences upon this process. Qualitative data provided insights into participants' own perspectives and strategies rather than inferring or generalizing about their perspectives regarding career development (Atkinson et al., 1993).

Parent participants were recruited through letters sent home via children, ages three to eight years, within the preschools, daycares, family resource centers, and primary schools. Educators were recruited through preschools, daycares, family resource centers, and primary schools. Each focus group took anywhere from 50 to 90 minutes and were conducted within the respective schools and educational settings. All participants were informed of the purpose, scope, and details of the study both through reading the letters of recruitment before signing, and again when reviewed at the start of each session.

Focus groups for children were comprised of small groups, four to six children, and ran 30 to 45 minutes in duration. The focus groups were conducted within the children's naturalistic settings – i.e., playrooms, classrooms, and resource centres within the respective institutions. Play media employed within these sessions included: puppets, clay/playdoh, toys, paints, crayons, art paper, and assorted play materials. Children were encouraged to talk about their understanding of career development concepts (work, self, parents' work, their dreams, hopes, interests, etc.).

A cyclical and recursive three-stage research process involving quantitative and qualitative mixed-methods approach was utilized (Clark et al., 2008; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2001).

A researcher and two research assistants conducted the focus group discussions and collected the data. Our research team, including our research assistants, were experienced, trained counsellors who had over 25 years working with children, including experience in conducting focus groups and data collection. Following each session, notes were reviewed and additions, deletions, and/or clarifications were made. Data were transcribed verbatim. Responses were charted, sorted, and grouped according to emerging recurrent themes for content analyses resulting in the identification of domains and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997).

In summation, this study used a mixed methods design, utilizing a sequential exploratory strategy (Cresswell, 2003), comprised of complementary quantitative and qualitative research methodologies: i) Quantitative surveys were both mailed out and dropped off to centres and schools to be disseminated to parents/guardians and educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers); ii) Focus groups were conducted with children, ages three through eight years, parents/guardians and educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers) of children, ages three through eight years; iii) Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research were summarized and articulated into guidebooks for parents/guardians and educators.

## H.2. Process

The project began in 2014 and comprised several tasks and procedures:

- Review of literature on children's career development and possible influences

### Quantitative Phase:

- Development of survey protocols based on literature findings targeting parents/guardians and educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers)
- Preparations and submission of documents for ethics review and approval
- Pilot of both surveys for parents/guardians educators (both rural and urban context)
- Refinement of surveys based on analyses of feedback from pilots
- Preparation of letters of permission for school boards, principals of schools, directors of preschools and daycares, parents/guardians, and educators (preschools and primary teachers and daycare workers)
- Methods (post data collection) were established
- Surveys mailed out and dropped off to targeted populations.
- Collected data from 1194 parents/guardians and 136 educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers)
- Coded and cleaned the data
- Analyzed the data using SPSS and Lisrel
- Wrote up findings

### Qualitative Phase:

- Developed open-ended themes from literature review and quantitative research for focus groups
- Finalized list of sites for focus groups for all three populations
- Conducted focus groups (in urban and rural contexts):  
Focus groups were conducted with 436 children (three to six children within each group – 30 to 45

minutes for each group); 41 parents/guardians and 51 educators (the number of participants within each group varied from site to site). Sessions ranged from 50 to 90 minutes in duration, depending on the breadth and depth of discussions.

- Process for analyses of data from focus groups: isolating concepts, itemizing frequency of concepts, clustering of recurrent themes, and looking within and across categories as part of the reanalysis – coding and checking, rechecking, and charting emerging themes and domains
- Wrote up findings

#### **Interpretation and Production Phase:**

- Summarized major findings from both quantitative and qualitative phases
- Articulated major findings into two guidebooks directed at: i) parents/guardians and ii) educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers)
- Presented findings at CANNEXUS 2015, 2016 and 2017 and CCPA in 2015 and 2016
- Two articles (in Press) to be published (hopefully) in the *The Canadian Journal of Career Development* in 2017. The first article presents findings from the mixed study design (quantitative and qualitative data) on parents' and educators' perceptions of children's career development content and process. The second article presents findings from the qualitative study of children's career development.

The demographics for the quantitative phase are presented in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Rural-Urban Demographics of Survey Participants

Participants	Number of Participants		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Parents	495	699	1194
Teachers	64	72	136

The demographics for the qualitative phase are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2:** Rural-Urban Demographics of Focus Group Participants

Participants	Number of Participants		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Children	199	237	436
Parents	23	18	41
Teachers	15	36	51

## I. TIMELINES

Task	DATE
Conduct preliminary review of literature	June – August, 2013
Develop surveys for parents and educators; identify focus group themes and formulate interview questions; prepare consent forms, permissions, debriefing statements, and information letters	August – October, 2013
Obtain ethics approval	December, 2013
Pilot survey instruments; establish protocols for focus groups	Winter and Spring, 2014
Contact stakeholders; procure permissions from potential participants; meet with advisories boards and supervisors; (telephone calls with follow-up)	Winter, 2014
Administer surveys and collect data; conduct focus groups	Fall, 2014 – Winter and Spring, 2015
Transcribe data from focus groups; code and analyze data from surveys and focus groups	2014 – 2015
Write up key findings (for surveys, focus groups); extrapolate themes and strategies for design of guidebooks	Winter – Spring, and Fall, 2016
Design and develop guidebooks	Fall, 2016 – March 15, 2017
Present findings at CANNEXUS14/15/16/17 and CCPA in 2016, 2017	2015, 2016, 2017
Present theoretical model for project at IAC	2015

### *Changes to timelines:*

Unfortunately, we had to change the end date from April, 2016 to August, 2017. There were a couple of reasons for this delay. Firstly, the upfront process took much longer than anticipated. Conducting the literature review and developing the protocols needed to be done prior to submission to the Ethics Review Board. This process proved onerous as we were seeking to conduct face-to-face focus groups with young children, ages three to eight years – understandably, parental permission was needed in order to access the children. The whole permission process to work with children, access schools and daycare centres, and other contexts proved time-consuming. When we sought permission to access daycare centres, we had to apply for clearances (Code of Conduct and Vulnerable Sector Check). Procuring ethical review clearance and gaining access to children through schools resulted in loss of time on the front end. Secondly, we encountered the usual interruptions in scheduling research sites, especially during winter seasons.

## J. DESCRIPTION OF DELIVERABLES

1. Guidebook for Parents/Guardians
2. Guidebook for Educators (pre-school and primary educators, early childhood educators, and daycare workers)
3. Brochure for parents/guardians
4. Brochure for educators

5. Project final report
6. Two articles in *The Canadian Journal of Career Development* (in press)

In our research, we set out to determine what, if any, knowledge young children (ages three through eight years) had of career and work behaviors/concepts. We engaged parents/guardians and teachers/educators through surveys and focus groups, and asked them what they thought about young children's awareness of career development concepts. Parents and educators responded to questions, such as: What is children's career development? Is it too early to address career development for ages three to eight years? What influences career development of children? What is the role of the family, the school, the community, and the media? [See Appendix B]

From this work, we compiled data from all three groups; children, parents, and educators. We sifted through those focus groups and surveys and put together rich findings. We then carefully combed the literature to compare our findings with what had already been compiled by earlier researchers and writers.

