CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

EDUCATING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS:
EXAMINING GRADUATE LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Education,
Educational Psychology

By

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DEDICATION

For the mommy moments I may have missed,
For all the boo-boos I didn’t kiss.
For all the times that I was late,
For all the times I made you wait.
This is dedicated to you
With love and gratitude
You two are my shining lights of inspiration
All this is for you, with much appreciation
Thank you my Blueberry and my Chocolate Chip,
You are the best two daughters a mother could ever be blessed with.
For my husband,
Looks like we made it and it is time to celebrate!
No more late nights, missed meals and hurried little breaks.
I am so glad “You’re still the one!”
“After all that we’ve been through,
It comes down to me and you.
I guess it’s meant to be
Forever you and me,
After all”
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ABSTRACT

EDUCATING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS:
EXAMINING GRADUATE LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

By

Gina LeAnne Barili Peterson

Master of Arts in Education,
Educational Psychology

The current study examined the 23 California State University (CSU) campuses, to uncover and understand the infrastructure and content of CSU graduate programs that offer degree options in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Theoretically, master’s level programs are designed to develop college instructors who will prepare tomorrow’s ECE workforce. The findings suggest that although the CSU system provides a multitude of master’s level programs, few specialize in Early Childhood Education. A specific emphasis was placed on the programs (N=7) that focused explicitly on the growth, development and education of typically developing children birth through age eight. Ultimately, programs were housed in various departments and colleges, and were found to have diverse coursework requirements. The implications for these findings suggest that there are uncertainties in how ECE educators are educated and trained to be effective teachers.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, teacher preparation programs, ECE workforce
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“The need for leadership in the early childhood field has never been greater. The field of early childhood education suffers from critical shortages at every level from beginning practitioners through university faculty. Excellent program advanced master’s and doctoral levels are urgently needed to produce the accomplished teachers, administrators, state early childhood specialists, child and family advocates, professional development specialists, teacher educators, and researchers who will be the intellectual, programmatic, public policy leaders of the future” (NAEYC, 2012, p.44).

Background

The field of Early Care and Education is a diverse and dynamic field that not only provides care and educational services to children and families, it also provides career opportunities to beginning practitioners (e.g. teacher assistants, teachers, caregivers) and advanced professionals (e.g., administrators, college faculty, advocates and policymakers). Accordingly, every aspect of ECE is interrelated and contingent upon creating a comprehensive system that will educate, train and support the ECE workforce. More specifically, there is an interconnectedness that exists between teacher preparation programs, high-quality classrooms and positive outcomes for children (Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai, & Kipnis, 2009). As further noted by Whitebook and Ryan (2011), there is a direct correlation between children’s higher achievement scores in connection to preschool teachers who are specialized in early care and education.
The Benefits of High Quality Preschool Experiences

Creating high-quality preschool experiences that promote positive outcomes for children has been a driving force behind numerous research projects over the past few decades (e.g., The Carolina Abecedarian Project; the High Scope Perry Preschool Project; and the Children of the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study) (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Data from these studies established many of the principles and practices ECE educators and advocates believe to be in the best interest of children. For example, stimulating interactions, responsive caregiving and emotionally supportive environments have been linked to boosting children’s learning in math and literacy as well as promoting children’s socio-emotional development (Yoshikawa et al., 2013).

As further suggested by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an organization dedicated to providing professional standards and guidelines that support children, families and the ECE workforce, when teachers implement curriculum that is age appropriate, culturally relevant, and designed to meet children’s individual and developmental needs, there is a greater likelihood that children will be challenged to construct their own knowledge, which will in turn can potentially produce positive outcomes in literacy, language, mathematics and self-regulation (NAEYC, 2012). In other words, children are more likely to thrive socially, academically and emotionally when under the care of preschool teachers who have specialized training in early care and education.

Creating Policy, Supporting High Quality

The field of early care and education (ECE) continues to be of interest to advocates, educators and policymakers at both the federal and state levels. In his
February 2013 State of the Union Address, President Obama proposed that high-quality preschool programs be made available to every child and he further urged policymakers to consider his plan based seminal research that suggested immediate gains, as well as long-term economic gains, and a reduced achievement gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). More specifically, in his “Plan for Early Education for all Americans” President Obama stated that when educating our youngest children is a top priority, “students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, (and) form more stable families of their own” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

To create high-quality preschool programs, President Obama’s plan ultimately calls for well trained, qualified teachers in every preschool classroom. However, as postulated by Whitebook (2004), there continues to be a shortage of specialized early childhood teachers who are trained to provide high quality experiences for children birth to age 5 and their families. If this is the case, how will preschools whether private, state or federally funded, comply with state and federal mandates that will require providers to provide all children with high-quality preschool experiences?

**Improving Teacher Effectiveness**

As suggested by Wilen, Ishler, Hutchinson and Kindsvatter (2000), the most effective instructors are those who combine sound educational principles with practical work experiences to provide a more vivid and realistic learning opportunity for their students. Just as children learn best from high-quality experiences, the NAEYC suggests that adult students learn best from well-designed teacher preparation programs that incorporate specific knowledge and skills along with opportunities to make connections
between fundamental concepts and professional experiences (NAEYC, 2012). For that reason, the 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs were developed (NAEYC, 2012). The NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards are designed to unite the early childhood education profession as a whole by providing institutions of higher education, from associate to baccalaureate to graduate programs, with a set of professional standards that can be used to create a comprehensive system that will develop a well-trained and qualified ECE workforce.

Likewise, the California Department of Education has developed the California Early Educator Competencies that aligns with, and elaborates on, the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards. Whereas the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards provide broad guidelines for high quality care, the ECE Competencies provide specific applications for quality care and education. The ECE Competencies were designed to support the ECE Workforce by providing a framework for accountability. It is important to note that the ECE Competencies are aligned with state national standards including the California’s K-12 Teaching Standards, the National Council for the Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE), NAEYC’s Accreditation Standards, NAEYC’s Code of Ethics, California Infant-Family and Early Childhood Mental Health Training Guidelines and Early Start Personnel Project (PEACH, 2012).

In an effort to improve teacher effectiveness in early care and education, many states are implementing NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards. California however, appears to be lagging behind as suggested by Karoly (2012). With scant research available to verify whether or not institutions of higher education (IHE) are
implementing the NAEYC Standards, there is some uncertainty as to how teachers are being taught about best practices for the growth and development of young children birth through age eight.

According to Karoly (2012) even though California continues to make strides towards program quality, alignment and articulation across all degree levels, there is much work to be done. To complicate matters, according to Whitebook et al. (2012), there is not an accepted or agreed upon program model for what constitutes a high-quality teacher preparation program. Consequently, not only can coursework content vary from program to program, so to can program requirements, fieldwork opportunities, pedagogical philosophies, and student learning outcomes (Whitebook et al., 2012).

Another obstacle for students wanting to pursue a master’s degree with an option in ECE is that ECE programs are often embedded in various departments and colleges including Education, Child and Family Studies, Psychology, and Human Development. Thus, finding a suitable program at an institution of higher education (IHE) maybe a daunting endeavor as prospective students sift through college catalogs and program descriptions (Karoly, 2012). If well-trained, qualified teachers are linked to positive outcomes for children, how will California prepare tomorrow’s ECE workforce to meet state and federal mandates for high-quality preschool experiences?

Statement of the Problem

Preparation of future professionals entering the Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce, (e.g., preschool teachers, administrators, child and family advocates, early childhood specialists, IHE faculty, researchers and policy leaders) requires the field to consider the significance of a Master’s level degree. In many cases those working in the
ECE field often obtain their education by way of Community College from instructors who hold a Master’s degree. However, as noted by Whitebook et al. (2009) teacher preparation programs at the Community College level can only be as good as the ECE educator teaching the course.

To date, much of the research on teacher preparation in early childhood has focused primarily on 2- year and 4- year programs (Early & Winton, 2001; Maxwell, Lin & Early, 2006), and, according to Whitebook et al. (2012) little is known regarding the appropriate pathways and implications of a master’s level degree or beyond. Not only does this lack of in depth information fuel the controversial debate over whether or not a degree matters for teacher effectiveness, it serves to prompt further research.

For example, can it be said with certainty that teachers are being trained to meet the developmental needs of young children from birth through age eight when their coursework and degree pathway is in a related field? The term related field, is an ambiguous term that usually refers to coursework or a degree in liberal studies, education, psychology, or child and adolescent development, rather than specific coursework in early childhood education. Likewise, can it be said with certainty that there is an agreed upon standard for what constitutes a model teacher preparation program? Therefore, this study seeks to gain a better understanding of how Master’s level ECE professionals are educated and trained in California.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study seeks to build on relevant research regarding the impact of teacher preparation programs on developing effective ECE educators. Ultimately, it is the ECE professionals (IHE faculty) who educate, train, and prepare future ECE
workforce practitioners (caregivers, teachers and administrators) who will work directly with children and families. This study will therefore examine graduate level programs in California to address the following questions:

1. Which of the California State University (CSU) campuses offer a Master’s Degree with an option/specialization in Early Childhood Education?
2. Where are these graduate programs housed within each CSU campus?
3. What are the entry requirements for these graduate programs, the nature of required core and elective coursework, options are available for the culminating experience, and unique features of the program?

