Reflections on Learning and Teaching Through Play: Faculty Voices Within Early Childhood Teacher Education in Canada

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ABSTRACT

Reflections on learning and teaching through play: Faculty voices within early childhood teacher education in Canada

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Play has been documented to be present throughout the lifespan. Play and learning are commonly associated with childhood yet their place within formal post-secondary settings has been overlooked. Considering the role of play in human development and the important role post-secondary early childhood teacher education programs (ECTE) have in preparing preservice teachers to create positive quality experiences for young children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, ECTE is a fertile context for inquiry on play and learning with adult learners. This study highlights the voices of 19 faculty members working in 13 recognized post-secondary Diploma and Certificate ECTE programs across six provinces and territories in Canada. It is a qualitative study that integrates various methods within a four-stage model to explore teacher beliefs and practices. Images, narratives and semi-structured interviews are used to provoke reflection while shedding light on (a) who faculty are, (b) their beliefs on play and learning for children and adult learners, (b) their related self-reported teaching practices, (c) perceived influential factors, and (d) recommendations for faculty professional development. Data were triangulated and analyzed through three steps. Faculty valued play and learning in both ECEC and ECTE settings and provided examples of how they put their beliefs into practice in ECTE programs. Insights reveal ways in which the relationship between play and learning in education shifts from children's spontaneous free play towards a structured and goal-oriented play in adulthood, including influential factors that may contribute to the change. Findings are discussed based on features of an existing ECTE professional development system model (Hyson et al., 2012), along with additional questions that are raised. A proposed model of a relationship between faculty's beliefs and practices is also presented, along with reported mediating factors operating at different levels. The study contributes to gaps within the literature and comes at a time when pressures for standardization and school readiness are putting the place of free play at risk in early childhood settings. The study's strengths and limitations are discussed. Recommendations and future directions for research, ECTE programs, and ECTE faculty are provided.

Acknowledgements

"Getting there is like a marathon. All the people at the water coolers help along the way."
Kenneth Blom (a.k.a. Dad)

Dedication

To those who make play possible.

To those who keep play alive.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation is one that represents a culmination of information that has been collected, reflected upon, and edited numerous times throughout the doctoral research process. It sheds lights on understandings that were co-constructed through interactions with the literature, scholars, and practitioners in hopes of making contributions as well as helping to lay the foundation for further research and practice. The dissertation also reveals insights in terms of the researcher's growth, learning, understandings and professional development. In keeping with narrative traditions, it is a research story.

The purpose of the qualitative study outlined within the document was to highlight faculty's voices as they reflected upon and shared their stories about play and learning. Faculty's personal beliefs about play and learning for children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings as well as students in post-secondary early childhood teacher education (ECTE) programs were elicited and discussed. Perceived influential factors and recommendations for faculty development specific to play and learning were also key areas that were explored.

Deeply rooted in the value of play for human learning and development, this study is housed within literature that supports the presence of play throughout the lifespan along with its longstanding relationship with education. It deals with the complexities inherent in describing what play is, its relationship with learning, as well as the many ways it can be implemented within educational settings for the benefit of children and adult learners.

While play is most commonly associated with children and ECEC environments, early childhood educators are those who play a central role in creating experiences for children's learning and growth. To help provide positive experiences in settings where numerous children spend a great deal of their early years, educators require particular knowledge and skills, including those specific to play, in order to implement effective practices benefiting children and their families. With reported concerns about decreased play and parental concerns about academic readiness, in understanding the value of play, educators can become advocates for play and the role it has for children's success in life and in school. Play may also be of value in one's personal and professional life.

Post-secondary level education requirements are in place for early childhood educators to work in ECEC settings in Canada. Institutions offering Diploma or Certificate programs in Early Childhood Education are the context of interest for this study. Education and training can influence what early childhood educators do and are noted to be a key factor in establishing quality ECEC. Discrepancies within research on early childhood educators' beliefs about play and related practices have also been

uncovered, resulting in implications for their education and training. When describing focus groups involving early childhood educators across four provinces in Canada, Eisazadeth (2015) states how "desires to feel 'comfortable' with play was at the heart of the participants' concerns…" (p. 2). College and university based ECTE programs are thus environments where adult learners can develop key understandings about play, both in theory and practice.   Believing in the value of play alone is not necessarily enough to implement it within educational settings.

The place of play within post-secondary settings, including what and how it is being taught is a topic that has yet to be explored in detail. This study addresses the need for the inquiry on beliefs related to play and learning and practices specific to adult learners in ECTE settings. It also acknowledges the larger systems in which such programs operate and identifies various mediating factors.

Within the ECTE system, faculty are those responsible for educating individuals who will be working with young children in ECEC settings. Faculty voices have yet to be heard, particularly in Canada where literature and research on the ECTE system is extremely sparse. What they do and how they do it matters. This study aims to help highlight who faculty are and the ways in which play and learning are currently put into practice with adult learners within ECTE programs.   With an underlying assumption and support from the findings that practices are tied to one's beliefs, faculty beliefs about play and learning for both children and adults and how their beliefs fit within broader teaching orientations are revealed in the process.

Through a four-stage integrative and flexible model of inquiry, images, narratives and interviews were used to help elicit, understand and interpret the information individuals shared.   Inspired by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Narrative, and Arts Based Research methods, recommendations on methods to explore teacher beliefs within the literature and the researcher's own background and experience, the study was designed in alignment within a postmodern interpretive lens. It introduces a qualitative methodology that integrates various methods and discusses its strengths and limitations for exploring teaching beliefs and practices as well as outlines considerations for future research endeavours.

The focus of the study was not to explore if faculty beliefs are observed in practice. The purpose was to elicit and describe individuals' self-reported beliefs, practices and contextual factors within post-secondary ECTE system while generating common themes and discrepancies as a faculty group.   It was an exploratory study that places an emphasis on faculty's meanings about play and learning in both their beliefs and teaching practices. Analysis was conducted through a three-step approach to maintain an

idiographic focus in describing and interpreting meanings participants' shared. Findings provided a description of who faculty are and what they believe and do in terms of play and learning in post-secondary ECTE settings, which will provide the foundations of future work as well as encourage further dialogue, reflection and advocacy. Findings also suggested a cycle, which includes various factors operating at different levels, within which a relationship between beliefs and practices may exist.

In providing an opportunity to share ECTE faculty voices', findings can contribute to the gap in the literature. By shedding light upon play within teaching and learning with adult learners in higher education, findings can also help inform practices, ECTE policies as well as inform what can potentially be in place for faculty support and professional development initiatives. The ultimate goal is that by improving the education of preservice educators contributions may then extend into ultimately improving experiences for children and their families in ECEC settings while promoting support for the value of play beyond childhood.

This document has been organized in a way deemed to best represent, through texts and images, information that was carefully selected to be directly aligned with the study's goals and research questions. It also takes into account departmental and institutional requirements as well as ethical and copyright considerations. In addition to obtaining consent from all participants and their respective institutions, consent was obtained for the use of images, when required. Additional considerations were made in terms of copyright, permission for use, and protection of the identities of people within the images themselves.

To help clarify terminology used within this dissertation, a legend of terms and their definitions is provided within Appendix A. This takes into account that the names of ECTE programs and professional titles for faculty differ slightly depending on the province or territory. It also acknowledges that students enrolled in ECTE programs in some provinces can be as young as 16 -17 years, yet they are referred to as adult learners within this particular study.

As a research story, this document is ultimately a narrative that describes what took place between a group of ECTE participants and the researcher. The majority of the document is intentionally written in third person to help tell a description of its tale. Quotes are included throughout the findings in an attempt to highlight faculty's own voices.

In highlighting the significant role reflection played throughout the research process, the importance of researcher reflexivity, and the value placed on subjective human experience, readers are invited to see ways in which the process unfolded and transformations occurred for myself through the chapter entitled "*Chapter Seven: Researcher's Reflections and Rumbling Thoughts,*" which is written in

first person. While this is included near the end of the document, it can be read first, last or anytime based on the reader's discretion. The researcher is a qualified drama therapist and comes with experience (a) working as an early childhood educator in a centre based daycare for over eight years, (b) teaching in and coordinating children's programs, (c) supervising early childhood education students, (d) designing and teaching an undergraduate course for four years, and (e) facilitating 17 sections of a seminar that helps prepare graduate students for academic teaching careers in higher education. It is acknowledged that the researcher's past experience and knowledge contributed to the design, implementation, and production of the study.

The following chapters will provide readers with a review of literature, a description of the methodology, the study's findings, a discussion, and a conclusion followed by the researcher's reflections on the process. The story now begins with setting the stage. A review of the literature pertaining to play and learning, play in education, ECTE, and teacher beliefs will be provided within the next chapter prior to describing details as to the purpose of the study and specific research questions that were explored.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Understanding Play

Play is a word commonly that is used in most households, yet a scrutiny of literature finds that the term play has come to be understood and applied in countless different ways. Not only has play managed to defy time through its presence throughout history, it has been documented alongside numerous benefits around the globe within both animal and human species. Play has piqued the interest of individuals from various disciplines (Paglieri, 2005), and continues to mystify as it is perceived through various disciplinary, philosophical and theoretical lenses. Play remains to be an abstract phenomenon yet it has various implications for theory, practice, and policy and thus it is a continued topic of interest for researchers and scholars.

Declared as a fundamental children's right (United Nations, 1989), play is a universal phenomenon. Play is considered a developmental task of childhood (Hewes, 2006), and it is at play that children are most competent (Jones & Reynolds, 2011), and are a head taller than themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). It is through play, exploration and imagination that children understand the world (Gopnik, 2010), as play helps create the foundation for life (Brown, 2009). The voices of young children attest to how play creates happiness in the classroom (Hughes, 2013).

Play is commonly considered a central tenet of childhood. There is also some agreement that play is present throughout the human lifespan (Blanche, 1999; Brown, 2009; Colarusso, 1993; Ellis, 1973; Elkind, 2007; Else, 2009; Farné, 2005; Freysinger, 2006; Goldmintz & Schaefer, 2007; Paglieri, 2005; Perone & Göncü, 2014; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Terr, 1999). It is stated however, that "one of the most common misperceptions among adults in our society is that play is an important behavior for children only" (Goldmintz & Schaefer, 2007, p. 22).   The importance of play in adulthood "has been poorly understood and undervalued by modern societies" (Goldmintz & Schaefer, 2007, p. 12), there is a lack of research on adult's perceptions of the role play has in our own adult lives (Nicholson, Shimpi & Rabin, 2014), and it is a topic that is mainly studied within therapeutic contexts (van Leeuwen & Westwood, 2008). Even when play in adulthood is referred to as "leisure" (Freysinger, 1998; Nicholson, Shimpi & Rabin, 2014) research is still limited. As van Leeuwen and Westwood (2008) indicate:

> According to the PsychINFO database, in the last 10 years more than 3000 psychological research articles written in English focused on child play, yet only 40 addressed play in adults or the elderly and this was mainly in therapeutic contexts. Adding terms such as gaming, leisure or recreational activities to the search resulted in around 100 articles for the combination with adult or elderly for the last 10 years, again mainly in therapeutic contexts. The discipline of

psychology displays little apparent interest or investment in the study of playful behavior

beyond childhood. (p. 153)

Central to the life of a child is play (Johansson & Samuelsson, 2006), yet it is not commonly discussed in terms of the lives of adults, including those who are responsible for children's care, education and development.

Understanding play is complex. It is an elusive concept (Ellis, 1973; Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008), and we are still without a consensus as to its definition (Hewes, 2010; Saracho, 2012; Wood, 2014). Criteria, however, have been created to help understand and identify play (Neumann, 1971; Krasnor & Pepler, 1980; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). Major defining characteristics of play include positive affect, active engagement, intrinsic motivation, freedom from external rules, attention to process rather than product and nonliterality. While there is yet to be a concrete definition, many agree that the presence of these particular characteristics allow individuals to determine what is and what is not play. These characteristics are commonly used regardless of the age of the player and are similar to those used when discussing leisure in adulthood (Freysinger, 1998).

Various types of play have also been identified, which adds to the complexity of describing and understanding the phenomenon (Howe, 2008).   Some authors have gone on to delineate free, guided and structured forms of play (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008; Miller & Almon, 2009; Smith & Pelligrini, 2008), based on how much of the experience is controlled and directed by the player. "A distinction needs to be made between free play, guided play, playful orientations to teaching and the ways in which work may be disguised as play" (Wood, 2014, p. 150).   Free play is most commonly associated as being the "true" or "pure" form of play as it encompasses most of its key characteristics (Hewes, 2014; Wood, 2014).   Social and cognitive types of play (Parten, 1932; Piaget, 1962; Smilansky, 1968), educational play (Saracho, 2012) and rough and tumble play (Pelligrini, 1995) are other types of play that have been described. While there are existing frameworks as to the different types of play (Sutton-Smith, 1997), along with scales that help identify play and non-play activities (Rubin, 2001), when attempting to define and identify play, it is thus evident that "all play is not alike" (Wisneski & Reifel, 2012, p. 179).   There is a great deal of variation. Simply articulating what play is and what it may look like is in itself a difficult task.

Historically philosophers, theorists, and researchers have come up with theories that have acted to help describe, explain and predict play. For an overview of theories of play see Ellis (1973), Howard and McInnes (2013), Lieberman (1977), and Rubin (1982). These theoretical lenses then shape one's views as to what play is, what it looks like, along with its role in animal, human, and societal

development. They also highlight particular strategies, practices and activities that may support play for human learning and development.   Numerous theoretical views on play in human development exist and particular perspectives, including those of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner have had significant influences within educational milieus due to their emphasis on play in relationship with social and cognitive human development (Howard & McInnes, 2013).   Play theorists, along with researchers, have indicated the numerous benefits of play.

Research has demonstrated how play promotes development in almost all domains (Fisher, 1992; Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2012; Hewes, 2006; Singer, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2011). Researchers have reported benefits for both children and adults. Specific authors have illustrated the way play can be used to meet therapeutic goals (Axline, 1969; Cattanach, 2003; Freud, 1968; Klein, 1932; Schaefer, 1993; Singer & Singer, 1992), and many have provided evidence of how play contributes to specific areas of human development including creativity (Pepler, 1986; Runco, 2005; Russ, 1998, 2003), social (Howes, 1992; Vygotsky, 1933), cognitive (Piaget, 1962; Sutton-Smith, 1979), metacommunication (Garvey, 1977; Smilansky, 1968), language (Bruner, 1972; Levy, 1984), literacy (Christie & Roskos, 2009), emotion (Bettleheim, 1972; Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1950; Spinrad, Eisenberg, Harris, Hanish, Fabes, Kupanoff, Ringswald & Holmes, 2004), and physical (Pelligrini & Smith, 1998), development, just to name a few. In addition, cultural variations of play (Göncü, & Gaskins, 2007; Göncü, Tuerner, Jain & Johnson, 1998), have been explored and play has been deemed by some as a valuable activity in and of itself (Göncü et al., 1998). Within research and literature on play there has also been a particular emphasis on its relationship with learning. This proposed relationship is one that has made significant contributions to theory, practice and policies in education.

Play and Learning

Play and its relationship with learning and development is documented without question in research (Miller & Almon, 2009), particularly for children (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008; Howe, 2008; Smith & Pelligrini, 2008; Johansson & Samuelsson, 2006). Research from a variety of areas such as neuroscience, cognitive science and developmental psychology have contributed to understandings of how the brain develops (Pellis & Pellis, 2009), how children learn (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999), the effects of play deprivation (Frost et al., 2012), and the effects of play in almost all areas of children's development (Bockarova, 2015; Fisher, 1992; Frost et al., 2012; Hewes, 2006; Singer, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2011).   Play and playfulness have also been documented to have positive effects on adult learning (Blatner & Blatner, 1997; Goldmintz & Schaefer, 2007; Harris & Davey, 2008; Kerr & Apter, 1991; Levy & Wallace, 2005; Melamed, 1987; Meyer, 2010; Perry & Ballou, 1997; Wood, 2008; Youell,

2008).   There is thus an apparent relationship between play and learning.   This relationship, is one that is reciprocal and multidimensional (Hewes, 2006).

"Play isn't the enemy of learning, it's learning's partner" (Brown, 2009, p. 101). Understanding and providing solid support for the relationship between play and learning is a complex and multilayered matter as "not all play is learning and not all learning is play" (Hewes, 2006, p. 5). Different views exist as to whether or not a relationship actually exists and the direction and the strength of the relationship itself.   There are researchers and professionals who are not convinced that play promotes learning in childhood (Saracho, 2012). There are others who claim play equals learning (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008; Singer et al., 2011), and see play and learning as inseparable due to their shared characteristics (Johansson & Samuelsson, 2006; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008). In between such extreme views, there is agreement that a relationship exists yet views differ in the characteristics of the relationship itself. Examples include claims that play paves the way for learning (Bodrova, 2008; Hewes, 2006; Moyles, 2010), play promotes skills important for learning (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), play is a medium for learning (Saracho, 2012), and learning can be enhanced through play. While children themselves may not distinguish between play and learning (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008), examples such as these only begin to highlight different ways in which adults perceive the potential relationship between them within the context of child development.

For adult learners play can be seen as "…purposeful fun that stimulates exhilarating work and genuine learning" (Levy & Wallace, p. 249). Play is also noted to help improve learning, develop skills, and enhance mental acumen (Goldmintz & Schaefer, 2007). Specific views on the relationship between play and adult learning, however, have not been explicit. The place and role of play in adult learning settings is yet to be studied in more detail in research.

There are numerous difficulties in addressing the interrelated processes of learning, play, and development. One particular issue involves the elusiveness of play along with its numerous theoretical foundations and philosophical underpinnings. "There is no single definition of play, and no single theory which can explain the role of play in children's learning and development" (Wood & Attfield, 2005, p. 58). With a lack of a common definition and with a choice of theoretical and philosophical perspectives through which play can be understood, numerous interpretations as to its relationship with learning and development have ensued.

Notwithstanding the lack of consensus as to the precise relationship play has with learning, its implicit relationship has significant implications for theory, research practice, and policy within educational settings.   Play has had a longstanding history within early childhood education. The diverse

views on the relationship, however, emerge within a debate on what is an appropriate curriculum for early childhood education (Howe, 2008), and has resulted in diverse ways in which play can be implemented within the classroom to promote learning. "The role, purposes and value of play in the early years curriculum continue to be debated" (Wood & Attfield, 2005, p. 1). Play has also been reported to be used for teaching and learning in higher education.   This has not been frequently documented nor is it fully understood.

Play in Education

      Play in early childhood education. The relationship between play and children's learning historically has been embedded within early childhood education. "Early childhood education is underpinned by a strong tradition which regards play as essential to learning and development" (Wood & Attfield, 2005, p. 1). This tradition is one that is based on theory, research and practice and is also included in recent international recommendations (OECD, 2012). The importance of play within early childhood has implications not only for ECEC classrooms but also professional development initiatives for early childhood educators, including Early Childhood Teacher Education programs.

      Play in early childhood curriculum. "Play has been at the center of the early childhood curriculum from the beginning of our history in early childhood education to present day" (Wisneski & Reifel, 2012, p. 175). While theorists have contributed particular perspectives on play and development, philosophers dating back to Plato have discussed the place of play in the education of young children. In addition to views proposed by Locke, Rousseau, and Dewey, educators including Froebel, Montessori and others have created curricular approaches to early childhood education (Wolfe, 2002). Specific curricula such as Te Whãriki, Reggio Emilia, and High/Scope have also been developed within various countries (File, Mueller & Wisneski, 2012). For differences and similarities between curricula see Samuelsson and Carlsson (2008), and Samuelsson, Sharidan and Williams (2006).   Historical underpinnings thus add support to the place of play in educational settings where young children learn and develop.

      While not all individuals are convinced of play's value there is a continuous need to justify it (Saracho, 2012). Many researchers, advocates and practitioners continue to promote the importance of play in early childhood education due to views that play has a relationship with learning and that playful learning is associated with principles of how children learn (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2008).   The diverse range of views as to how and why play should be implemented in practices geared to promote children's learning are revealed within terms used to describe the approaches available today. "The descriptors of play in connection to early childhood education have been numerous – the play-based curriculum, play-

oriented curriculum, play as pedagogy, play as curriculum, and play-centered programs" (Wisneski & Reifel, 2012, p. 175). Others use terms such as learning through play (Cheng, 2012), playful pedagogy (Goouch, 2010; Moyles, 2010), play centered curriculum (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales & Alward, 2011), playful learning and developmentally appropriate practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Within each curricular approach, a certain relationship between play and learning is depicted yet there is room for specific ways in which practitioners plan, organize, implement and assess their practices to reflect the relationship.   Each with its own spin and its own take on play's relationship with learning, approaches differ as to what play is, how it is be incorporated through planning, curriculum, materials to use, as well as its purpose and the teacher's role in play.   Within each approach practitioners "...bring differing emphases on how much children play, which play is emphasized, and in what way the teacher is involved" (Wisneski & Reifel, 2012, p. 178).

Practices can range from loosely structured play environments without active adult support to those, which include little or no play and are highly structured and dictated by the educators themselves (Miller & Almon, 2009). Variations on ways in which play is put into practice within pedagogy have been named. Trawick-Smith (2012) for example, has described a continuum in which there are three main approaches that reflect varying theoretical and philosophical views. These include the "Trust in Play," the "Facilitate-Play" and the "Enhance-Learning-Outcomes-Through Play" approaches. These are similar to three pedagogical modes named by Wood (2014) that include the "Child Initiated Play," "Adult Guided Play" and the "Technicist Version of Educational Play" modes. While names differ slightly, these two authors suggest that practices can range from play being free, unstructured and initiated by the child to play being guided by the adult to the intentional implementation of play to meet specific learning outcomes.

Recognizing that play is rarely not controlled and regulated in early childhood educational settings to favor adults' plans and structures, Wood (2014) describes that within educational practices there is an apparent interplay between spontaneous engagement that is intrinsically valuable to the learner, which she calls "play *as* educational practice" and structure to achieve particular outcomes, which is "play *in* educational practice". There are no clear cut parameters or guidelines for practice. Within an educator's approach, play can be provided and supported through various materials, equipment and curriculum content, as well as by providing time and opportunities to engage in play through the design and use of spaces (Graue, 2010; Goouch, 2008; Hewes, 2006; Ward, 1996; Play Wales, 2013). In addition, educators need to make choices as to if and when to intervene and interact with the children (Enz & Christie, 1997; Goouch, 2008; Jones & Reynolds, 2011). Central to ECEC are

early childhood educators (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992), and what they do is paramount (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Early childhood educators contribute to and are guided by their choice of early childhood curriculum in terms of how play is implemented in their classrooms. "While the research shows that the quality of the whole ECEC system is of key importance, at the program level it is the human resources that shape the activities and experiences of children on a daily basis" (Friendly & Prentice, 2009, p. 42). In attempts to meet particular educational goals these educators act as decision makers and are responsible for considering content, design and use of space, materials, activities, as well as ways in which they will deliver material and interact with children. "Fundamental to program quality are early childhood staff" (Friendly & Prentice, 2009, p. 9). Central to promoting and supporting experiences for young children is the early childhood educators' implementation of play.

"Play is, without a doubt, the most natural way children learn all over the world: this is why it is so important for us, as educators, to ensure that children have every opportunity to engage in play and playful experiences" (Moyles, 2010, p.1).   Children require special pedagogy, playful ones (Goouch, 2010).   As discussed there are many interpretations of play and play-based practices, therefore "creating environments where children can learn through play is not a simple thing to do consistently and well" (Hewes, 2006, p. 5). As important elements of the curriculum, each pedagogical decision and the approach used is shaped by early childhood educators' beliefs in terms of the various meanings attributed to play, the relationship between play and learning, the variations in curriculum enactment, and adults' broader goals for behavior and other factors in the classroom.

Current place of play in early childhood education. Despite the longstanding traditions and noted benefits of play within ECEC settings for the purpose of enhancing the quality of children's learning and development, there has recently been a push for academic learning to replace play in the classroom (Patte, 2012; Ranz-Smith, 2007; Saracho, 2012; Vu et al., 2012; Wood & Attfield, 2012). This push is not only felt in North America but in other parts of the world (Hewes, 2010; Saracho, 2012; Wood & Attfield, 2005), and is affecting children at younger and younger ages (Bodrova, 2008). To be ready for school children are becoming "hurried" (Elkind, 2007), and "helicopter parents" (Howe, 2008), are putting their children in more and more structured activities.   Academic learning is seen as incongruent with play (Nicholson, Shimpi, & Rabin, 2014), and the age of accountability has translated into less recess in some schools (Graue, 2010; Patte, 2009), more teacher directed activities, more performance measures, and increased prescriptive objectives and curricula (Goouch, 2008).   Children are given less autonomy and free play is being devalued despite its developmental benefits (Hewes,

2006; Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008; Howe, 2008; Wood & Attfield, 2005).   Free or child initiated play is "under siege" according to Zigler and Bishop-Josef (2009) and opportunities for play are affected in Canada as play becomes "institutionalized" (Hewes, 2010).   "Across early childhood education and home environments, play has shifted from its precious child-initiated basis of 'free' or 'unstructured' play to a structured, educational thrust for early academic preparation" (Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, & Gryle, 2008, p.305).

Societies, particularly governments and policy makers (Wood & Attfield, 2012), are beginning to view play and learning as separate entities, ones that do not share a strong relationship even though they are reported to be operating through a form of "data blindness" as instructionism is not matched with what is known about how people learn (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2008). The current state is not helped, "ambiguities surrounding the definition of play have done little to substantiate claims that children learn through play or that a play-based curriculum is the best or the only approach to supporting early learning" (Wood & Attfield, 2005, p. 2). Currently play is thus both praised and neglected in early childhood education (Johansson & Samuelsson, 2006).

Within this push for academic versus play-based learning, there are apparent efforts geared specifically to provide and support learning through play in early childhood education. Research efforts, international play scholarship, ongoing debates on play and learning, and practices in various countries continue to advocate for play and its role in academic learning. Play is still being recognized to be of value (Wood & Attfield, 2005) and advocates voice how play and learning do not have to be considered separate entities. "Through play, children acquire knowledge and practice new skills, providing a foundation for more complex cognitive processes and academic success" (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 306). It is also argued that "playful preschool environments do not guarantee that children will be ready for the workforce. They do, however, begin to instill a learning style that promotes lifelong learning and that prepare children with strategies that can serve them throughout their school career and beyond" (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2008, Epilogue Preschool Education section, para, 5.).