Through our study, we obtained evidence from the children that the seeds of career development were apparent. They were interested in various activities, doing chores, the work of adults, and were quite capable of sharing their hopes and dreams. It is not entirely possible to describe the passion, excitement and overall enthusiasm of young children as they articulate (through play) the importance of their 'work' and that of their parents.

The research findings have been integrated into booklets targeting parents/guardians and educators. The information is intended for parents and educators to reflect upon career development and the young child in the here-and-now. The booklets present perspectives about young children as they grow and make sense of their world, which includes the world of family, community, school, work, interests, hobbies, values, and preferences. Themes, while presented as separate sections, are interconnected and flow into each other.

Themes that emerged from data obtained from children, parents, and educators on children's career development included:

- Development of self
- Interests and abilities
- Development of healthy relationships
- Decision-making, problem-solving, building resiliency
- Participation in family and community life
- Hopes and dreams for present and future selves
- Knowledge of diverse work roles in families and communities

In summary, the guidebooks were designed to provide both parents and educators with opportunities to see up close how children see themselves in the present, and their hopes and dreams for the future. The rich drawings, stories, and narratives from the children authenticate their conceptions of both their world and that of the significant adults (both fantasy and real-life). The goal is to empower parents/guardians and educators to understand, support, and become engaged in children's career development through a play-based, age-appropriate, and child-centered process.

***If I had the opportunity to do the project again:***

More time, especially up front is required for literature reviews, ethics clearance, accessing schools and day

cares, etc. There is an established chain-of-command to be followed. Before approaching individual schools, centres, principals, and educators, permission must be obtained from the respective boards and supervisors. The letters of permission obtained are then presented to the respective sites (daycares, family resource centres, schools). Principals often ask educators if they wish to participate. Requests were sent through individual educators, who had children carry letters home to parents/guardians. Sometimes, and perhaps, too frequently, surveys and/or requests for permission letters sat in a Principal's office or within a classroom, and did not reach the intended parents. There are countless demands on schools to participate in studies on a broad range of issues. Schools have become saturated with requests. Accordingly, when administrators and teachers do comply, the surveys and request letters are sent via the children. Again, the process can breakdown – even after follow-up phone calls, there were no guarantees the data will be obtained and delivered back through that same process. We underestimated the time involved in this arduous, time-consuming process. Having a key informant on site is very helpful to liaise with staff, navigate the schedule, and facilitate the process. We were able to procure this person in some settings, but not in all.

## K. MARKETING AND DISSEMINATION

Two articles are in draft form to be submitted to *The Canadian Journal of Career Development*. We have presented at: Cannexus14, 15, 16, and 17; CCPA in 2015 and 2016; and International Association for Counselling (IAC) in 2015. CERIC will release the booklets and brochures in Fall of 2017. Webinars and seminars will follow.

## L. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Researchers adhered to timelines and guidelines (CERIC) and the ethics review process (Memorial University). Informed consent forms, interview protocols, and questionnaires were vetted through the ethics committee. Approval from the committee ensured quality control and success of the instruments and process, including the plan for the attainment of the research goals and objectives. Results of the three (3) phases of the data gathering have been summarized and presented as deliverables (booklets and brochures) – interventions and guidelines for the career development of young children targeting parents/guardians, educators, counsellors, and prospective individuals, groups, and educational organizations.

### ***Inputs and impact of project and process:***

This will be determined as training and information sessions are conducted with stakeholders, including educators and parents/guardians.

### ***Impact of project on key stakeholders:***

The anticipated impact on stakeholders (including preschools, daycares, and K-3 primary aged children, their parents/guardians and educators, career counsellors, advisors, and the general public) will be significant. The findings on the content and process of young children's career development can be utilized in pre-service and post-service professional development for educators. Seminars, workshops, webinars, etc., can take place. These findings will add to the discourse on the research, theory, and practice of career development.

## M. IMPACT ASSESSMENT/OUTCOMES

The research will shed light on career development theory, research, and practice on young children, including possible roles of significant others in this process that could potentially guide interventions and understanding.

Researchers have called for research on young children and their career development. The qualitative data should advance theory and practice of young children's career development. The research, exploring young children's insights and perceptions, is exciting and innovative. We hope quantitative data will enrich the field regarding parental and teacher perceptions of young children's career development.

### *Actual outcomes of the project:*

We set out to zone in on young children's career development and awareness of related constructs. Findings evidenced success on this goal. Data gathered from the quantitative surveys supported the broadened approach to career development of young children. Similarly, data from respective focus groups with parents/guardians and educators evidenced how parents and educators viewed career development. Both parents and educators affirmed the importance of career education at the preschool and primary school levels. Most parents and educators, who participated in our study, were attuned to the broader definition of career development and recognized the importance of childhood in the process. Parents and educators see themselves as important players/influences in their children's career development. We hope this research validates their vital roles and demystifies the complexity of the whole process.

### *Unexpected outcomes:*

Perhaps, most surprising, was the level of enthusiasm and high interest demonstrated by all three participant groups – children, parents, and educators. Children easily shared their stories, paintings, depictions, and hopes and dreams. They were knowledgeable of work, its importance, and the work of their parents/guardians and other family members. Parents and educators were attuned to the holistic nature of career development, the links between children's hopes and dreams for a bright future and its importance.

Both parents and educators readily understood career development as a process and the differential influences that have an impact upon career development. While some participants within both groups thought it may be too early to address career development in preschool and primary levels, most acknowledged children developed identities, interests, and aspirations quite early. Great discussions ensued around the importance of fun and play and of keeping activities age-appropriate – not to speed up children's choice-making.

Unfortunately, gender and class stereotyping were evidenced and clearly indicates the need for further discussion and intervention. We were surprised at the frequency and prevalence of stereotyping, particularly relating to gender.

Many parents/guardians and educators engaged in discourse around intentionality of career education and pondered its fit within a play-based curriculum. Both groups readily acknowledged the holistic nature of learning and the significance of building linkages to future educational and career goals. Within the focus groups, both parents/guardians and educators reflected upon their own individual career stories/paths and on those of other family members. They frequently commented, "I hadn't thought of that before" (reference

to how they chose a particular occupation, etc.). They welcomed the broader implications and importance of early career education.

We felt that the questionnaire within the quantitative phase and the focus groups raised awareness of the importance of childhood within the career development process.