Accordingly, this study begins with discovering which of the California State University (CSU) campuses offer Master’s programs with an emphasis, specialization or area of concentration, in Early Childhood Education. The identified programs will then be organized by college or department for better clarification. Next, the study will review the infrastructure and content of the selected programs (e.g., entry requirements, number of total units, types of culminating experience). And finally, this study will describe teacher preparation programs that emphasize the growth, development and education of typically developing children from birth to age eight years, and whether or not there are any notable or unique features.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is intended to support the literature on Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce by providing relevant research regarding graduate level programs being offered through the California State University system. At this time ECE advocates, practitioners and policymakers are struggling to find a suitable solution for the ECE
workforce. More specifically how to educate, train, support, and ultimately prepare future ECE educators (e.g., preschool teachers, administrators, and IHE instructors), to meet new state and federal requirements. As postulated by Whitebook et al. (2009), high-quality preschool classrooms can only be obtained when preschool teachers are well trained. Even more profound, preschool teachers are only as good as the college instructor teaching the course. For this reason, equipping institutions of higher education (IHE) with educators who have sound pedagogy, knowledge, and field work experiences in ECE is vital. As preschool teacher qualifications, and outcome expectations for children continue to be of interest to policymakers and advocates alike, the need to reconsider how IHEs are preparing tomorrow’s ECE workforce is essential.

This study may potentially also have an impact on practitioners and professionals who want to specialize in early care and education as it challenges CSUs to reexamine, and possibly reform, the current design, infrastructure and content of their MA programs.

**Terminology**

For the purpose of this thesis, the following are a list of terms and definitions:

- **Alignment**: Ensures that educators implement content and curriculum that is essential for meeting state and national standards.

- **Child Development**: The field of study that emphasizes the growth and development of children from birth through the end of adolescence (CDE, 2011).

- **Early Care and Education**: The profession in which all early childhood educators (preschool teachers, caregivers and faculty instructors) work (CDE, 2011).
• *Early Child Education:* The field of study that emphasizes the growth, development and education of typically developing children from birth to age eight years.

• *ECE Workforce:* includes those individuals working in child care programs, agencies, organizations, or institutions of higher education, whose primary mission is to facilitate children’s development and learning as well as offer family support (NAEYC, 2011).

• *High-Quality Care:* Programs that address the needs of the child and family; Programs that offer small classroom sizes with low child to teacher ratios, a developmentally appropriate curriculum, and an assessment of children for the purpose of planning instruction, guiding learning and identifying concerns, and (NEA, 2012).

**A Glimpse of the Thesis**

There is an absence of scholarly work spotlighting the implications of higher education on the field of Early Care and Education (ECE). To optimally serve children, it is important to explore the development of ECE educators, practitioners and professionals. Chapter Two, Literature Review, therefore examines upcoming policy changes and the potential impact this may have on the field of Early Care and Education. Next, there is a brief look at best practices, followed by a review of literature regarding the impact of high-quality early care and education. Then, a glance at career opportunities that are available in the ECE workforce. Finally, the literature review discusses how practitioners and professionals are being prepared via the three degree pathways (e.g., associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degree) as offered by California’s
Institutions of Higher Education. Next, Chapter Three, Methodology will elaborate on the sample, procedures, instruments, and research design used in this study to examine the infrastructure, content and unique features of graduate level programs. In Chapter Four, Results, findings from the current study will be described. More specifically, Chapter Four will discuss where M.A. programs with an option in Early Childhood Education can be found within the CSU system, in addition to program content. Finally, this thesis will conclude with Chapter Five, which will discuss implications of the findings and offer suggestions for future research and policy.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis paper is to examine graduate level teacher preparation programs in California that specialize in Early Childhood Education (ECE). However, before examining the elements of a Master’s degree program, it would be advantageous to consider the various aspects of ECE to appreciate how high-quality preschool experiences are likely contingent upon a teacher’s education, training and experience.

Thus, this chapter will review several interrelated aspects of ECE. The first section, “A Call to Action: Changes in Early Care and Education” discusses upcoming policy changes and the potential impact it will have on the field of ECE. The second section, “Best Practices in Early Care and Education” defines key components to high-quality early care and education as recommended by the NAEYC (e.g., developmentally appropriate practices and the intentional teacher). The third section, “The Impact of High-Quality Preschool Experiences” reviews seminal work that has been identified as the link between teacher preparation programs, high-quality preschool classrooms and positive outcomes for children. The forth section, “A Look at the ECE Workforce” compares employment opportunities and the educational pathways between preschool and K-12 teachers. The fifth section “Teaching Teachers to Teach” looks at California’s Master Plan for Educators, the ECE competencies and the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards. And, the final section “A Closer Look at Teacher Preparation Programs” explores California’s Institutions of Higher Education (e.g., associate’s degree programs, bachelor’s programs and master’s degree programs).
A Call to Action: Changes in Early Care and Education

In a policy brief by the National Education Association (NEA) it was stated that “the most effective early childhood educators have at least a four-year college degree plus specialized training in early childhood” (NEA, 2010, p. 3). The premise being that by raising the level of education and training for preschool teachers this would potentially narrow the achievement gap for children entering kindergarten, especially for low income children (NEA, 2010). Likewise, as reported by Stipek (2006) research studies not only found immediate benefits for children who engage in high-quality preschool experiences (e.g., academically and socially), but also stated that such benefits can be sustained long term (e.g., higher graduation rates, lower drop-out rates, a reduction in teen pregnancy, and lower crime rates), as well as for life, as noted in the PEACH White Paper (PEACH, 2012).

Recognizing that there is a considerable amount of research linking high-quality preschool experiences to positive outcomes for children, national public policy such as, President Obama’s “Plan for Early Education for all Americans” (2013) proposes that the federal government fund high quality preschool access for all children. This plan however, would require that all preschool teachers be both qualified as well as well-trained.

Although there is substantial support for funding preschool for all children, ECE advocates, practitioners and policymakers are in a quandary regarding the ability of the current ECE infrastructure to support such an ambitious agenda. . First, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2012) reports “The field of early childhood education suffers from critical shortages of qualified personnel at every level
from beginning practitioners through university faculty” (p. 44). The lack of potential ECE educators in the workforce may be problematic in maintaining the level of high-quality programs proposed by national and state initiatives.

Second, there is no collective agreement on what is meant by the terms well-trained and qualified. More specifically, there is not an agreed upon standard for teacher qualifications, as will be further discussed in the next section. Third, as noted by Whitebook and Ryan (2011), there is a serious mismatch between “the content and quality of teacher preparation” (p.4). In others words, it may not be the level of the degree per se but rather the content of coursework, the area of concentration (e.g., ECE as compared to “related”), and the opportunity to participate in fieldwork practicum that can influence effectiveness.

The Diverse Qualifications for Preschool Teachers

Besides critical shortages in the field, another challenge is the inconsistency and variability from state to state, program to program, regarding teacher qualifications (Norris, 2010; NEA, 2010). To date, teachers who want to work in a private, center-based preschool program in California need only 12 units of ECE coursework as compared to five states that require preschool teachers to have either a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate or a Child Care Professional (CCP) credential. While on the other hand, thirteen states have no requirements for teachers to teach in private, center-based programs (NEA, 2010).

Similarly, to teach in a state-funded preschool program in California teachers are required to have a CDA, as compared to four states that require an Associate’s degree. Twenty-seven states, as well as the District of Columbia, require a Bachelor’s degree.
What’s more, of those states that require a B.A. degree, eighteen states stipulate that ECE coursework be included (NEA, 2010). As for federally funded programs, according to Office of Head Start as of October 1, 2011 each Head Start classroom in center-based programs must have a teacher who has at least one of the following:

1. An associate, baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education;
2. An associate degree in a field related to early childhood education and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool-age children;
3. A baccalaureate or advanced degree in any field and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool-age children or;
4. A baccalaureate degree in any field and has been admitted into the Teach For America program, passed a rigorous early childhood content exam, such as the Praxis II, participated in a Teach For America summer training institute that includes teaching preschool children and is receiving ongoing professional development and support from Teach for America’s professional staff.

If well-trained and qualified teachers are the link to positive outcomes for children, how will California prepare tomorrow’s ECE workforce to meet state and federal mandates for high-quality preschool experiences? Do preschool teachers need a degree to be effective? If so, what should teacher preparation program models look like, and how will ECE professionals receive the proper support, training and expertise in early care and education?
Best Practices in Early Care and Education

Early care and education is a specialized field within education encompassing the knowledge and application of best practices as related to children from birth through age eight. It is believed that teachers who are well trained and educated, specifically in early care and education, are more likely to implement best practices (e.g., NAEYC recommendations, developmentally appropriate practices and intentional teaching strategies). In this section elements of high-quality practices will be highlighted. Over the past few decades, a great deal of research has been devoted to supporting best practices and what is in the best interest of children. As part of a comprehensive system to support high-quality early care and education, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has studied demographic trends, explored effective learning strategies and researched the developmental domains in an effort to construct a framework for best practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Based on NAEYC’s recommendations, many factors contribute to high-quality early care and education including (a) professional development and compensation (b) health and safety (c) relationship and interactions (d) parent and community involvement (e) environment and (f) experiences (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Defining Developmentally Appropriate Practices

In early care and education, the phrase developmentally appropriate practice is commonly associated with high-quality programs. According to the NEA (2010) there are five critical components that contribute to high-quality: (a) a well rounded curriculum that supports all areas of development; (b) regular assessments to guide learning and identify concerns; (c) a comprehensive network that includes the family and community
while addressing childrens health and nutritional needs; (d) small class sizes with low
teacher to child ratios; (e) the hiring well of educated teachers, who are paid adequatley.
As a guide for how to ensure high quality early learning experiences for young children,
NAEYC developed the guiding principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice
(DAP) (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The core beliefs of DAP state that early childhood
education teachers should understand each child’s individual developmental patterns, use
teaching strategies that match each child’s age and developmental level, be responsive to
the social and cultural context within which children live, provide learning experiences
that are appropriately challenging, and use knowledge of how children learn and develop
to inform decisions about curriculum and teaching strategies utilized (Copple &
Bredekamp, 2009).