Support for play in the promotion of learning during the early years can be seen in Canadian ECEC as well as other parts of the world as it is included within numerous existing models designed for play-based curriculum and pedagogy (OECD, 2012; Saracho, 2011; Van Hoorn et al., 2011; Wisneski & Reifel, 2012; Wood & Attfield, 2005), as well as position statements of national associations such as the Canadian Association for Young Children (2006) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Play also has a prominent role within various early childhood learning policies and curriculum frameworks around the globe (Cheng, 2012; Patte, 2012; Wood &

Attfield, 2005), including existing provincial curriculum frameworks in Canada (Flanagan, 2011; Government of Ontario, 2014; Jang, 2015; Langford, 2012; Manitoba Child Care, 2011; Rajendram, 2015).   In Canada play is also present and valued in ECEC through support provided by associations, and organizations (Canadian Association for Young Children, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada Association, the Centre for Excellence in Early Childhood Development, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, the Canadian Child Care Federation, the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, and the Canadian Council on Learning). There is also documented support from the Association for Canadian Deans of Education (2013), the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (2012) and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's recent "*Power of Play*" campaign (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2014).

Theoretically, support is thus present for play and learning in early childhood education while play is perceived to be "under siege" (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2009). It is acknowledged, however, that evidence illustrating the implementation of curriculum frameworks, particularly those in Canada is limited. Hewes (2010) also raises concerns that "reassuringly, 'learning through play' is resurfacing in the lexicon of recent provincial early learning policy and curriculum documents. These approaches, however, tend to focus on play as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself" (p.1) and she states how "play must not be hijacked by an early learning agenda" (p. 4). While support is documented, there still remains the question as to how play is best put into practice especially when "there is no one definition of play and there is no one right way of enacting a pedagogy of play" (Ryan & Northey-Berg, 2014, p. 212).

How play is implemented effectively for children's learning and development, lies in the hands of early childhood educators. Whether educators understand and implement "play *as* educational practice" or "play *in* educational practice" (Wood, 2014) so that it includes child directed, adult directed or structured play to meet particular academic learning outcomes will be highly dependent on their education and training. What and how play is implemented within higher education settings with adult learners, however, is not as clearly understood or documented.

Play in higher education. Research that centers on the presence and use of play for the purposes of teaching and learning within formal post-secondary adult learning contexts has not yet been created. For this dissertation, an extensive literature review was conducted that explored how the terms play and playfulness were used within existing literature that describes teaching and learning in formal post-secondary educational settings. A search with explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria within seven databases resulted in an in depth analysis of 27 relevant documents that explored (a) when and

where play and playfulness terms are used within the literature, (b) how play and playfulness are defined, (c) how play and playfulness are used in teaching and learning in post-secondary settings, (d) why they are used in teaching and learning and (e) their stated effects on adult learning. Documents included reports, studies, narratives, theoretical papers, reviews, as well as both published and non-published papers between 1979 and 2012. These documents outlined the use of play and playfulness within a variety of disciplines but did not include ways in which play is included with the use of technology as well as play within post-secondary early childhood teacher education programs.

The review suggests that play and playfulness are terms used within some literature in relation to teaching and learning in higher education. There was tremendous variability in the ways in which authors defined the terms as well as in descriptions as to how play and playfulness are used within various post-secondary settings. Regardless of how the terms were reportedly used within the literature, there appeared to be agreement as to their benefits to student learning experiences within post-secondary environments. All authors referred to the use of play and playfulness in regard to improving some aspect of student learning. Stated effects and intended uses indicated positive benefits in correspondence with individual, social and specific learning goals. Reported implementation of play or playfulness was either through (a) instructors' overarching aims of education, (b) instructors' general approaches to teaching and learning, (c) the creation and maintenance of a play space, or (d) in the use of specific activities and experiences.

Findings from the review support the complexities involved in defining the terms play and playfulness through the variety of ways they are defined, used, discussed and used within post-secondary settings. It also supports the lack of defined strategies in which play is implemented within post-secondary settings. It was apparent that professors or instructors' pedagogical decisions were the central guiding force as to how, when, and why play was implemented in their classrooms. Although play and playfulness are not terms commonly used in literature specific to teaching and learning in higher education, play-based experiences may benefit students on individual and social levels, particularly in relation to learning. What play is, how it is implemented in post-secondary settings, what potential relationship it has with adult learning, how it fits with adult learning theories and effective practices in teaching and learning in higher education, along with potential factors specific to higher education that influence faculty's practices is an area yet to be explored more in-depth.

Professional Development in Early Childhood Education

With more and more children participating in ECEC settings during their early years (Bushnik, 2006; OECD, 2011), and increasing numbers of early childhood educators entering the workforce

14

(Romeyn, 2010), it is crucial to stress the importance of educators' education and training. In addition to various measureable features (group size, child-educator ratios) within ECEC environments, staff qualifications and training are predictors that help create high quality experiences for children in early care and education settings. In many ways educators' education and training has been linked to high quality environments (Ackerman, 2004; Arnett, 1989; Fukkink & Lont, 2007; Kagan & Newman, 1996; NICHD, 2006) and have been shown to be positive predictors of quality (Prochner & Howe, 2000; Jacobs, 2000; Friendly & Prentice, 2009; NICHD, 2006; OECD, 2006; UNICEF, 2008). High quality experiences for children in early childhood are linked to the professionalism and competence of teachers (Samuelsson & et al., 2006) and training has been shown to have an effect on educator practices (Enz & Christie, 1997). "Across many countries, improving the knowledge and expertise of the early childhood workforce has been seen as key strategy to ensure children experience a high-quality program" (Ryan & Northey-Berg, 2014, p. 208).

Teaching is multi-faceted and training teachers is in itself complex, in both form and content (Jacobs & Adrien, 2012). Early childhood teacher education programs can differ in regard to such features as size, focus, format, and type of certification (degree, certificate) offered. They may also differ in terms of delivery methods (Howe, Jacobs, Vukelich & Recchia, 2012). The main goals of teacher education are to provide educators with knowledge and skills within areas that are deemed to be important in ECEC environments in order for them to develop into effective practitioners. Essentially, educational programs consist of both theoretical and practical knowledge to help educators translate beliefs, philosophies and ideas into practice (Langford, 2008).   While taking many forms, content and pedagogy in teacher education can influence the knowledge and skills preservice educators develop resulting in educators' professionalism and improved practices to ultimately benefit children under teachers' care (Jacobs, 2000; Whitebrook, 2003).   The National Association for the Education for Young Children (NAEYC) in 2009 state that:

> Just as curriculum for young children is more than a list of skills to be mastered, professional preparation for early childhood teachers is more than a list of competencies to be assessed or a course list to complete. Early childhood students in well-designed programs develop professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a community of learners making sense of readings, observations, field experiences, and group projects through their interactions with others. They make connections between life experiences and new learning. They apply foundational concepts from general education course work to early childhood practice. They learn to self-assess and to advocate for themselves as students and as professionals. They

15

strengthen their skills in written and verbal communication, learn to identify and use

professional resources, and make connections between these "college skills" and lifelong

professional practice. (p. 5)

Despite the importance placed on educators' education and training, research on early

childhood teacher education and professional development is limited (Hyson, Horm, & Winton, 2012)

and there is little empirical support and focus on the actual quality of ECTE programs (Hyson et al.,

2009). Having a diploma or degree in early childhood education can be a factor in a teacher's

effectiveness, but it alone does not guarantee teacher competence. Hyson et al. (2009) address how:

The quality of the higher education program—that is, how well it prepares new teachers by, for

example, grounding them in knowledge of child development and academic subject areas and

providing opportunities to practice new teaching skills—may be a more critical factor in a

teacher's ability to influence children's development and learning in a positive way than having

a degree per se. (Introduction section, para. 1)

These authors agree that rich, deep and positive teacher education can make a difference, not

necessarily the type or length of degree held.   It is not enough to have higher qualifications, we need to

begin to explore details about students' educational experiences, including what they are learning and

the teaching practices being used to help prepare students to develop both personally and

professionally.

Early childhood teacher education in Canada. Currently there are no standards offered at the

national level for recognized Early Childhood Teacher Education programs in Canada.   There is no

universal ECEC system in place and thus provincial and territory jurisdictions, each with their own

subdivisions are responsible for governing ECEC settings, including standards, required qualifications for

staff, and ECTE programs.   Each province and territory also has specific sectors, which oversee specific

academic requirements involved in the accreditation process itself (Association of Canadian Deans of

Education, 2012).

It is reported that in 2004, there were 135 post-secondary education settings (publicly funded

colleges, CEGEPs, universities and private institutions) that delivered Early Childhood Education

certificate, diploma, degree and related programs in Canada (Beach & Costigliola, 2004). There is a lack

of information on recent numbers but it is documented that "all provinces and one territory have

included requirements for such post-secondary specialization in their legislation governing the operation

of regulated early childhood programs" (Flanagan, Beach, Michal, & Cormier, 2009, p. 65). These post-

secondary education requirements differ however in regard to such factors as length, content,

requirements, standards, and assessment measures.   These authors report that in 2009 only six

provinces had standards for post-secondary Early Childhood Education programs. These standards may

provide information as to required outcomes or competencies, for example, but may not necessarily

dictate standards for faculty qualifications, program content as well as pedagogy and delivery methods

used. Play and its importance has a crucial role in Early Childhood Education and begins in teacher

training programs in Canada (Varga, 2000), and there is support for the importance of play within the

Canadian ECEC landscape. The place of play in Canadian post-secondary Early Childhood Education

programs, including details as to content, pedagogy and faculty has yet to be studied.
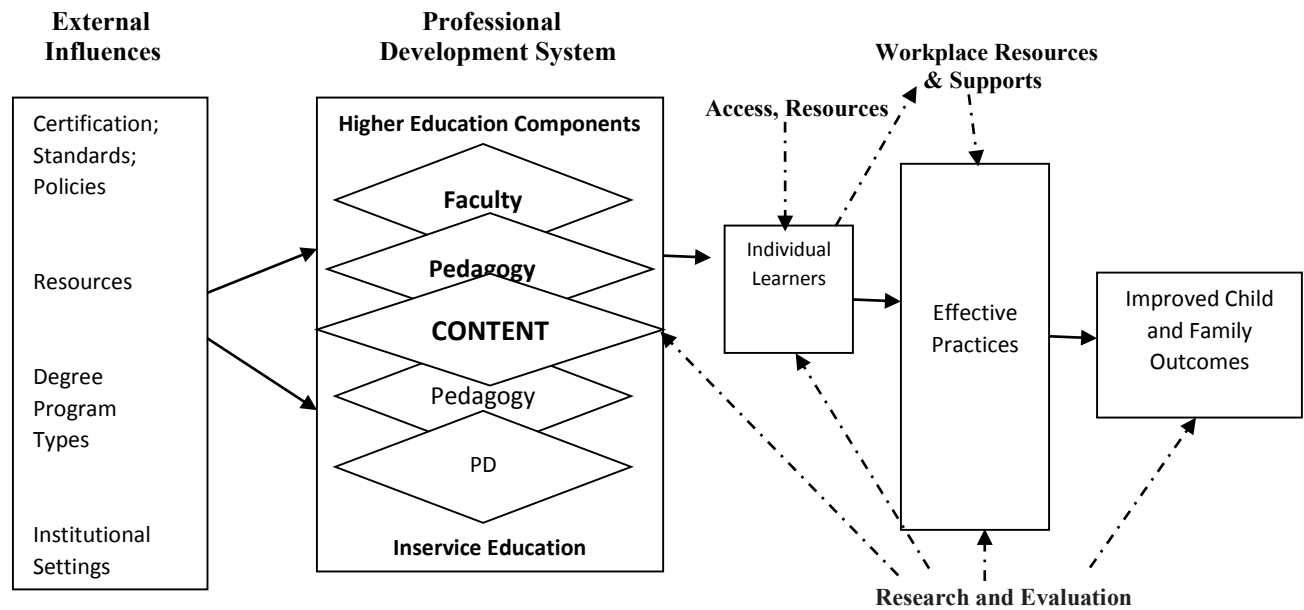
Figure 1. Professional development system, practices, and outcomes: Contexts and pathways. Reprinted with permission from Hyson et al., 2012.

Professional development system. Early childhood teacher education operates within a larger

early childhood professional development system as indicated in Figure 1 from Hyson et al. (2012).   As

the model illustrates, to have a positive effect on child and family outcomes in ECEC settings an

individual educators' practices are influenced by factors that contribute to and result from a

professional development system through higher education and in-service education. This professional

development's foundation and direction is influenced by nationwide, province, territory, and

institutional governing external factors and resources. As with early childhood education settings,

particular policies are set up to determine courses, content, and requirements for those in early

childhood teacher education programs (Vu et al., 2012). The creation and content of these policies, as

well as potential monitoring systems to evaluate their implementation will be dependent on settings and governing bodies responsible for accreditation and execution of the preparation of preservice teachers. Policies that guide practices within teacher education programs are influential in ensuring that educators, as core players in early childhood settings (Howes et al., 1992), are knowledgeable, skilled, and competent to implement practices in ways that are appropriate and effective in promoting children's learning.

Professional development then influences individuals, who have access to resources in and out of the workplace along with workplace supports to implement effective practices.   Higher education components are the focus for this particular dissertation.   A focus will be placed on highlighting information about faculty, who they are and their beliefs about play and learning in addition to content and pedagogy specific to play.   It is also acknowledged, however, that these key factors do not operate in isolation, they fit into a larger system that of, professional development.

Play content and pedagogy in post-secondary early childhood teacher education. Play is central to the life of the child and thus adults who play or who trust in the value of play are important (Goouch, 2010), particularly adults in early childhood education (Neugebauer, 1993).   To be proficient in implementing play practices in an appropriate and efficient manner, it is reported that educators must become skilled observers (Hewes, 2006) in order to observe and tune in to children's abilities, needs and interests (Saracho, 2012) while making appropriate, effective interventions (Hewes, 2006; Ward, 1996). Educators need to accept the importance of play (Graue, 2010; Hewes, 2006; Moyles, 2010) and provide time, space, and resources for play while being continuously aware of the impact of their interactions and their use of the play space, (Goouch, 2008). Educators, to implement play within the curriculum must also trust children and the value of play (Goouch, 2010), be comfortable with uncertainty, and be adept at being a flexible planner (Nell & Drew, 2013; Wood & Attfield, 2005). They must develop the ability to communicate the value of play to others (including parents, coworkers and others) so they too can become advocates.   Due to the potential decline of play in the sociocultural climate of ECEC today, Ryan and Northy-Berg (2014) state that "when teachers learn about play they also need to learn how to navigate, and contest work environments that counter the research-proven effects of play in the curriculum" (p. 208). These aptitudes may potentially be achieved through teacher education.

It is both the content and the method of delivery of an educational degree that influence teacher practices (Ritblatt, Garrity, Longstreth, Hokoda, & Potter, 2013; Whitebrook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai, & Kipnis, 2009). "Play provides a solid foundation for education but requires increased awareness so that adults can provide meaningful play opportunities" (Henle, 2007, p. 20). Teacher education

programs are key settings to promote critical awareness about play in early childhood education. Awareness alone, however, is not necessarily enough to ensure knowledge and skills to implement play-based practices. Teacher education programs can help preservice educators (a) acquire, construct and critique knowledge of play and pedagogy, (b) develop skills to effectively put play into practice for the promotion of children's learning, and (c) articulate information to others about play and its role in learning. As Vu, Han and Buell (2012) suggests, programs for preservice educators must include content, strategies and policies to support positive changes that help preservice educators' development of play-based curriculum. It is not enough to know what play is. Preservice educators also need knowledge as to how to put play into practice. To become advocates of play early childhood educators need knowledge, skills, and reflection, which also involves becoming aware of the role of play in their own lives as adults (Nicholson, Shimpi, & Rabin, 2014).

Three main features: knowledge, reflection and practice should be involved in models of early childhood teacher preparation (Ritblatt et al., 2013). Trawick-Smith and Dziurgot (2010) address how "…playing with children is not simply an enjoyable way for teachers to spend time in the classroom; it is a cognitively challenging act that requires knowledge, reflection, and purpose" (p. 127). It is thus not enough for upcoming early childhood educators to understand play theory. To enhance interactions that are well matched to children's needs and are deemed a "good fit", it is suggested that teacher education provide students extensive knowledge of play through theory, observations and interpretations of children's play as well as opportunities to put theories into practice along with continuous reflection. Strategies may then come about after play content knowledge and reflection have been achieved. Trawick-Smith and Dziurgot (2010) discuss how learning to interact during play does not involve simply providing educators with a "bag of tricks". Rather, it involves helping upcoming early childhood educators determine the goodness of fit between what children need during play and the educator's actions to support it.

Research on teacher beliefs has indicated various reasons as to why educators are not putting their beliefs about play and learning into practice. These include factors that have a direct link to their education and preparation, such as what and how they were taught. Some practitioners have claimed that although they believe in the value of play in ECEC, their beliefs were not put into practice because they do not know how (Lobman, 2005) or were not taught how (Kemple, 1996). Others noted that they did not have any play specific courses and content in professional development and teacher education programs (Moyles, 2010; Vu et al., 2012). One problem may lie in where play content is included within ECTE programs.

Information about play content in ECTE programs is limited (Vu et al., 2012). "Unfortunately, much less is known from these studies about what students receive in such programmes with regard to children's play and the purposes and approaches to using play in early childhood programmes" (Ryan & Northey-Berg, 2014 p. 208). Vu et al. (2012) reviewed 20 of NAEYC accredited teacher education programs for early childhood and found only one course had play in the title, and that play content in general was lacking in course descriptions. Even when play is valued as a key guiding principle for practice in early childhood education settings, it was not a requirement for early childhood teacher education programs to have specific courses or content related to play theory and practice to receive certification by the association. Within an examination of various aspects of ECTE Certificate and Diploma programs across Canada, Jacobs and Adrien (2012) state "clearly, some programs deliver the message about the importance of play through courses that have play as a main focus, whereas other programs may embed the message in other courses" (p. 128).

A potential reason for the lack of play specific findings is offered by Ryan and Northey-Berg (2014), who state that play is commonly included in broader topic areas, such as child development and learning environments. To examine the place of play courses within post-secondary ECTE programs Lobman, Ryan, and McLaughlin (2005) spoke to faculty in 29 early childhood programs within higher education settings. They discovered that 28% of the universities offered courses entirely specific to play whereas 90% of the programs had courses devoted to child development. Within American college settings included in that particular study, play courses were not as common when faculty reported their institutions' offerings. The majority of recognized ECTE programs in Canada are in the college system (Jacobs & Adrien, 2012). These authors go on to state how "typically, the content of these training programs is the result of 'best practice' information as interpreted by college instructors, and in some cases, the content is driven by provincial learning outcome mandates" (Jacobs & Adrien, 2012, p. 124).

While play course titles and play content are not necessarily explicit, play, due to its many forms, types and possible methods of implementation, may thus manifest itself throughout ECTE in other ways. It is suggested that more research and policies are needed on early childhood educators' professional development (Sheridan, Edwards, Martin, & Knoche, 2009), particularly research on the play content if play is deemed to play a central role in ECEC. It is not only essential to look at what preservice educators are learning about play, however, an examination is also required on how it is being taught that is, play pedagogy.

"Both college classrooms and early childhood classrooms can be seen as play's conceptual fermenting grounds, and both can be places for respectfully and ethically synthesizing creative

processes with content and skills" (Ranz-Smith, 2012, p. 99). It can also be said, however that "there is a discontinuity between the nonlinear ways that young children learn and the linear educational institutions where teachers and caregivers are trained" (Fromberg, 1999 p.33).   Other than a few authors who document their own or others' teaching practices, literature is limited in terms of addressing ways in which play content and skills are taught to upcoming early childhood educators. Teacher educators have written about how they have engaged preservice educators in play-based action research (Cheng, 2001; Patte, 2012), have elicited student participation in improvisation (Lobman, 2005), have modelled play and playful teaching modules (Hyvoven, 2011), and have used play-based pedagogy to teach play in teacher education (Ayling, 2012; Harris, 2007). Others have reported on their own practices within the play specific courses that they teach (Bredikyte & Hakkarainen, 2011; Johnson, 2014; Lord & McFarland, 2010).

Nell and Drew (2013) address the importance of hands on open-ended play experiences for both children and adult learners and recommend having educators actively engage in intentional play themselves to better understand play for children. They go on to express how "providing concrete experiences for teachers is an imperative component of successful transformative professional development" and that "teachers find creative, resilient ways to meet children's needs when they are empowered to be creative themselves" (p. 80).   Nicholson et al. (2014) subscribe to a similar approach: "We suggest that it is through their actively embodied, creative, relational, therapeutic and individually meaningful play experiences that early childhood professionals are most likely to develop the understanding and passion that will fuel their ability to courageously fight for children to have a right to play in a world that is currently privileging other 'truths'" (p. 1207).

What currently exists in the literature are single case examples of practices implemented within undergraduate and graduate play related courses. They are mostly from ECTE settings in the United States, Europe and Australia.   A detailed snapshot as to what is happening within various courses and institutions in terms of helping early childhood educators develop play knowledge and skills within the landscape of Canadian ECTE may contribute to what is currently missing from the literature and may promote the foundation for future research in the area.   One way to address what is being done in ECTE programs is to talk to key players in the higher education professional development system, the ECTE faculty.

Faculty in post-secondary early childhood teacher education. If play is not explicit within teacher education programs, then what preservice educators learn about play may be implicitly integrated within courses based on curriculum and pedagogical choices made by ECTE faculty

themselves. Just as an educator plays a central role in students' experiences in the early childhood classroom, it is the faculty member who acts as a decision maker who plans, organizes, implements and assesses at the teacher education level. As the quality of teachers affects pupils' learning experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2000), the quality of teacher educators also affects the quality of teachers (Buchberger & Byrne, 1995; Korthagen, 2000). "Just as children learn best from teachers who use responsive and intentional strategies, adult students learn from instructors who create a caring community of learners, teach to enhance development and learning, plan curriculum aligned with important learning outcomes, assess student growth and development related to those outcomes, and build positive relationships with students and other stakeholders in the program" (NAEYC, 2009, p. 5). What teacher educators do and how they do it may influence what educators do in their classrooms (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007), including if and how they incorporate play.

Information about individuals who are responsible for educating the upcoming ECEC workforce is extremely limited (Byington & Tannock, 2011; Murray & Male, 2005; Russell & Korthagen 1995). As major players in the ECTE professional system (Horm, Hyson, & Winton, 2013), faculty are those who influence what and how preservice educators are educated to work with young children, which then impacts child and family outcomes. It is not well known as to who faculty are (Murray & Male, 2005), what they do within early childhood education preparation programs or what their professional development needs and interests are (Byington & Tannock, 2011).   Within the context of early childhood educators' professional development, Sheridan et al. (2009) write how "research is needed that determines precisely what effective coaches and consultants do to elicit desired qualities and competencies of practitioners and that identifies why this is important in terms of creating productive learning sessions that lead to lasting changes in skills and practices among learners" (p. 396). Up to this point attention has not been given to faculty and their voices are needed to not only celebrate their work but to help lessen the research-practice gap (Horm et al., 2013).

The only ECTE faculty survey undertaken in Canada was part of larger study, *"Training Strategy Report for ECEC in Canada,* (Forer, Beach, & Flanagan, 2007). Over 150 faculty teaching in ECE departments at 17 different post-secondary institutions across Canada answered a survey to gather information on (a) ECE faculty characteristics and trends, (b) faculty views on their work, and (c) faculty opinions on ECE programs, including "the match between curriculum and skills needed by ECEs, characteristics of ECEs entering post-secondary training and adequacy of current regulatory frameworks of training requirements" (p. 5).   While a great deal of information was collected on faculty

characteristics and views on ECE training programs, the report does not clearly examine faculty's classroom practices nor does it address any views faculty may have on the role of play in ECEC and ECTE.

Research on faculty, specifically those working in Canadian ECTE programs, warrants more attention. Insights may be valuable to better understand ECTE in Canada as well as help improve quality services for both adult learners in ECTE programs and for children who will soon be under early childhood educators' care. Information about faculty may also help in the design of effective faculty professional development programs to be better aligned with faculty's needs to help them succeed (Weber-Mayrer, Piasta, & Yeager Pellatti, 2015). Considering that faculty require no formal teacher education to teach adults in post-secondary settings and that no standard pedagogy exists within post-secondary institutions, it is beneficial to explore not only their practices but also their beliefs.

Research on Teacher Beliefs

Teacher beliefs are described as"...implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught" (Kagan, 1992, p. 66). They are created through enculturation and education (Pajares, 1992), and are highly influenced by personal experiences, characteristics as well as education and training (Parsons, 2013; Vartulli, 2005). Beliefs have been a key area of interest in education as studying teachers' beliefs has helped contribute to understand the nature and process of teaching, particularly as teaching is a complex act that involves more than observable behaviors. Beliefs have been noted to act as a guide to filter and organize information and to affect thinking, decisions, planning and behaviors and thus have been believed to transfer into curriculum and teaching practices (Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). This has also been documented within ECEC settings (Cheung, 2012; Vartulli, 2005; Vukelich, 2012; Wilcoz-Herzog & Ward, 2002). Beliefs are stated to lie at the very heart of teaching (Kagan, 1992; Vartulli, 2005), and may be even be formulated prior to entering formal preparation programs at the post-secondary level (Vu et al., 2012).

With distinctive features that differentiate beliefs from knowledge (Nespor, 1987), teaching beliefs can consist of beliefs about students, learning, subject matter, as well as teaching role and responsibilities (Calderhdead, 1996; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992), which then fit within larger beliefs and knowledge systems (Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996). A teacher's beliefs about a particular area may fit into a larger system of beliefs about teaching and learning, which could then influence their teaching actions. An adaptation of a model of the hypothesized relationship between theory and action by Bennett, Wood, and Rogers (1997) is illustrated in Figure 2.