## **N. KEY FINDINGS/INSIGHTS**

### **N.1. Quantitative Data**

#### ***Comparisons: Parents and educators***

Surveys were administered to both educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers) and parents/guardians. Surveys were sent to the respective daycares, preschools, and primary schools. Administrators asked their staff if they would participate. Educators who agreed to take part then distributed the packages to their children to carry home to their parents. Researchers have no way to accurately determine who actually received the surveys. Hence, it is difficult to accurately estimate the return rate. Based on the actual numbers sent to schools, we had 55.5% of surveys returned from educators and 30.4% from parents. The educators' survey consisted of thirty-six questions, and the parents' survey comprised twenty questions. The survey questions reflected parents'/educators' intentional and unintentional influences upon children's (ages three to eight years) career development. Questions sought information related to attitudes and perceptions. Participants indicated their perceptions or understanding of the content and process of young children's career development including their perceptions of roles of work, school, self-concept and self-esteem as well as their own roles in supporting the developmental process, e.g., how they influence children's self-concepts, nature of parenting, teaching and interaction, decision-making, problem-solving, and possible futures, as well as how they feel they ought to support this development.

### **N.2. Phase I: Educators' Survey**

In Phase I, we compiled percentages on all survey item responses. Table 3 presents select items from the educators' survey and the percentages of responses for respective items. Following is a brief description of these findings.



**Table 3:** Percentages of Responses for Select Items of Educator Survey

Educator Survey Item	Percentages			
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Young children want to talk about their future.	28.9	65.9	5.2	0.0
Young children learn skills very early in life that will help them manage their lifelong learning, careers, and work.	72.6	23.7	2.2	1.5
Teachers and daycare workers are aware of their impact on children's career development.	57.0	37.0	5.2	0.7
Children need opportunities to view and learn about workers in their community (e.g., what they do at their jobs).	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Helping children understand their strengths and limitations is an important part of the curriculum.	48.1	37.8	12.6	1.5
Self-confidence and self-esteem influence career choices.	73.3	23.7	1.5	1.5
There is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children develop self-awareness and self-esteem.	15.8	53.4	26.3	4.5
There is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children to explore and apply their interests.	7.5	50.4	34.6	7.5
The curriculum for young children makes sufficient connections to the real world.	20.1	56.7	20.1	3.0
What children watch on TV as well as social media can influence their future career choices.	53.3	43.7	2.2	0.7

Ninety-four percent (94.8%) of educators either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that young children want to talk about their future. Ninety-six (96.3%) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that young children learn skills very early in life that will help them manage their lifelong learning, careers and work.

Educators' responses reflected an awareness of their impact on children's career development. Ninety-eight percent (94.0%) either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that teachers and daycare workers are aware of their impact on children's career development.

One hundred percent (100%) of educators strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the importance of children viewing and learning about workers in their communities.

Educators were asked their opinions on emphasis of specific career development concepts/constructs within the curriculum. Eighty-five (85.9%) of teachers either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that helping children understand their strengths and limitations is an important part of the curriculum. Ninety-seven (97.0%) of educators responded that self-confidence and self-esteem influence career choices. Interestingly, only 69.2% of educators either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that there is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children develop self-awareness and self-esteem. Notably, only 57.9% of educators either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed there is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children to explore and apply their interests. Also, when educators were asked their

opinions on the extent that curriculum connects with the real world, 76.8% either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed.

Finally, educators' responses reflected a strong belief that TV and social media are also strong influence on career choices. Ninety-seven (97.0%) of educators either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that TV and social media can influence future career choices.

### N.3. Phase I: Parents'/Guardians' Survey

In Phase I, we compiled percentages on all item responses. Table 4 presents select items from the parents/guardians' survey and the percentages of responses for respective items. Following is a brief description of these findings.

**Table 4:** Percentages of Responses for Select Items of Parent Survey

Parent Survey Item	Percentages		
	Yes	No	
Children should learn about the world of work at preschool and primary school	77.7	22.3	
It is important to learn about workers in their community.	96.6	3.4	
Children learn early what they are good at and what they are not so good at.	70.4	29.6	
Preschool and primary schools do a good job helping children develop self-awareness and confidence.	88.9	11.1	
	Yes	No	Sometimes
I would bring my child to work if I could.	57.5	21.7	20.8
My child likes school and learning.	84.7	2.4	13.0
Teachers try to make school and learning fun.	88.5	0.8	10.6

In our study, 77.7% parents/guardians believed that children should learn about the world of work at preschool and primary school. The majority of parents/guardians (96.6%) believed that children should learn about workers in their communities.

Seventy percent (70.4%) of parents believed that children learn early what they are good at and not so good at. As well, parents felt positively regarding the preschools and primary schools role in helping children develop both self-awareness and confidence. Eighty-eight percent (88.9%) of parents felt that preschools and primary schools do a good job of developing children's self-awareness and confidence.

Parents were also asked whether they would bring their child to work if they could. Seventy-eight percent (78.3%) of parents responded 'yes' or 'sometimes' to that question.

The majority of parents have a positive perception regarding their child's engagement in school and learning. Ninety-seven percent (97.7%) of parents responded 'yes' or 'sometimes' that their child likes school and learning. Finally, 99.1% of parents responded 'yes' or 'sometimes' that teachers try to make school and learning fun.

**Note:** Aside from compiling percentages on all items within each survey, comparisons were made of educators' and parents' responses across questions related to common themes. However, since items from the parents' surveys were not on the same scale as those from the educators' surveys, both were converted to the equivalent of percentages. Means were obtained for each item, and adjusted on the same scale from 0 to 1, thus making the mean equivalent to a percentage of proportion. These findings are discussed and presented for publication in *The Canadian Journal of Career Development*.

## N.4. Qualitative Data

### *Comparisons: Children, parents, and educators*

Focus groups were conducted separately with parents, educators and children (ages three to eight years) within schools (preschool and primary), daycares, and family resource centres. Forty-one (41) parents, 51 educators and 436 children (ages three to eight years) participated in focus groups. The focus groups complemented the individual survey responses by providing opportunity for more in-depth search for meaning, reflection, and examination of the nature of children's career development as well as the nature of interactions affecting this development (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Clark et al., 2008; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Schultz, 1970).

Two researchers conducted each session, one as facilitator and one as note taker. Discussions within each focus group were guided by topics and open-ended questions [see Appendix B]. Following each individual session, discussions were read over several times to ascertain what was said and discussed. Domains and themes were isolated from the content summaries (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories were formulated within the themes. Themes and categories were compared to original focus group notes and additional changes were made to originals as part of the recursive process. Summaries of the respective focus groups and the collectives were written.

Focus group interviews or discussions with parents and educators explored themes such as how they view career development and career education, and their perceptions of their roles in children's career development, including how they influence children's perceptions, decisions, and possible futures. Finally, focus group grade-level interviews with children explored their career interests, present possible/future selves, and their notions of work/occupations, etc. Children were encouraged to express their perceptions through age-appropriate media, such as telling stories in their own words, through puppetry, clay/play-doh, paintings/drawings, and other play activities.