To effectively implement NAEYC’s developmentally appropriate practices,
teachers are expected to demonstrate the following five practices: (a) creating a caring
community of learners (i.e., positive interactions between children and teachers; (b)
teaching to enhance development and learning (i.e., teacher skills and strategies used to
plan effective learning experiences); (c) planning curriculum to achieve important goals
(i.e., knowledge, skills, abilities, understanding that children are expected to acquire); (d)
assessing children’s development and learning (i.e., monitor children’s progress); and (e)
establishing reciprocal relationships with families (i.e., respectful, collaborative
relationships with parents and program policies that encourage family environment
(Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

As defined in the PEACH White Paper (2012), not only are the needs of the
whole child met in a DAP program, the needs of the family (e.g., early intervention
services, provider support and responsive relationships) are likewise addressed. A DAP program would also employ intentional teachers who would take into consideration the value of age appropriateness, individual appropriateness and cultural influences of a child (Gordon & Browne, 2012).

**The Intentional Teacher: An Imperative Ingredient to High-Quality Practices**

According to Ackerman (2005), although several factors are deemed vital in creating a high quality, developmentally appropriate preschool program for young children, the intentional teacher is considered to be one of the most imperative ingredients. As suggested by NAEYC (2012), intentional teachers understand the developmental stages that occur during the early years, birth through age eight, and with that knowledge they not only will create a developmentally appropriate curriculum, they will set up a learning environment that allows for exploration, problem solving and creativity. In other words, intentional teachers act with purpose, selecting specific strategies that will best support children’s learning and their emotional well-being. As indicated in numerous studies, intentional teachers who are both responsive and sensitive to children’s individual needs, and are known to provide the most effective and stimulating curricula (Yoshikawa et al., 2013; Witebook & Ryan, 2011).

**The Impact of High-Quality Preschool Experiences**

According to Yoshikawa et al. (2013), a considerable amount of longitudinal research has been conducted between 1965 and 2007 to determine whether or not there are significant benefits to high-quality child care for at-risk children. The most referenced of these studies are the High Scope Perry Preschool Project (1962), the
Carolina Abecedarian Project (1972), and the Children of the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study (1993).

The High Scope Perry Preschool Project in particular, measured three major categories: social responsibility (delinquency, marital status, and pregnancy), scholastic success (graduation rate, grade point average, and postsecondary education), and socioeconomic success (employment earnings, compared to welfare assistance) (Schweinhart et al., 1985 as cited by Parks, 2000). Data revealed that the children who were enrolled in the Perry Preschool project had an overall higher success rate in all three categories as compared to those children who did not participate in the project (Parks, 2000).

Data from the other two studies were likewise favorable in that high-quality classroom experiences were shown to reduce the achievement gap for at-risk children. In addition to these notable studies, two contemporary studies Tulsa, Oklahoma’s Pre-k for All program and Boston Public Schools’ (BPS) preschool program showed significant gains in language, reading and math skills (Yoshikawa et al., 2013; Bueno, Darling-Hammond & Gonzales, 2010).

In sum, the overall results from all of these studies corroborate that children perform better in school, and in life, when they are enrolled in high-quality preschool programs (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). The question is how are teachers prepared to implement high quality experiences as described in this section? The next section will call attention to the wide range of experiences and expectations within the ECE workforce.
A Look at the ECE Workforce

The field of Early Care and Education is a diverse and dynamic field that not only provides care and educational services to children and families, it also provides career opportunities to initial practitioners (teacher assistants, preschool teachers, and caregivers), who are just beginning their careers in ECE, and advanced professionals (e.g., administrators, college faculty, advocates and policymakers), who are theoretically more educated and experienced.

According to the 2006 California Early Care and Education Workforce Study, there are close to 130,000 members of the Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce working in either center-based or family childcare programs. In Los Angeles alone, there are more than 65,000 full-time employees that work either directly or indirectly with children and families as reported in the Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Los Angeles County (2008).

As suggested by Karoly (2012), the ECE Workforce is a unique vocation that provides a variety of employment opportunities. For example, ECE educators (caregivers, providers, assistants, teachers, mentors, directors, administrators and supervisors) may work in either in formal settings (licensed center-based programs or family childcare programs), or informal settings (license-exempt providers). While others may choose a career working in agencies, organizations, and institutions of higher education that ultimately train and educate the ECE educators. No matter the career choice, the primary mission of the ECE workforce is to support children’s development and learning.
Comparing Career Pathways

While K-12 teachers must first complete an accredited teacher credential program that meets specified qualifications (e.g., bachelor’s degree, teacher credential, and fieldwork training), there are currently no such requirements for the ECE workforce. For example, according to Title 22 Regulations, to be a “fully qualified early childhood teacher” in California, a teacher is required to have a minimum of 12 units in early childhood education and six months of work experience. However, as noted by Karoly (2012), based on data from Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai and Kipnis (2009), “many ECE providers begin caring for children before they have formal professional development” (as cited in PEACH, 2012, p.106). In other words, it is not uncommon for preschool teachers and childcare providers to acquire work experience and ECE units after rather than prior to being hired (Bueno, Darling-Hammond, & Gonzales, 2010). Yet, there are some ECE educators who are required to have A.A. or B.A. degrees as part of their job description (e.g., state funded preschools or Head Start). This inconsistency within the ECE workforce has fueled much debate and sparked interest among stakeholders and policy makers and will be further discussed in the next section.

Comparing Educational Pathways

Most ECE advocates would agree that high-quality preschool experiences don’t just happen. In fact, according to Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai and Kipnis (2012), “No ECE program can succeed without teachers who can establish warm caring relationships with children,” (p. 1). Interestingly, of all the factors that can contribute to high-quality care (e.g., small classroom size with a low teacher to child ratio, high
standards and accountability, and adequately paid teachers), the most controversial is the education level of the classroom teacher (Barnett, 2007).

Researchers want to know how much education contributes to teacher effectiveness. To date, relatively few studies have focused on the effects of teacher education in early care and education as compared to the research literature on teacher effectiveness for grades K-12 (Kelly & Camili, 2007). What is evident is that there is a clear mismatch of expectations between K-12 and ECE teachers. For example, much of K-12 teacher preparation takes place at the university level, as compared to ECE teacher preparation which generally occurs at the community college level (Whitebook et al., 2009). At this time not only does there appear to be scant research identifying effective models to support higher education for ECE professionals, the California State University system design is somewhat problematic in that there are a limited number of graduate programs specializing in ECE (Karoly, 2012). Although, finding data to support an ideal standard of practice for ECE is limited, later in this chapter the educational pathways for the ECE workforce will be further explored.

**The Need for Degrees in ECE**

In California, preschool teachers may enter the ECE workforce with varying levels of education and experience. Some teachers will start their career without having any formal ECE education, while others may have the minimum qualifications (12 ECE units) and still others may have a degree in early childhood education. As suggested by Bueno et al., (2010), preschool teachers who have earned a BA degree in early childhood education “have generally been found to be more effective than those without these qualifications” (p. 2).
Although there are proponents that maintain a teacher’s training is directly linked to high-quality experiences and positive outcomes for children, whether it be through formal education (related coursework taken at an institution of higher education) and/or professional development (extensive training in a specific topic area), there are several opponents that would disagree (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). Data collected from work by Early et al. (2007) failed to find a direct correlation between a teacher’s degree and high-quality practices. Early et al. (2007) further cautioned that there were several likely prospects to promote classroom quality including a teacher’s individual skills and beliefs, availability of materials and overall support from supervisors.

Whichever side of the debate one may take, the fact is that policymakers at both federal and state levels are now requiring a percentage of lead teachers in preschool classrooms to have a bachelor’s degree. Thus, advocates, researchers and practitioners are in need of evidence to “justify the investments necessary to institute higher educational standards for pre-k teachers” (Bueno et al., 2010).

**Teaching Teachers to Teach**

Much like how young children learn best from responsive and caring teachers who use intentional teaching strategies, adult learners benefit from instructors who are well versed in theory and pedagogy, who develop and build respectful relationships with their students (NAEYC, 2012). Still, where do teachers learn to teach?

According to the California Master Plan for Higher Education, (2009), one of the goals for institutions of higher education (e.g., California Community Colleges, California State Universities, and Universities of California) is to develop and maintain a system that not only supports adult student learning but more importantly, will prepare adult
students for a successful transition into the workplace. Furthermore, as noted in Recommendation 8.4 of the California Master Plan, California colleges and universities should develop an infrastructure to support the ongoing professional development of faculty, in order to improve the quality of teaching and promote student learning.