This model illustrates how a teachers' beliefs may fit into a broader teaching orientation. For example, one`s belief`s about play would fit into broader pedagogical decisions as to how to implement

play to promote learning within a particular context. The implementation of beliefs into practice may then be influenced by various contextual and situational constraints. These may include constraints at the school, local or class level, for example, policy, perceptions and demands, which may influence their teaching intentions.   Constraints in the classroom, for example, time, space and students' reactions, will then impact actual practice. Reflections upon one's practices can then alter the cycle.   It is a cyclical process that takes into account various influential factors that can have an impact on the relationship between theory and action.
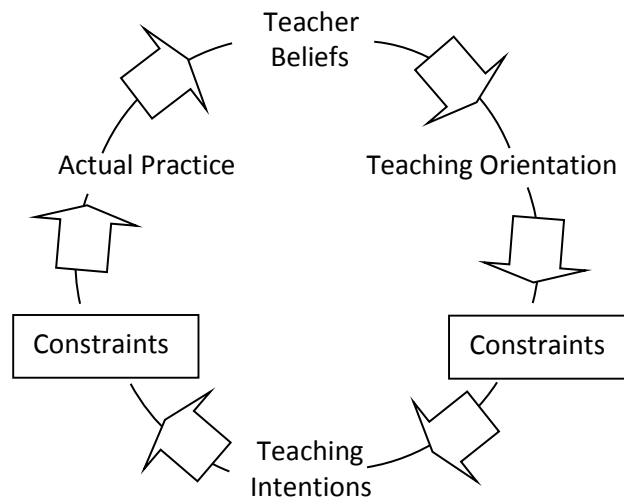
Figure 2. Adapted model of the hypothesized relationship of theory and action
(Bennett et al., 1997).

Early childhood teachers' beliefs. Insights about play related beliefs and practices have been gained from studies conducted with early childhood teachers and educators. Researchers have been interested in exploring educators' beliefs (Howe et al., 2012; Parker & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2006; Rusher, 1992; Stipek & Byler, 1997; Vartulli, 2005; Vukelich, 2012; Wen, Elicker, & McMullen, 2006; Wilcox-Herzog & Ward, 2002), as well as educators' beliefs about play (Adams, 2005; Brock, 2010; Cheng, 2012; Hyvonen, 2011; Izumi-Taylor, Samuelsson & Rogers, 2010; Moyles, 2010; Parsons, 2013; Ridgway & Quinones, 2012; Ryan & Northey-Berg, 2014; Sandberg & Samuelsson, 2005; Sherwood & Reifel, 2010). While the relationship between beliefs and practices were not the focus of particular studies, an existing relationship between them was inferred through rationales for researchers' investigations. Other researchers have explicitly investigated the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their play-based practices (Bennett et al., 1997; Brett, Valle-Riestra, Fischer, Rothlein, & Hughes, 2002; Cheng, 2001; Cheng & Simpson, 2004; Kemple, 1996; Parsons, 2013; Ranz-Smith, 2007; Quance, Lehrer, & Stathopoulos, 2008).

Results from studies in the area indicate that there is tremendous variety in teachers' stated beliefs. Supporting the elusiveness of play and the variety of ways play and learning can be implemented into the classroom, early childhood educators have provided a set of diverse beliefs both about play itself and about ways in which they felt it should be implemented. Findings also indicate an apparent disconnect between beliefs and practices, which coincides with authors who have indicated that the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices has been contested (Kagan, 1992) and inconsistent (Fang, 1996). Although teachers were claiming to believe in play and its value for children's learning, it was not being observed in practice. Authors address how this disconnect may be due to the various factors that may hinder beliefs being actualized within the classroom (Adams, 2005; Bennett et al., 1997; Brett et al., 2002; Cheng, 2001; Cheng, 2012; Hewes, 2006; Kagan, 1992; Moyles, 2010; Parsons, 2013; Quance et al., 2008; Ranz-Smith, 2007; Vu et al., 2012; Wood & Attfield, 2012). They also outline implications for teacher education.   As beliefs are noted to be created and influenced by individuals' experiences and education (Pajares, 1992; Parsons, 2013; Vartulli, 2005), insights are aimed to help improve ECTE and professional development experiences to better educators' beliefs as well as help educators develop skills to put these beliefs into practice.

To date studies on beliefs and practices specific to play have been conducted (preschool teachers (Adams, 2005; Bennett et al., 1997; Brett et al., 2002; Sandberg & Samuelsson, 2005), kindergarten teachers (Cheng, 2001; Cheng & Stimpson, 2004; Hyvoven, 2011; Kemple, 1996), grade one teachers (Ranz-Smith, 2007; Quance et al., 2008), early childhood educators (Izumi-Taylor et al., 2010; Parsons, 2013) as well as preservice educators in university programs (Cheng, 2012; Sherwood & Reifel, 2010). It is recognized that few of these studies were conducted within a Canadian context. It thus appears research has yet to undertake studies on beliefs about play and related practices for those teaching upcoming early childhood educators within Canadian ECTE programs, the faculty members themselves.

Faculty beliefs. Research on faculty beliefs is an area of research interest. Hora (2014) reports how there has been a substantial amount of research on faculty's thinking in post-secondary contexts. For a review see Hativa and Goodyear (2001). Within recent years there have also been additional studies that have explored faculty's beliefs, priorities and behaviors within different topic areas (Bailey, 2013; Brinthaupt & Eady; Day , Lovato, Tull, & Ross-Gordon, 2011; Calkins & Seidler, 2011; Cretchley et al., 2014; Morgan et al., 2014). Faculty beliefs have mainly been elicited through methods that include interviews, surveys, or written accounts and studies have mainly focused on faculty teaching within a range of disciplinary areas in university contexts, with few that include faculty teaching in college

settings (Day et al., 2011; Harder, Lamm, Roberts, Navarro, & Ricketts, 2012, Hong, Haefner, & Slekar, 2011; Vance & Weyandt, 2008).

Within the study of faculty beliefs, it is acknowledged that faculty beliefs about teaching and learning cannot be removed from the context or discipline (Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi, & Ashwin, 2006; Neumann, Parry, & Bechner, 2002; Young, 2010).   Faculty beliefs may contribute to their practices, and may also be influenced by contextual factors.   "The field's knowledge of faculty beliefs is hindered by a lack of empirical work on this foundational construct, not to mention how these beliefs interact with other psychological and contextual factors to shape actual educational practice" (Hora, 2014, p. 41).

More research that looks at faculty in college settings is needed, particularly faculty working within ECTE programs as they are a population that have yet to be included within the literature on faculty beliefs. Who they are, what their beliefs are about play and learning will contribute to the existing literature in the area and may also provide additional insights into their pedagogical decisions when preparing adult learners to work in ECEC environments. Explorations of contextual factors that may hinder or impede ECTE faculty's implementation of their beliefs may also be warranted due to their apparent place within the relationship between beliefs and practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate play and learning within accredited post-secondary Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programs in Canada by examining faculty's beliefs and practices when educating preservice early childhood educators.   It sought to highlight ECTE faculty voices and identify their (a) personal beliefs about play and learning within both ECEC and ECTE settings, (b) teaching practices that reflect these conceptions, and (c) perceived contextual factors that either support or hinder enactment of their intended practices as they work with adult learners in post-secondary ECTE (Diploma or Certificate) programs.   It was also proposed that faculty's insights would inform future faculty professional development initiatives specific to play and learning.   The study is grounded within literature and a model of theory and action (Bennett et al., 1997), which supports that beliefs are related to teaching practices yet the enactment of beliefs is influenced by various factors. The focus was not to explore if faculty beliefs are observed in practice. Rather, it is to provide a description of what faculty's perceived beliefs, practices and factors are.

Due to faculty's role in educating preservice early childhood educators to work with young children, faculty's beliefs about play and learning for children in ECEC settings as well as for adult learners in post-secondary ECTE environments were sought in relationship with faculty's self-reported

teaching practices.   It is an exploratory, descriptive and interpretive study aimed to give voice to faculty and provide a glimpse of their beliefs and practices specific to play and learning within the Canadian ECTE landscape. As research has yet to be conducted in the area, this study will contribute to literature, practice and future research.

Research Questions

The central research question guiding this study was: What are faculty's reported beliefs on play and learning and related teaching practices used with preservice educators within the context of recognized Canadian post-secondary Early Childhood Education (Diploma or Certificate) Teacher Education programs?   Guiding questions for this study are as follows:

(a) What are faculty's beliefs about play and learning for children in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings?

(b) What are faculty's beliefs about play and learning for adults in Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programs?

(c) What are faculty's reported practices within Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programs that reflect their personal conceptions of play and learning?

(d) What are contextual factors that support or hinder implementation of faculty's beliefs about play and learning within their teaching practices within Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programs?

(e) Would professional development initiatives geared specifically for faculty to learn about play and learning be recommended and if so, what might these professional development initiatives include?

Chapter Summary

To provide positive experiences for children in ECEC settings, early childhood educators need quality education themselves. Due to the importance of play within the lives of children and its potential relationship with learning for learners of any age, ECTE settings are a fertile ground for preservice educators to engage in theory, practice, and reflection centered on play. This will help foster explorations of held belief, help develop play related knowledge and skills needed to be effective professionals, as well as help promote the role of play of their own lives as adults. This is critical as upcoming early childhood educators will become future advocates for play in a society where there is a risk that play will further be devalued at the cost of outcome driven and standardized learning and living.

Due to the multiple meanings of play and the variety of views as to its relationship with learning there are an array of ways in which it can be implemented in education. While play is prominent in early childhood education, its place in post-secondary settings, however, is not clear.   As the central role in ECEC is the early childhood educator, faculty plays an important role in what, how and why things are done within ECTE.   Taking into consideration existing literature as well as how ECTE programs operate within a professional development system, this dissertation focuses on the ECTE faculty and their contributions in terms of their beliefs about play and learning and related teaching practices as well as contextual factors and insights to faculty professional development initiatives.   Insights are geared to help inform areas such ECTE in Canada, play pedagogy in higher education, play and learning throughout the lifespan, while it all centers on helping improve the educational experiences of children and those responsible for their care. The purpose of the study, along with specific research questions to be addressed were provided as a foundation leading to the study's methodology, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Epistemological Framework

It was acknowledged from the onset of the study that the researcher subscribed to various positions in terms of epistemological and ontological views. The study's creation, including its choice of participants, research questions and method were heavily influenced by the researcher's lens. The researcher's views are as follows:

(a) the nature of reality is subjective and socially constructed. Individuals can provide various views and interpretations of the same phenomenon, which are influenced by contextual (social, temporal, historical, cultural) factors;

(b) the nature of knowledge and lived experience is interpretive and knowledge creation is a subjective experience. Research methods are those that should be humanistic, flexible, and should support idiographic, inductive, and iterative processes that allow for complexity when attempting to reveal understandings of a particular phenomenon;

(c) there are multiple ways of knowing, creating meaning and representing data; and

(d) the role of the researcher is one that is immersed within the research process. Assumptions and bias may be reflected upon but the researcher's lens and view of reality cannot be removed. Research and understandings that arise are a result of a co-constructed understandings based on the relationship and exchanges that occur between the researcher and the participants.

Fitting a postmodern constructivist interpretive lens, these views ultimately shaped what was studied, the specific research questions to be answered as well as helped guide particular decisions throughout the research process in terms of data collection, analysis, and reporting. These particular views are heavily influenced by the researcher's own academic, professional and personal experiences. Grounded within this particular framework, the study was designed and conducted to best answer the research questions.

Exploratory and Descriptive Design

Based on the characteristics of qualitative research outlined by Hays and Singh (2012), this qualitative study was designed in a way in which it would be aligned with the researcher's lens and take various key features of qualitative inquiry into account, including the humanness of research, purposive sampling and the importance of context. It was also deemed important that the study include an interactive, flexible research design to help generate information and "to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 1998, p.

11).   An emphasis was placed on respecting individuals' subjective meanings, collaboration between the participants and the researcher, and the role of reflexivity for all individuals involved in the research process.

Marland (1995) stated that "implicit theories cannot be studied until they are first made explicit …asking teachers to articulate their implicit theories inevitably involves them in a process of discovery….Finding appropriate and valid ways of making implicit theories explicit is therefore a major methodological challenge" (p. 133).   In line with qualitative research methods and data collection strategies suggested by those interested in exploring teacher beliefs (Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992), it was decided that multi-method approaches were needed to help elicit and encourage dialogue in collaboration with informants throughout the study in hopes of supporting the complex multi-faceted experience of teaching (Kagan, 1992), as well as helping to gain access to faculty's thinking and tacit beliefs (Pajares, 1992).

"Different qualitative approaches have different, but overlapping epistemological, underpinnings and theoretical and methodological emphases" (Smith, 2004, p. 39). With numerous qualitative methods to choose from (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), each with their own distinctive features, it was deemed that multiple methods would best suit this particular inquiry and best answer its specific research questions. Just as play itself can be viewed, described, understood, and experienced in many ways, "humans have invented a variety of forms of representation to describe and understand the world in as many ways as it can be represented" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 164).   It was thus seen as valuable to choose a process that could provide a variety of methods. This could potentially respect the intrinsic magic of play, the meanings a particular individual has created for it, as well as one that would allow for the varied and complex meanings that can be attributed to beliefs and practices in terms of play and learning.

The study's design was inspired by various approaches, including Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), narrative inquiry, and arts based research.   These approaches share similar epistemological underpinning with this study. Details about each methods' theoretical underpinnings and ways it has inspired the design of this study will now be described.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The study is one that is primarily inspired by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).   IPA is a relatively recent approach and while it is mostly used in psychology research (Todorova, 2011), it has also been adopted within social and health sciences, and has been used to look specifically at teaching practices (Klockare, Gustafsson, & Nordin-Bates, 2011).   IPA is a qualitative approach committed to exploring how people make sense out of their

subjective experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). "The main currency for an IPA study is the meaning that participants' experiences, events, and states hold for participants" (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 36). Founded in its main phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic theoretical roots, it honors individual's personal accounts. "First, at the heart of IPA is the idiographic commitment to the case" (Smith, 2004, p. 51). IPA places its attention on individuals' stories, which then provide the basis for uncovering generic themes. Within IPA an examination of each individual case is completed prior to conducting a cross-case analysis, which is the approach undertaken in this study. IPA also values the interaction between researcher and participants and acknowledges that the researcher along with his or her knowledge, experience and conceptions are actively implicated within the research process. IPA involves a double hermeneutic cycle in which a participant makes meaning of experience, and the researcher then makes meaning of the participant's meaning.

IPA is described as not being a prescriptive approach, but rather a set of flexible guidelines to be adapted based on the researcher goals (Storey, 2007). "One cannot do good qualitative research by following a cookbook" (Smith, 2004, p. 4). Suggestions and guidelines are not fixed, allowing the research process to emerge based on the needs of the participants and the researcher aligned with the research questions. The foundations of IPA are well aligned with the goals of this study and similar forms of data collection, including semi-structured interviews, were used. Narratives, such as journals, diaries or written personal accounts are also used in IPA studies (Smith & Eatough, 2007). IPA's approach and guidelines have helped frame this study's data analysis, which will be discussed later within this chapter.

The study thus uses an IPA inspired approach. It involves 19 participants who all teach within post-secondary Diploma or Certificate programs in Canada. The exploratory and descriptive design was also influenced by two other qualitative approaches, which influence ways in which data was collected and reported.

Narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach that either investigates people's narratives or employs narrative to help present a view of phenomena. "As a form of teacher research, narrative inquiry prompts reflection and encourages the authentic expression of lived experiences" (Meier & Stremmel, 2010, p. 250). Based within the belief that lives are a culmination of stories that unfold (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), narratives can elicit experiences of individuals. They can help give voice to those who have yet to be included in educational research (Chase, 2005). Narratives can also act as reflective tool. It is "through the telling of their stories, they gain insight into what they are doing and why they are doing it" (Meier & Stremmel, 2010, p. 250).

Stories have had a strong tradition in teacher education (Carter, 1993). They have also been used in research within various areas including teacher professional development (Conle, 2000), preschool teacher's values and beliefs (Court, Merav, & Ornan, 2009), factors that shape academic teaching practice (Jones, 2011), and professional development of teachers' identities (Leitch, 2006).   In an attempt to ensure the opportunity for faculty's voice to emerge throughout the research process, narratives were used within this study as a method for participants to articulate their beliefs and how these are applied within the complexities of their teaching practices.

Short written narratives from each participant about their practices were submitted and verbal narratives during interviews were both used as data. The researcher also engaged in narratives when writing reflections and sharing experiences as well as to verify faculty's emergent stories and to negotiate their meanings with participants.

Arts based research. This study is also inspired by arts based research, which is a qualitative holistic approach to research that promotes new and alternative ways of knowing, thinking and representation (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Leavy, 2009). "*Arts based research practices* are a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation" (Leavy, 2009, p. 2). Methods are noted to draw from various arts such as music, literature, performance, dance and visual forms. In additional to narratives, images and photo elicitation interviews are included in this study, as they have been considered to be effective in the study of faculty's beliefs, and thus their use is aligned with answering the research questions.   Based in the researchers' epistemological views and background that supports the use of the arts in research and human development, it was deemed that it would be beneficial to incorporate elements of the arts in the research design.

In researching teacher beliefs, authors have addressed methodological difficulties in that individuals may not be aware of beliefs or have language to express their beliefs (Kagan, 1992) and language based retrieval methods may not necessarily be compatible as beliefs are created and stored as images (Goodman, 1988; Pajares, 1992). "We wish to signal also a potential problem with the use of surveys, questionnaires, or other multiple-choice-type inventories as methods used to gather data about teacher conceptions and beliefs," (Kane, 2002, p. 197).   Both narratives and images have been methods that have been recommended to study teacher beliefs (Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1996; Pajares, 1992), and yet to date these particular methods have not been used together to gather information about teacher beliefs and practices about play and learning.

Visual research recognizes the power of images and photographs and are being increasingly used in social science research (Jenkings, Woodward, & Winter, 2008). Photographs, videos, animations, paintings, and drawings are images that help evoke both cognition and emotion. They can provide an instant glimpse into the world and the perspective of the participant. When used within research, images can help understand individual's experiences (Shulze, 2007). Lego models and drawings have also been used in research to help elicit individuals' identities (Gauntlett, 2007; Nevgi & Löfström, 2014).

"The presence of images are often more powerful in explaining a situation than a discursive rendering of the same situation. As we know, a picture is worth a thousand words" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 157). Images can help see phenomena from a fresh perspective. They can stimulate conversations while adding or building upon existing explanations to promote and generate theoretical understandings. Images can bring to life other elements discursive language is unlikely to reveal and images can capture meaning that measurement cannot (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Images were used as data in this study to represent faculty's beliefs about play and learning. The content of the images can represent the participants' worlds and can illustrate what they would like to share (Jenkings et al., 2008). Images also provided the foundation for interviews. As a different method to address research questions centering on beliefs within this study, photo elicitation interviews were conducted.

Photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) have been included within research in education (Ketelle, 2010) and early childhood education (Birkeland, 2013) to understand adult educators for example (Taylor, 2002) as well as preservice teachers' beliefs (Ruto-Korir & Lubbe-De Beer, 2012; Stockall & Davis, 2011). In photo elicitation interviews photographs serve as symbols of meaning that people explain during the interview process. It is a collaborative process that places an emphasis on individuals' personalized meanings (Clark-Ibáňez, 2004) as they are co-constructed through a collaboration with the researcher (Birkeland, 2013; Harper, 2002; Margolis, 2011; Pink, 2007). "In photo elicitation, this exchange is stimulated and guided by images" (Birkeland, 2013, p. 456). For this study, interviews involve elicitation based on images. These images include photographs and other visual forms.

Authors state how photographs can build bridges between strangers (Jenkings et al., 2008) as they facilitate communication while easing rapport between the participant and the researcher (Clark-Ibáňez, 2004). Images can also provide structure to interviews (Clark-Ibáňez, 2004) and promote focus (Stockall & Davis, 2011). The "photographs sharpen the memory, give interviews immediate character and help to keep them focused" (Shulze, 2007, p. 540). Images provide active collaboration within both data collection and analysis (Jenkings et al., 2008). Both parties are anchored in an image that they

explore together, revealing potentially different information than from other methods. "Respondent's memories are stimulated in different ways than through verbal-based interviews and in ways potentially unknown to the researcher" (Clark-Ibáňez, 2004, p. 1512). Images can also help put participants at ease to express themselves in an interpersonal manner (Shulze, 2007).

In summary, based on its inspiration from various methods, the approach for this study is thus a métissage (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Donald, Hurren, Leggo, & Oberg, 2008), or a bricolage (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009), in that it is a methodology that merges genres. Table 1 highlights ways in which all three different research methods have been incorporated into different stages of the research design. It interweaves verbal and written narratives, as well as images of faculty voices on play and learning in accredited ECTE programs across the Canadian landscape through a reflective, collaborative and multi stage process. Different forms of data were collected, triangulated and analyzed in an iterative manner to generate themes within each individual case as well as across all cases to provide a snapshot of what is being done by individual faculty members across the country.

Table 1

Contributions of IPA, Narrative Inquiry, and Arts Based Research to Stages within the Research Design

Stages within the research process	IPA	Narrative Inquiry	Arts Based Research
Data Collection	inclusion of interviews and narratives	inclusion of oral and written narratives (by participant)	inclusion of images and narratives use of photo-elicitation interview methods
Data Verification		use of narratives (by the researcher)	
Data Analysis	analysis of individual accounts before identifying themes across cases		meaning making through the creation and discussion of images and narratives
	double hermeneutic cycle (analysis by participants and researcher)		general analysis of the content of images
Reporting		use of the researcher's narratives and quotes from participants' stories to present study details and findings	use of images to illustrate findings

Participants

  Participants as the primary informants were faculty teaching within accredited post-secondary ECTE Diploma and Certificate programs in Canada. The study was focused on faculty working within recognized public post-secondary programs that prepare preservice educators to work within childcare or regulated day care centres. As education requirements and governing factors differ for those working in kindergartens, home childcare services and school programs, information pertaining to these particular settings were not included. While there are University ECE degrees (Beach, Friendly, Ferns, Prabhu, & Forer, 2009), various accredited ECTE programs offered in French, and other forms of professional development such as workshops and in-service training, this study only included faculty working in post-secondary college or university ECTE Diploma or Certificate programs offered in English. Both programs that offered on-line and classroom based courses were included.

  Recruitment. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants.   Firstly, provincial and territory websites were visited to collect names of recognized early childhood teacher education programs housed within post-secondary institutions across Canada. The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC, n.d.) site was also used to help gain information on recognized post-secondary ECTE programs within each province or territory.   A list of recognized programs within each jurisdiction became the main source from which participants were recruited.   There were 71 programs identified. It is recognized that this list of programs was not necessarily an exhaustive list but there is currently no official listing of programs delivering ECTE programs in Canada.

  Websites of Early Childhood Education programs offering Diploma or Certificate programs in English within colleges and universities from this list were then visited to obtain contact information for ECTE program heads. Chairs, coordinators or program leaders of ECTE programs or departments in which ECTE programs were housed were contacted by e-mail when contact information was available. If necessary e-mails were sent to administrative assistants or a general e-mail address provided for the program or university.

  Out of 71 programs from the original list generated, 58 programs (82%) were contacted. Table 2 outlines an overview on the total number of recognized post-secondary ECTE programs contacted and the number of participants recruited within each province and territory.   Post-secondary ECE programs were not contacted if programs were offered in French, if no contact information was available, if the institution was no longer operating or if the institution did not offer an ECE Diploma or Certificate program. In the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, a request for permission to conduct research at the institution was required from the research office before sending request for participation to the

ECTE department itself. In New Brunswick, only one institution was contacted as it was referred by a government official.

Table 2

Post-secondary ECTE Programs Contacted and Participants Recruited within each Province and Territory

Province and Territory	ECE programs contacted[a]	Number of participants recruited[b]
Alberta	8	3
British Columbia	17	1
Manitoba	2	-
New Brunswick	1	1
Newfoundland & Labrador	1	-
Northwest Territories	-	-
Nova Scotia	2	-
Ontario	22	10
Prince Edward Island	1	-
Québec	2	3
Saskatchewan	1	0
Yukon	1	1

[a]N= 58
[b]N= 19

E-mail communication to program heads included an introduction, information about the project along with a request for faculty participation.   A document outlining the project and details about what participation entails was included as an attachment (Appendix B).   Interested individuals were asked to contact the researcher and the program head was not informed of faculty participating.

All ECTE faculty at institutions contacted were invited to participate. The only exclusion criteria was that faculty needed to hold a teaching position within a recognized ECTE program and that they needed to be available for interviews prior to August, 15th, 2014. Participants could include positions such as full time or part-time instructors, lecturers, department chairs and program coordinators. The courses taught, did not necessarily pertain specifically to 'play'.

Faculty members who had expressed interest were then contacted through e-mail (Appendix C), with an attachment outlining detailed information about the study (Appendix D).   Upon agreement to volunteer as a participant, individuals were provided details to set up the first interview (Appendix E) and were given a copy of the consent form (Appendix F).   All individuals who had returned a signed consent form were included in the study and were notified that they could withdraw without repercussions anytime. A total of 19 female faculty members representing 13 different ECTE institutions

in 6 different provinces and territories participated. Complete demographic information about faculty members will be outlined in "*Chapter Four: Findings*".

While it is recognized that smaller homogenous samples could provide more in depth case studies, the recruitment strategy was intentionally used to help meet the main objective of the study, which was to highlight voices of faculty working in ECTE programs across Canada. It was originally anticipated that approximately 6-10 participants would volunteer for the study, however, it was deemed that involving more people was more reflective of the complexity and variety that was apparent on the ECTE landscape.   It was recognized that "multiple perspectives makes our engagement with the phenomena more complex. Ironically, good research often complicates our lives" (Eisner, 1997, p. 8). The sample, however, provided a heterogeneous account of those working in the field and was well suited to answer the central research question. The flexibility of the research design also provided the opportunity to include more people than was expected.

Other than one faculty member the researcher had met prior to the study, the researcher did not previously know any of the participants and never visited any of the institutions prior to the study. There were no conflicts of interest and the research process provided the opportunity to get to know people and settings through the participants' perspectives. While one cannot be completely free of biases and assumptions, not knowing the participants minimized any preconceived knowledge about faculty members and their working environments.   This helped the researcher to listen closely to faculty's voices when co-constructing meanings about play and learning within their individual experiences.

Data Collection

With an emphasis on providing opportunities for participants to be actively involved in sharing and co-creating their own personal meanings ascribed to play and learning, data included (a) demographic information about participants, (b) participants' written views on how children and adults learn, (c) transcripts and notes from semi-structured interviews, (d) participants' self-selected images about their beliefs on play and learning, (e) participants' written narratives about their teaching practices, (f) any additional data that participants' provided, and (g) a researcher journal.   Including various types of data was aimed at providing faculty's multiple and alternative ways to express and represent their thoughts and actions, which enhances the richness of the findings.