Substantive data emerged from the qualitative datasets from parents, educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers), and children. In the following sections, those findings will be condensed and a summary of selected findings are presented, comparatively.

### ***Interests and abilities:***

Children in our study readily talked about their interests. Children's interests included the following themes: games/toys, television shows, movies, books, and activities/sports. As the age of the children increased, so did the quantity and diversity of their interests. Following are some of the stories from children:

*I love to paint pictures. My favorite TV show is Batman, my favourite book is Batman. I like to read books and play at school. I would like to be a better Batman.*

*My favourite book is Robert Munch. My favorite TV show is Sponge Bob. I have a lot of Sponge Bob stuff. My favourite game is Connect 4, and my favorite sports are ball hockey, basketball, and soccer.*

Most parents in the study were tuned into their children's love of learning, and readily talked about their children's specific interests. As well, many of the extracurricular out-of-school and leisure activities or hobbies in which children partake during early childhood sustain them through middle childhood and are linked to their later educational, social, and career preferences. Following are select quotes from parents:

*Extracurricular [activities] are important to support physical development and social development; increases social awareness and as they provide opportunity for her to integrate into many different settings and with different people.*

*Her involvement in these [interests/activities] supports an active lifestyle. It teaches her about balance in her life and prioritizing her schedule. It teaches her to make a commitment and stick to it. I think that the performance aspect of the activities is connected to the development of her self-esteem. It certainly gives her more confidence.*

Parents in our study felt that participation in extracurricular activities had a lifelong impact on their children. They felt it supported the development of: team work, social skills, physical development, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Most parents were attuned to children's self-awareness; many parents connected children's self-awareness to awareness of interests and abilities. According to parents, children know what they like and don't like as their interests are quite evident and diverse. Even in the case of siblings, parents remarked that interests are unique. Some parents noted that interests change and are influenced by the peer group as children are more likely to try something new in the company of peers.

### ***Hopes, dreams and aspirations for future:***

According to children, parents, and educators in our study, there is much evidence of children's aspirations, hopes, and dreams for the future. Both parents and educators acknowledged that children's aspirations for future selves change frequently and reflect experiences, interests, from real-life and fantasy, and the people in their lives. From an early age, children talked about aspirations, and were observed by parents and educators alike. Many children envisioned a future with multiple roles as they talked about more than one choice for future self. This was particularly evidenced in the stories and paintings of older children (ages six to eight years). Sample of children's stories follow:

*I want to be a music teacher and work at Fisheries and Oceans like Mom and Dad. I want to be those things because I like singing and water. In order to be that, I have to get a good education and do very well in school.*

*I want to be a marine biologist. My brother wants to be a paleontologist. I love sharks. My brother is older, he told me all about marine biology because I love sharks. Work makes everyone happy.*

*I will play school. I'll cook stuff. Be a teacher, a mom, and a doctor.*

Hopes and dreams for future roles varied from fantasy to reality with children aspiring to take on roles of their 'idols' and 'heroes' in media, books, and TV. There was strong evidence of how future roles were related to their current activities/sports (a hockey player, a video game designer, a car engineer); and awareness of work roles and occupations of parents and significant adults in their lives (e.g., a teacher, a carpenter, a marine biologist). Samples of narratives and drawings/paintings reflected varying levels of children's understanding of the career process. Older children linked their hopes and dreams to their own interests, and were able to talk about how they would accomplish their goals. Multiple goals/hopes manifested as well.

Parents recognized the importance of allowing children to explore, fantasize, and make connections between their current experiences and future lives. Most parents encouraged children to imagine many possibilities for future selves. They recognized the importance of children's awareness of, and having opportunities to explore, diverse possibilities and options. Parents shared their observations of their children's hopes and dreams:

*Talks about being a rock star. I think the influence comes from TV. TV is great and awful at the same time. It does have a great influence on what children think. Media is pronounced.*

*She talks about her hopes and dreams all the time. Singing and dancing has been consistent, and then often she has a back-up plan, like working in the zoo. She loves animals. She always talks about wanting to help animals or people when she grows up.*

*We need to start very young, as soon as children are able to fantasize about their futures. Every kid dreams about when they are bigger. When I was a child I wanted to be a rock star. My children talk about what they want to be. It changes from time to time based on their experiences and their interests.*

As well, educators talked about children's aspirations for future selves. Quotes from educators included:

*The parents appear to be their main role models ... many children want to do what their parents do.*

*Future selves change based on others' interests. Students role play the teacher's role quite a bit. You see them in the play centre taking turns as the teacher. They role play Santa and the Easter Bunny; whatever is happening at the time in their lives.*

Educators reported seeing children imitating the roles of mothers and fathers and/or roles that they experienced through play and real-life. They also highlighted the influence of current events like Chris Hadfield in space and major sporting events like NBA or NHL playoffs in children's hopes and dreams for the future.

### ***Construct of work and parents' work:***

Parents noted that children have a general awareness of their work roles and this awareness increases as children age. Parents see children as interested and curious about their work. Only some parents noted they talk to their children about their work and conversations certainly vary – more detail is discussed with older children regarding specific work tasks and responsibilities. As well, many parents indicated that their children had been to their place of work and that the visits are positive experiences for their children.

Parents noted:

*She has a very good understanding of my work role. She asks me questions about what I do and we talk about it. She also has a good understanding of the work roles that she*

*has experienced, e.g., doctor, teacher, zoo worker, etc. However, she does not know much about a welder or other trades person.*

*He knows that I had a stressful job where I had difficult people to work with. I talk to him about how that happens from time to time and how we still have to learn to get along with people. We might not like them or hang out with them, but we have to get along.*

Children generally have an awareness of their parents' work roles and this awareness increases as children age. Younger children are able to name their parents' careers particularly in cases of more common careers, e.g., teacher, doctor, truck driver, but generally they tend only to identify the parents' workplace. By grade three, most children know where their parents work and the names of their occupations, and are able to talk about some of the work responsibilities. Children generally equate working with making money that supports lifestyles, e.g., buying things, having a house, travelling, etc. Younger children (ages three to four years) recognize the time that parents have to be away for work. Older children's attitudes/perceptions of work reflected more insight into how their parents feel about their work and the nature of work. Children eagerly shared their depictions and narratives:

*I have homework. Mom does work at schools, she works in summer. Dad works at a restaurant.*

*Dad shovels snow; he got hurt at work – he was in construction. People work to give us food, clothes, and toys.*

*My Dad works at construction. He is a handy man he builds houses.*

*My Dad does not like his work; I don't think that he wants to be at work; I hear him say that...*

Educators also felt that parents increased children's awareness of career possibilities by talking to their children about their work and work roles, and the work and work roles of immediate family and people in the neighborhood/community. As well, educators believed that children should have an appreciation for the work of others; it can start with the workers in a school community – e.g., cafeteria staff, maintenance staff, and nurse. Educators shared their perceptions and observations of children's knowledge of work:

*Children have lots of ideas and often place no limits on what they would like to be. Many chose the occupations of their parents when asked.*

*Most are traditional. I do hear them talking about popular TV programs – Dr. McStuffin is a common one. Boys mostly want the building roles; girls are into the dolls and babies.*

Notably, educators believed that parents should talk to their children about their work, the work of other significant adults in children's lives, and the work of people in their communities. Educators also talked about the need to make connections between careers and lifestyle choices – Is the salary going to allow you to support life style choices? Is travel for work going to allow you to support life style choices?