Exploring the ECE Competencies and the NAEYC Standards

In an effort to improve the overall quality of early care and education in California, a systematic approach was developed to foster professional development standards for all Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), organizations and agencies that support and train California’s early childhood educators (PEACH, 2012). The result of that endeavor was the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competencies (2011).

According to the California Department of Education and First 5:

The ECE competencies serve several interrelated purposes. First, they provide coherent structure and content for efforts to foster the professional development of California’s early childhood workforce. Second, they inform the course of study that early childhood educators follow as they pursue study in institutions of higher education. Third, they provide guidance in the definition of ECE credentials and certifications. And fourth, they give dispositions that early childhood educators need to support young children’s learning and development across program types (p.2).

The ECE Competencies incorporate twelve core areas as follows: (a) child development and learning; (b) culture, diversity and equity; (c) relationships, interactions, and guidance; (d) family and community engagement; (e) dual-language development; (f) observation, screening assessment, and documentation (g) special needs and inclusion;
(h) learning environments and curriculum; (i) health, safety and nutrition; (j) leadership in early childhood education; (k) professionalism; (l) administration and supervision.

The ECE Competencies were designed to support, train and unite the ECE Workforce by providing a framework of knowledge and professional standards. It is important to note that the ECE Competencies are aligned with state national standards including the California’s K-12 Teaching Standards, NAEYC’s Accreditation Standards, NAEYC’s Code of Ethics, California Infant-Family and Early Childhood Mental Health Training Guidelines and Early Start Personnel Project (PEACH, 2012).

Whereas the ECE competencies focus on specific core areas to promote strong professional development, the 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs provide a more general outline. According to NAEYC (2012),

These standards are designed for the early childhood education profession as a whole, to be relevant across a range of roles and settings. These core NAEYC standards are used across degree levels, from associate to baccalaureate to graduate programs. They are used in higher education accreditation systems, in state policy development, and by professional development programs both inside and outside institutions of higher education (p.10).

The Initial Standards are designed for undergraduate or graduate programs that are preparing individuals to enter the ECE workforce for the first time, whereas the Advanced Standards are intended for graduate programs where individuals are being prepared for leadership roles. The NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs consist of seven standards:
1. Promoting Child Development and Learning
2. Building Family and Community
3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families
4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches
5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum
6. Becoming a Professional
7. Early Childhood Field Experiences

Together, the ECE Competencies and the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards provide the most comprehensive program design framework for future ECE educators. The next section addresses the three degree levels that are available to ECE educators.

A Closer Look at Teacher Preparation Programs

Associate’s Programs

The community college is the point of entry for many ECE professionals for a variety of reasons including accessibility, proximity, and affordability. Although some students seek only the minimal education requirements as needed to work in a preschool (e.g., 12 ECE units), many seek a degree according to Karoly (2012). The California Community College (CCC) system offers two degree paths, an Associate of Arts –AA, and an Associate of Science, along with five Early Childhood Education / Child Development certificates (Karoly, 2012). According to Karoly (2012), two-year programs have two primary functions: First, to prepare students for the ECE workforce; second, to prepare students to transfer to a four-year college.
Whichever path a student selects, the CCC instructors have a huge responsibility to ensure that students are not only prepared to work directly with children and their families as part of the ECE workforce, but that students are well versed in theory, current trends and issues, and that quality practices are appropriately modeled, in an effort to provide them with a solid scholastic foundation.

**The Curriculum Alignment Project:** Students wanting to transfer from a two-year community college to a four-year university can now do so in a more streamline fashion due to dedicated efforts made by supporters of the Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP). The Curriculum Alignment Project was launched in 2008 with the intention of creating a “clear and consistent pathway for students interested in careers in Early Childhood Care and Education in the state of California,” (PEACH, 2012, p. 197).

There are currently eight core courses that have been aligned: Child, Growth and Development; Child, Family and Community; Health, Safety and Nutrition; Principles and Practice of Teaching Young Children; Introduction to Curriculum; Teaching in a Diverse Society; Observation and Assessment; and Practicum: Field Experience.

According to the Child Development Training Consortium, by aligning these eight fundamental courses, students will not have to repeat ECE coursework upon transferring to a CSU. This process will ultimately save students a considerable amount time and money. To date, 4 out of the 23 CSU campuses (Humboldt, Fresno, Fullerton and Sacramento) are operating under CAP and have created a direct transfer pathway for students wanting to pursue a B.A. (Child Development Training Consortium, 2013).
Bachelor’s Programs

Once a student transfers to a four-year university, pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Early Care and Education may be a rather challenging task. According to the PEACH White Paper (2012),

It is rare to find an academic department or 4-year degree program that is focused specifically on ECE at the bachelor’s level. Instead, degrees tend to be offered in departments that focus on Child Development, Human Development and Family Studies more broadly, offering ECE as a specialization, concentration or option within a major that may also offer specializations on different age groups, or other types of service provision, such a family life education or parenting education (p. 56).

Ideally, the purpose of a bachelors program is to provide students, who are potential ECE educators (e.g., preschool teachers, administrators and family childcare providers), with practicum based on theory and research as a means to develop appropriate teaching strategies that are considered essential in a high-quality preschool classroom. As proposed by NAEYC (2012), “Without knowing about the past and the future (the precursors to children’s development and learning, and the trajectory they will follow in later years), teachers cannot design effective learning opportunities within their specific professional assignment” (p.12). As such, a B.A. degree in Early Childhood Education potentially serves to prepare teachers to meet the demand for well-trained and qualified preschool teachers.

The current debate of whether or not a B.A. degree matters is entangled around several issues. One challenge in particular is finding a B.A. program that specializes in
ECE rather than earning a degree in a “related” area of concentration. As postulated by Whitebook and Ryan (2011), most ECE educators end up in programs that specialize in Education in lieu of ECE. Programs that specialize in Education are traditionally better suited to support those who want to work with elementary grades (K-6) rather than with young children (birth to age five). Whitebook and Ryan (2011) as note that “little work has examined the content and quality of teacher preparation (programs)” (p. 4). Due to a lack of concrete data, there tends to be speculation regarding benefits of a B.A. degree.

**Master’s Programs**

According to the California Master Plan for Higher Education (2009), California State Universities provide the primary pathway for those individuals seeking a master’s degree related to education and teaching. Ideally, it is at the Master’s level where students develop sound pedagogy, gain deeper knowledge, and engage in fieldwork experiences which is quite essential for those planning to be ECE leaders, advocates, or educators. However, as noted in the PEACH White Paper (2012), “there are limited Master’s and Doctoral Programs per se that focus on early childhood education…making it more challenging to prepare future faculty and leaders in the field of early childhood education” (p. 91).

Besides the limited availability of M.A. programs, there is not an accepted or agreed upon program model for how to educate, train and develop ECE educators (Karoly, 2012). As Whitebook et al. (2012) explains, not only can pedagogical philosophies vary from M.A. program to M.A. program, so to can program requirements, coursework content, implementation of standards and fieldwork opportunities.
Overall, there is a limited amount of research regarding the impact of a Master’s level education on teacher effectiveness (Karoly, 2012). Whitebook et al. (2009) did however compare data from K-12 and ECE research and found there to be some specific contributing factors to high-quality teacher preparation programs including, IHE coursework, opportunities for practical fieldwork experience, program structure, the implementation of ECE competencies and part-time faculty. This line of reasoning is a work in progress and has generated further research. As suggested in the Executive Summary of the Learning Together Study (2012), the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment is developing two measures in an effort to enhance our understanding of teacher effectiveness. One measure will consider “the contribution of higher education program characteristics” and the second measure will explore the “teachers’ work environments” (Kipnis, Whitebook, Almaraz, Sakai & Austin, 2012, p.6).

**Synthesis of the Review of Literature**

Policymakers, practitioners and advocates are actively trying to find a suitable solution for ensuring that the ECE workforce is prepared to meet the demands of new state and federal mandates. More specifically, how to train, support and educate future ECE educators is at the forefront for many leaders. As postulated by Whitebook et al., (2009), high-quality preschool classrooms can only be obtained when preschool teachers are well trained. Even more profound, preschool teachers are only as good as the college instructor teaching the course. Theoretically, it is at institutions of higher education where teachers are prepared for a successful transition into the ECE workplace. There however continues to be some ambiguity as to what constitutes key elements in a teacher preparation program.
At this time, there is not a formal pathway for early childhood educators to follow as compared to K-12 educators. For example, whereas K-12 teachers need a Bachelor’s degree and credential to teach in California, ECE teachers need only 12 units of Early Childhood Education to be considered a “fully qualified teacher.” Head Start however now requires their Lead Teachers to have a B.A. degree. This move towards high-quality has caused some debate within the ECE workforce industry. For this reason, it is vital to examine how institutions of higher education (IHE) are preparing tomorrow’s ECE workforce.

More specifically, it is important to consider whether or not graduate programs are implementing sound pedagogy, knowledge, and field work experiences to amply prepare college instructors to teach the next generation of ECE educators. In Chapter Three, the sample, research design and procedure used to examine CSU graduate programs will be outlined.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

Theoretically, the Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce is expected to create high-quality preschool experiences for all children, thus there needs to be a system in place to educate, train and prepare ECE professionals in a manner that reflects high standards, competency, and intentionality. Building on seminal research that examined teacher preparation programs for early childhood educators at the associate’s level and bachelorette’s level, the proposed study sought to explore graduate level programs by considering the following three research questions:

1. Which of the California State University (CSU) campuses offer a Master’s Degree with an option in Early Childhood Education (ECE)?