Methods used, the types of data collected and the process itself were intentionally selected to be in alignment with the research question and the framework through which the study was designed. The use of interviews, narratives and images to elicit the tacit worlds of individual's are practices that

the researcher was familiar with and has seen its potential benefits first hand. The methods and the process were also deemed to be well suited for the participants.

The research process involves a four-stage model, which includes an information gathering and recruitment stage, two semi-structured interviews, and a verification stage. An overview of the process is provided within Figure 3.

Stage 1: Participant recruitment and information gathering
Participant homework: Submit demographic information and views on how people learn
Submit two images that reflect views on play and learning

Stage 2: Semi structured photo elicitation interviews about faculty beliefs
Participant homework: Submit a short narrative of how put beliefs into practice in ECTE

Stage 3: Semi structured interviews about faculty practices

Stage 4: Follow up and verification

Figure 3. A four-stage model of data collection used within this study

This study's design was inspired by a three stage model used by Bennett et al. (1997) to explore preschool teachers' theories of play, their relationship to their classroom practice, as well as mediating factors. Bennett et al.'s model included having nine teachers write narratives about how they include play in their practices, semi-structured individual interviews and group meetings about key themes, followed by stimulated reflection on action through video episodes of play in the classroom. This study was tailored to include elements of Bennett et al.'s method and process to create a multiple stage design in which each stage would build on the next to create multiple layers of understanding. Due to geographical constraints and sample size it was not plausible for this study to have faculty group interviews. In addition, as this study aimed to look at beliefs and practices, not to explore the relationships between beliefs and practices, self-reported narratives were used to elicit teaching practices in lieu of Bennett et al.'s stimulated reflection on action of classroom play episodes. An additional level was added to this study to include verification of the researcher's understandings, contributing to the trustworthiness of the findings as well as honoring the voices of the participants.

The current exploratory design was one that provided a predetermined outline with steps to follow. Within that outline, however, the design is one that allowed for flexibility when working with each individual participant. Each stage helped inform the next and stages were intentionally placed with time in between to provide opportunities for reflection for both the participants and the researcher. Detailed descriptions of what occurred within each stage will now be outlined.

Stage one: Participant recruitment and information gathering. This first stage involved collecting contact information from governments and post-secondary institutions, sending recruitment requests, as well as obtaining ethics approval and individuals' consent for participation.   Participants who had sent signed consent form via e-mail were asked to respond, in writing, to demographic questions and to questions about how they think children and adults learn. The e-mail request is in Appendix G and the questions can be found in Appendix H. Participants were asked to submit their responses via e-mail prior to the first interview. A date for the first interview was set and instructions for selecting and submitting images were communicated to participants (Appendix I). These instructions outlined that in preparation for the first interview, participants were asked, via e-mail, to select two images. The first image was to be one that they felt best depicted their beliefs about play and learning for children in ECEC settings. The other image was one that they felt best depicted their beliefs about play and learning for adult learners within post-secondary Early Childhood Teacher Education settings. Both images were also to be sent to the researcher prior to the first interview.

The inclusion of images was not only to help elicit faculty's beliefs but to help them reflect upon and create their own meanings in collaboration with the researcher. "In the conversation between researcher and the interviewee the meaning of the images can be explored and different interpretations elaborated upon" (Birkeland, 2013, p. 457). Images also provide a different form of representation as compared to written or verbal data.

The choice of images was auto driven in that participants were asked to choose their own images. The process of how participants chose their images was not seen as a focus for this particular project. Images could come from multiple sources such as photographs, cartoons, paintings, and text as long as the image could be sent via e-mail to the researcher prior to the first interview. The image could also be ones that they created themselves or found elsewhere. It was the participant's decision as to what they felt best depicted their beliefs about play and learning.

It was intentional not to provide a specific set of images to all participants. While providing the researcher insight into the worldview of the participant specific to their beliefs about play and learning for both children and adults, giving participants the option of creating or choosing their own image

allowed the freedom for participants to express their stories and beliefs in a way that best suited them as individuals. This is in line with the postmodern paradigm, which views meaning as subjective and places participants more as equal partners and collaborators in the research process. It is also aligned with the purpose of the study, which is to highlight the voices of those working in the field.

Stage two: Semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews about faculty beliefs. The second stage involved engaging in individual one hour semi-structured photo-elicitation based interviews by using faculty's self-chosen images to elicit their self-reported beliefs about play and learning in ECEC and ECTE. Due to geographical constraints, interviews were conducted either in person or through the use of technology (e-mails, telephone, Skype), which are considered viable mediums for successfully conducting qualitative research (Evans, Elford, & Wiggins 2008; Hanna, 2012; Holt, 2010). Participants were provided an option.   Within this study interviews with two individuals were done face-to-face, one via Skype and all others were over the telephone.   Participants were advised that an audio recorder was used to record the interview. They were informed when the audio recording was turned on and off.

The photo elicited semi-structured interview began with introductions, a summary of what would take place within the hour, as well as time for any question the participant may have in regard to the project or for the researcher. To help build rapport and help individuals feel a bit more at ease, prior to discussing their selected images, the researcher thanked the individual for sending along the demographic information, clarified details provided or asked some additional information about the individual, such as their interest in ECEC or how they got involved in teaching at the post-secondary level. Individuals were then asked to talk about their first image that was to depict their beliefs about play and learning. "*Tell me about the picture*" was used as the opening question about the both images.

The interview protocol can be found in Appendix I. Questions for the interview were created based on information from literature on play and teaching and learning in higher education in combination with the researchers' knowledge from professional experience as a daycare educator, drama therapist and instructor in post-secondary settings. An additional question arose during one of the first interviews, which was "*Do you see a difference between play and playfulness or play and playful practice?*" It was deemed to potentially provide additional insight into faculty's beliefs and practices in terms of play and learning and thus the question was asked to other participants. While an interview protocol was in place, questions were guided by the images. During the interviews, when applicable, prompts were used to clarify individuals' beliefs about play and its relationship with learning. Questions within each interview were geared to be in line with the images and what the individuals were saying. It

was ensured that there was time to discuss each image. Participants at the end of the interview were then asked if they had any additional comments they would like to add.

It was mentioned at the end of the first interview that there would be a follow-up interview and that participants would be asked to send along a short narrative (as long as they like, and in whatever format they prefer) prior to the next interview. The instructions were to reflect on what was discussed during the first interview and write about how they put their beliefs about play and learning into practice when teaching preservice educators. This was said verbally but was also sent in a follow-up e-mail to set a date for the next interview (Appendix J). It was requested that the narrative be sent along with any additional information (course outlines, assignment descriptions, resources, and photographs) that they would like to share to help illustrate their practices, if interested in doing so.   Submission of additional data was optional.

The inclusion of a written narrative of how faculty felt they put their beliefs into practice was aimed to promote a deeper understanding of particular aspects of their teaching practices. Narratives were included to provide an alternative form of data representation while adding to the richness of conversations and layers of data collected.   It was also a reflective tool for participants to reflect on their play beliefs and related practices as well as articulate them in writing, which then helped provide a foundation for further dialogue with the researcher.

Prior to the second interview, the researcher transcribed the first interview verbatim, which helped bring the researcher close to the data (Halcolm & Davidson, 2006). A Research Assistant was hired to check 25% of the first interviews transcribed by the researcher.   Transcripts were verified from the original audio recording, which is recommended in order to check for errors and ensure accuracy (Fasick, 2001; Poland, 1995).   All individual participant data collected up to that point, including the interview transcript, was reviewed in preparation for the next interview.

This initial phase of analysis was done intuitively as it was believed that the researcher should be familiar with the conversations that had taken place, details about the individual, as well as formulate meanings and follow-up questions. The process continued to be an inductive and iterative one. It allowed each stage to inform the next and helped build the foundations of understanding. Throughout the process, the researcher was able to clarify participants' meanings that were being created through the interview.

Stage three: Exploring faculty practices. The third stage involved engaging in hour long individual semi-structured interviews based on faculty's practices used to implement their beliefs.

Participants were also asked about factors that support or hinder putting their beliefs into practice along with recommendations on faculty professional development initiatives specific to play and learning.

The interviews began with a quick greeting as well as a chance to ask any questions about the process. Participants were advised that an audio recorder was used to record the interview. They were informed when the audio recording was turned on and off. Guiding questions for the second semi-structured interview were based on both the interview protocol (Appendix K), as well as questions that were noted as the researcher reviewed data collected for each individual. The interview ended with details about what would happen next. This included informing participants that the researcher would be analyzing data but would not share any information until checking back with them for verification.

Stage four: Follow-up and verification. The fourth stage involved having the second interviews transcribed. All but one interview were sent to a third party transcription service in Canada via e-mail with no identifying characteristics of participants and their home institutions. These transcriptions were cross checked for errors by the researcher from the original audio recording. The researcher transcribed one interview as the institutions' ethics requirements stated that audio data could not be sent to a third party due to concerns about confidentiality.

During this stage, participant data, including demographic information, images, narratives, interview transcripts, and any additional information or documents sent, were uploaded into a coding software (MAXQDA 11) for safekeeping and further analysis. All data for each individual were analyzed and written up by the researcher, resulting in a written narrative for each individual case. An overview of information that was included in these narratives is in Appendix L. Participants in this stage were specifically sent a description summary of the researchers' understandings via e-mail. Participants were asked to verify and edit, if necessary. They were also provided a choice of disclosure for writing and dissemination purposes (Appendix M). Their responses were sent via e-mail and the researcher advised participants that they would be provided a copy of the findings once the project was completed.

Researcher journal. Throughout all stages of the research, a journal was used to help the researcher be explicit about her own beliefs and assumptions as well as to note observations and memos throughout the process. As Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state, "there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual" (p. 24). In exploring participants' meanings the researcher is engaged in an interpretative activity and thus "the researcher's pre-existing knowledge and conceptions are therefore actively implicated in the analytic process as the researcher tries to describe and account for the participants' experience" (Lyons, 2007, p. 162).

The researcher was aware of her active role in trying to understand participants' experiences as well as in making decisions when reporting faculty members' stories. With this in mind, it was deemed important to be self-aware, reflective and transparent throughout the process.

> The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in
> to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be
> aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to
> understand. (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 123)

Researchers' reflections are included in the last chapter within this dissertation.

Data Analysis

There is more than one way to approach analysis (Lyons & Cole, 2007), and various methods can be used to best generate answers needed (Saldaňa, 2013). Incorporating collaboration between participants and the researcher to best meet the goals, answer the research question(s), as well as fit within the underlying framework of the study, a multilayered three-step approach to analysis was conducted both manually as well as with the help of computer data analysis software (MAXQDA 11). In terms of finding an ideal method Braun and Clarke (2006) state "what is important is that the theoretical framework and methods match what the researcher wants to know, and that they acknowledge these decisions, and recognize them *as* decisions" (p. 8). Details are thus being made explicit about what the analysis consisted of, why and the steps taken within the process.

The analytic process was one guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and thematic analysis. Narratives were also used within the analysis to help with data verification. Aligned with the approach used in IPA, the focus was to respect individual faculty members' subjective meanings prior to unveiling and reporting broader themes for the group of Canadian faculty participating in the study. "Restorying," a method used in narrative research (Creswell, 2008), was used to create narratives of each individual case, which were verified by participants. Verified data provided the basis for a thematic analysis for the group. Analysis did not attempt to achieve one truth. Rather, staying close to individuals' accounts, the analysis embraced multiplicity in the views and practices shared when reporting themes and patterns identified across all cases.

Analysis occurred throughout all stages of data collection and both the researcher and participants were involved in the process. Each faculty member was viewed as an expert in terms of their own beliefs and teaching experiences and thus participants' voices were actively involved in creating and clarifying meaning. The process "…recognizes the role of the informant not only as a data resource, but also as a resource of analysis" (Jenkings et al., 2008, Analysis in Photo-elicitation section,

para 3.). It is based on participants' contributions to the analysis that the researcher was able to conduct an analysis across all cases. Collaboration aided with clarification of the researchers' understandings of individuals' meanings, and also helped to report closer representations of participants' beliefs and practices.   In recognizing the active role of the researcher in analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researcher was engaged throughout the process in reflexive dialogue while thoughts, and observations, as well as emergent codes and patterns were noted.

"If qualitative research is to yield meaningful and useful results, it is imperative that the material under scrutiny is analysed in a methodical manner" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386). Data management, coding, developing, and refining themes as well as identifying patterns across the data were involved "…throughout the project, although with more emphasis on coding and data management at the beginning of a project and more emphasis on identification of patterns as data collection winds down and the investigator's focus turns to analysis" (Ayres, 2008, para. 4).   Analysis was an iterative process conducted through a three-step approach, which started with becoming familiar with the data and resulted in a rich and deep description of themes (King & Horrocks, 2010).

The three-step approach used in this study, outlined in Figure 4 illustrates how each step feeds into the next and that the individual's accounts are at the center of the analysis process. The steps include (a) becoming familiar with data and devising a coding framework, (b) restorying and verifying individual cases, and (c) conducting a thematic analysis across cases. Each will be discussed including details about how they were conducted. Terms used by Braun and Clarke (2006) help clarify types of data analyzed and will be used within the description. Data corpus includes all data collected. Within the data corpus, a data set includes chosen data to be analyzed, a data item is an individual piece of data collected, and a data extract is individual coded chunks of data within a data item.
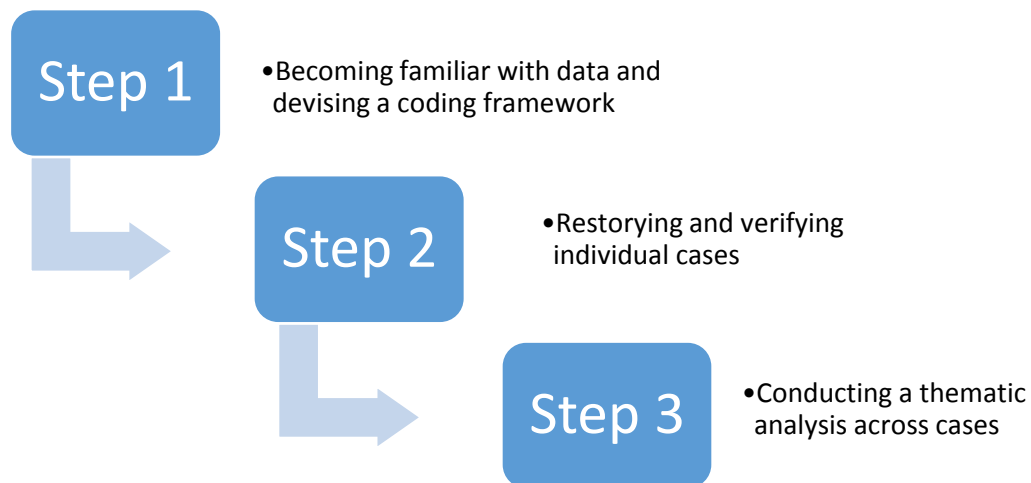
Figure 4. A three-step approach to data analysis used within this study.

Step one: Becoming familiar with data and devising a coding framework. The first step of data analysis in the study occurred during data collection. It was a recursive process integrated within the research design that allowed data to be reviewed and reflected upon before, during and after information from participants was shared. This first step allowed the researcher to become familiar with all data as well as how each individual's data set fit within the data corpus. Throughout the process it contributed to the development of a coding framework, which was then used for data reduction leading to identifying data extracts and themes during the later steps.

Prior to each interview data were submitted to the researcher. The content of each data item was reviewed and reflections contributed to conversations that occurred in the interviews with each participant. In preparation for the first interview, demographic information, responses to questions about how people learn, and images were reviewed. Prior to the second interview for each participant the first interview was transcribed by the researcher. As Davidson (2006) writes:

> Logically, it may be beneficial for researchers to transcribe their own interview data, given that they have first-hand knowledge from their involvement in the interview process, expertise in the interview subject, and the advantage of having participated in both verbal and nonverbal exchanges with the participants. (p. 40)

Transcription by the researcher allowed for the opportunity to become familiar with each participants' interview as a data item, as well as allowed for observation of patterns that were emerging across data items and data sets. "A verbatim record of the interview is clearly beneficial in facilitating data analysis by bringing researchers closer to their data" (Halcolm & Davidson, 2006, p. 40). The transcript for the first interview was reviewed along with the participants' narrative in preparation for the second interview. The first step allowed the researcher to become familiar with data and take note of initial emergent patterns within and across individual data items and data sets. This occurred between interviews and during interviews.

The interviews involved interpretative acts on part of the researcher and participants' actual accounts (Smith & Eatough, 2007). During the interviews themselves, the researcher was engaged in continuous reflection about the information that was emerging and how it related to the research question(s). The researcher was attempting to address emergent patterns while making analytic choices as to which direction to take the interview with each participant. While the content of images and narratives as data items provided information taken into account for analysis, the meaning attributed to the data by participants during interviews was imperative. Through the use of images and photo-elicitation interviews participants acted as active collaborators by selecting and sharing images

thus contributing to both data collection and the initial stages of analysis (Jenkings et al., 2008). "Respondents, by attending to the photographs taken and understanding what analysis is and is not captured, can engage actively in the research, complete gaps in the research proactively, and participate in the progress as 'co-researchers'" (Jenkings et al., 2008, Analysis in Photo-elicitation section, para. 6). Participants' discussions of their practices in relation to their narratives also acted in a similar manner.

Initial analysis during data collection did not occur in a linear process. It was an interpretative and collaborative act that helped the researcher becoming familiar with the content of data items, individual data sets, and the data corpus. The process also aided in the development of emergent codes that became a part of the coding framework that was used within the next two steps of the analysis.

"Codes may be developed prior to data collection or may emerge inductively through the coding process" (Benaquisto, 2008, para. 1). Both theoretical and inductive codes were used for the purposes of making sense of data, data reduction and identifying patterns to report within the findings. From the onset of the study topics derived from the literature on play, play and learning, teaching and learning in higher education, and the researchers' professional practice were used to frame the questions and prompts posed to participant. Tied closely to what a researcher wanted to know in line with the goals and interests of the research study (Ayres, 2008; Benaquisto, 2008), these topics served as the basis of a coding framework within this study, which was used to guide data collection as well as manage, reduce and extract data for analysis.

Coding is about thinking and thus a coding framework should not be fixed and should not include too many codes (Saldaňa, 2013), which may lead to a "blinkered" approach to analysis (King & Horrocks, 2010). King and Horrocks also suggest that there needs to be freedom for both application and modification in which codes are added, redefined, merged, or deleted. During the first step of analysis a coding framework was developed keeping in mind preconceived codes, which are often referred to as a priori codes (King & Horrocks, 2010), or provisional codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While being alert to new possible concepts and ideas other codes emerged through stages of data collection as the researcher became familiar with the data and thus added or redefined codes, as deemed appropriate. The coding framework is outlined in Appendix N. It includes overarching thematic categories with codes that were identified through data collection as well as a priori codes.

MAXQDA 11 was a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software used to help manage, organize, retrieve and help think about the data. After data collection was complete and transcripts from both interviews were verified, all data was uploaded into the MAXQDA 11 computer coding and analysis software. It was used to help the researcher become familiar with the data and was considered an

effective tool that allowed efficient searching, retrieving, and exporting data, particularly with the extensive amount of data collected for all 19 participants. "Coding data by attaching code labels to segments of data, such as a section of a transcript or a part of an image, is a basic facility of code-and-retrieve QDA software" (Seale & Rivas, 2012, p. 429). Once all participant data were uploaded, all data items from 5 random individual cases were coded using MAXQDA 11. Open coding was used. This helped the researcher become familiar with the software, data, as well as verify the usefulness of the coding framework. No changes to the coding framework were made prior to engaging in Step 2. It was noted that additional information was identified within data corpus that spoke to the research project itself in terms of the methodology and the relevance of the study in participants' lives. This was then included as a topic to explore within third step of analysis.

      Step two: Restorying and verifying individual cases. "Restorying is the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework" (Creswell, 2006, p. 56). The coding framework from Step One provided the foundation for Step Two. It provided the structure for how information was extracted within each individual's data set as well as provided the template for how each narrative was organized and restoried by the researcher in a written narrative that participants could then verify.

      Data extracts for each individual were identified for each code within the coding framework. This was done manually. In an attempt to gain a holistic perspective for each individual, data items for each participant were first viewed in the same order as they were received within data collection. Demographic information and written responses about how people learn were then reread and summarized. Transcripts were reread and codes and sub-codes from the coding framework were noted in the margins of each data item, where applicable. Data extracts for each code were then examined in detail and summarized to provide an overview of the participant's beliefs, practices, perceived influential factors as well as recommendation for faculty professional development. Images and narratives were reviewed to see if they added or contradicted any information specific to the individual's account. Once the researcher felt that all information had been extracted and restoried in an accurate manner, the understandings were written up, resulting in 19 different individual narratives. Thematic categories from the original coding framework were used as headings and in vivo quotes in participants' own words from interview transcripts were included.

      Each individuals' narrative was sent to the respective participant for their own verification. Once verification was received by the researcher, any changes required were made to the narrative. The verified data from each participant was then uploaded into the MAXQDA 11 software and was used for a thematic analysis across all 19 cases.

Step three: Conducting a thematic analysis across cases. "Thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 15). Prior to engaging in thematic analysis of all verified data (*N*=19) as a data set, all participant demographic data were collated and written up. Observations were also made on the images submitted by all participants. Comments were made on the types of images submitted as well as content related observations. The researcher used the codes within the coding framework under '*Beliefs about play'* to help guide her observations. A description of what was happening in the picture, the space and materials in the image, who was in the image, as well as overall affective impressions were noted for (a) images of play and learning for children in ECEC, then (b) images of play and learning for adults in ECTE settings. A summary of observations was recorded and was later used to support or contradict findings that emerged within the thematic analysis as well as highlight the potential use of images as a tool to elicit and represent teacher beliefs.

"Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set" (Ayres, 2008, para. 1). It offers a set of guidelines for coding, identifying themes and patterns of meanings, as well as reporting important concepts from across a data set. While the approach to analysis used in this study was based on the foundations of IPA in that individual case accounts were the foundation of generating themes for the group, IPA is theoretically bounded. Thematic analysis is a tool in its own right yet it is not embedded within a particular theoretical position. "Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 5). Thematic analysis is an accessible method that is flexible to meet the needs of a particular research study (Braun & Clarke) and was deemed an appropriate method within the third step of analysis within this particular study.

The process of analysis conducted during this step was based on three broad stages of thematic analysis named by Attride-Stirling (2001), which include (a) reduction and breakdown of text, (b) exploration of text, and (c) integration of the exploration. The author states how these stages are noted to include steps that are common methods used within qualitative analysis. Each stage involves a deeper level of abstraction in which there is progress from descriptive to interpretative levels (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "Analysis involves a constant moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analyzing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 15). In moving from describing patterns to theorizing about the significance of

overarching patterns, there is continued consideration as to the relevance of the data to the research question(s), the data set as a whole and the relationship between categories.

Using MAXQDA 11, verified data for all participants was first coded into meaningful and manageable segments to identity parts likely to help answer the study's research question(s) (Ayres, 2008). Overarching thematic categories from the original coding framework were used for this purpose in reducing and breaking down the text. Extracts from all participants were retrieved, printed and were read in their entirety for each thematic category. Memos were noted in terms of emerging concepts as well as the relevance of existing codes from the coding framework. The researcher was looking specifically to verify the existing codes' usefulness in identifying patterns in the data, how they overlap, how they may be refined and any additional codes that may be identified.

Revised codes were labelled and used to further explore the text within the data set. The data set for all 19 cases was then coded in MAXQDA 11 using the revised codes. Text was retrieved, printed and inspected in more detail to establish what participants were really saying within each thematic category. In the process of moving from codes to broader themes, the detailed inspection of the text aided in generating, reworking and clustering similar ideas. Through this inductive analysis process themes were also named.

As King and Horrocks (2010) indicate, themes do not simply emerge from data. "It always involves the researcher making choices about what to include, what to discard and how to interpret participants' words" (p. 149). Researcher's judgment was involved in making decisions as to what counts as a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a theme is a patterned meaning in a data set (Braun & Clarke), and "…the term 'theme' implies some degree of repetition…" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 149), a theme was created based on similar words phrases or ideas recurring from several participants that were then clustered and named. The recurrence was not determined based on quantitative frequency measures. Rather, it was based on the importance of the patterns in relation to the research question(s). As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, there are no hard and fast rules or right or wrong answers in the interpretative act of generating themes, as long as choices made are consistent. The researcher aimed for consistency in the manner through which themes and sub-themes were identified. Themes and subthemes created and labelled within this step are outlined in Appendix O. After the themes were generated, full rereading of the transcripts was conducted to verify that (a) themes were accurate and grounded in participants' accounts, and (b) nothing was missed. Images were also reviewed to triangulate findings.

"In all versions of thematic analyses, the researcher is required not only to produce a list of themes but also organize those themes in a way that reflects how they are conceptualized to relate to each other" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 150). The last step of analysis involves the integration of the themes to help illustrate how the themes fit together for the research question(s) and how they will be presented.   As the aim of the project was to highlight ECTE faculty's voices, the findings are presented in a narrative that includes participants' in vivo quotes and example images. Figures are also included to help show relationship between main themes that were identified.

Ethical Considerations

In alignment with the humanness of research, various ethical considerations were accounted for throughout the research process. First, prior to participant recruitment ethics approval was granted at Concordia University to engage in research with human participants. The study was deemed minimal risk. Ethics clearance was also required through individual post-secondary Research Ethics Boards (REB) at various post-secondary institutions before communicating with faculty and beginning the research process.

Ethics application policies and requirements differed based on each post-secondary institution. Ethics applications were sent in an attempt to receive approval to engage in the project with faculty members in Early Childhood Teacher Education programs across Canada. With 19 participants representing 13 post-secondary institutions, in addition to ethics approval at Concordia University nine ethics applications for individual institution REBs were required. Concordia University ethics approval was accepted by the other four institutions.   In addition, five other institutional Review Ethics Boards requested applications but these applications were terminated as no faculty members from those settings volunteered to participate in the project.

During the application process minimal changes to the original application and supporting documentation were required, if any. One institution required both the researcher and the researcher's supervisor to take an online tutorial on ethics and required an individual at the setting to oversee the project as part of the application. Turnaround time for ethics applications from time the application was submitted to final approval ranged between 8 to 43 days. The project was granted ethics approval by all institutions and when required all ongoing annual renewal procedures were adhered to appropriately.