### ***Influences on children's career development:***

Many parents talked about the importance of the influence of positive role models, mentors, family values, and exposure to the media and a variety of social settings on career development. Parents also noted the impact of peers as role models and the influence of children's experiences. As well, parents identified the influence that rich experiences have on the development of "soft" (parents' description) skills and the

importance of these skills, such as, team work, positive social skills, moral development, determination, etc. Parents commented:

*Home life is very important and having opportunities for social interaction is important. Peers are very influential. Often if they do not like something or it is too difficult, they will do it because their friends are. Media and the video games they are playing are also influential in terms of their interests. We do monitor those things.*

*All experiences are so influential. His Dad is a plasterer and painter and seeing him at work is so valuable for our son. Visits to the grocery store teach him so much about budgeting and preparing and decisions, etc. Chores are very influential. Teach him to take responsibility and to stick with a task.*

*Hockey is important. It teaches them team work, hard work, commitment, and being physically active. Children know what they see. They know the type of work that they become familiar with. They need to experience it. Children learn a lot from parents regarding work ethic and values. They learn from their experiences in school through play and books.*

Educators believed that children's aspirations for future roles are influenced by a number of factors, including: gender, knowledge of their parent's and immediate family member's careers, field experiences, travelling, and extracurricular activities. Educators shared their observations about impact of gender on children's choices in play, aspiration for future roles, etc. Media, such as YouTube and TV, are major influences on children. Children's choices for future selves often reflect what they were seeing in the media. As well, children are influenced by experiences, current events and happenings in their lives. Educators noted:

*Yes, guest speakers, parents talking about their careers and those of family members, the media – YouTube and movies, even those like Mall Cop give kids a perception – rightly or wrongly of what a career might be. Yes, I think there is still a lot of stereotyping that goes on and sometimes we are not even aware of it.*

*Field trips, travel and organizations such as Boy Scouts, Brownies, Cadets, and Rangers can expose kids to different careers. Yes, there are still different expectations for boys and girls, but it is changing.*

*Role-playing activities, age appropriate discussions on different careers, and more intentional goals of creating more awareness of what people do at work. Media has a role to play, and activities that stimulate creativity. Activities which give them a chance to reflect on themselves are important.*

### ***Importance of children's involvement:***

Most parents indicated that their children have chores/tasks to perform at home. Children readily talked about the chores/tasks they had to perform at home. As well, the completion of chores and tasks were routine at early childhood centres and primary schools. The nature of the chores include such things as, making beds, putting dishes in the sink, cleaning up after play, and helping with pets and younger siblings. Even though parents noted that children have some reservation towards chores/tasks, they often need encouragement and support for completion. Nevertheless, both children themselves and educators reported that children were motivated to complete the chores/tasks. Some parents noted that children do better with completion of chores if they are rewarded. Similarly, some of the children talked about the monetary rewards for completion.

Parents and educators easily talked about the long-term benefits of children having chores and tasks at home. Lifelong lessons were discussed, such as, responsibility, respect for other members of the family, independence, persistence (hard work), organization, way of understanding responsibility, engaging in leadership roles, and increasing self-esteem and a feeling of belonging and sense of accomplishment. Both educators and parents alike accentuated the significance of such expectations for children's character development and career development.

When asked to reflect on the relevance of chores/responsibilities for children, educators commented:

*We give our students a lot of work to do such as: setting up band equipment, buddy reading, lunch orders, emptying garbage, computer lab set up, and setting up book fairs. They all can't get enough to do! One boy said last week, "Miss, it feels good to do this".*

*[Chores are] very important. You can tell the difference between the children who are expected to do things at home and those that don't.*

*It teaches them the value of routine, organization, and work ethic and responsibility.*

When asked to reflect on the relevance of chores/responsibilities for children, parents commented:

*They do chores when it is required for a certificate through Brownies/Beavers. Or at times they have given me a card for Father's Day with chores on them as a gift for me. They are too young to do much. When they get older they will do more. They learn to work towards a goal and to reap benefits from their efforts.*

*She loves helping and knowing that she is helping. Sometimes she may not like to dress herself or make her bed, things like mow the grass, etc. They teach her responsibility and independence. She learns that she has to care for others within the family and she learns team work.*

*The six-year-old daughter tidies her room every day. She loves to help at everything. The three-year-old, because of autism, is being taught to comply with requests. They [chores] provide structure and teach responsibility.*

When asked about their chores/responsibilities, children talked about them in a very positive light. Children referred to their chores and responsibilities as important work they had to do. A sampling of their stories follows:

*Chores help me prepare to work later. I have a ton of chores. I have to help clean up the mess. I sweep the floor, make my bed, and clean my room.*

*My Mom made a list of chores for me and my brother. It's important to help around the house and clean my room.*

*I am very happy helping Mom and Dad.*

*It is important to do chores for responsibility. I have many chores. I take out the garbage and clean my bedroom.*

### **Early intervention:**

Most parents expressed the belief that career development should be addressed very early with children in a developmental and age-appropriate manner. Parents noted that from a very young age, children talk about growing up and have dreams and hopes for the future. As well, educators noted it is never too early to talk about career development as career choice and career decision making are complex processes. Both parents and educators felt a need to start early with a natural process appropriate for the children's age and



developmental levels. They also emphasized how important it was for children to be exposed to multiple opportunities for careers and work roles. The narratives below represent just some of the parents' beliefs:

*I think we should start talking about the concept as early as K. My child has talked about the concept for a long time – i.e., 'so I have to go to elementary school, then high school, then college, how many years is that? Then I have to get a job, what does that mean – I have to go to work?' I see seven- and eight-year-olds talking a lot about what they want to be. So, as a concept it should be appropriately talked about at a young age, just like we would talk about any life concept, like physical development.*

*At a very young age, we should be talking about the occupations that we see in the community. Earlier we talk about it the better. The more children know about the possible occupations, the earlier they can start and learn new skills and learn about themselves.*

*The sooner we talk about this, the better. We need to give children information and opportunities to explore work sites. Children need something to focus on and be interested in. It does not mean that they will become that. Children also need to be aware of the conditions that they will work in and that some careers mean that you have to make certain sacrifices like working away from your family. Many people are not really informed about what it means to work in the trades such as where you will find work and the difficult working conditions.*