2. Where are ECE graduate programs housed within each CSU campus?

3. What are the entry requirements, required core and elective coursework, and culminating experience options for ECE graduate programs, and are there any notable or unique program features?

Sample

According to NAEYC (2012), the primary goal for graduate programs is to educate, train and prepare candidates who are seeking leadership positions in the field of early care and education. The California State University (CSU) system provides one of the primary pathways for those individuals seeking a master’s degree related to education and teaching; therefore, this study is specifically limited to the CSU campuses and
graduate programs that offer Master’s degrees with an option in Early Childhood Education.

**Instruments**

Data were compiled using published information, available through on-line websites (e.g., http://degrees.calstate.edu/), as well as through individual CSU databases, campus catalogs and home page portals. This research method was selected, in part, for being one of the primary pathways in which potential candidates locate graduate level programs.

To track and organize data, tables and charts were used. As a springboard for this thesis paper, work from Whitebook, Bellm, Lee and Sakai (2005), and Maxwell, Lim and Early, (2006) provided a framework for the table and charts. More specifically, *Time to Remodel: Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs in California’s Institutions of Higher Education* by Whitebook et al. (2005) provided a chart of California college campuses that offer teacher preparation programs at 2-year, 4-year, graduate and doctorate levels.

The study *Early Childhood Teacher Education Programs in the U.S.* by Maxwell et al. (2006) provided a mode for tracking coursework content of teacher preparation programs. And, work by the Partnerships for Education, Articulation and Cooperation through Higher Education (PEACH) Component provided a table in *Pipelines and Pathways the Current Status of ECE Professional Development in Los Angeles* that illustrated the diversity of Bachelor’s degree programs at Southern California CSU campuses (PEACH, 2012). This table provided an ideal model for organizing the infrastructure of MA level programs.
Research Design

This thesis is a descriptive, non-experimental study of ECE teacher preparation programs. The proposed study sought to provide an informative analysis based on information gathered while examining the infrastructure (how programs are housed) and the content (entry requirements, coursework and culminating experience options) of graduate programs that are currently available through the CSU system.

Procedure

Based on the three research questions as stated in the Introduction, data collection occurred in four distinct and systematic phases. Phase 1: Searching the California State University System, conducted a search for Master Degree programs with an option in Early Childhood Education. Phase 2: Finalizing the Search for ECE Graduate Programs, tapered the sample population to include only those CSU campuses with programs that specialize in the growth, development and education of typically developing child birth through age eight. Phase 3: Organizing ECE Graduate Programs, examined the infrastructure of how graduate programs are housed within the CSU system. And finally, Phase 4: Examining ECE Graduate Program Requirements, identified program content (e.g., entry requirements, core and elective coursework, culminating experience options), and described any unique or notable features from each program.

Data collected during this study was verified and audited for accuracy by both the researcher and a second reviewer (the chair of the thesis). The second reviewer replicated each of the steps as described in Phase 1 through Phase 4. If any discrepancies were uncovered, the researcher conducted another search in areas where the discrepancies were noted.
Figure 3.1 illustrates the systematic process used for the study’s data collection.

Figure 3.1

Searching the CSU System for ECE Teacher Preparation Programs

Which of the California State University (CSU) campuses offer a Master’s Degree with an option in Early Childhood Education?

Phase 1: Searching the California State University System.

Phase 1 identified which of the 23 CSU campuses offer a Master’s degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE). To incorporate all the potential pathways a student might take, four systematic searches were conducted using the CSU Degree Search website (http://degrees.calstate.edu/) and the following four *key terms* (degree options/ area of concentration):

1. Education (ED)
2. Child Development (CD)
3. Early Childhood (EC)
4. Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Phase 2: Finalizing the Search ECE Graduate Programs

Phase 2 ensured that the sample for this study included any and all CSU campuses that offer a Master’s degree program with an option/specialization/ area of concentration
in Early Childhood Education. Thus, two follow up searches were conducted to verify results from Phase 1.

First, a closer examination was performed on those CSU campuses that resulted from the four searches (ED, CD, EC, ECE), in Phase 1. More specifically, the researcher reviewed program descriptions and coursework definitions using on-line campus catalogs and department portals from each campus.

Second, a cross check was performed on all 23 CSU campuses to ensure that a CSU campus and Master’s program was not overlooked or missed during the Phase 1 search. The researcher accessed each CSU campus homepage and entered the key search term “Early Childhood Education,” and then reviewed the program description and coursework as needed.

At the end of Phase 2, any CSU campus that offered a Master’s degree program emphasizing the typical growth, development and education of children from birth to eight remained in the study. On the other hand, if a program had a primary focus on any other related topic outside of the ECE scope (e.g., human life span growth and development, elementary education, administration, curriculum or special education) the CSU campus was excluded from the study. Furthermore, any CSU programs that offered an on-line or hybrid alternative was also dropped from the study.

Where are ECE Graduate Programs Housed within each CSU Campus?

Phase 3: Organizing ECE Graduate Programs

Understanding the infrastructure and diversity of each ECE graduate program is important in understanding the goals, philosophy and potential outcomes of earning a Master’s degree from a particular CSU institute. So then, based on the results from
Phase 1 and Phase 2, all ECE graduate programs that met the study’s criteria were organized by (a) college (b) department (c) degree option/specialization/area of concentration (d) degree and (e) number of required units (e.g., semester or quarter units).

**What are the entry requirements, required core and elective coursework, and culminating experience options for ECE graduate programs, and are there any notable or unique program features?**

**Phase 4: Examining ECE Graduate Program Requirements**

To understand better the unique characteristics for each teacher preparation program the researcher reviewed each program’s requirements and coursework content. During Phase 4, the researcher explored the entry requirements, required core and elective coursework and the culminating experience options as outlined in CSU program descriptions and course definitions that are available through on-line CSU catalogs. A brief summation of information will be discussed regarding any notable or unique program features in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

In an effort to understand the diversity and dynamics of teacher preparation programs, this study examined the design, infrastructure and content of graduate level programs within the California State University system by considering the three research questions:

1. Which of the California State University (CSU) campuses offer a Master’s Degree with an option in Early Childhood Education?
2. Where are these ECE graduate programs housed within each CSU campus?
3. What are the entry requirements, required core and elective coursework, and culminating experience options for ECE graduate programs, and are there any notable or unique program features?

Review of Sample and Method

The population for this study included the California State University (CSU) campuses offering graduate programs that focused primarily on the growth, development and education of typically developing children from birth to age eight years. To answer the three research questions, data were collected in four systematic phases from sources of information that are readily available to the public via online websites, CSU campus catalogs and department web portals.

Phase 1: Searching the California State University System

The goal of Phase 1 was to identify those CSU campuses that would show up if an individual began their search for a master’s degree with an option / area of concentration
in Early Childhood Education. Beginning with the broadest key term Education (ED) and moving to the more specific key term Early Childhood Education (ECE) four searches were conducted.

**Education (ED)**

The first search term, Education, produced a plethora of graduate level programs. More specifically, each CSU (N=21), except for Humboldt and Maritime Academy, had a multitude of majors with a variety of options / specializations in education for potential students to choose from, ranging from as many as 25 (Los Angeles) to as few as two (Bakersfield and Monterey Bay). In all, the search term Education yielded 187 Master’s of Arts (M.A.) degree majors among 21 of the CSU campuses ranging from Education, Special Education, Child and Adolescent Development, Kinesiology, Counseling, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Within those majors, there were numerous options / specializations available (e.g., Multiple and Single Subject Credentials, Theory and Research, Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Leadership and Administration, Reading, Special Education, Mild-Moderate Disabilities, Child Development, and Early Childhood Education).

Due to the vast number of programs offered and the variety of options within those programs, filtering out and organizing only those programs offering an early childhood education master’s degree major or option/specialization proved to be a daunting task. Therefore, the researcher further narrowed the search criteria, focusing on only those programs that resulted from using the key term Child Development.
Child Development (CD)

The search for programs listed as Child Development produced six CSU campuses (Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Jose, and Stanislaus) with nine M.A. programs in child development (Note: some programs had more than one option, accounting for a greater number of programs than campuses). Additionally, many of these programs located using the Child Development search term had already been accounted for in the first search under the broader term of Education.

Programs that offered concentrations in Child Development were further explored, while program options that focused on related areas of study, such as special education, general education, child and adolescent development and interdisciplinary studies were eliminated from the study. Although San Diego had a program in Child Development, it was an interdisciplinary major that did not have a specified option in early childhood education, and therefore was eliminated from the study.

Each of the remaining five CSU campuses had at least one program option offering a M.A. degree in Child Development and was kept in the study to further explore in Phase 2. The next search term, Early Childhood, was examined to identify only those programs specializing in early childhood development (i.e., birth to age eight years).

Early Childhood (EC)

The Early Childhood search resulted in 12 CSU campuses (Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Northridge, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Sonoma, and Stanislaus). Much of the information found in this search was already accounted for during the Education and Child Development search. For example, the Early Childhood search revealed several program majors in related
studies including Education, Special Education, Child Development, Child and Adolescent Studies and, Interdisciplinary Studies.