Participants submitted signed consent forms prior to the project and they were informed that they had the freedom to choose to participate and were free to withdraw at any time. They were also asked to choose their preference in terms of disclosing their identity after verifying the narrative of researchers' understandings, if consent was permitted by their institutional Research Ethics Board.

Narratives included some quotations taken directly from the interview transcripts and participants were informed that additional quotes may be used. Participating faculty members are recognized within the "*Acknowledgements*" section of the dissertation using their choice of first name, full name or pseudonym. For additional protection of their anonymity participants' names are not included along with quotes within this dissertation. Individuals were randomly given a number and within the following pages they are referred to as Participant 1, 2, 3, and so on. Information identifying institutions is not provided. There were no conflicts of interests between the researcher, the participants, and the institutions involved.

Ethical considerations were addressed in terms of use of images and use of course related data. The use of visual data raises additional issues of confidentiality and ethics (Clark-Ibáňez, 2004) and it is important to consider limiting the revelation of people's identities without consent (Ruto-Korir & Lubbe-De Beer, 2012).   Within this document, as the use of images to elicit teachers' beliefs is not commonly used as a method, as many images as possible are included in this dissertation. Selection and inclusion is based on (a) copyright considerations and (b) attempts to protect confidentiality of individuals. When participants were provided guidelines for selecting and submitting images, it was requested that individuals provide reference information for their images, and consent when applicable. They were informed that if reference information and permission was not provided the images would be used as a form of data collection but the images would not be shared with others.

Images are included if they are photographs belonging to the participant and permission for inclusion was received. Images from other sources, such as the Internet, are also included within the dissertation if reference information was available, and people's faces could be easily covered to protect their identities. Within the dissertation it is noted when permission for inclusion was received under the applicable Figure(s).

As the researcher was not aware of the originator of images from the Internet and other sources, as well as due to the number of images submitted, it was difficult and near impossible to receive copyright permission for all images for use within the dissertation. However, attempts were made to do so when possible.

Criteria from Concordia University's Copyright Guide were used to evaluate that the use of images in this particular case would fall under "Fair Dealing." "Fair dealing allows limited and non-commercial copying for the purposes of research, private study, education, parody, satire, criticism, review, and news reporting" (Concordia University, 2015, Copyright Basics Fair Dealing section, para. 1). Images were used as a key feature of the research process and their dissemination is for educational and

research purposes to help support and illustrate the study's findings as well as the usefulness of the method. Not all images collected are included and the resolution has been altered, when possible, to protect others from copying images for commercial purposes. Attempts thus have been made to ensure to use images in an ethical manner.

Additional course related data submitted by participants was used solely for the purposes of data collection and analysis. Data were not duplicated or shared with others in order to protect confidentiality and institutional policies.   Efforts were ongoing to ensure rights were protected of all involved.

Establishing Trustworthiness and Quality

In discussing how to choose a framework or a method to conduct qualitative research, Braun and Clarke (2006) state "what is important is that the theoretical framework and methods match what the researcher wants to know, and that they acknowledge these decisions, and recognise them *as* decisions" (p. 8). The researcher has made attempts to do so, thus contributing to the quality of the research.

Various additional steps were taken to help promote the trustworthiness and quality of the study. Lyons (2007) states the following:

> These have to do with ensuring the contexts in which the participants are located are adequately described, that the analytic process is presented in a transparent and detailed way, that there is a reflexive account of how the researcher's speaking position' might have influenced the research at its various stages and that interpretations are grounded in research data." (p. 169)

In addition to being transparent through detailed accounts as to what was done during the study in terms of its design, data collection and analysis, additional steps are deemed as important to maximize trustworthiness and to ensure that a study was conducted in a rigorous and credible manner (Hays & Singh, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).   As a qualitative research study, the objective was to interpret individuals' stories as accurately as possible while generating group themes that are grounded in the data resulting in a detailed description of findings.

The research design was intentionally created to promote alignment between theoretical underpinnings, epistemological framework, research questions, forms of data and data collection methods, and analysis as well as the study's main goals and purpose. The four-stage design provided time for prolonged engagement with the data while engaging in simultaneous data collection and analysis throughout the research process.   The design was also one that strategically included

opportunities for continued reflection throughout all stages and for the researcher to check understandings with participants at various stages in order to be able to interpret and report the participants' experiences as accurately as possible.

Verification is a strategy used by qualitative researchers to demonstrate the rigor of their work and should be addressed throughout the research process, not just at the end (McGinn, 2008). Verification was included within the study when ensuring the highest quality audio recordings for the interviews, as well as cross checking the accuracy and quality of a random sample of transcripts. Verification was also conducted throughout interviews to clarify understandings with participants. Individual participants were sent a narrative of the researcher's understandings about their beliefs and practices. Member checking was done to maximize the accuracy of the researchers' interpretation of the participants' meanings. Verified data was then used for further analysis of group themes. Transcripts were then all reread to verify themes that were identified.

The coding process was comprehensive. A coding framework was first developed, verified and adapted based on the data. Each data item was given attention, themes were checked within the original data set and data were interpreted to be presented within a narrative report using illustrative extracts. The study thus meets criteria deemed to evaluate good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Multiple types of data such as images, narratives and interviews, were included in order to help elicit meanings as well as represent different ways meanings have been created through the process. Multiple methods also provided participants an opportunity to have an active role in the research process and could help support the co-creation of their own meanings when discussing their beliefs and practices related to play and learning. Triangulation was thus implemented through the use of various data sources and data collection methods.

Throughout the project the research was proactive to be transparent and disclose the researcher's own conceptions and reflections. "At every point in our research…we inject a host of assumptions…without unpacking these assumptions and clarifying them, no one…can really divine what our research has been or what it is now saying" (Crotty, 1998, p. 17). Through the use of a journal and writing memos, the researcher tried to be aware of her beliefs and assumptions, which are outlined within the last chapter of this dissertation. The researcher also engaged in debriefing sessions with a colleague to brainstorm and check understandings throughout the project.

A study can be measured in terms of its originality in terms of insights gained and methodology used, as well as the scholarly and ethical treatment of participants. This particular study aims to

contribute to theory and practice and the findings may prove useful for researchers, scholars, faculty and ECTE programs. These elements are also included within this particular study, contributing to its quality.

Chapter Summary

This study's qualitative exploratory and descriptive design is one that has been influenced by and incorporates various methods. It honors the research questions, the researcher's views as well as considers suggestions and gaps stated within the literature. It was conducted while keeping ethical considerations into account. The design was one that was flexible and allowed the researcher and participants to engage in an iterative and reflective process that embraced complexity. Through the design, reflexivity and collaboration was required on the part of the researcher and participants to co-construct faculty member's beliefs and practices related to play and learning aligned with its core purpose, to highlight the voices of Canadian ECTE faculty. A three-step approach to data analysis incorporating elements of IPA, narrative, and thematic analysis was conducted to generate individual cases that were verified by participants prior to identifying group themes and how themes relate to best answer the research questions. Findings from the study will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings

This study's main question was: What are faculty's reported beliefs on play and learning and related teaching practices used with preservice educators within the context of accredited Canadian post-secondary Early Childhood Education (Diploma or Certificate) Teacher Education programs?   To help answer the main research question, as well as elicit information about further professional development five subsidiary questions were proposed. To reiterate, the subsidiary questions were as follows:

   (a) What are faculty's beliefs about play and learning for children in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings?

   (b) What are faculty's beliefs about play and learning for adults in Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programs?

   (c) What are faculty's reported practices within Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programs that reflect their personal conceptions of play and learning?

   (d) What are contextual factors that support or hinder implementation of faculty's beliefs about teaching and learning within their teaching practices within Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programs?

   (e) Would professional development initiatives geared specifically for faculty to learn about play and learning be recommended and if so, what might these professional development initiatives include?

These questions helped guide the study's design as well as data collection and analysis.

Within this chapter, findings from the analysis will be presented. Demographic information about participants will be presented followed by a general summary highlighting descriptive information about the images submitted by participating faculty members. Keeping in mind the main research question, findings will then be organized in terms of faculty's beliefs about play and learning for both children and adult learners (combining subsidiary questions a and b), faculty's practices related to their beliefs and influential factors (combining subsidiary questions c and d), as well as professional development initiatives (subsidiary question e).

Participants Demographic Information

There were 19 individuals who participated in the study.   All participants were female. Participants represented 13 post-secondary institutions within 6 different provinces and territories. A breakdown of participants from each province and territory is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3.

Number of Participants and Institutions for Each Province and Territory Involved in the Study

Province and Territory	Participants [a]	Post-secondary Institutions [b]
British Columbia	1	1
Alberta	3	2
Quebec	3	2
Ontario	10	6
New Brunswick	1	1
Yukon	1	1

[a] *N =19*
[b] *N= 13*

Age. Participants' ages ranged from between 26 and 61 years at the time of data collection, with a mean age of 47.4 years. Sixteen participants (84%) were between the ages of 40 and 59 years.

Professional title. Participants were asked to indicate their title within the ECE program in which they worked. Reported titles included Professor, Instructor, Faculty, Teacher, and Coordinator. Titles were dependent on the province or territory in which individuals were working, for example, Professor was a title used in Ontario. It is noted that 6 individuals (32%) indicated having some form of coordination role (Convener, Coordinator, Program Lead, Supervisor) in addition to their teaching role.

Education. The highest level of education held by participating faculty included a Diploma (5%), a Bachelor degree (11%), a Master's degree (73%), or a Master's/Ph.D. combined degree that was currently in progress (11%).   Areas of study within their reported education included Education, Psychology, Social Work, Physical Education, Drama in Education, as well as Speech and Language. While all participants held Diplomas or Degrees related to some form of early childhood education or Child and Youth Studies, 11% held Master's degrees in areas related to adult learning (Adult Education, College Teaching). Individuals noted additional courses and training (ABA, High/Scope, special needs training, ECE) and 16% had some form of Post Graduate Certificate/Diploma.

History of experience in ECEC. All participants indicated having had some form of experience working with children, including children with special needs. While it was not requested to report how many years of experience they had working with children, some participants reported having worked up to 20 years within the field of ECEC. Various positions reported include:

- Teacher (kindergarten/Grade 1/elementary, English Second Language)

- Support/Respite

- Educational Assistant or Educator

- Nanny

- Camp Counsellor

- Therapist (Developmental Therapist, Speech Language, ABA)

- Administrative role (Owner & Operator, Director, Coordinator, Manager)

- Consultant (to child care centers, families, school boards, municipality, ministries of education)

- Volunteer

- Facilitator

- Work with Associations of Early Childhood Educators

Experiences with children took place within various settings:

- Child care

- Family day homes

- Early intervention programs

- Community programs

- Camp

- Lab school

- Schools

- International programs

History of experience in post-secondary ECTE settings. Participants reported having worked anywhere between 2 and 36 years within post-secondary ECTE settings, with a majority (53%) having taught between 0-10 years, 26% between 10-20 years, 16% between 20-30 years and 5% between 30-40 years. The total years teaching included full time, part time and sessional work specific to ECTE programs. It included years having taught in institutions other than where participants were employed at the time of data collection, as well as included teaching within both Continuing Education, evening and day ECTE programs. Some individuals indicated having had experience teaching in programs other than ECTE within post-secondary settings, which was not included in the breakdown.

Courses taught. Faculty members were asked to list courses that they had taught or were teaching within their respective ECTE program at the time of data collection. Some examples of courses participants listed include those listed here. For a more complete list see Appendix P.

- Introduction to ECEC

- Child development

- Curriculum and programming (including courses on different curricular models)

- Learning environments

- Issues in ECEC

- Observation

- Reporting and Assessment

- Inclusive care, children with diverse abilities and exceptionalities

- Health, safety, nutrition

- Language, literature and literacy

- Creative expressions and arts (sound, movement, music, art) in ECE

- Child abuse

- Social justice

- Working with parents and families

- Professionalism and advocacy

Twenty six percent of the individuals reported teaching courses where play was explicitly noted in the title. Some participants also stated that their responsibilities included teaching and supervising students within practicums and field placements.

Factors that have influenced participants' beliefs and practices. While questions did not aim to generate information about factors that influenced participants' beliefs and practices, individuals mentioned how previous experiences influenced them. Participants indicated that education, training, research, past learning experiences with students, working with other educators, and having inspirational educators helped shape what they believe and what they do in practice. Faculty members mentioned how various theorists, researchers and scholars have influenced them. Those that were mentioned more than once included Vygotsky, Gardner, Piaget, Brofenbrenner and Malaguzzi. Others included Maslow, Erikson, David Elkind, Bev Boss, Magda Gerber, as well as Anna and Sigmund Freud.

In their responses, participants mentioned how their beliefs are continuously evolving. In terms of her beliefs about how children learn, a participant indicated "this is ever changing" (Participant 15). Another faculty member noted that her beliefs and practices took a long time to realize. "The phrase, 'children learn through play' was the mantra I learned in my training many years ago. However, actually understanding what this means and recognizing it as it is happening, took me many years to grasp" (Participant 6). Participants reported that they are very active in seeking out professional development opportunities to keep up-to-date in the field.

Images Depicting Faculty's Beliefs about Play and Learning

Prior to looking at the images as a source of data integrated within the interview process with each individual case, it was decided that the images themselves might act alone as a form of data in terms of faculty's general beliefs about play and learning. Data gathering included reviewing the images to provide insights about the image selection process itself and this may help inform as to the use of this particular method. By looking at all images together then looking separately at those specific to children and adults, the researcher made some general observations in terms of the types and content of the images faculty members' had submitted. Some general findings will be described leading to more specific.

Lists were developed based on (a) the types of images selected, (b) who, if anyone, was in the images, (c) what was happening within the images, (d) the type of environment and materials that were depicted in the images, and (e) overall impressions that the images elicited in the researcher. Taking account of copyright and ethical considerations, copies of some exemplar images were carefully selected for inclusion within this dissertation. A general description of the images will now be provided.

Types of images. A total of 38 images were submitted to depict faculty's beliefs about play and learning. There were 20 for children in ECEC and 18 for adult learners in ECTE settings. Other than one YouTube video, the remaining images were photographs or clip art. Images were taken from the Internet or were photographs selected from participants' own collection. Visualizations (drawings, paintings, collage) were not created by participants for the purposes of the project, although the option to do so was provided.   When submitting their images, some participants included written information about the image and support for why they had chosen it. This information was included within the analysis of interview data as to understand the meanings created by individual participants in terms of their beliefs.

Image content. Nine images involved text, two of which were only text, and the remaining had the text incorporated within the image either by the original creator or by the participant.   The text involved such things as quotes, descriptors, or words representing the participant's own philosophy. Twenty-three images included people, two were outdoor landscapes, two involved materials, one had an animal, and the other depicted five human senses. Exemplars of the different images are provided in Appendix Q.

Play and learning for children in ECEC settings. Out of the 20 images chosen by participants for their beliefs about play and learning for children, 85% had children in them. Children were in similar age or mixed aged groups (40%), in pairs (30%), or were alone (30%). In the images of children, children

were of different ages, including infants, toddlers, and pre-adolescents. Out of the 15% that did not include children, two did not include people at all, and the other involved cut outs of people. It was not determined if the cut outs were of children or adults. In the images of children, adults were present in 30% of them. They were either off to the side watching or were engaged with children (smiling, making silly faces, sharing, stimulating with materials) at the children's level.

All images except for three demonstrated children visibly engaged in doing something and yet no one was visibly talking. Visible actions include jumping, splashing, looking, touching, digging, crawling, riding, climbing, balancing, building, painting, feeling, measuring, moving, opening or closing, making, manipulating, and concentrating.   While not all images showed people's faces, individuals seemed to be content. No one in the images came across as sad, angry through their faces or body language.

Images depicted some form of outdoor (60%) or indoor (30%) environment while 10% of the images were displayed on a blank background.   Indoor environments appeared to include classrooms or home settings.   Materials in the environments included such items as natural materials (leaves, dirt, puddles, tree branches, gardens, rocks, car tires, and a ladybug), art materials (cardboard boxes, paper, ribbons, shovels, paints, wrench and tools, measuring tape, and goop), or toys (bike, sword, cups, train, fireman hats, doll houses, cars, and blocks).   Outdoor playground type equipment were present in two images.

The researcher noted that while only a few of the images included potential products (box castle, branch structure, painting, waterways), no specific goal or products were evident.   Words that came to the researcher's mind when looking at all the images submitted for children's play and learning included doing, messy, natural, engaged, concentrated, busy, unstructured, exploration, curiosity, discovery, creation, contemplation, and freedom.

Play and learning for adult learners in ECTE settings. Out of the 18 images submitted to depict participants' beliefs about play and learning for adult learners in ECTE settings, 11% were images of children, and 50% were of adults. The remaining were of landscape, an animal or were of text or materials. Within the images that included adults, 56% also included children. The text-based image also included information pertaining specifically to children.   Adults within the images with children were visibly engaged in observing, documenting, supporting and engaging in materials alongside children. Materials included such items as art supplies, toys, plants, food scraps or sand. Without children, adults were of various ages in groups, no images of adults alone or in pairs were submitted. Adults in groups were engaged in playing a game in class, or were visibly performing, demonstrating a

product or were posing for the photograph.   Materials included binders, notes, paper plates, burlap, blankets, or branches made into a specific structure.

Indoor environments, which all appeared to be classroom settings, were illustrated in 55% of the images while 28% percent were outdoors including forest settings, a sandbox, or a landscape. Three images (17%) were not depicted within a particular location.   Words that came to the researcher's mind when looking at all the images submitted for play and learning for adult learners included such things as structure, organized, stimulate, scaffold, perform, create, support, inspire, observe, and show.

What are Faculty's Beliefs about Play and Learning?

To reveal faculty's beliefs about play and learning, analyses were conducted on collected data that centered on (a) faculty's beliefs about how people learn and (b) faculty's beliefs about play. A summary of descriptive findings for each section will be provided followed by an overview of how they are integrated to highlight participants' beliefs about play and learning for both children and adult learners.

How people learn. As the current study was designed based on the premise that a potential relationship between play and learning exists, questions in terms of how children and how adults learn were posed prior to engaging in interviews specific to play and learning. It was not presumed that the written responses captured all information participants had to share about their views.
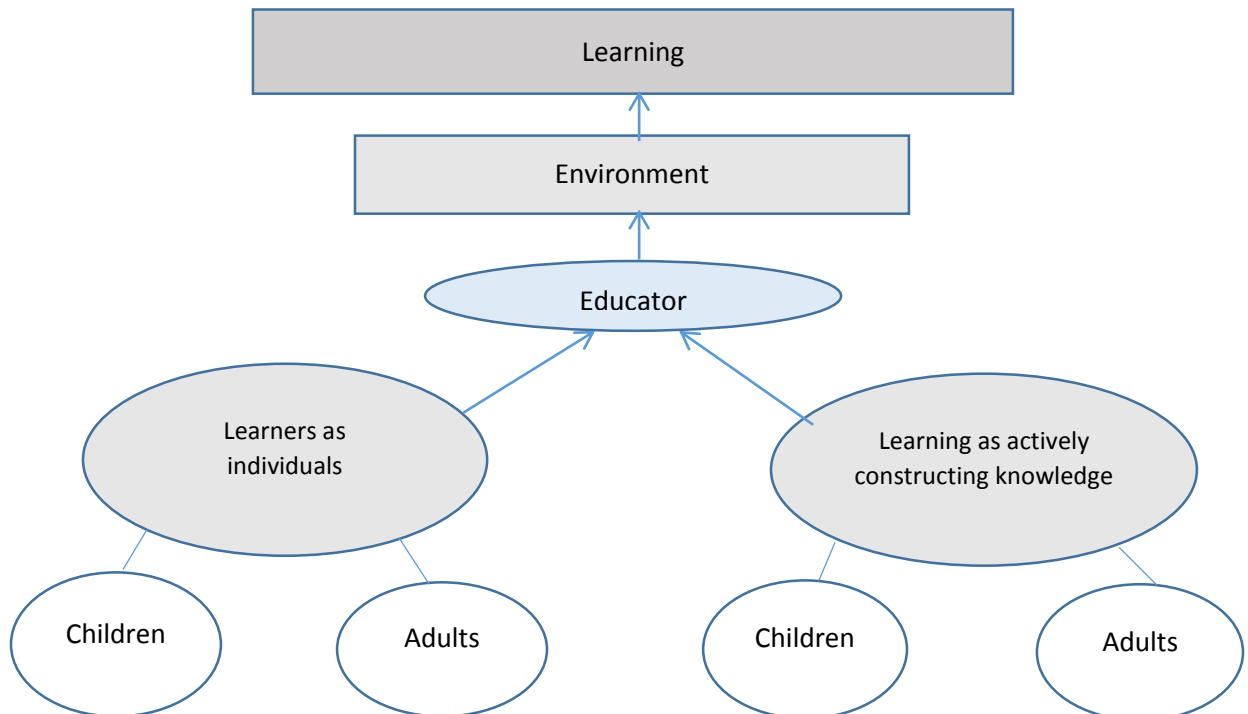
Figure 5. Identified themes for faculty's beliefs about how people learn.

Figure 5 illustrates the main findings. An analysis of all 19 participant's data on how people learn resulted in four core features, (a) learners as individuals, (b) learning as actively constructing knowledge, (c) the importance of the environment, and (d) the importance of an educator's role in learning as a central piece. More than a majority of participants expressed how their views about how people learn and the educator's role in helping students learn were similar for both children and adults within their written responses. While many participants indicated that they perceive that children and adults learn in similar ways after a detailed look at all participant data, differences were identified between children and adult learners and thus are delineated within the display and will each be described.

Learners as individuals. Participants expressed agreement that students, regardless of age, are individuals who have unique ways of learning, different learning styles, diverse abilities, and ways of expressing themselves. It was also noted that students are at different developmental levels and learn at their own pace.

Children as learners. Children were reported to be perceived as naturally curious. Additional terms used when describing children as learners included free, fearless, spontaneous, accommodating, naturally motivated, naturally trusting, and open within activities. They were noted to be willing to engage in experiences and enjoy figuring things out. Some individuals expressed how children learn through all experiences. "I see them learning by, through all their experiences" (Participant 3). "Children are always learning" (Participant 4).

Adults as learners. Adult learners are described as being at a different stage of development, in which they are self-regulated and can perform certain behaviours within educational settings, such as sitting for long periods of time, waiting their turn to speak and taking on roles.   Based on behaviors, adults were also noted to be more reserved and resistant than children. They were reported to come into education with more experience, skills and knowledge as well as engrained values and beliefs, which were perceived to impact how they learn.

When working with adult learners it is very important to understand who your learners are and what they bring to the classroom (views, experiences, personality etc.).   Adults in the college classroom have been around for at least 17-18 years and their experiences have shaped who they are, what they know and how they behave. In order to cater to them it is vital to know this information so that the classroom environment can be set up in a logical way. (Participant 13)

Learning as active construction of knowledge. Both children and adults were described as learning through the active construction of knowledge. They were reported to learn by "doing", by

62

being "active" or through "hands on" experiences, suggesting that most participants see that learning happens when learners are actively engaged in the learning process. It was indicated how participants see learning as building upon existing repertoire of knowledge and how it is something that individuals actively construct. Students should be perceived as active and competent and need to be actively engaged in order to learn. Individuals are perceived to learn through their minds, bodies, senses, through others, as well as hands on interactions with the environment. Students were also described to require motivation to learn, which can be promoted through choice and learning based on one's interests.

Children's learning. Activity related terms were more prevalent within answers specific to how children learn (active, hand on, manipulate, doing, explore, experimentation, questioning, whole body, senses, discovery, inquiry) along with physical interactions with materials, people and their real environments. When asked how children learn, it was also explicitly stated by over a half of the participants that "children learn through play". "That's how children learn, they are playing" (Participant 10).

Adults' learning. Adult learners were noted to learn through "hands on", "direct experiences", "practice" and "active involvement". While respondents indicated that learning can happen through body, heart and mind, information specific to adult learners' interaction with their physical environments was not mentioned nor were specific materials or tools. Practice and hands on experience for adults was noted to connect theory and practice "to make greater sense of it and to develop mastery" (Participant 18), to test ideas and problem solve. It was also stated how adult learners benefit from "hands on learning and practicing their skills for facilitating play skills for working with children" (Participant 2). Hands on experiences were also discussed in terms of being used in conjunction with other teaching methods when working with adults. "A combination of approaches including hands-on materials, small group discussions and direct instruction, lecture, can be useful to address the diverse learning needs and experiences of adult learners," (Participant 11). Play was not a term commonly used to describe how adults learn.

The learning environment. It was voiced how the learning environment, sometimes noted as "the third environment", plays a key role students' learning process. Respondents indicated how environments should be safe and inclusive, within which students feel valued, respected and comfortable. Students should feel as though they can explore, make mistakes and express themselves without judgement. Learning was also perceived to be a social experience, which happens with others

within the environment. Participants voiced how learning happens through discussions, observations, and co-constructions of knowledge with peers.

Learning environments for children. In addition to having safe environments to learn with others, open-ended materials were encouraged for young children, and the importance of the outdoors, nature, and natural (not bright) colors and materials was expressed. *"*I believe that the environment is the third teacher, so the early childhood setting must be thoughtfully planned and prepared. Aesthetics is critical and the use of open ended materials that allow for divergent thinking is a must" (Participant 6).

Learning environments for adults. Other than ensuring emotional safety so adult learners can feel comfortable in learning environments, specific details about the physical environment, including specific materials, were not addressed when speaking about how adults learn.

Educator. It was indicated how the educator plays a vital role to help foster learning. Their role is one that involves being attuned to who students are as individuals and where they are at as well as being responsive, flexible and creating environments that include the right tools and the right circumstances that foster students in actively constructing their own knowledge. This also involves creating safe environments that include varied learning experiences and provides appropriate modifications or accommodations within the environment when necessary. Creating safe environments was stated to help encourage all students to participate and help them feel that they can succeed. Educators' relationships that are meaningful and authentic are noted to be of particular value to help students learn. Participants expressed how an educator should be respectful, caring and be interested in students and help develop genuine and meaningful relationships as well as develop trust in the learning environment. In terms of students, Participant 15 states "having caring educators who are responsive to their needs and interests is critical in my mind."