Parents noted that career development is not an integral part of the curriculum and certainly not a fluid process. Educators believed they have a powerful influence on children's development of knowledge and exploration of careers across gender. Parents saw that most of the activities related to career development at school are isolated instances and occasional events connected to special days (e.g., Education Week, graduation, guest speaker days). Parents talked about dress up centres at preschool, play groups, and daycares as related to career development. Parents commented:

*They have a Green Thumb theme in school, where they grow some food and learn about the food that makes us healthy. At the Family Resource Centre they have a dress up area, where children dress in what they want to be when they grow up.*

*It is certainly not an organic component of the curriculum, but they do have career days and ask children about the work their parents do. It happens during special events, not ongoing. At the end of the year in kindergarten they talk about what they want to be.*

*Daycares have career-related centres – e.g., they have carpentry centres, a hospital centre, etc. Even the two-year-olds are exposed to this. Our son's teacher draws attention to their strengths and makes connections to something they would be able to do later in life. I do not think that this is part of the curriculum but an interest that the teacher has.*

*Schools have career days and children can dress up in occupations. In daycare she engages in role play as workers, e.g., veterinarian, doctor, firefighter, etc. Most of what is pushed at school is university occupations. Schools need to expose children to diverse occupations and all possibilities. Schools need to plant the seeds of possibilities. They should have people come to talk to children about their work and have children take field trips to experience a variety of occupations. Children need to be exposed to all occupations, including blue collar.*

Educators identified the need to have more intentional goals pertaining to career awareness and they emphasized the need to focus on broader skill development, such as character development, not just career/work options. Some educators noted during focus groups that the STEM project in schools provides opportunities for children to explore careers in respective fields. They readily saw the connections of

academic subjects to career development skills and abilities. Following are select teacher comments:

*No, it is not too early. We need to provide children with opportunities to use their imagination. The possibilities are endless for their futures and we need to allow them to imagine those possibilities. We have community workers come to our daycare; nurse, firefighter, recycling.*

*In our centres, we have lots of material that represent various work and workers – from vets, teachers, carpentry, mechanic, etc. We have volunteers in our centre and we always acknowledge them and talk about their volunteer work, sometimes it is parents/grandparents or students. In kindergarten, they role play, have field trips, community partners, guest speakers, All About Me program, and parent volunteers.*

*Yes, it is important as they will change their minds many times. I think play is really important but with the right resources...doesn't seem to be a lot being done in school from my children's experience. Hands-on activities, crafts and travel seem to really help broaden their minds.*

*It is never too early. Children ask a lot of questions and have dreams. Children are like sponges and they are soaking everything up. The more they are exposed to people in different jobs the better it is. We ask open-ended questions in circle time and we do dramatic play.*

## **N.5. What did we learn?**

We utilized a mixed methods design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. We were able to measure (via two survey instruments) the perceptions and attitudes of a larger sampling of both parents and educators in the quantitative phases. We aimed to investigate parents' and educators' perceptions and attitudes towards the career development of young children, ages three to eight years, with regard to variables, gender, context (rural and urban), and education level. Unfortunately, we had very low numbers of males in both samplings which meant we were only able to describe findings for female participants.

In the quantitative phase, we were able to garner perceptions and attitudes of parents and educators on multiple career development constructs (e.g., resiliency, self-efficacy, interests, abilities, hopes, and dreams of young children, ages three to eight years, as well as their opinions of the presence and importance of different influences (e.g., family, school, community, and media) upon the career development process.

The qualitative phase provided an opportunity for parents and educators to discuss career constructs of young children as well as to elaborate upon their understanding in the process, influences (family, school, peers, community, and media), and their roles in the process. The interconnected nature of schooling, home, and career development emerged in the focus groups. Parents and educators shared anecdotes, stories, and many examples of their observations of young children, their schooling, and overall learning.

Perhaps, the most significant learning came from the children. We took a close-up view of career development of young children. Working with little children, aged three through eight years, was time-consuming but proved very worthwhile and revealing. Children's narratives and artistic depictions gave us opportunities to capture their thinking and feeling about the often ambiguous and highly debated adult constructs of the work, the self, present and future aspirations, and how it unfolds. Children's enthusiasm, natural curiosity, passions, and insights came to life. They took it all very seriously (e.g., talking about how they had very important work to do at home, in school, in their communities). They literally glowed as they shared their favorite movies, books, heroes, interests, and activities. Many, particularly the older children,

were aware of how they could become like someone or reach a particular goal.

Key learnings from the children's narratives and depictions were revealing on both the content and process of career development. They know more about themselves and the world of work and what's involved than most adults think. They are actively engaged in learning and their openness to the whole process is evident.

Theoretically, findings from our study of children's perceptions told through mini stories/narratives and depictions (painting, puppetry, and drawings) supported findings within the literature on children's career development (e.g., Borgen & Young, 1982; Howard & Walsh, 2011; Schultheiss, Palma, & Manzi, 2005; Trice, Hughes, Odom, Woods, & McClellan, 1995). There was evidence of a developmental trend in the interests and possible selves represented by children. Younger children's (ages three to five years) responses often reflected mythical, magical, and fantasy figures, whereas older children's (ages six to eight years) responses represented real-life figures (e.g., Mom, Dad, teachers, uncles, sports figure). When asked 'how will you make your dream come true?' or 'how will you become a firefighter?' younger children responded I will put on a hat, go to the fire hall, etc. Younger children were very concrete focused on tools, costumes, props, etc. Conversely, older children (ages six to eight years) were apt to answer those questions with I'll go to university and study, or I'll practice my piano and dancing. Older children were prone to give responses on the process of 'becoming' that incorporated actions and plans albeit some of those actions and plans were simple, linear, and concrete. Undoubtedly, findings lend support to Howard and Walsh's (2011) concepts of early career choice and attainment model. Here are some excerpts from their mini stories:

*To be a doctor you need to see if everyone is ok, you don't need to go to school, just go to doctor's place. I want to be a teacher too. (4-year-old)*

*To be a florist I need to make flowers. (5-year-old)*

*I want to be a nurse. I will go to nursing school. (6-year-old)*

*I want to be a scientist. I have to study science in university. I would like to find a cure for cancer. (7-year-old)*

*I want to be a kindergarten teacher. I have to go to university and get a job as a teacher. (8-year-old)*

Findings from the children's focus groups validated the literature around multiple selves, time orientation (present and future) and hoped-for selves. Following are a few of the children's stories on multiple hopes and dreams for possible selves:

*I want to be a basketball player, song writer, and scientist.*

*I want to drive trucks and trains and be an artist. Be a teacher like Miss – not be a helper...*

*I want to entertain people and also be a super star and a rock star. I also want to be a dance teacher because I love it.*

*I want to be a vet, a doctor, and a dentist – I want to check all of the patients. I want to be a vet because I love animals.*

## O. NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several limitations to this study. The data obtained from children were cross-sectional.

Comparisons were made within the respective age groups (three- to five-year-olds and six- to eight-year-olds) and between these groups. There is a need to examine the findings of children in longitudinal studies in order to affirm and validate developmental patterns.