More specifically of these 12 CSU campuses offering master’s degrees in these related studies, 6 CSUs offer master’s degrees in Education, 3 CSUs offer majors in Special Education, 5 CSUs provide majors in Child Development, 1 CSU offers a major in Child and Adolescent Development, and 1 CSU offers a major in Interdisciplinary Studies.

In spite of using the key term Early Childhood, this search surprisingly did not produce any areas of concentration that were specific to Early Childhood. Based on the study’s criteria, the researcher eliminated the programs and majors that were found during EC search. For the final search, the researcher used the key term Early Childhood Education.

**Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

The Early Childhood Education search produced 10 CSU campuses (East Bay, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Sonoma, and Stanislaus) with a total of 13 program majors. Out of the 13 program majors, five CSUs (East Bay, Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sonoma) had program majors in Education with an area of concentration in Early Childhood Education and/or Early Childhood/Primary Education (Los Angeles). The remaining programs offered areas of concentration in related studies that were already noted in the previous three searches (Education, Child Development and Early Childhood).

A summation of all data collected during Phase 1 is illustrated in Table 4.1. All 23 of the California State Universities are listed with the number of programs that were
found using the four key search terms (ED, CD, EC and ECE). It is especially important to note that although the table below shows a total of 225 Master’s Degree programs, this number may not be altogether accurate because some programs were found in more than one of the searches. In other words data may be duplicated.

Table 4.1:

**A Summary of CSU M.A. Degree Majors and Areas of Concentration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSU Campus</th>
<th>1. ED</th>
<th>2. CD</th>
<th>3. EC</th>
<th>4. ECE</th>
<th>Total Programs by Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominquez Hills</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime Academy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monterey Bay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northridge</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomona</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jose</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Obispo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marcos</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanislaus</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total by Program</strong></td>
<td><strong>187</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>225</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, looking at Table 4.1, Los Angeles shows a total of 34 programs: 25 programs are listed under the key term Education; 3 programs are listed under Child Development; 3 programs are listed under Early Childhood; and 3 programs are listed
under Early Childhood Education. However, upon a closer examination, the 3 programs that were found in ECE were the same 3 programs found in EC, CD and ED. Thus, the Total Program by Campus column may over represent the actual available degree options/areas of concentration.

By omitting CSUs with duplicate data, and programs that were outside the ECE parameter (e.g. Special Education), at the end of Phase 1, there were 10 CSU campuses and 13 M.A. programs found using the key term ECE. More specifically, the 10 CSU campuses included East Bay, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Sonoma, and Stanislaus. Moving forward to Phase 2 the researcher confirmed that all 13 programs met the study criteria, and that all CSU campuses were represented in the study accordingly.

**Phase 2: Finalizing the Search ECE Graduate Programs**

To ensure that the final sample met the study criteria, the researcher first performed a closer examination of the 13 programs that were found during Phase 1. Then, the researcher performed a cross check of all 23 CSU campuses to ensure that *any and all* of the CSU programs were not overlooked.

**Upon a Closer Examination**

The researcher sifted through the 13 programs that were found during Phase 1 and reviewed program descriptions and coursework definitions that were available via on-line using campus catalogs, web portals and department websites. As a result, although Sacramento offered two child development M.A. programs (i.e., Theory and Research and Applied Settings), coursework focused on the period of development from infancy
through adolescence, with only one class specific to development of infants and young children.

Similarly, San Bernardino, San Jose, and Stanislaus offered M.A. degrees in Child Development; however, coursework lacked sufficient specificity to early childhood. Furthermore, these programs emphasized theory and development, and not education of children from birth through adolescence. In other words, based on catalog information, the San Jose program appeared to focus on preparing graduates for advanced careers in human services, administration, and teaching at the elementary, middle and secondary level. As for the Stanislaus program, even though there were 18 elective units, which allow for students to individualize their program – and potentially specializing in early childhood education - the approved courses were strongly oriented towards atypical development (e.g., psychological trauma, emotional or behavioral disorders) and offered only one option in early development.

Finally, although San Diego offered an M.A. in Child Development, it was an interdisciplinary major that did not offer a specific pathway with a focus on early childhood. As a result of the closer examination, of the 10 CSU campuses only 5 CSU campuses remained in the study: East Bay, Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sonoma.

**Conducting a Cross Check**

To ensure that a CSU campus and M.A. program was not missed or overlooked, a cross check was performed by entering the key term Early Childhood Education into the search option located on each campus (N=21) web page. The researcher then reviewed course descriptions, as well as core and elective coursework definitions that were
available via on-line using campus catalogs, web portals and department websites.

Subsequently, in addition to the 5 CSU campuses (East Bat, Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sonoma), two additional CSU campuses, Fresno and Northridge, were added to the study. The programs at these two campuses were likely missed during the Phase 1 search because they are housed in departments that were outside the search scope (e.g., ED, CD, EC, and ECE). In other words, although the Northridge program was located in the College of Education, the Early Childhood Education program was an option of the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling - a factor that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

After a closer examination and cross check, at the end of Phase 2 out of the original 23 CSU campuses, 7 CSU campuses met the study’s criteria. Thus, the study’s sample consisted of seven ECE graduate programs: East Bay, Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Northridge, San Francisco, and Sonoma. The seven programs were then organized as discussed in Phase 3.

**Phase 3: Organizing ECE Graduate Programs**

Based on the results of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 searches, each program was organized by (a) college (b) department (c) degree option (d) degree offered, and (e) number of required units (e.g., semester –s or quarter –q) as illustrated in Table 4.2. As a result, five out of the seven programs were found in the College of Education, with East Bay listed in the College of Education and Allied Studies, and Fresno in the Kremen School of Education and Human Development, and San Diego in the College of Health and Human Development.
There were a range of Department categories including: Education, Teacher Education, Elementary Education, Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Psychology and Counseling Literacy, Elementary and Early Education, and Family and Child Studies. All of the programs have options in ECE with one exception – CSU Los Angeles, which has an option in Early Childhood/Primary Education. All programs offered a Master’s of Arts Degree except East Bay that offered a Master’s of Science Degree. As for required units, Fresno and Northridge required a fixed total of 30 units, San Francisco 33 units, and East Bay and Los Angeles 45 quarter units. Two programs (Long Beach and Sonoma) had a range of total units determined by the culminating experience.

Table 4.2:

How CSU Graduate Programs are Housed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSU Campus</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>Education and Allied Studies</td>
<td>Teacher Education</td>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>45 q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>Kremen School of Education and Human Development</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>30 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teacher Education</td>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>30 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>Charter College of Education</td>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>EC/PE</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>45 q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northridge</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Educational Psychology and Counseling</td>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>30 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>33 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Literacy, Elementary and Early Education</td>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>30 s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase 4: Examining ECE Graduate Program Requirements

To understand the diverse dynamics and design of each program, the entry requirements, required coursework (core and elective), and culminating experience options were reviewed.

Entry Requirements

Across the seven M.A. ECE programs, entry requirements (e.g., GPA, Letters of Recommendation, Transcripts, Statement of Purpose Essay, and Written Proficiency Scores) were relatively similar from program to program, although there were some unique nuances. For example, two of the graduate programs (Fresno and Los Angeles) requested a GPA of 2.75, whereas Northridge required 2.50, and Sonoma required a minimum GPA of 3.0. Out of the seven programs, East Bay, Northridge and Sonoma require official transcripts. With respect to Letters of Recommendation, Los Angeles, Northridge and San Francisco require two letters, with San Francisco specifically requesting that one letter be from an instructor and one letter be from an employer. Two programs (East Bay and Fresno) on the other hand, require 3 Letter of Recommendation. With regard to the Statement of Purpose Essay, all but two programs (Long Beach and Los Angeles), according to their catalog description, require a 1-2 page essay stating professional and personal goals.

The CSU system requires that all master’s degree applicants pass the Upper Division Writing Exam with a score of 8 out of 10 or higher. However, each of the eight campuses set their own policies for additional evidence of writing proficiency. For example, Fresno and East Bay require students to pass the CBEST, while Northridge and...
others require passing the GRE with a score in the 50th percentile or higher on one of the three sections of the aptitude tests if an applicant’s GPA is less than 3.0.

All programs require prerequisite coursework prior to entry, typically an introductory course to the major as well as a research class. Additionally, most programs require an undergraduate degree in a related field and some experience working with young children prior to acceptance. Furthermore, if the undergraduate degree was in a non-related field, many programs required applicants to complete 12 units in child development before entry into the program, and/or show evidence of one to five years of teaching experience. For example, Los Angeles recommends, but does not require a valid teaching credential or two years experience teaching young children, while Fresno requires applicants to be qualified for the ECE Master Teaching Permit (equivalent to a BA/BS plus 12 units in ECE or Child Development) or possess a valid teaching credential.

Based on information located in the university catalog, Northridge was the only program that did not require prior experience with young children at all. Furthermore, Northridge did not require individuals to complete additional units in early childhood education/child development if the applicant’s undergraduate degree was in a non-related field.