Educators and children. The role of the educator when working with children was noted to be attuned to individual children's abilities and needs, particularly through observation, providing time and freedom as well as creating experiences that are varied and appropriate to the developmental level of the learner.

Educators and adults learners. An educator's role was reported to include being attuned to each student and creating experiences that are meaningful for adult learners. These experiences should include a variety of activities and delivery methods yet "developmentally appropriate" was not a term used when participants were speaking about adults. Participants indicate how educators working with adult learners need to help adult students make connections between the material being learned with what they already know, use additional information from other courses and their actual practices.

What is play? Beliefs about play and its perceived benefits were elicited when discussing images participants provided to depict their beliefs about play and learning for both children and adults. General descriptions of play were generated through examining data extracted from interview transcripts. Information from verified data highlighted faculty's perceptions in terms of (a) description of play, (b) types (b) environments for play, (c) materials involved in play, (d) educator's role in play, (e) perceived benefits of play, and (f) beliefs about play for children versus adult learners.
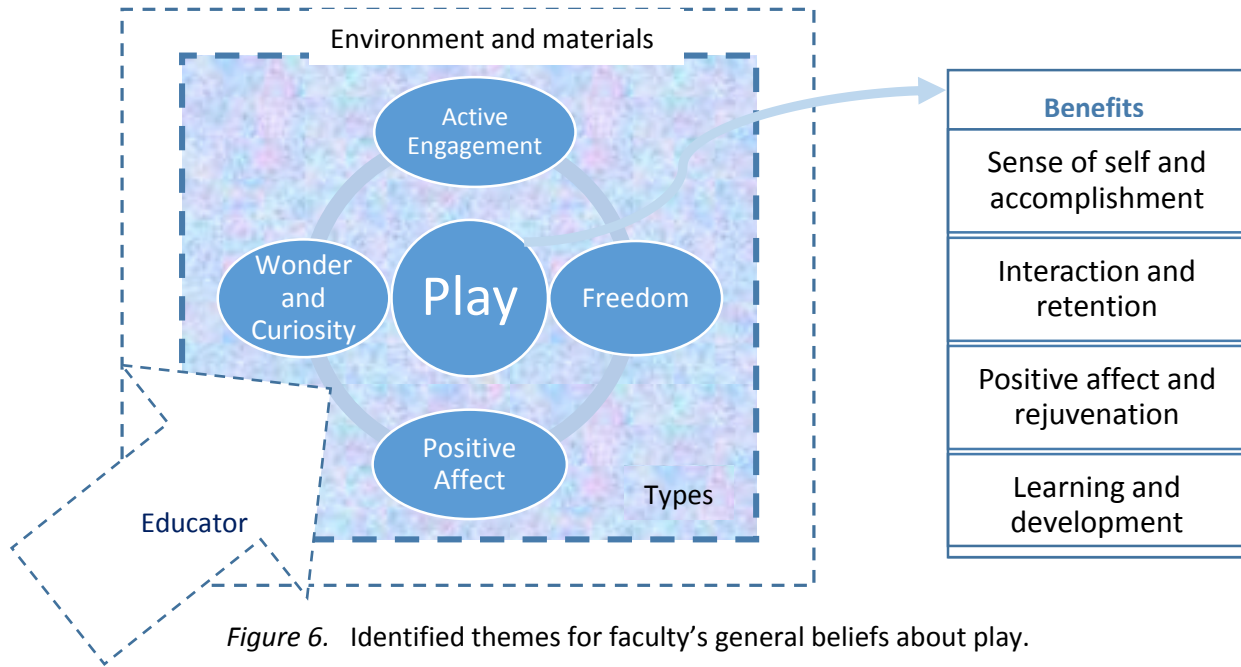
Figure 6. Identified themes for faculty's general beliefs about play.

Figure 6 illustrates the main findings. Overall, play was described through the articulation of key elements and various types. The environment and materials were perceived to help foster play. Participants articulated the importance of the educator in allowing play, creating the environment for play, as well as different roles they enact. Play was also reported to have many benefits. Detailed findings for each area will be provided with information derived from images participants submitted and exemplars, if applicable. Information specific to children and adults will then be discussed.

Descriptions of play. Respondents did not provide a unified, agreed upon definition of play. Each faculty member had a different description of what play is and what it involves. Participants were in agreement that play is more than a specific activity and that play can look different depending on the definition used or the people involved. It was not perceived to be specific to a setting and was considered to be more than the environment and the materials being used.   One participant indicated "so it's more of an attitude as compared to what you are actually doing" (Participant 1).

65

Play was described through the use of words, concepts and ideas. These were identified, clustered and named resulting in four key themes that highlighted what participants reported to be key characteristics of the play experience. As illustrated in Figure 6, these characteristics include (a) active engagement, (b) freedom, (c) positive affect, and (d) wonder and curiosity.

Active engagement. Faculty described play as involving interactions between an individual and their physical world, materials and other people. Respondents indicated that play encompasses active engagement, which involves the body and senses. "For me play is engagement" (Participant 18), and it was stated that play is "just getting right in there" (Participant 16). This engagement can be such a deep immersion in which individuals are "in the present moment", "in the zone", and far away from their thoughts and worries so much so that they may lose track of time. While individuals indicated that play can happen alone, social interaction is also a tenet of play.

Active engagement illustrated within images submitted by participants. For example, Figure 7 shows children of various ages actively immersing themselves with their full bodies in a piles of leaves. Figure 8 denotes complete concentration.   In her description of the image with the little girl, Participant 15 described "she spent a long time totally immersed in observing this insect. To me, observing this engagement, highlights a few key elements of what I believe play provides." Figure 9 is an example of children and adults interacting with materials and others in play.

Figure 7. Participant image illustrating active engagement.

Figure 8. Participant image illustrating engagement. Participant's photograph reprinted with permission.

66

Figure 9. Participant image illustrating interaction with materials and other people. Participant's photograph reprinted with permission.

Freedom. Freedom was depicted from the use of terms that imply self-direction, the freedom to choose and to do what you want with whatever you want. Participants noted how play has no structure, no rules nor any boundaries. It is messy, unscripted and should not be restricted. The messiness involved in play is depicted in Figure 10. It was also noted that play is not evaluated and there is no set agenda in play other than the agenda set by the individuals who are playing. "I think my definition of play is that it isn't controlled by someone else" (Participant 15). Within play individuals can be spontaneous. It is articulated that play suggests possibilities and it is where things do not have to make sense. It was apparent that faculty viewed openness and freedom as being inherent in play itself. When describing play, Participant 8 states "so, it, I guess the freedom to choose and to immerse yourself in the activity and I guess to have the sense of contentment or the sense of losing track of time".

Figure 10. Participant images depicting messiness and freedom.

Figure 11 illustrates additional ways in which some participants discussed freedom inherent in play. As one participant described the image of the garden landscape, she discussed how play depicts various levels, freedom and possibilities while another participant highlighted wonder and the suggestion of possibilities inherent in play, as illustrated in the figure of the young child playing with the house in the "fairy garden".

Figure 11. Participant images depicting freedom and possibilities. Both photographs belonged to participants are reprinted with permission.

Positive affect*.* Play was commonly discussed as being happy and joyful or something that people enjoy. "When I think of play I think of happiness" (Participant 3). Numerous participants also described play as "fun" suggesting that the experience involves some type of positive affect for it to be enjoyed. To depict her beliefs about play and learning for children, one participant sent along a video of a young child laughing an adult rips a piece of paper. A still frame image from the video is in Figure 12, which helps demonstrate positive affect.   In addition to positive emotions, a few individuals indicated that while play involves happiness or pure joy, it can also be challenging, frustrating, or involve processing negative experiences.
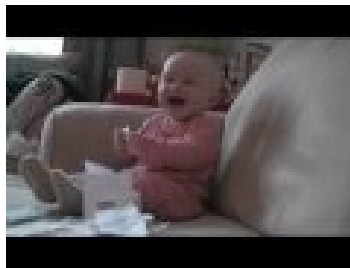
Figure 12. Participant image from a video illustrating positive affect.

Wonder and curiosity. Participants noted that play involves, awe, wonder and curiosity. Data also illustrated that play was noted to be associated with terms such as exploration, experimentation, inquiry, problem solving as well as imagination. Figure 13 displays two young children peeking through tires, which denotes curiosity and exploration. The participant, when discussing the image, reported how the image represented her beliefs that "play as the learning tool means self-discovery, exploration, experimentation, curiosity, supported independent problem-solving, and initiative" (Participant 14).

68

Figure 13. Participant image illustrating wonder and curiosity.

Participants' accounts indicated that various characteristics of play do not stand-alone. The nature of the relationship between these characteristics used to identify what is or what is not play was not clear. It was voiced how play is complex and multilayered, with multimodalities that all intersect with each other. A participant, submitted Figure 14, for example to depict her view of play and learning, which demonstrate the multiple elements of play.

RESPECT   LOVE   PATIENCE   FLEXIBILITY SCAFFOLD

Figure 14. Participant image depicting various senses involved in play and learning.

Olympic Rings was also a metaphor used by one participant to describe play and to illustrate how play involves all domains of development.

> I call play, I call them the Olympic rings because all of the, you know, social, emotional, and language and motor. They all, they are like the rings of the Olympics. You can put each of them in there. No one stands alone. They all connect and without one you don't have all the, you don't have complete play. (Participant 2)

Play, playful and playful practices. During one of the first interviews, a question arose in terms of defining play versus playful, playfulness, or playful practice. This question was then asked to the remainder of participants in hopes to potentially highlight individuals' beliefs about play in educational

settings by looking at potential differences and similarities between the terms. It was a difficult

question for many individuals. One participant, when figuring out her own beliefs and practices states "I

think that two words, I added three letters to the same word, and I got stuck. Play and playful"

(Participant 10). Table 4 reveals some distinctions made by participants between the terms play,

playful, playful practices and playfulness.

Table 4

Distinctions Made by Participants between Play, Playful and Playfulness

Play	Playful	Playful practice	Playfulness
sequenced	light, carefree, relaxed		
doing something (physical)	cognitive, emotional or personal expression		
act of playing			
	being playful, which can occur in situations that do not warrant or that are not set up for play (e.g. setting with set agenda – business meeting)		
Spontaneous		more planned or involves educator being engaged in the play can include element of play	
		creates structure, develops safety and trust to better spontaneously jump into play	
what person is doing			how person is acting
			term used to justify play for adults

Types of play. When describing their beliefs, some participants explicitly noted that there are

different types of play and diverse types of play were illustrated within the images participants had

submitted. Types noted included constructive, functional, solitary, parallel, associative, cooperative,

dramatic, outdoor, organized games, sensory, pretend, guided, teacher directed, and free play. Most

conversations revolved around the images participants provided. Various types of play could be

identified within the images, including sensorimotor (goop, finger paints), physical (building, jumping,

splashing), constructive (boxes, shelter, waterways), dramatic (sword, cape, firemen), and a game with

rules. Questions did not directly ask about different types, suggesting that information elicited may not

be an accurate reflection of faculty's perceptions of what they perceive to be specific types of play.

Play environments. Environments were deemed by participants to be important for play. It

was reported that spaces could provide invitations for people to play. Play spaces can be rich in

possibilities, which promote freedom and joy for individuals to engage in meaningful experiences in ways they would like and play genuinely. Respondents stated that for play, environments should be safe, both physically and emotionally. Spaces should be where individuals feel as though they belong, and should not feel as though they are being ridiculed or judged. "There is room, there is space for everybody" (Participant 16). Spaces should cater for all senses, be carefully planned, as well as be appropriate.

Many faculty members indicated how outdoor and natural environments were conducive to promoting the characteristics of play they described. A participant indicates that play is "perhaps easier in the outdoors. Maybe that environment encourages it more" (Participant 1). In discussing how the outdoors is less structured than a classroom, she goes on to state how "there's no rules, or boundaries about the materials out there. Umm so the children have more freedom, or the adults have more freedom. It's literally open, like the sky is literally the limit cause there is no ceiling." One individual noted how outdoor environments, including weather and natural materials, remove an element of control. "It's one of those things where everyday where you go outside will be new and different possibilities that you as an educator don't necessarily always know either what's going to happen," (Participant 15). There also seemed to be apparent support for the outdoors within the images submitted by participants, as 44% of all images submitted included outdoor environments.

Play materials. Participants had noted how materials may also promote hands on manipulation, exploration, freedom, and openness, as well as interactions with others, which are characteristics noted earlier when describing play. Natural and open-ended materials were included within participant's images for both children and adult learners.

Educators' role in play. Information specific to the educators' role in play was extracted and various themes arose in terms of what educators need to do, what particular roles they may play and what they need to know to promote play. Participants reported how, to promote and encourage play, educators are involved in (a) observing students' needs, (b) creating environments for play and learning, (c) allowing time and freedom for play, (d) taking on different roles depending on the time and the players' needs, (e) providing support, (f) acting as a model and advocate, and (g) being playful.

Perceived benefits of play. Throughout the interviews, no perceived negative benefits of play emerged. Many benefits of play were reported by faculty, which include (a) sense of self and competence, (b) interaction and retention, (c) positive affect and rejuvenation, and (d) learning and development.

Sense of self and competence. Faculty members voiced how play can create a sense of belonging and can promote self-discovery. It was reported that in play people can be who they want to be and can be who they really are, at whatever level they are at or in whatever way they need to. "In play people can 'let go' and let their inner spirit shine through" (Participant 5). Play is reported to allow individuals to follow their own interests, make their own goals and figure things out on their own. "Play is try and try and try until I'm no longer interested" (Participant 10).

Interaction and retention. It was reported how play promotes engagement with peers. As play involves the mind, body and interactions with others, it was expressed that play helps people remember information, which then may be transferred to other parts of their lives.

Positive affect and rejuvenation. Participants indicated how play promotes joy, release and relaxation. Play also is noted to provide clarity and focus.

Learning and development. Conversations with participants also elicited information as to their perceptions about what play allows. It was voiced by many how play is meaningful in many ways and it allows for growth in various domains. When discussing play it was stated how "Everything is there" (Participant 9).

Play was explicitly linked with learning. While specific outcomes and skills can be gained through play, it was noted that there might be other implicit things that are learned through play but are things that may not be easily observed or assessed. It is noted that play helps individuals look at the physical and social world in new ways and problem solve. It also suggests possibilities, creates wonder and magic as well as a zest for learning. As Participant 16 stated, "like play to me, is all about being curious and open."

Play is discussed not only in terms of what it does for individuals who are engaged in it, but also how it can help elicit information to others. For example, play is stated to allow educators to see what students are thinking and what they understand about the world, themselves and other people. When engaging in play, adults can act as a model to children and parents to illustrate its importance in life.

Beliefs about children's play versus play for adult learners. While the information above addresses general views about play among the group of faculty, specific details that were identified about faculty's beliefs about (a) children's play and (b) play with adult learners were separated and will now be discussed.

Children's play. In examining data extracts to derive at faculty's beliefs about play, it was observed that children's play was the participants' central reference point. Details about children's play, including play spaces, materials, educator's role, perceived benefits, and reported concerns about play

in the early years were more prominent than play for adults. This may have been due to the context of the study, which are ECTE post-secondary settings in which adult learners are being educated to work with young children. More details about play with adult learners in post-secondary settings emerged in faculty's written narratives and interview transcripts that were examined to address faculty's reported practices when teaching within ECTE programs, which is the next subsidiary research question to be answered.

Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity.
Kay Redfield Jamison

Figure 15. Participant image depicting the value of play for children.

It was apparent within participants' images and interviews that faculty perceived play to be of great value to children. "Play is the beginning of everything. We have no childhood without play" (Participant 18). Figure 15 is an exemplar image that supports this belief. Through play, children were described to have concrete gains in development within various domains. It was also expressed that play allows children to take ownership, feel competent as well as help them figure out what is happening in their lives.   Play was also explicitly linked with children's learning.

Participants believe that educators need to ensure that children's basic needs are met, allow time for children to play, as well as provide permission for freedom within play. Participant 11 stated that educators need to promote "playful, joyful experiences that allow children to make discoveries."   It was noted that children should be allowed to play and to experiment freely how they want to play based upon their own plans and goals that they have set for themselves. Educators thus need to let the child lead. This involves relinquishing control, being open to what happens and being willing to make mistakes.   This idea was supported by the images submitted by participants. Only 30% of the images submitted to depict faculty's beliefs about play and learning for children included adults and those adults did not appear to be taking over the children's play. In discussing her image Participant 3 stated "I didn't want the adult to be there just because I felt that we can be there, we can guide, we can give all that we can give but then we need to step back."

It is noted that educators should respond to students' needs and interests, scaffold, extend play, as well as promote wonder and curiosity. Educators were noted to be models for children and parents, illustrating the importance of play. It was expressed how educators should be playful and should be excited. Participant 8 stated the following:

> If we're not excited by life and living, how can we bring that to children. What messages do we give children if we're not excited? Interested, want to investigate, want to know more. Just want to maybe ... and maybe just want to muck around quite frankly.

The importance of carrying playfulness into adulthood was also demonstrated within another participant's image, submitted to depict her beliefs about play and learning for adult learners (Figure 16).

"The secret of genius is to carry the spirit of the child into old age, which means never losing your enthusiasm."
Aldous Huxley
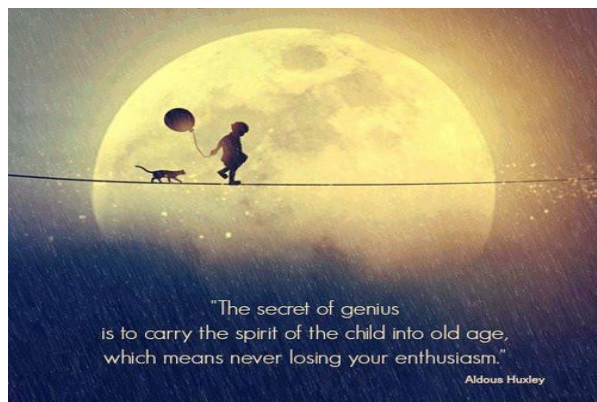
Figure 16. Participant image depicting the importance of not losing enthusiasm, playfulness and curiosity in adulthood.

Participants indicated how educators may take on different roles during children's play yet views differed as how to interact. While some faculty expressed that educators should not be directly involved in children's play others expressed how educators should sit, interact and engage in play at children's level. Another voiced how an educator should not feel as though they have to join in. Engagement in play was noted to be dependent on the appropriate time and what the child wanted. It was agreed that educators need to respect children and their understandings and should not provide too much direction, not disrupt or interrupt children's play and not predict what children are going to say or do.   To do so, participants indicated how educators require an understanding of child development, play and its value, as well as the role of the environment.

Faculty expressed how educators need to create safe environments that respond to children's interests. The importance of the outdoors, natural environment and materials were reported by many to be important elements to include when working with children. It was expressed that natural

environments both inside and outside are comforting for children and are areas that promote learning. In terms of outdoor spaces, it was expressed "so it should really be an extension of the classroom rather than an empty space to burn off energy" (Participant 19). Sixty percent of the images submitted to depict faculty's beliefs about play and learning for children depicted outdoor environments as compared to 28% of the images for adult learners. Nature was perceived to bring everything back to the roots of learning. During the interview with Participant 3, the following conversation took place:

Participant: So I wanted to give you that image because I can see that going back to roots, you know, going back to nature. I feel that that is the learning, going back to the fundamentals. With all these computers and gadgets and technology, beautiful. And I really want individuals and my children to delve into that because there is just so much potential out there. But I believe that we are forgetting. We are forgetting that children need to play, that they learn through the play. That they need to get out there. Ok, so they, they need to do, they need to explore.

Interviewer: Do and explore.

Participant: Yeah.

Within the environment it was expressed how educators need to provide appropriate materials. Materials should allow a multitude of possibilities without limited predetermined outcomes and how natural, loose and open-ended materials were particularly beneficial as compared to commercial and conventional toys. It was suggested that when working with children, a variety of materials should be provided, they should be changed regularly and should be carefully selected based on children's individual needs and interests.

Although there were no particular questions aimed to generate information specific to participants' concerns or additional considerations when talking about play, throughout the interviews various insights emerged. Participants' expressed concerns about the decline of both children's play and the implementation of play-based learning in education.

Numerous participants voiced how there is lack of freedom in children's play. It was reported how children's programs run on tight schedules and are over structured. While it is reported that there is a current push in the field to get children outside more, participants indicated that there is a lack of playground activity and that children are currently perceived to be overprotected. Risky and open ended play was perceived as being minimized due to concerns about safety. It was reported that dramatic cooperative play are not appreciated enough and are often discouraged due to their rough and

tumble or superhero components. The use of technology was another noted concern, but was only addressed by two participants.

Concerns were also raised in terms of educators being focused on predetermined goals and preparing children for academics.   Individuals expressed how social expectations and pressures are being downloaded onto children and that there are attempts to fit children into boxes. "I think when the teacher has to spend more time telling children what to do instead of listening to what the children are saying or doing or watching what they are doing then you have a problem" (Participant 18). It was voiced that there is concern about the harm in "schoolifying" children, by wanting children to have the right answers as well as having more rules imposed on educators, which creates more rules imposed on children. "It's rules imposed on me so that imposed on me so that I can do my job better but then I don't realize I am imposing rules on the children now just to meet the rules that I'm supposed to meet." (Participant 10)

An apparent contradiction was noted as participants described play-based approaches in education settings that involved using worksheets and activities with set end goals.   It was expressed how there is a focus on assessment and a focus on adult derived outcomes, even when open-ended materials are present. Rotating between tables set up with goal directed activities was specifically called out for not being play.   "I don't think there is anything playful about making children move in rotation from one table to another" (Participant 18). While there are concerns for lack of activity and interaction, "walking by a preschool room or a kindergarten classroom and seeing silent children sitting at desks with their heads down writing is a red flag for me" was stated by Participant 1 as she expressed her views as to the importance of play in ECEC settings and hope for play in school. "I hope that things start to shift in the school system that more play is incorporated into learning. But I think early childhood educators have a great responsibility to allow for that joyous playful learning in the early years and that can hopefully carry the children through" (Participant 6).

Play and adult learners. Participants expressed how play has value for adults, including benefits to adult learning. It was reported that play helps them let go of stress and laugh, as well as engage in discovery. It is also reported to have social benefits by helping students get to know each other, build relationships and build a sense of community.   It was acknowledged, however, that play is not commonly associated with adults and play for adults is not necessarily supported by society. "You know, play is expected to only happen then with children. You know, when I'm a child its okay to be free. It's okay to be free. It's okay to play. It's okay to manipulate materials….when you hit a certain age you're not supposed to play anymore" (Participant 12). It was suggested that play is something that can help

adults learn to engage with children, not something that adults do themselves to learn. Being with

children was articulated to provide adults permission to play.   This was observed within images

participants had submitted to depict their beliefs about play and learning for adult learners in ECTE.

Over half (56%) of the images that included adults also depicted children. In addition, text based images

for beliefs about adult learners included information specific to the need for children's play and the

need to keep the spirit of children well into adulthood.

Some participants clearly stated how play holds similar characteristics in adulthood as compared

to childhood, yet play looks a bit different or the process in which individuals engage in play differs

slightly. An example was provided as to how play in adulthood may be seen as baking pies as a type of

reconstruction of children playing in goop. When asked if adults could be playing in goop, as illustrated

in the picture Participant 8 submitted for her beliefs about play and learning for children, the following

conversation transpired:

Interviewer: Well and what would happen if we, in the first image, do you think you could

transpose adults into those little bodies, like put 2 adults playing in the goop?

Participant: (pause) Ahhhh, yeah, I think society would not necessarily support that but

maybe adults reconstruct that in their own homes by baking, making pies. You

know, sometimes as adults our play, we have goal directed, or we have

outcomes but the outcome but the process is a bit of play in all the, the making

of pies, quilting…

When discussing an image of children playing in puddles and mud, a participant raised how it may

become sexualized if the image depicted adults in mud instead, suggesting how play is looked at

differently in adulthood.

Within participants' descriptions it was expressed how adults are noted to place an importance

on goals and thus play becomes more goal directed.   Play was reported to be something where growth

can be determined by scores. Specific examples of adult play activities that were reported included

soccer and golf.   It is acknowledged how it is hard for adults to let go, be open to possibilities and not

work with a particular goal in mind.   Goal directed activities were observed in images of adults, in which

adults were visibly engaged in playing a type of structured game, demonstrating their achievements or

following a set plan in some way.

Participants had addressed concerns that adults do not play enough and that adults have

forgotten how to play. When talking about play it is suggested how "it's a process of life and I think

that's probably why so many adults end up being so unhappy as they get older because they forget how

to play" (Participant 14). Adults were reported to lose their curiosity and be directed away from play.

They become more concerned about what others will think, not looking foolish and not making

mistakes. Faculty members shared how adults also need to play, they need freedom to get out of their

structured and programmed lives as well as how important it is for adults not to lose that sense of

wonder. When discussing the content of Figure 16 (above) Participant 5 stated:

> Participant: What if I tight-roped across the moon or you know, that what that whole, again
>
> that wonder and curiosity that umm we sometimes don't listen to. But what if?
>
> What if we could do that?
>
> Interviewer: Right.
>
> Participant: And I think for adults that maybe that's what this images speaks to me about is
>
> that we can't lose that, we can't lose that sort of wonder. Yeah, I just really like
>
> that picture.

Overview of faculty's beliefs about play and learning. Findings related to how people learn as

well as their descriptions of play were further interpreted to potentially shed light on participant's views

as to play and learning, including insights into the nature of its relationship for children and adults.

These findings will now be combined to help answer the first two subsidiary questions that aim to reveal

faculty's beliefs about play and learning for children and adults.

It was apparent that participants view play as a tool, vehicle or medium through which both

children and adults learn and they viewed play as having a place in both ECEC and ECTE settings.

> I think that there are aspects of play that you can absolutely do in any classroom. I firmly
>
> believe that. I don't care if you're teaching a PhD class, whether you're teaching a first-year
>
> class, whether you're teaching high school, whether you're teaching grade two, whether you're
>
> teaching four and five year olds. There's no way that there shouldn't be elements of play in that
>
> classroom. (Participant 16)

Both learning and play have common features, including the role of the educator and the environment.

While taking into account the needs and interests of individual learners as well as the need for students

to actively construct knowledge, educators are responsible for creating safe and fruitful environments,

including the right conditions and materials in order for play and learning to occur. Play was perceived

to promote learning and development.   It was stated, "that learning cannot happen without play and

that play is joyful" (Participant 18).