In the quantitative phase, factors were measured using self-perceptions and attitudes. While Phase II, the qualitative phase, provided for opportunities to clarify and elaborate on those self-perceptions and attitudes, it is important to note the bias implicit in self-reporting. The subjective nature of the qualitative data and the adoption of grounded theory analysis is an inductive process. While we aimed to reduce the amount of bias, there is no guarantee that we achieved success in doing so. This is especially true in the case of children's narratives, depictions, and their articulations of same. It was essential that we record the voices and capture the thinking of all three participant groups (parents, educators, and children).

Generalizability will be compromised by the representation within both the educators' and parents' samples. We had primarily females which compromises our generalizability.

The study was conducted within Newfoundland and Labrador. We had representation in the quantitative phase from Aboriginal people, but not in the qualitative phase. Replicating this study with more diversity is recommended.

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## Q. APPENDICES

### Q.1. Appendix A: Surveys

#### Provincial Survey: Parents/Guardians

***Understanding young children’s career development as a developmental/relational process:  
Engaging parents, schools and community***

The purpose of this research is to obtain information about young children’s interests and understanding of work. Early experiences in a child’s life may influence later career choices. We are asking Parents/Guardians how they feel about young children’s career development. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you taking part in our study.

**Please check the appropriate box.**

CHILD ONE	CHILD TWO	CHILD THREE
I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian 1, 2 or more children	I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian 1, 2 or more children	I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian 1, 2 or more children
My child is: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	My child is: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	My child is: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
My child is enrolled in: <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 3	My child is enrolled in: <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 3	My child is enrolled in: <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 3
My family lives in: <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Outside the city		
I have completed (highest level): <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> College <input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> Other		

Please answer the questions below. Put an X in the box beside each statement.

Question	Yes	No
1. My child should be learning about the world of work at preschool and primary school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. It is important for young children to learn about workers in their community, (e.g. what they do at their jobs).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. At a young age children develop ideas of jobs for boys and other jobs for girls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. High school is time enough for students to focus on career choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Teachers in primary school should introduce children to career education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The mother influences children's future career choices more than the father.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Children's career interests are influenced by their friends' career interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Children learn early what they are good at and what they are not so good at.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. When my child makes mistakes, he/she bounces back and will try again.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Preschool and primary schools do a good job helping children develop self-awareness and confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes
1. I talk about my work with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I would bring my child to work if I could.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. My child likes school and learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Teachers try to make school and learning fun.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I supervise what my child watches on television.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Our family plays games and sports together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I would like some help in supporting my child's career development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I let my child solve problems on their own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I feel my child is confident in trying new things and is open to change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. As a Parent/Guardian, I play a huge role in building my child's self-confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Provincial Survey: Educators**

***Understanding young children’s career development as a developmental/relational process: Engaging parents, schools and community***

The purpose of this research is to obtain information about young children’s interests and understanding of work. Early experiences in a child’s life may influence later career choices. We are asking teachers how they feel about young children’s career development. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you taking part in our study.

**Please check the appropriate box.**

<p>I am:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p>I teach:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In the city</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Outside the city</p>	<p>I teach:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Preschool</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Day-care</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grade 1</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grade 2</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grade 3</p>
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I have \_\_\_\_\_ years teaching experience.

Qualifications: Certificate – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade  6<sup>th</sup> Grade  7<sup>th</sup> Grade

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the questions below. Put an X in the box beside each statement:**

Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. It is important for Parents/Guardians to talk about their work with their children and family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Young children want to talk about their future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Young children learn skills very early in life that will help them manage their lifelong learning/careers/work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Teachers and daycare workers are aware of their impact on children’s career development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Children’s career development unfolds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

naturally and schools don't need to influence it.				
6. Children begin to make choices about possible careers before they begin school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Children need opportunities to view and learn about workers in their community (e.g., what they do at their jobs).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. At a young age, children develop ideas of jobs for males and other jobs for females.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. High school is time enough for students to focus on career choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Young children rule out a possible career choice or type of work because they think it is gender inappropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Young children connect how well they do in school with future career choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The curriculum for young children makes sufficient connections to the real world.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Primary school teachers need to raise children's awareness of occupations beyond conventional occupations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Career development is not as important as other school subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Children view certain jobs/occupations as out of their reach because of class or socioeconomic status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Career development doesn't take much teacher preparation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I would like some professional development in the area of career development for young children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Children's relationship and interactions with teachers can influence their career development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. What children watch on TV as well as social media can influence their future career choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Parents/guardians generally supervise what their children watch on TV.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Families generally spend sufficient time together, (e.g. playing games and talking).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. The mother influences children's future career choices more than the father.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Parents/Guardians' normal day-to-day interactions with their children play a huge role in shaping their child's career choices later in life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. Children's play can influence their future career choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Children's career choices are influenced by their relationship with friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Schools allow sufficient time for play.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. Children should learn to solve problems on their own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Self-confidence and self-esteem influence career choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. As a teacher/daycare worker, I am able to give sufficient attention to building children's self-confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Young children are confident with school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Young children are confident with making friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. There is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children to explore and apply their interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Helping children understand their strengths and limitations is an important part of the curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Children need help in developing confidence to try something new.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. When children make mistakes, they bounce back and will try again.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. There is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children develop self-awareness and self-esteem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Q.2. Appendix B: Focus Group Protocols

### Protocol for Parent Focus Groups

#### Preamble:

As you know, we are conducting a study of career development in young children. The purpose of this group/session is to have you share your thoughts, observations, and feelings about career development in young children. We have some open-ended questions and/or themes for your feedback. We welcome your ideas on this important topic.

1. Who/what affected your life choices/career development? Comments?
2. When do you think we should raise the topic/talk to children about jobs and careers? Comments?
3. What experiences do you think influence children's career development? Comments?
4. What do you see and feel that your child(ren) know about:
  - themselves/interests?
  - what they can do/what they can't do?
  - their hopes and dreams for future selves?
  - other comments.....
5. Tell me a little about your child(ren)'s ability to:
  - make decisions/make choices/solve problems?
  - respond to change?
  - other comments.....
6. Think about what happens regarding the topic of career development at school:
  - what are schools/teachers doing on this topic?
  - what do you think about your child(ren)'s love of learning - what does he/she like learning about?
  - what part does extracurricular activities play in your child(ren)'s life?
  - how are children's present experiences related to their futures?
  - other comments.....
7. Think about your child(ren)'s tasks/chores:
  - what kind of tasks/chores does your child(ren) have?
  - how does your child(ren) feel about doing tasks/chores?
  - what does your child(ren) learn from having little tasks/chores?
  - other comments.....
8. Think about what your child(ren)'s says about work; what he/she might like to do when they get older:
  - what kind of work/if you don't like what your child(ren) say, how do you respond?
  - other comments.....
9. Think about your own work:
  - what do your child(ren) know about your work?
  - what do you talk about with your child(ren) about your work?
  - have you ever taken your child(ren) to your workplace, etc.?
  - other comments.....