**Required Core and Elective Coursework**

After reviewing program descriptions and coursework definitions the researcher was unable to conclusively determine whether or not coursework was aligned with national or state professional preparation or accreditation standards (i.e., NAEYC Personnel Preparation Advanced Standards or California Early Childhood education Competencies), due to the various titles and definitions of coursework. Although each of
the CSU programs has their own distinct requirements for core and elective coursework, all seven programs required core coursework in 3 out of the 12 CDE Competencies; development and learning, learning environments and curriculum, and research methods, as can be seen below in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Comparing CSU Coursework to CDE Competencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Core and Elective Coursework Content Areas</th>
<th>East Bay</th>
<th>Fresno</th>
<th>Long Beach</th>
<th>Los Angeles</th>
<th>Northridge</th>
<th>San Francisco</th>
<th>Sonoma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development and Learning</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and Community Engagement</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation/Assessment</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Environments and Curriculum</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Studies</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-Language Development</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture/Diversity</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs and Inclusion</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/Professionalism/Advocacy</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration / Supervision / Consultancy / Mentoring</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>60 hours</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, most programs required a course focusing on family engagement, observation and assessment, and leadership/professionalism/advocacy. Surprisingly, of the three programs that offered specific coursework related to culture and diversity (e.g., East Bay, Los Angeles and San Francisco), it was an elective. Infant development was a
required course for two programs (Fresno and Long Beach), while an elective course for two other programs (Northridge and San Francisco).

Furthermore, no programs offered core or elective course work emphasizing dual language learning, although based on catalog descriptions, it appeared to be embedded in some literacy and language courses. One program, East Bay, offered the most in-depth coursework related to curriculum with over five required courses in distinct learning domains (e.g., math and science, language and literacy, social studies, and the arts). And finally, of the seven programs, three required a core course related to special needs and/or inclusion and one required it as an elective.

**Culminating Experience**

Although each graduate program requires a culminating experience (e.g. a comprehensive examination or thesis project), the experience and specific coursework requirements can differ from campus to campus. For example, four of the programs required units that varied according to the culminating pathway that a student selected. More specifically, students that plan to take the comprehensive examination at Sonoma or Long Beach are required to complete 30 units of study. Whereas students who choose to complete a thesis are required to take 33 units. Additionally, Sonoma offered students a *cognate pathway* (equivalent or similar) which required 36 units.

Out of the seven programs, four programs (Fresno, Long Beach, Northridge and Sonoma) offered students a choice between a comprehensive exam, thesis, or project. Among these four programs, there were some subtle differences in terminology. For example, at Sonoma rather than offering a “project” option, Sonoma offers a “Cognate”
(e.g., capstone) experience. Likewise at Long Beach, the culminating experience is termed *Capstone* (highest achievement in a series of actions).

Besides a difference in terminology, programs may in fact have different requirements for the culminating experience. At Fresno for example, in addition to the comprehensive exam, which carries no credit, students are required to complete three units of an approved elective. Another example of how program options and requirements can differ campus to campus was found at San Francisco where there are two culminating experience options (Field Study and Thesis). With both options students are required to complete two courses for a total of six units. The Field Study option combines a seminar research course with a field study course. The Thesis option however combines a seminary research course with a master thesis course.

Not all programs offer students a choice for their culminating experience, for example, two programs (East Bay and Los Angeles) have only one option for their culminating experience. More specifically, at East Bay the culminating experience option is a 4 unit graduate synthesis course. In contrast, Los Angeles requires that students pass a comprehensive exam.

**Unique Program Features**

Not only did this study find some unique features among the graduate programs, there were also some notable differences. As for unique features, Sonoma was the only program to incorporate a noteworthy strategy for their culminating experience. More specifically, the amount of total program units (30-36 semester units) is dependent upon which of the three the culminating path options a student selects. In other words, a student that selects the “thesis path” would have to complete 30 program units (e.g., 6
M.A. core units, 6 thesis units and 18 ECE core units). Whereas a student that selects the “individualized exam” would have to complete 33 program units (e.g., 9 M.A. core units, 18 ECE core units and 6 approved elective units). For the “cognate experience” a student would complete 36 program units (e.g., 9 core units, 18 ECE area of concentration units and 9 cognate units).

Another unique program characteristic that is implemented at Sonoma is the specific structure and execution of the Individualized Exam, typically referred to as a comprehensive examination. For example, students select an area of interest to study in collaboration with their chair and committee. The committee works together to write three questions related to students’ area of interest, which form the exam. Students have 72 hours to complete and return their responses to their chair. After reviewing the responses and within two weeks, students meet with their committee to respond orally to the committees follow-up questions.

At Long Beach one of the unique program features is that almost all of the required core coursework, excluding the culminating experience courses and a course titled “Seminar in Early Childhood Care and Education: International Perspectives,” integrated ten hours of field work practicum. Fresno, on the other hand, requires students to complete two hours of lab in three of their core classes. According to the program description, East Bay’s fieldwork practicum is emphasized by the integration of a clinical supervision in six of the core courses whereby modeling, mentoring, and reflective practice is implemented. At Los Angeles, only one of the required core classes includes a field-based experience however, several of the elective options were found to have required lab hours ranging from one to twenty hours.
Finally, at Northridge students are required to complete a 60-hour fieldwork course in their first year, with the option of completing additional hours as an elective. One noteworthy course found at Northridge is the Partner’s for Excellence course in which students are paired with mentors in the field, who in turn complete a consultancy project with an early childhood education program in the community. Additionally, students can specialize in infant/toddler/family mental health by completing a 15 unit Infant-Toddler-Family-Mental Health (ITFMH) Certificate, of which up to 6 units may be counted towards electives for their MA degree.

This study uncovered a few notable differences. For example, many of the programs appeared to have a particular focus. More specifically at Fresno their M.A. Degree in Early Childhood Education is connected to the primary grade credential. At Long Beach courses appeared to be geared towards mid-career professionals seeking to gain enhanced skills in the areas of program development and influencing policies that impact children and families. At East Bay coursework is heavily concentrated in curriculum development and learning and instruction, with five distinct courses in domains of development.

Lastly, although almost all of the programs require elective coursework ranging from two to three classes, two programs (Long Beach and Fresno) were pre-planned and did not allow for students to take electives. The number of units required ranged from a fixed number of 30 semester units (Fresno and Northridge), 33 semester units (San Francisco) and 45-quarter units (East Bay and Los Angeles), to a variable number of units ranging from 30 to 36 depending on the selected culminating experience (Long Beach and Sonoma).
Synthesis

As noted in previous studies, finding the appropriate pathway to a degree in Early Childhood Education can be a challenging experience for prospective students in that programs are housed in various departments and colleges. Upon examining each CSU campus and the required coursework, it seems that each CSU campus and graduate program offers a specific area of specialization. There did not seem to be any consistency or standard of practice form campus to campus, program to program.

Furthermore, it was apparent that not only did each core and elective course have different titles and objectives but it was difficult to determine to what extent courses were aligned with the NAEYC Professional Preparation Advanced Standards or the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. The implications of these findings for M.A. programs in early childhood education will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study examined graduate level programs in the CSU system to uncover and understand how graduate level programs are preparing ECE educators. Essentially, it is at the master’s level where ECE professionals are prepared for positions of leadership, advocacy, teaching and training. Fundamentally, it is the ECE educator (IHE faculty) who educates, trains, and prepares future ECE workforce practitioners (caregivers, teachers and administrators) to work directly with children and families. Theoretically, early childhood professionals who do not understand the stages of growth and development, learning styles, and the social-emotional needs of children birth through age eight years, cannot implement developmentally appropriate practices with intentionality. For ECE practitioners, teacher education typically occurs at the community college level, and according to Whitebook, et al. (2009), teacher preparation programs at the community college level can only be as good as the ECE educator teaching the course.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the status of early childhood education programs at the M.A. degree level within the California State University (CSU) System. The decision to investigate only those programs located within the CSU system were based primarily on two factors: (a) the 23 campuses that make-up the CSU system are part of the master education plan in California that is responsible for preparing teachers, and (b) as part of a comprehensive public education system of higher education, there
would be some degree of homogeneity in comparing campuses within the CSU system, as opposed to also including private, online, or hybrid M.A. programs.

To date much of the research on teacher preparation in early childhood has focused primarily on 2-year and 4-year programs, and according to Whitebook et al. (2012) little is known regarding the appropriate pathways and implications of a master’s degree or beyond. Not only does this lack of in depth information fuel the controversial debate over whether or not a degree matters for teacher effectiveness, it serves to prompt further research. Specifically, this study sought to answer three research questions:

1. Which of the California State University (CSU) campuses offer a Master’s Degree with an option/specialization in Early Childhood Education?
2. Where are these graduate programs housed within each CSU campus?
3. What are the entry requirements for these graduate programs, the nature of required core and elective coursework, options are available for the culminating experience, and unique features of the program?

**Campuses that Offer a Master’s Degree with an Early Childhood Education Option**

Although the CSU system has 23 universities with a multitude of master’s degree options, there were a limited amount of programs (N=7) with an option specifically in Early Childhood Education. In California, according to Master Education Plan, the CSU system is responsible for teacher preparation, including early childhood education. The findings from this study are disconcerting given the lack of ECE programs at the master’s level. With so few programs available, how will we replenish the ECE workforce, which according to NAEYC (2012) is facing a critical shortage of highly-qualified ECE practitioners and professionals?
Where Early Childhood Education Programs are Housed

Not only is there a limited amount of ECE graduate programs available, what is available is extremely difficult to find because they are housed within various colleges and/or departments. One program for example, was particularly difficult to find because of the way it was listed in the University catalog. Specifically, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) has a M.A. degree in Educational Psychology / Counseling with an option in ECE, however during the first two search phases only their M.A. program with an option in Special Education was found.