Based on participant data, faculty voiced a connection between play and learning, however, the

nature of the relationship between play and learning within educational environments seemed to

change. This is illustrated in Figure 17.   Faculty's views indicated that whereas play and learning are deemed to overlap for children in ECEC settings, there is an apparent division between them for adult learners in ECTE.   A participant described the sequence of play and learning throughout life as "in the beginning, we play, play, play, learn, play, play, learn…. Play some more. Then we work, work, work, work, hoping to learn, learn, learn and then we hope to play and learn once again" (Participant 3).

External Factors
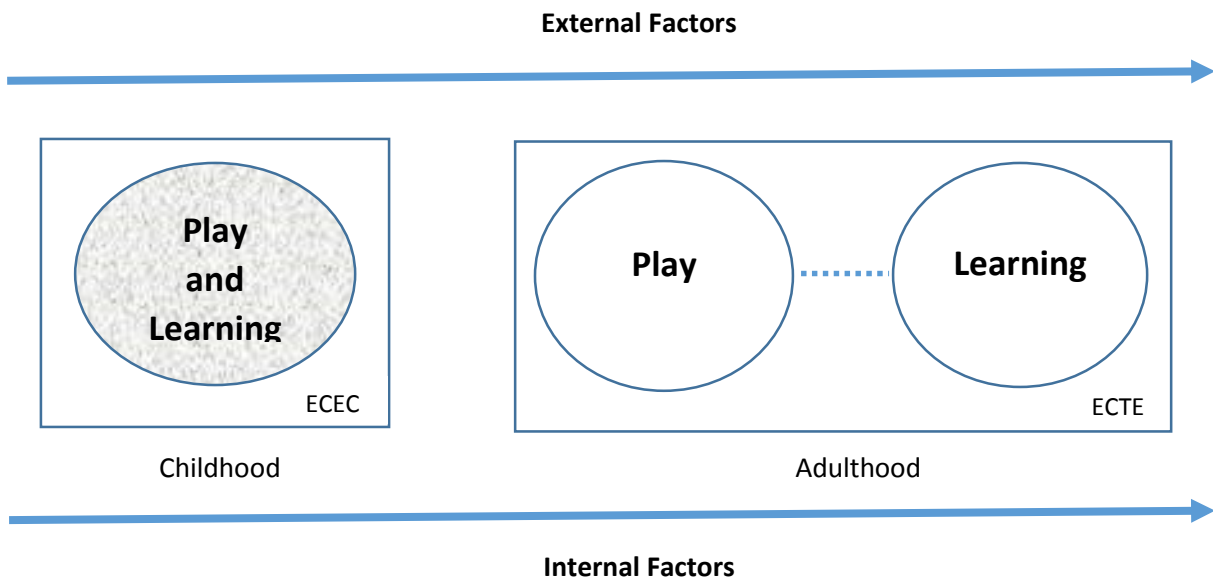
Internal Factors

Figure 17. A conceptual model that illustrates faculty's beliefs about play and learning in educational setting from childhood to adulthood as well as external and internal factors.

The shift of the relationship is perceived to be influenced by a combination of both internal and external factors that through time, impact ways in which play and learning intersect in educational settings. Internal factors include learner characteristics, beliefs and ways individuals behave in the world. External factors are influences from the environment. These include past experiences, societal values as well as elements specific to the setting itself.

Children as learners were perceived as naturally curious, trusting, spontaneous, willing, accommodating, and open to learning. The play and learning relationship was clearly conceptualized when participants were talking about children. Within collected written data about how people learn and faculty's descriptions of play within interviews, it was stated by 15 out of 19 participants (79%) that children learn through play.   Participants stated such things as "they're playing? That's what children do" (Participant 10), "I see the value of allowing children to play and that they are learning" (Participant 7), and "they absolutely learn while playing. They just don't set out to play in order to learn"

(Participant 1). Others had indicated that play allows children to create meaning in their world and that they learn through active interactions with peers, adults and their environments.   The following dialogue transpired between the researcher and Participant 14:

Participant: And they're, you know, children are constructing their own knowledge and they do that through discovery, and curiosity, and exploration, and experimenting, and making mistakes, and trying it over again, you know it's that whole nonjudgmental approach to learning.

Interviewer: Right. And are all those things encompassed in play?

Participant: Yep. In my mind they are.

While having meaningful and authentic relationships with educators, positive learning experiences were deemed to be ones that are fun and ones in which children have time and freedom to play and actively interact within safe environments that meet their interests and needs. The relationship between play and learning for children in ECEC settings was also evident in images submitted such as Figure 18. Faculty voiced their support for play and learning, particularly uninterrupted experiences where children are free to choose, engage and lead.

As compared to views that children learn mainly through active interactions with their environments, faculty's reported beliefs about adult learners centered on what adults are bringing to the learning environment, what adult learners need to learn or what they need to do within the learning process.   Adults' life experiences are seen to influence who they are and how they approach play and learning within post-secondary settings.
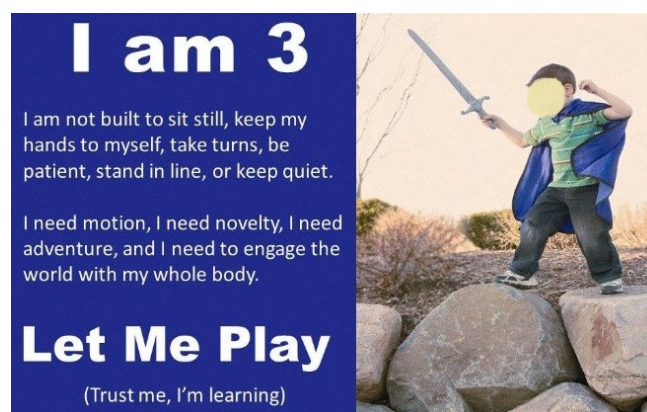
Figure 18. Participant image depicting play and learning for children.

When coming to post-secondary ECTE settings, students were perceived to bring their existing knowledge, skills, past experiences, and engrained values and beliefs to the learning environment.

Adults bring lived, personal experiences with them when they come into a classroom. I think it is important to recognize these experiences because we can help them link their learning to any past experience that is relevant to their learning. (Participant 10)

That participant also stated how *"adults learn differently because some have knowledge or experience on the subject matter already"* (Participant 10). Faculty discussed how some students have had negative past experiences within the education system. These detours were reported to make students feel unsuccessful at learning. "Unfortunately many adults have had negative experiences with school in the past and these negative experiences can certainly hinder their learning" (Participant 4). .

Adult learners in post-secondary ECTE settings were described as being reserved, resistant and concerned about being judged. They were perceived to need motivation, interest, engagement, and connections to material to learn. It was expressed that adult learners may need models and more prompts than children to engage and move forward in their learning. "Adults, we've become a little more reserved, I guess, so how we present things to kind of get, to hook the adult's curiosity is a little trickier, maybe?" (Participant 4). A participant notes what she perceives to happen between childhood and adulthood:

They [children] come at it for more of, a, a, not as fear based, not as worried about what people will think about it until they start to hear those words 'You're getting too dirty.' You know, 'Stop that', you know, 'Go play over here instead of over there' 'Do this instead of that' So then you stop listening to your inner voice and you start listening to those external voices. And then when you become an adult I think they're muddied up….the voices, you don't, you can't separate who is you and who is your internal spirit and drive…. and who is your playful child? You can't hear it anymore because it's so convoluted with everything else that has happened in your life. (Participant 5)

In terms of play, information about adult learners was not as prominent within the data as details about children's play, although it was expressed that faculty feel adults have seemed to have forgotten how to play, the value of it and how freeing it is. "I don't think enough adults actually set out to play" (Participant 1). Adults were viewed more likely to not give themselves permission to make mistakes or give themselves time to engage fully "in the zone". "That ability to play, as an adult, becomes somewhat buried or stifled by rules and responsibilities" (Participant 5). Play was also described as looking different for adults in the early years, with a transition towards being more goal oriented. It was expressed how working with children seems to remind adults of their own playfulness and provide adults permission to engage in play. Growing up in cultures in which play was not valued

81

was noted to affect how adults approach and engage in play, and thus may perceive its relationship with learning.

There appeared to be more of an element of structure or control in images submitted by participants to depict their beliefs about adult learners as compared to images submitted for children. The adult images did not connote as much messiness or fully body involvement and there was more inclusion of products or structured pieces. An example of this distinction is seen in Figure 19, which illustrates two images submitted to depict a participant's beliefs about play and learning for children and another for her beliefs about adult learners.   While children were engaged in action within the images submitted for children's play and learning, adults appeared more reserved, were engaged with children or were displaying, performing or posing for the camera.

Figure 19. Participant images illustrating some of the differences between play and learning for children and adult learners. Images have been altered to protect confidentiality.

In terms of play and adult learners in post-secondary settings, a participant stated "I think one of the things that happens, specifically when you teach post-secondary is that, it almost, play almost gets beaten out of them. As a result their natural sense of curiosity does" (Participant 16).   There is more of a distinction between play and learning in adulthood. "I think that when adults decide to play it's for the sake of playing, it's not to learn" (Participant 1).   When participants described how adults learn, they stated that they learn through active hands on and direct experiences or practice. "I think that really good learning falls out of the doing…and the opportunity to do" (Participant 4).   The term play was not explicitly used to describe how adults learn within the written data submitted prior to the interviews, however, when discussing their beliefs, there was agreement that in post-secondary ECTE settings play can act as a vehicle to help adults learn.   As compared to concrete gains in development for children, play for adult learners was perceived to help foster complex and profound thinking as well as help adults

understand play while developing appropriate knowledge and skills specific to the profession. "Adult learners must play in order to understand the value of play" (Participant 6).

In addition to individuals' characteristics and life experiences that may impact the divided relationship between play and learning in educational settings, societal views about play and learning may also be a factor. "I feel as though in society in general, society in general does not understand that play does lead to learning and development," (Participant 7). Faculty expressed concerns about children being too over programed and hurried with parents concerned about academic readiness and play not necessarily being implemented in schools. Faculty also addressed how society also perceives post-secondary education in a particular light. "And especially in the context of university, people want to, or they're told 'university is serious. You're coming and you're studying' so when you throw play at them they're like 'what? Like this is not within my realm of university'" (Participant 1).

Factors associated with the educational settings itself were noted. It was expressed how "all people learn through active experiences and play, however this looks different in the college classroom" and "there are a lot of similarities in my views there but at the same time they can't be same as exactly the same because the environments are so different" (Participant 19). Different rules and requirements were noted, including having more structured experiences and common goals to achieve. It was expressed how in ECEC settings theory guides the educators' practices to help children learn about their worlds while theory is taught within ECTE programs in combination with practice. It was indicated that there is more than one type of way to engage students in learning. "For adult learners, there is also time to sit and listen, time to reflect, which is not as prevalent in early childhood education settings," (Participant 19). It was voiced how it is difficult to create environments that promote open-ended self-chosen experiences as key features of play in post-secondary settings.

Through an analysis of participant data, general themes were identified and were then integrated to highlight faculty's beliefs about play and learning. Overall, participating faculty believed that play and learning are valuable for both children and adult learners in educational settings, yet the play and learning relationship shifts due to various factors. In this study ways in which faculty report putting these beliefs into practice was also explored, along with factors that are perceived to support or hinder the implementation of play and learning with adult learning in ECTE settings. Information aimed to answer the next question will now be provided.

What are Faculty's Self-Reported Practices and Factors that Influence Implementation in ECTE?

Within faculty's written narratives and interviews, all participants express how they use play or components of play in their teaching practices within their respected post-secondary ECTE setting. It

was expressed that play is important within the programs in which faculty work and participants indicated why play should be promoted when working with adult learners who are preparing to work with children. A summary of participants' stated reasons as to why play is important in ECTE will be provided prior to outlining details about faculty's self-reported practices, which reflect their beliefs about play and learning. This section will conclude by examining influential factors discussed in terms of implementation of faculty's beliefs about play and learning in their teaching in ECTE.

Faculty's views on the importance of play in ECTE settings. Participants viewed play as being very important in ECTE settings. Main themes identified reveal how participating faculty members see play in practice as beneficial to help preservice educators (a) understand children, (b) become comfortable and advocate for play as well as (c) benefit from play in their own lives.

Understanding children. Play was noted to be central to ECTE programs due to the importance of play in the lives of children. Participants indicated how integrating play within ECTE programs was perceived to help understand children as play is perceived to be how children learn. "Play is always present and they have to interpret it and try to understand it because that's what children do. And so I don't think that we can disassociate from play ever in an early childhood program. It would be inappropriate" (Participant 4).

Becoming comfortable and advocating for play. Faculty reported how students are enrolled in programs to learn how to work with children and that play is the foundation of why students are in the ECTE program in the first place. They noted that it is where students learn about play, develop skills to facilitate play with children, as well as become play advocates.

As early childhood educators are role models, it was reported how they should be comfortable with play. If not, children may pick up on those who are self-conscious and there may be additional ramifications. "Yeah we have to, especially in our field, like if we are teaching educators, then we have to break that shell, we have to get them comfortable with play and to feel the joy of play or they will *never* be comfortable allowing children with it. What may result is learning experiences that are restricted by rules, structure, and adults" (Participant 1).   It was also noted how it is important to promote wonder with adult learners in ECTE so they are open to possibilities. "I think that the minute anyone who's going to work with children stops being curious, they stop being curious in the classroom with kids" (Participant 16).

Participants also indicated how they hope that students within ECTE programs not only learn about play but also see the value of play and thus they will promote and advocate for the importance of play for both children and themselves. During the last year of the program, one participant noted how

she aims to "instill in my students that they have an obligation to share their knowledge and understanding of play as learning" (Participant 4).

   Play in the lives of early childhood educators. *As* a faculty member reported, play is not only for children. "We all need play" and that "Incorporating play into a post-secondary early childhood education classroom would be considered logical" (Participant 3). It was also expressed how play could also help benefit adult learners themselves.   Within ECTE settings "we're teaching human beings how to be human beings with children" (Participant 5).   It was stated that it is essential for students to learn who they are, understand their barriers and blockages while learning what they are doing with children.

   Faculty's self-reported practices. Faculty provided details in their narratives and interviews about how their beliefs about play and learning were reported to be implemented in ECTE settings as well as influential factors that may either support or hinder their beliefs being put into practice. In examining the data, it was identified that participants were in agreement that they implement play and learning with adult learners.

   Participants indicted such things as "in terms of ECE student learning I believe that learning through play is also the best practice" (Participant 4) and "I think play is threaded through everything we do" (Participant 10).   Another participant went on to express how:

   I think it's important if students are going to understand what inquiry is and understand the value of, you know, explore exploring with children that they have to experience it themselves because many of us have had academic experiences that are very different from that. And we often, I find that we often, the students often fall back on what their experience is. (Participant 18)

A few faculty also expressed how teaching was play to them. "Coming up with different ways to teach things it is kind of fun" (Participant 7), which another individual described how everything she does when teaching is play as teaching is what she loves.   All participants described examples of methods they use in their practices, including details about when they implement them.

   Examples of play.   Faculty discussed examples of strategies they use within their classes, which were seen as play. These include reading children's books and using humor, pictures, stories, videos, music as well as personal and real life examples. Other examples of play involved adult learners being engaged in various activities and experiences (a) in the classroom, (b) outside of class, (c) within student assignments, and (d) within experiences that involve children. A list of each type are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Examples of Play Related Teaching Methods Reportedly Used by Faculty

In the classroom	Outside the classroom	Assignments[a]	Children
Physical energizers Facilitate and observe play scenarios Engage with play stations or invitation centres Role play and simulations Mock interviews Debates Games (e.g., Jeopardy) Ball toss Constructive or sensory activities Puzzles Construct own play definitions Visualizations Use of the arts (clay, paint, draw play, write poems, engage in art making) Inductive problem solving Group activities Explore websites Playing with ideas Discussions Engaging with content in playful ways	Go outdoors to collect materials, bring them back to discuss Go on nature walks Visit a child care centre when no children are present Field experiences in child care centres or schools in the community	Create play spaces, activities or kits Create choreography Create videos Create online profiles Reflect on own childhood play experiences Engage in experience and write about it (not just about theory) Choices within assignments Providing suckers while students write exams	Photos and videatives Field experiences Visits to the ECTE classroom

[a]Assignments included activities done both outside and inside class

Participants also provided examples of teaching methods they used but were not considered play. Examples included assessment methods, particularly tests and quizzes, as well as times when students were engaged in observations and documentation. Content heavy related elements were also perceived not to be play, including lectures, Power Point slides, sitting writing notes, theoretical discussions, and talking about specific documents. "That's like the most serious, no fun, no play. And it's just content, content, content" (Participant 10). Focusing too much on meeting learning objectives was also noted to take away from the essence of play within teaching and learning in ECTE.

When play is implemented. Overall, details about when play was implemented varied slightly depending on the individual and what they perceived as influential factors, which impacted when and how play is implemented into practice. While some participants stated that there is no particular set sequence in which they implement play, some faculty described using play in each class. For example,

individuals described helping promote "play states" during each class by facilitating playful energizers every 15 to 20 minutes, ways in which they use a "chunking" approach to incorporate play approximately every 30 minutes or implement play after having presented information. For other faculty members, play was only incorporated more and more in later classes during the semester once the foundation of theory was covered.   Participants also either discussed their practices in terms of courses specific to play, courses that lend themselves to play content and practical experiences or using play and learning related practices regardless of the course or content itself.   Influential factors will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.   It was, however, expressed how participants tried to incorporate play as much as possible.

> Well, I can't say I'm incorporating play into every class I teach. That would be not realistic. But I do try to, as much as possible, make sure that students are getting up and using their content in a way that is going to bring greater sense to them. (Participant 18)

Key features of faculty's play related teaching practices. Through a detailed examination of information and examples of participants' practices, it was identified that overall, most participants expressed how they implemented play and learning through the use of various methods and activities that they referred to as play. A few faculty members, however, described putting their beliefs about play and learning into practice through a particular approach to teaching.

The approach discussed was geared towards a fostering particular mindset or play state and promoting students' wonder and curiosity.   Participants expressed that by creating environments and experiences within their courses, students would then be open to learning, see possibilities and be willing to let go.   "So that's become my key thing is asking, 'I wonder'" (Participant 16).   Implementing play was not only about designing and facilitating particular activities. Rather, various methods and strategies were used to foster a particular play state. "Play is about a mode or mental state, it's about feeling alive and in the moment and I try to make sure that this is the way my students feel in my class" (Participant 1).

Regardless of how faculty claimed to use play, it was observed that the examples shared similar characteristics.   It was identified that implementation of play involved other elements, such as the use of other teaching methods, the use of play to help connect theory and practice and to meet particular goals, as well as the importance of creating safe learning environments. To implement play both faculty and students were also perceived to taken on an active role.

Main characteristics of faculty's play related examples. Through a detailed examination of information and examples of participants' practices, it was observed that faculty's practices include

experiential, interactive strategies. They share three main key characteristics, which are (a) active engagement, (b) social interaction, and (c) real life applications. As Participant 9 wrote in her narrative, her practices involve "keeping it real for students" and "keeping the students as active as possible in class".

Participants acknowledged that play is not only something that students should understand but it must also be experienced. "If you are going to be an early childhood educator who values children's play" and someone who understands play as a vehicle for teaching and learning with children "you have to play" (Participant 6). Others express how "in order to experience it you really need to do it" (Participant 10). Within their reported practices, play and learning is more than content. Examples faculty described as play involve having students actively engaged in doing something. "It's really important to get people out of their chairs and not just sitting" (Participant 5). Physical movement, sensory experiences, social interaction, direct experiences with real objects, and emotions were noted to be involved.   Most methods highlight how students are engaged with others, including children. Social interaction may occur within the activities or within group activities and discussions.   Practical and real experiences were also identified. Students were described not only as actively engaged in practical experiences in and outside of class they were also provided real life examples to help them learn. Within the data, it was clear that examples, which were used within a particular approach or were simply described as play-based methods, do not stand alone.

Implementing play with other methods. Participant data indicated that faculty incorporated play alongside other methods.   Reflection was a key practice that was commonly discussed when faculty discussed their teaching practices.   "I don't think as educators we can do what we do without reflection" (Participant 6). Reflection was reported to be implemented through questions during or after class through sharing, discussions (individuals or groups), debriefing, or within activities and assignments. It was done verbally or through writing inside or outside of class. Reflection points may include what happened, ways to improve, emotions associated with the experience, play experience as children, why or creating links back to theory. Play was not perceived to occur alone. It was mentioned how even when students are asked to engage in something, there was always an element of sitting and talking about "why" after the experience in order to analyze benefits and bring out what was learned through the experience.   "Especially If I'm bringing out a bunch of toys in the play course and they're like "this is so much fun!" Then ok now, why are we doing this?" (Participant 9).

Reflection was noted to help students learn from others by being exposed to different ways of knowing as well as to help gain support. It was expressed that reflection helps deepen learning and

through reflection students discover things for themselves. Students can make their own connections, which then enhances their skills as independent problem solvers. Reflection is reported to make things real, help students develop their abilities to think critically while consolidating loose ends, showcase what was learned, and see the value in the experience. "If you understand the sensation and the experience, then you learn from it" (Participant 5). Participant 4 discussed how reflection is particularly important in some cases when students are engaged in play. She stated:

> I think also another constraint a little bit is the idea that learning can be fun and when they are having fun they are learning. That's a leap. You have to make that leap to get it and that's what the debrief is all about. The debrief is all about, okay, what happened? What happened and what did you learn?

Using play to connect theory and practice. A majority of participants expressed using a teaching approach that combines both theory and practice. This was indicated through various comments made by participants. "For adult learners to appreciate and value play, they must learn this through direct experience and through the study and discussion of the theory" (Participant 6). Other participants stated "I have to teach the content as well as give them opportunities to explore what that looks like and what that means" (Participant 19) and "I love that feeling where I kind of get out of box that ok we learned x, y, z because we have to but we are not going to learn it with me up here just talking and blabbing with overheads and all of that. 'Let's do'. And the students actually do learn through that" (Participant 3).

Terms such as content, information or knowledge were used when discussing theory. It involved covering or delivering content through lectures, Power Point presentations, discussions, brainstorming, talking about readings, documents or assignments, sitting writing notes, or reflective practices. This component was also referred to as serious or as "work". Knowledge was seen as being a critical piece. "If they don't have the knowledge then I can't go any further" (Participant 3).

Practice was viewed as play by participants. It was described as the "doing" or the "experience" component, which included practical applications, active learning, direct experiences, hands-on experiences or the lab element of classes. Practice related play experiences were also reported to involve more than the brain as they can also involve the senses, body and emotions. This play component is considered active, interactive, fun, light, practical, and real.

It was expressed that it is not enough for students to know the material. "Students can't just listen and talk about the theory" (Participant 9), and "it's not just enough to you know. To be able to show or identify, I want that higher order of demonstration in there" (Participant 7).   Engagement

89

alone, however, was also not perceived as enough. It is acknowledged that "we have three-hour classes. It's not all just let's play. There is also, we have to work, and it's not a playful work. And that's part of it" (Participant 5).   This faculty member also stated that at times students need to "read this, you need to listen to this." Faculty recognized that sitting and writing notes is not play and that while attempts are made not to be the "talking head at the front of the room" (Participant 4), sometimes both are perceived as necessary.   In ECTE classrooms it was reported "there's time for lecture, there's time for sitting and just listening and reflecting" (Participant 19).

Most of faculty's approaches were thus about balancing theory with practice where students were reported to be given knowledge as well as opportunities to experience what is being taught through practice. Participant 11 shared the following:

> It is a balance, so in the best teaching moment I've got the whole class and they're all using open-ended materials and everything's great, but it's not like that every day. To get to that, to get to that space of wonderment, there is a little bit of mechanical learning that needs to happen before, so they always underpin their thinking about play with a theory.

In discussing play and non-playful moments in her teaching Participant 6 states:

> But I guess sometimes when, you know, if we're having a lot of discussions about different theories, maybe that isn't so playful because it's more that academic speak that comes out. And sometimes you have to have those more theoretical moments. And that's okay. But I think I try really hard to balance those moments with more playful experiences through learning because my belief is that adults also learn through play. And so we need to have those playful moments in class, those joyous moments that are linked to the learning.

Using play in relation to course outcomes and goals. When designing and implementing their teaching methods, most faculty expressed how they explicitly kept in mind course material as well as overarching course outcomes or goals. A faculty member discussed what she does "depends on the course and it really depends on the learning outcome of that week" (Participant 12), while another stated "I'm kind of pressed for meeting the goals of the course" (Participant 11). It was also expressed how activities are designed to "engage these students for a sustained amount of time and still reinforce that message that I am trying to do" (Participant 3), and "often what I find in courses, there are specific outcomes, and maybe I haven't thought outside the box enough or maybe I am too rigid and stuck but sometimes you can't meet all those objectives just through play" (Participant 8). Within faculty's practices there is an apparent attempt to balance between explaining how things work, serious

conversations and more playful direct real world experiences while keeping an overall goal or direction in mind.

The importance of creating safe and fruitful learning environments. To help promote play and learning within the classroom, faculty reported how both physical and interpersonal elements must be addressed within the environment. Participants described the importance of creating agreements, clear protocol and expectations during the first day of class. This was deemed to help create safe environments where students could let go of worry and judgements so that they would be comfortable to speak, ask questions, make mistakes, engage, and be silly. "I have to create a safe place where students can feel that they can come in and do something a little bit outside the norm and when they can experience, I don't know, joy. And where they can question the rules," (Participant 1). Participant 5 wrote in her narrative, "I encourage them to think critically about different ways of knowing and being by setting up a safe environment that involves discussion, and a lot of play, to help the students feel safe in disclosing." In addition to creating space so that students would feel comfortable, it is perceived as important to build trust. To do so, it is also perceived to be of value to show respect towards students and attempt to develop relationships.

Setting up classrooms spaces within the post-secondary setting that allows room to move and interact was perceived to be something to consider. Faculty mentioned using music to create a particular atmosphere as well as setting up the classroom space for a particular purpose or topic. In recognizing that there are different learners, a couple participants also expressed how it is beneficial to have trinkets set out for students to manipulate during class. Various participants indicated the use of other spaces within the college, including outdoor spaces, curriculum labs, gym or other class and meeting rooms. Some faculty spoke about specific materials they use within their practices, including such things as play bags, Lego pieces, toys, objects, natural materials, board games, open-ended objects, and art supplies. Both faculty and students were perceived to have active roles in the learning environment in which play and learning occurs.