## Protocol for Educator Focus Groups

### Preamble:

As you know, we are conducting a study of career development in young children. The purpose of this group/session is to have you share your thoughts, observations, and feelings about career development in young children. We have some open-ended questions and/or themes for your feedback. We welcome your ideas on this important topic.

In your many years of experience with young children, could you tell me a few of your observations on children ages 3 to 5 years and 6 to 8 years?

1. What observations have you made on children ages 3 - 5 years/6 to 8 years?
  - what they can do - what are they good at?
  - what do they like to learn about?
  - what they know about themselves/how they feel about themselves?
  - self-esteem/Self-confidence
  - self-efficacy
  - what makes them happy?
  - ability to solve problems?
  - ability to adapt to change - resiliency?
  - make choices/decisions?
  - what are children interested in?
  - what are they influenced most by?
  - do children talk to you about things? What kind of things?
  - other comments.....
2. What kinds of things do you observe children saying or doing that show you their ambitions, goals, hopes, plans, etc. for their futures? Comments?
3. What have you seen or heard children talk about career development ideas? Comments?
  - Work
  - Jobs/occupations
  - What type of things do they say
  - other comments.....
4. What do you think young children can understand about career development, importance of work, hopes and dreams, etc.? Any examples? Comments?
5. Do you think it's a good idea to talk about career development in preschool/daycare/primary classes? Comments?
6. Some might be inclined to say it's too early to talk about careers at this age -- what would you say to them? Comments?
7. What do you think young children understand about their parents/guardians' work/jobs? How do you know they know? Comments?

## Protocol for Children Focus Groups

### *Emotions/feelings:*

I love: \_\_\_\_\_ I feel: \_\_\_\_\_ I feel happy when: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Play activities/interests:*

I like to play with: \_\_\_\_\_ My favorite game(s): \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite toy(s): \_\_\_\_\_ What I like to do with my friends: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Media:*

My favorite TV show(s): \_\_\_\_\_ My favorite movie(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### *Literature:*

My favorite book(s): \_\_\_\_\_ I like to read with: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Sports:*

Favorite sport(s) I love to play: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Hero:*

Favorite hero(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### *Learning:*

I like to learn: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite things to do in daycare/preschool/school: \_\_\_\_\_

Things I like to learn: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Self:*

I am very good at: \_\_\_\_\_ I know I'm good at this because: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be better at: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Future selves:*

When I am bigger I will play: \_\_\_\_\_ When I am older I will: \_\_\_\_\_

When I grow up I am going to be: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Home/family:*

My fav thing to do at home: \_\_\_\_\_

At home I help: \_\_\_\_\_ I help by: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Jobs/work:*

I have work to do: \_\_\_\_ Do you know anyone who goes to work? \_\_\_\_ Why do people go to Work? \_\_\_\_ What kind of work/job would you like when you are bigger? \_\_\_\_\_

### Q.3. Appendix C: Article Abstracts

#### *Parents' and educators' perceptions on young children's career development*

This exploratory project adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine the process and nature of young children's career development. The study aimed to explore how children's (ages three to eight years) career development is formed in relation to the family, school, community, and media, and the nature of these influences. The research addressed the significant gaps in both the theoretical and practical applications of career development for young children, their parents, educators and community.

In our research, strategies of inquiry involved grounded and action theory research methodologies. In Phase I, an extensive review of the literature on the career development of young children was conducted to delineate factors and variables. In Phase II, two quantitative surveys were designed, piloted, and revised to examine parents' and educators' perceptions about young children's career development, roles and effective practices. The survey administered to educators consisted of 36 questions and the survey administered to parents consisted of 20 questions – 1194 parents/guardians and 136 educators (preschool and primary teachers, and daycare workers) completed surveys. Questions sought information related to attitudes and perceptions on the content and process of young children's career development, including the role of work, school, self-concept and self-esteem as well as their own roles in supporting the developmental process, e.g., how they influence children's self-concepts, nature of parenting, teaching and interaction, decision-making, problem-solving and possible futures as well as how they feel they ought to support this development.

Phase III, the qualitative phase, provided an opportunity for parents and educators to discuss career constructs of young children, and to elaborate upon their understanding in the process, influences (family, school, peers, community, and media), and their roles in the process. In Phase III, focus groups were conducted separately with forty-one (41) parents/guardians and fifty one (51) educators (preschool and primary teachers and daycare workers) of children (ages three to eight years) within schools (preschool and primary), daycares and family resource centres. We obtained qualitative data from parents and educators on themes such as how they view career development, their role in children's career development, their perceptions on how they influence children's perceptions, decisions, and possible futures, and their understanding of career education targeting young children. The focus groups data complemented the individual survey responses by providing opportunity for more in-depth search for meaning, reflection and examination of the nature of children's career development as well as the nature of interactions affecting this development (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Clark et al., 2008; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Schultz, 1970). The interconnected nature of schooling, home, and career development emerged in the focus groups. Parents and educators shared anecdotes, stories, and many examples of their observations of young children, their schooling, and overall learning. Finally, in the development phase (Phase IV), findings from Phases I, II, and III (quantitative and qualitative research) were summarized and articulated in booklets for parents and educators. These Guidebooks were intended to empower and support parents/guardians and educators, and others (individuals, groups, and organizations) in understanding and advancing the career development of children. In this article, research process, the methodology, and findings are described. The implications for the theory, research and practice of children's career development are outlined.

### *Children's career development: A qualitative study*

This article presents qualitative data from our study with young children, ages three to eight years, on their understanding of career development constructs and process. Focus groups with 436 children (ages three to eight years) explored their career interests, present possible/future selves and their notions of work/occupations, etc. Children were encouraged to express their perceptions through age-appropriate media, such as telling stories in their own words, through puppetry, clay/playdoh, paintings/drawings, and other play media.

The children's narratives and depictions revealed interesting insights into their understanding of career constructs. This study showed children generally have an awareness of their parents' work roles and this awareness increases as children age. Younger children are able to name their parents' careers particularly in cases of more common careers, e.g., teacher, doctor, truck driver, but generally they tend only to identify the parents' workplace. By grade three, most children know where their parents work and the names of their occupations, and are able to talk about some of the work responsibilities. Children generally equate working with making money that supports lifestyles, e.g., buying things, having a house, travelling, etc. Younger children (ages three to four years) recognize the time that parents have to be away for work. Older children's attitudes/perceptions of work reflected more insight into how their parents feel about their work and the nature of work. Children eagerly shared their depictions and narratives.

Key learnings from the children's narratives and depictions were revealing on both the content and process of career development. They know more about themselves and the world of work and what's involved than most adults think. They are actively engaged in learning and their openness to the whole process is evident. The rich narratives and depictions are presented and discussed in light of their implications for the theory, research, and practice of young children's career development.