If ECE programs are not housed in a manner that is readily accessible to potential students, students may conclude that there are no ECE focused graduate programs, and may subsequently select a degree option that is in a related field that is not ECE specific. This is problematic because as indicated in the research, it is not the degree itself that determines quality per se, but the overall program content (Whitebook et al., 2005). As such, how can we know for certain that related graduate programs are aligned with the NAEYC Standards and ECE Competencies?

Program Features of Master’s Degrees with Early Childhood Education Options

Although M.A. programs are designed to prepare teachers to teach, this study found it difficult to determine whether or not ECE graduate programs are providing the knowledge and skills as recommended by national and state standards. Given the vast amount of varied entry requirements, range of core and elective coursework, limited coursework descriptions, and individual program designs, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the extent to which M.A. degree programs within the CSU System are explicitly providing future educators with sound pedagogy, knowledge, and field work
experiences in ECE. For example, while some schools require particular prerequisites including ECE coursework and fieldwork experience, other programs do not. If students are entering graduate programs with limited ECE coursework or experience, then how can graduate programs build advanced level knowledge and skills as recommended by the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards and the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies?

Furthermore, from campus to campus, program to program this study found that there was a considerable amount of variation in required core and elective coursework. Regarding coursework content, all seven programs required core coursework in 3 out of the 12 CDE Competencies (e.g., development and learning, learning environments and curriculum, and research methods). However, none of the programs required coursework in dual language development and only three programs listed culture and diversity as an elective, but not as a required core course. Infant / Toddler Studies was listed as a core course in two programs and an elective in two programs, however three programs did not include Infant / Toddler Studies as either a core or elective course.

Also, as one of the provisions in the newly revised NAEYC Standards is the increased emphasis on fieldwork. More specifically, NAEYC requires that ECE professionals have field experiences in “at least two of the three ECE age groups (birth-age 3, 3 through 5, 5 through 8 years) and in the variety of settings that offer early education (early school grades, child care centers and homes, Head Start programs” (NAEYC, 2011, p. 57). That being said, this study could not confirm whether or not fieldwork experiences were integrated into core or elective coursework requirements as explicitly suggested by the NAEYC standards.
Limitations

Data was found on-line through campus websites, portals and directories, and may only be as accurate as the last update or post. In other words, the researcher relied on information that was publically available and did not have any direct contact with CSU personnel, program directors or department chairs to verify if information used in this study was in fact current and correct. This study also found that many of the CSU web portals are not particularly user friendly, which can potentially create additional barriers for students seeking information about ECE M.A. programs.

Future Research

What should teacher preparation programs look like? More specifically, with a limited number of courses that a student can take in a 30 unit program, how do we make decisions about the ideal coursework for ECE educators? Is there a model for core and elective coursework content? It might be necessary to study the content of each ECE program more in depth. Next, it would be beneficial to follow up with those graduates who are teaching in Community Colleges. Are they in fact implementing best practices and were the amply prepared with high quality standards? Also, how do graduates from ECE MA programs that are aligned with NAEYC or ECE Competencies differ from those who graduate from related programs that are not necessarily aligned?

These are research questions that should be addressed in future studies. Without this information it would be difficult to determine those elements that contribute to high-quality teacher preparation programs and ultimately positive child outcomes. This study was a limited exploration of what currently exists within the CSU system. The results of this study shed light on MA programs that offer a concentration in Early Childhood
Education, demonstrating that there are a limited amount of programs available and that programs are often housed in various departments, making it difficult to access, and finally that coursework is inconsistent form program to program.

**Implications**

At this time ECE advocates, professionals and policymakers are struggling to find a suitable solution for the ECE workforce. In particular, how will the IHE system support a highly qualified, well trained ECE workforce? Not only is there a lack of ECE graduate programs available, the IHE system overall lacks continuity from community college to graduate school. Developing a high-quality IHE system for Early Care and Education teacher preparation programs requires vision, diligence and teamwork by ECE educators and policy makers. Thus, in order to achieve the high-quality as required by national and state initiatives, it may be time to take a closer look at teacher preparation programs at the master’s level, to identify areas that may need to be reformed, revamped and revised.

**Reforming ECE MA Programs within the CSU System**

The CSU system has a multitude of Master’s degree programs to support and develop K-12 teachers there are however, few teacher preparation programs designed specifically for ECE professionals and practitioners. With so few programs to support the ECE workforce, the field faces some uncertainty as to how to sustain high-quality for future professionals and practitioners, and ultimately for children who attend preschool classroom. Consequently, having so few graduate programs specifically in ECE, the number of students who might otherwise enroll may be limited, thus adding to the critical shortage of ECE professionals. More specifically, students who would otherwise enroll in
an ECE program on a CSU campus may be forced to either enroll in an on-line program, or they may opt to complete a program in a related field. Not only is this a potential loss of revenue for the CSU system, but the fact that students may obtain degree in related options only perpetuates mediocre quality for ECE professionals and practitioners.

Revamping ECE MA Programs within the CSU System

How can we have confidence in what knowledge and skills ECE professionals are gaining – and whether these knowledge and skills are identified as being related to quality ECE practices? The potential for improving the current system is by no means an easy undertaking. It actually requires several considerations. First, it might be advantageous to bring together a consortium or cohort of ECE Professionals: Program Coordinators, Department Chairs, IHE Faculty who are willing to unite in an effort to share their expertise knowledge, skills and visions for high-quality, integrated early childhood system.

Second, rather than an eclectic collection of coursework, should we consider developing a common framework based on the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards and the California ECE Competencies that is specific to graduate programs. Without a standard framework in place, we run the risk of advanced level programs offering a variety of courses that may not necessarily prepare graduates for leadership roles.

One final consideration, perhaps as imperative as it is to provide a standardized program model, ECE professionals would also benefit from degree options that allow them to specialize in areas including Educational Leadership and Administration, Infant /
Increasing Accessibility to ECE MA Programs within the CSU System

It would be advantageous for the CSU system to consider an alignment system whereby Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) provide a seamless system that extends from community colleges to graduate programs. Much like community colleges have started to align with 4-year programs, undergraduate programs should consider aligning coursework with graduate programs in an effort to build a more comprehensive educational system.

In this study campus and program websites proved to be difficult to use and were poorly organized. This is troublesome because individuals are most likely to use website search engines to locate graduate programs that meet their educational goals. Based on readily available information, it is difficult for students to navigate through the multiple program options and to clearly understand what is available at the Master’s degree level. Therefore, students searching for Master’s degree programs with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education, would likely benefit from websites that are updated regularly with current information about coursework and program descriptions. Additionally, ECE program options should be more visible and easier to locate.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

In closing, the field of Early Care and Education is rather unique in that it has many direct and indirect types of services that are provided by ECE professionals and practitioners. Not only do children, their families and those who work in the field stand to benefit from research on teacher preparation programs, but society in general can
benefit economically by investing in educators who will be leaders and advocates for early care and education.

Recommendations

This study on Master’s degrees with an option in Early Child Education was intended to examine how the CSU system is preparing ECE educators. As it stands, teacher preparation programs are in need of revision and reformation. The following are a few relevant recommendations:

- The ECE workforce needs direct support, training and education to specifically address the growth, development, care and education of children birth through age eight. Thus, ECE educators need relevant coursework not related coursework.

- Therefore, in an effort to create some consistency from campus to campus, program to program, the researcher would like to encourage program coordinators, Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty to form an ECE consortium as a platform to actively discuss the possibility of revising program coursework to match CDE Competencies and/or NAEYC Standards.

- On a larger scale, reformation of the CSU system is recommended. Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) must consider the advantages of a seamless system that includes community colleges to graduate programs. Much like community colleges have started to align with 4-year programs, undergraduate programs should consider aligning coursework with graduate programs in an effort to build a more comprehensive educational system.
• Students should be able to access information more readily. Websites must therefore be updated on a regular basis with current information.

• To ensure high-quality standards that are consistent with State and National standards, all ECE programs might consider having a core standard philosophies, areas of specializations, and if there are any area of concentration (e.g., diversity, special needs, infant/toddler, leadership, curriculum and teaching).

• The CSU system is only one possible pathway for candidates to obtain a master’s degree. There are however, other pathways including private universities, the University of California (UC) system, and on-line programs where candidates can earn a Master’s degree. Therefore, it may be advantages to extend the premise of this study to further exam all institutions that offer a Master’s degree with an option in Early Childhood Education to truly understand how teacher preparation programs are preparing future ECE educators.

• According to NAEYC (2012), teacher preparation programs should be preparing graduates for a lifelong career working with young children birth through age eight using research-based knowledge and NAEYC Standards. Both BA and MA level programs should consider the possibility of providing a unified approach to learning, one that builds onto the other in a progressive, intentional manner as recommended by NAEYC.
Finally, as preschool teacher qualifications and outcome expectations for children continue to be of interest to policymakers and advocates alike, the need to reconsider how institutions of higher education are preparing tomorrow’s ECE workforce is essential. Institutions of higher education are ultimately responsible for providing educators with sound pedagogy, knowledge, and field work experiences in ECE. Therefore, the question that remains to be answered is, can institutions of higher education become not only aligned, but unified, to create a smooth transition from one degree level to the next, beginning with associates degree programs all the way through to the doctorate level in an effort to support the field of early care and education?
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