Faculty's role. Participants discussed their role in building safe environments in which students feel a sense of belonging. To do so, faculty are to be welcoming, friendly and warm. It was considered important to foster relationships with students, recognize diversity, get to know students and be aware of students' needs, as well as respect and get excited for them. Participant 5 shared that if students and faculty "connect on those sorts of levels, then it is easier to make the classroom more playful, because people feel respected". Faculty were described as acting as a guide, coach and mentor who encourages, supports, scaffolds, gives advice, and provokes deeper learning.

Faculty's role was perceived to be a leader and facilitator in which they are responsible for teaching content, creating related discussion points, as well as leading activities and discussions. Faculty were also seen to plan and set up activities, arrange visits, provide, and support students to find their own materials and resources, design assignments and perform in ongoing student assessment.

By demonstrating play skills, having fun, telling jokes, and acting silly or playful, participants expressed how they help set a light and playful tone and set the stage for play to happen within the class. "I think my role when I'm working with adult learners is to be able to give them, let them have a playful environment because learning how to be an early childhood educator you need to be able to experience fun in order to express fun" (Participant 10). It was expressed how faculty need to not be too serious but not be over the top when acting playful yet being playful was perceived to help model playful behaviors, help hook students' interest, and help them appear to be accessible as instructors.

Key characteristics of faculty were also identified to help foster play in ECTE settings. Participants expressed that when teaching, faculty need to have a lot of energy. They need to stay in the moment as well as be flexible and ready to adapt without solely focusing on meeting particular learning objectives. To help spark students' curiosity and keep them interested it was suggested that faculty should share their own experiences and provide a variety of ways to help bring theory alive.

Students' Role. Various participants mentioned that along with faculty, students also need to take on an active role within the ECTE classroom. Participation is essential whereby students should be prepared for class, contribute in class, set their own goals, and engage in activities. Students were described as physically involved, active in constructing their own knowledge, as well as involved in creating, sharing and engaged in their own meaning making. When speaking about students, Participant 9 stated how "they need to be responsible and take some responsibility for their own learning" and that students need "to take some initiative in letting me know if there are issues."

Perceived benefits of play in ECTE. The participants perceived play related methods to have various benefits. These benefits were centered on (a) promoting student engagement, understanding and retention, (b) helping reenergize students and play having therapeutic effects, (c) teaching child centeredness, and (d) helping develop various skills.

Promoting student engagement, understanding and retention. Faculty voiced how play helps create student interest, curiosity and excitement, which fosters learning. Through play students were perceived to engage with content in fun and playful ways, making learning fun and interesting. Participants stated how in play within ECTE students may also experience joy. Participant 2 stated how

"they're just doing it, they're learning but they're having fun" and "if you find it meaningful and joyful, you're more likely to do it again."

Through play, faculty also reported that students engage with material and concepts through the brain as well as with the senses or physical level. "It's body, it's kinesthetic. You're not just learning it with your head but you've learnt it with your muscles" and "if you can get students moving and they're talking about the content, that's so much more powerful than me talking about it," (Participant 1). "Doing it is different than being told something" (Participant 8). Students were seen to experience something first hand and thus "experience it in their own physical body and in their own social environment" (Participant 5). This type of engagement was reported to help students gain insights, understand the material, understand how play is learning, understand the process inherent in play, as well as help material stick. Play was described as a "way where we use our bodies, or we use our minds in different ways that brings the material to a different level of understanding, a different way to think about it, or to feel it, or experience it" (Participant 4). By actively engaging with content, participants expressed how students are less likely to forget it because they have done it themselves and they will more likely remember it to apply in the future.

> If I talk about it, I kind of get them on the surface level but if we talk about it and then we do something related to it that becomes more meaningful. They're more likely to retain that information and when it comes to you, you know, writing their tests or being in the field in the future that activity might pop into their head and they might connect it back to whatever we talked about beforehand. These hands on experiences may also help students think about what they will experience in the field. (Participant 19)

Participants also stated how play helps bring what is being talked about in class to life in different ways, which helps students integrate their understanding of concepts, make connections and apply concepts to real life examples. Participant 15 shared how her students have commented that "when we get to touch and play and explore, that's when it all comes together for me." Students are provided opportunities to apply theory within a safe environment, making concepts relevant and concrete. "Like we have a lecture and then the hands on helps solidify it and bring it home" (Participant 2).

Helping reenergize students as well as play having therapeutic effects. Play was noted to help refresh students so that they are more open to learning. "They're in that play state, they're in that state of joy where anything is possible and that's such an important learning space cause what you are then going to tell them and talk about is going to sink in because they are open to it in that moment"

(Participant 1). It was also expressed how play acts as a stress relief and can have cathartic or therapeutic benefits. Faculty expressed how play helps students come out of their shells and gain acceptance within safe environments. Play also provides a space for feelings to emerge and be worked out, particularly when working with difficult subjects. Participants indicated that it helps students remember what brought them to the field in the first place, tap into their own play experience, as well as help them figure out if they actually want to be there, especially if they have limited experience with children. By engaging in play it is stated that students can remember what it feels like to play, to have the freedom and feel how good it feels, especially "cause they don't do a lot of play themselves, you know, anymore" (Participant 9).

Teaching child centeredness. Play was described to help teach child centeredness by having students engage in play experiences themselves and yet it was observed that a majority of participants included children within their practices. In bringing photographs, videos and examples of children in class, students were noted to "get the real deal" (Participant 10).   Children were described as being the "ultimate teachers" (Participant 6).   It was expressed that in providing opportunities to observe and engage in play with children, children could help scaffold ECTE students' learning.   As compared to adults engaging in materials themselves trying to anticipate how children may or may not react, it was deemed "a far more valuable learning experience to play with materials with children" (Participant 17). Participants described how adults' memories and knowledge about the properties of the materials they are playing with will impact how they use the materials and adults were perceived to have different questions than children may have when playing with materials. It was voiced, for example, how adults use objects for a particular goal as compared to children's use of objects for the sheer purpose of using the object. Children were seen to help develop adult learners' understanding as well as keep them engaged. When bringing an infant to visit her class, Participant 19 described how students made comments such as "it makes sense now" and she observed how "they didn't want to leave, they wanted to continue in class."

Helping develop various skills.   In play students can engage with material in a variety of ways, which was reported to promote critical and divergent thinking as well as help work towards students' strengths. It was addressed how play-based methods contribute to students' later success in the program by providing a good foundation for students in terms of how they engage in dialogue and behaviors in classes during the later years. By helping students demonstrate and represent their understanding, play also was deemed to help faculty check in with students, assess students' skills, and

identify gaps, upon which they can potentially adapt their own pedagogy. Participant 18 wrote the following in her narrative:

> Through the students' representation the professor has the opportunity to assess what has been learned, the level of comprehension can be determined along with gaps. This assessment allows the professor to determine student needs for future learning and further entices the professor to self-reflect on pedagogy.

Students' reactions to play and learning in ECTE. Implementing play and learning was noted by faculty to have resulted in reactions from adult learners in ECTE programs. When first implementing play in their classes, faculty noted that while some students are positive and jumped in right away, many were described to be hesitant, unsure, guarded, lost, scared or stressed. "Most of the adults I have worked with are hesitant to play" (Participant 5).   It was reported that students have commented that "at first they were really uncomfortable when I would suggest these these crazy things. And then later on, they realized that we are all in it together" (Participant 6).   Another participant states that "I find that at the beginning of the year I spend a lot of time in desensitizing them from experiences in the public school system," (Participant 7).   Participants were in agreement that it takes time to create conditions that help students become more comfortable engaging in play within ECTE post-secondary settings.

Faculty indicated that over the course of the semester or the program there is a transformation in many of the students when it comes to engaging in play within their classes. In terms of using play-based methods, Participant 14 shared how "students may not like them or understand them initially – but throughout the semester the 'light bulbs' come on – especially with the notion of 'shared control' and independent problem solving." Faculty reported seeing a change in how comfortable students have become with play from when they first entered the program until they leave. "It could not be more night and day" (Participant 4). "At the beginning it is tough getting going, of letting go, of you know, being judged, that fear of being judged, that fear of being wrong, umm and I find they sway to the total opposite end" (Participant 7), with a majority of her students finding a balance.   It was reported by participants that through the program students who were once on the sidelines became active participants. Although it was acknowledged that some students, particularly those who grew up in cultures in which play is not valued for children or adults, are less likely to change while most students are perceived to become more playful and have "learned to let go" (Participant 5).   Faculty acknowledged how throughout the ECTE program students are more willing to share, contribute and

laugh. Students begin to see that their opinions matter, they want to be there and "they're going to play well by the time they leave" (Participant 2).

Participants described that students have provided them with positive feedback about their teaching methods verbally as well as through journals and course evaluations. Students have made comments on how they understand the material and have enjoyed the ways through which it was learned. Faculty have also noticed changes in students' perspectives within their reflections and have observed changes in their behaviors in class and when working with children in the field.   A faculty member shared how at graduation she has had students come up to her and provide feedback on how they have not forgotten material from her classes that involved playful learning experiences. Another participant shared how her students reported that when they left the program they implemented activities with colleagues at their workplace. Negative feedback about play related practices were not reported by participants.

Faculty's reflections on play in ECTE in relation to their beliefs. While participants expressed that they all implement play within their practices, during the second interview many faculty voiced particular insights and questions that emerged in their own reflections of their practices in relation to their beliefs about play and learning. These reflections centered on (a) implementing play for adults as compared to children's play in educational settings, (b) implementing components of play versus true play, and (c) creating playful environments versus implementing play within teaching.

Play for adults as compared to children's play. Some participants acknowledged that adults play but play in different ways than children do and thus play in ECTE was perceived to look different than play in ECEC.   One way in which play was deemed to look differently was based on the use of materials in class. "While unfortunately my students are not always able to sit on the floor exploring different manipulates and materials, play-based learning remains a cornerstone in our curriculum" (Participant 19).   Another participant addressed how children commonly hold and manipulate objects in play and yet it is something she did not use frequently in her practices with adults. Participant 10 stated:

> Because clearly I can't always bring in an object that will allow them to literally play and translate into learning, very different than with children. They have to use those objects in order to show us what they understand and what they're learning. I guess with adults they've been there, they've done that.

Other participants clearly expressed how their teaching practices are more structured than children's play. Within ECTE settings, environments and activities were perceived to be connected to

theory and set up with goals and outcomes in mind. When talking about play in ECTE, Participant 9 stated how "it has a very different goal with the adults then it does with the children." Goals and outcomes were otherwise seen to restrict play within stated beliefs about play for children.

Within some participants' reflections, it was expressed how play in ECTE is goal directed. While one faculty member stated how "I try to give them extended time so that they can just benefit from the joy of the experience without having to always be so alert to everything" (Participant 6), a few participants reported how it was not often that they provided time for students to engage with whatever they would like for a long period of time. Participant 15, in terms of her post-secondary ECTE classrooms questions "how that works in terms of play so that they're learning new concepts and really letting them have them uninterrupted times with materials that they get to choose and how they engage with them. … I'm not sure how much that happens in the classroom setting."

Play within ECTE was also perceived to be active yet it is more directed than for children and does not include much student choice. "We do play in my classrooms at times but it's not always play because it's not always 100% self-chosen" (Participant 19). This participant went on to state how her students are "infrequently involved in free play." Another participant discussed how her students are given some opportunities to experience free play, most of the time play in ECTE "it's directed, I mean it's not free choice" (Participant 9). It was also questioned whether or not it is considered play if it is not enjoyed by adult learners. Participant 10 expressed the following during her interview:

And that's where my struggle is. How am I letting them play in the class? When I break them up into groups and get them to probably role play, you know, that's one way, but it's a job to them. It's a task, but they don't see it as a playful task.

Implementing components of play versus true play. Some participants explicitly stated how they do not implement play, per say, in ECTE. Rather, they implement components of play within their teaching practices. A faculty member, for example, acknowledged in her narrative that "perhaps there is not a perfect fit with the definition of play and what happens in my courses, however, there are many components of play that are reflected in my courses" (Participant 8). She outlined how her approach involves hands on experiences with real objects and people, choice, fun, and intrinsic value, all characteristics she viewed as being inherent in play. Another participant expressed how playful experiences and hands on open ended elements are incorporated in her classes and that what she does involves engagement and enjoyment yet states "I wouldn't say that it's reflective of true play" (Participant 19). Participant 15 also stated how she doesn't engage students in play in the same way it is defined in most textbooks. Rather, she stated the following:

The idea is always the process, not the product when it comes to play. I think students should be allowed to process information. I think we all can decide on how we want to play, or not play at the same token.

Participant 15 stated how she implements play by creating experiences in which students can engage in a process by engaging with material at their own pace.

Creating playful environments versus implementing play. During the research process, a participant came upon some reflections in terms of her beliefs and her practices. She had written the following in her narrative:

Since our last conversation, I realized that what I thought was play really was not what I was doing in classes. I thought about how I know in my head I want class to be fun, but does it really translate into a playful learning experience or a playful environment? It seems that I offer a more relaxed and open environment instead of using play as a tool for learning. I guess what I've realized throughout this process is that I think I use play as a tool for learning but I actually do not.... yet!" (Participant 10)

Throughout the interview that followed, she then voiced questions such as "are they playing when they are learning, or is having a playful environment enough for their learning?" She expressed how instead of being separate, play and playful were terms that could potentially represent different forms of play and learning and thus she may implement play into practice in different ways.

Factors that were perceived to influence the implementation of faculty's practices. When discussing their practices within the second interview, participants were asked questions about what factors they perceived to support or hinder implementation of their practices based on their beliefs about play and learning in ECTE settings. Information from faculty's responses to the question along with relevant data that emerged within the interviews was extracted and analyzed. Factors, which influence what faculty would like to do, what they actually do, and when they implement play in practice were perceived to highlight information specific to factors operating at the institutional or classroom level. Practices were also perceived to be fueled by societal perceptions and faculty's beliefs and previous experiences.

Institutional factors. Various factors within the post-secondary setting were identified to influence faculty's practices, including (a) departmental policies and requirements, (b) social network and support, (c) course related factors, (d) job related factors, and (e) funding. These factors operated externally to the faculty member and were perceived by participants to affect what they were able to do in preparing to teach and facilitate their courses.

Departmental requirements. When discussing play, Participant 15 states how "I would love to be able to do more" and admitted that "my challenge is how do I make that happen with some of the constraints that are involved in a formal, college setting?" Demands were reported to be placed upon faculty within some departments, which were stated to take away faculty's freedom in designing their courses and assessment practices as well as hindered meeting students' needs. Examples were provided such as being required to include online components or group elements in their classes, having to utilize standardized textbooks or being required to penalize students for late submission of assignments. In discussing what supports implementation of her practices, a participant described the benefits of having the freedom within her department:

> I think the fact that we can create our own course outlines...I think our vocational learning
> outcomes are very open. Well, I think they give enough directions but there's some flexibility in
> there so that you're able to create courses that meet the needs of the students in the area that
> you're living in and then also allows for adaptations to be made to meet those learning needs.
> (Participant 15)

Class sizes, class schedules and the length of the program were other institutional factors that were identified. Increasing class sizes were reported to make it difficult for faculty members to engage students in practical applications in class as well as get to know individual students' interests and needs. Participants discussed the benefits of small classes and addressed how they were more likely to lecture in larger classes.

Faculty expressed concerns about class schedules. Having to teach many classes in one day or teaching classes back to back posed constraints for faculty based on the energy required and the time needed to gather materials for play activities. "I'm drained if I have to do two three hours classes in a day. I'm really drained and I have done them back to back" (Participant 14). Another participants addressed the following:

> I try to manipulate my schedule as much as possible but often times, you get the schedule and
> you get what you get. So when you got a class on the third floor at one end of college and
> you're teaching in ten minutes all the way down, that can be a bit of a challenge to go back to
> the lab area and gather materials. That's often a bit of a hassle. (Participant 17).

Having "classes as early as 8:00 a.m. and as late as 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. when students have done a field placement all day" (Participant 14), is another scheduling issue that was also perceived as a constraint. Classes were also reported not to allow enough time to cover all the information, meet the required outcomes, as well as allow students to engage in meaningful play-based experiences. "We don't have

the luxury of time, and there are things I do need to cover" (Participant 1).   A participant suggested

creating schedules that would provide more time and freedom for students to engage fully in

experiences, for example Saturday classes from 10:00 to 5:00, while another stated:

> Yeah, before there used to be, where we actually had Saturday labs, but they've stopped that.
> So I just incorporate some of that into the actual lecture time. And in the old days when we had
> more time, then we used to go to the child development centre and we would actually, in one of
> the classrooms, change out a theme. So we would plan it all out, gather the materials and set up
> the new themed room so that they had that practice, but we can't do that now. We just don't
> have enough time. (Participant 2)

Participants also acknowledged how they need to remember that the program is only a certain length

and therefore there is only so much they can aim to accomplish with their students.   Faculty stated such

things as "so I have to keep that in mind, that we're only a two year program" (Participant 6) and "yeah,

I only have them for 10 months. I can't work miracles" (Participant 7).

Social network and support. Participants were positive when speaking about their respective

ECTE departments and institutions. "I work in the most amazing environment" (Participant 18). Faculty

stated how their departments embrace play, as illustrated by Participant 5 who expressed "I think one

of the factors is the environment that I work in, that doesn't only respect it, but also expects it" when

discussing play. Colleagues were reported by many to be a tremendous support in helping them enact

their beliefs within their practices. "In my department we all play" (Participant 3) and when working

alongside others who promote play and learning "it is a bit contagious" (Participant 4). Working with

others who share similar philosophical traditions was seen as a support as well as being beneficial in

helping to build continuity between courses for students.   While working with others who have a

different approach to teaching was reported by some to be beneficial to help see different perspectives,

it was also perceived by others to be a bit more challenging. Belonging to a learning community,

engaging with others within the institution, within the community, as well as within organizations were

also seen as supporting faculty in putting play into practice.

Having support from department heads and senior administration was also seen as very

beneficial. It was expressed that "having someone understand and listen to what the needs are in the

team and actually find a way to meet those needs is really important" (Participant 6).   It was also

shared that, individuals, particularly those in higher administration need to understand and support the

benefits of doing things in a way that differs from students sitting in desks listening to teachers deliver

theory. Such support would provide approval and acceptance for faculty who want to implement more active hands on approaches within their teaching.

 Course related factors.   All participating faculty members discussed course related matters when discussing their practices. These factors involved the course itself and topics being covered within the course, which impacted the variety of ways in which participants incorporated play in their teaching. Online delivery methods and finding practicum field sites were also discussed.

 Some participants discussed putting their beliefs about play and learning into practices solely within specific play courses while others discussed implementing play within various other courses. Participant 8 stated "I do try to incorporate components of play within the course," but addressed that some courses lend themselves more to hands on experiences than others. This was something that was commonly discussed by participating faculty members. "Curriculum, it is much easier to do because the subject matter is song, dance, games, materials, storytelling etc. whereas other classes it takes a little imagination," (Participant 1). Courses that were described as being more theoretical, were perceived to require more content be delivered.   There were, however, participants that described incorporating play in all courses.

 In addition to the course itself, some faculty discussed how play is more readily applied with various topics. A participant expressed how what she does depends on the topic. "The classroom environment is set up in a certain way, students engage in an experience and theory is incorporated. How this is done is dependent on the topic being covered within a particular class" (Participant 6). Another participant, when discussing her own teaching methods, stated how "it depends on the type of information and the level that I want to impart the information" (Participant 13), while another stated "so the subject itself kind of dictates what you can do with it" (Participant 19).   While some topics were reported not to lend themselves easily to play-based teaching methods, Participant 5 stated how "of course there are materials that are tedious and not always open to play ideas, but I use my creativity to think of how I can bring the ideas to life." She went on to argue that to keep things fun and interesting for students, incorporating play is important. "It is more important in those courses that are heavy in theory and sort of academic learning that you try to bring some fun into it, some play," (Participant 5). A couple of participants discussed how they have brought play into teaching about serious topics such as childhood diseases, and child abuse.

 A few faculty members brought up their concerns about implementing play within courses that are taught online. These concerns centered on ways in which they can make online environments playful and the challenges faced when wanting to incorporate active and interactive hands on activities.

101

Participant 1, for example, stated how it is something she was finding to be a challenge. "Yeah, but that's the harder piece, trying to make things more playful in an online environment." Another participant questioned what she would do if faced with teaching an online course in the future. "So I think if I had to teach an online course, how would I - you know, would I be able to have a playful environment in an online environment?" (Participant 10). Participant 2 expressed the following:

> We do things like, we go on a pretend plane ride, put all the chairs together and get them bumping up and down on the plane and all this kind of stuff…I can't do that on video conference. It just won't work cause they participate with me, so I think-- because there's a lot of things going to distant education, which there's some real value to that, but I think that the play part will be really challenging to do that when, like for us when we're delivering it.

> For faculty responsible for finding practicum sites as part of their duties, finding practicums in schools and finding quality ECEC sites with good models were perceived as challenges. It was reported that it was difficult to find placements that share similar approaches based on what students are being taught about play and ways in which play should be implemented into practice with children.

> *Job related factors.* Having a job that entails teaching educators was perceived to help in terms of implementing play. Faculty's energy levels also effects what is done in class. "Sometimes lack of energy blocks me, because I don't have it in me." (Participant 3). A lack of time, the workload, and marking were job related factors that participants reported to influence what they do. Participant 7, for example, expressed the following:

> And that's what I find, that I do lack time… that because of the nature of the profession, being relational, I spend many many hours in my office instead of prepping, you know, talking to my students, brain storming with them on those play-based assignments.

Participant 7 goes on to state that if she "only taught 3 courses a term I would be able to incorporate more play and learning into my courses." It was also voiced how play related teaching methods take more time. "Sometimes it takes way more work to put into place the guidelines for a playful activity versus just the hand out and Power Points" (Participant 8).

> *Funding.* Limited funds were reported by faculty to influence having materials available, helping fund children's visits to ECTE classrooms as well as impact having adult learners participate in play labs during their programs.

> **Classroom factors.** Things to do with the classroom and learning environment itself, such as students and logistics, were identified as being factors that impact faculty's play related practices.

Students. Faculty described how students' energy and reactions to play experiences influenced what they do as well as when they do it. "Sometimes the feeling in the classroom or they're just not cooperating and that puts a damper on things" (Participant 3). What is done was perceived to depend on students and thus depends on how long students have been in the course or in the program.

Participants acknowledged how "what works with one group might not work with the next group" (Participant 11), and "so, no semester, no class I teach, is ever the same because the people are different. It is like that with children" (Participant 6). It was frequently discussed how participants have diverse group of students within their classrooms. "I am finding more and more needs in the classroom as the sizes of the classes get bigger" (Participant 14). Faculty reported how they had students of different ages, cultures, education levels, needs, interests and learning preferences, as well as students with differing levels of experience with children, all of which were stated to influence what faculty do in their teaching.

Many participants described that when adult learners arrive at ECTE programs, they are scared to let go as they do not want to be wrong and they care about what their peers and their instructors think. They fear being judged and do not want to look stupid. It was also reported that adult learners may come into ECTE programs unsure if it is the right career or profession, may feel unprepared for life in post-secondary settings, and may not know others in their classes. It was identified how faculty viewed students as not being used to having control within formal education settings. They were perceived to come in from highly structured environments in which they had a lot of direction, and were accustomed to testing and lecture based instructional methods. Participant 15 discussed experiences in which she attempted to share control with students and provide more choices within her assignments and ended up facing challenges. She stated how:

> Students have just been so used to other people having control that all of a sudden somebody's saying you have control of this. It's a little more difficult. I've had students say 'I would just prefer you tell me what you want me to do. And you set the date. Because that's easier for me.'

It was acknowledged by numerous participants that students bring their previous experiences and expectations to the classroom, resulting in being hesitant and unsure when faced with learning experiences and teaching practices to which they are not accustomed.

The range of diversity of learners was not perceived as a barrier. Recognizing where students were at was seen to influence ways in which faculty adapted their practices. "It is a little bit of a constraint but I think because I recognize it I can use it, you know?" (Participant 4). Faculty first try to

create conditions within the learning environment for students to feel more comfortable by slowly incorporating play and more open ended experiences.

A faculty member described in detail as to how she adapts her practices based on students' needs. She states that when entering the program:

> They are first year students right out of high school. So they are 16, 17 years old, they are very used to being tested. They like being tested, even though they say they hate it but they actually like it cause they are secure - there's boundaries and that's what they know. That's what they come from. So, I have to test them cause if I don't test them too much, or enough, it kind of bothers them actually. So, that is an interesting thing. (Participant 4)

She explained how she helps bridge the transition for students in the first year by using quizzes as it is what she acknowledged students had been accustomed to, whereas in later years in the program she uses different assessment strategies. In terms of play, she describes how she engages first and second year students in play activities to understand and remember "what does that feel like to play and have fun." Students in the third year are viewed as comfortable and understand types of play activities. There is a focus on deeper understanding at an academic level, where students connect their experiences with theory.

Other participants were in agreement that past school experiences influence students in ECTE. Participant 19 stated:

> If they've been in high schools where teachers just kind of talked at them and they're more, that's how they learn, that's what they are comfortable with because that's what they know. Whereas if they have been in an environment where they're umm taught to think critically and do things and they're more likely to be kind of comfortable with that type of learning as well.

Students who come from university settings were also perceived to have particular reactions to unfamiliar methods. "We throw them off sometimes when they come to us from the university with our differences" and have difficulties as "unless it's in that structured format, it can't possibly be important" (Participant 16).

Logistics. The learning environment, including available materials were important factors deemed to influence faculty's play related teaching practices. It was reported that large classrooms with room to move and windows support participants' practices. Furniture should include tables, preferably round or puddle tables, which are moveable. Participant 9 stated how "the environment dictates to them what will happen" as she discussed how students appeared more relaxed and more playful when they were not in a classroom sitting in set desks in rows that suggests more passive learning. This was

also voiced by Participant 11 who expressed the following about her students. "They are at tables instead of a lecture hall so it actually it's assumed that you won't be lecturing. It's assumed that it will be interactive."   Without these spaces, faculty expressed how they still can implement play, however, it becomes a barrier to work around. "We are still moving around in the classroom but we still have to wiggle around tables and stuff" (Participant 1).   Having access to a variety of open ended and loose materials were also deemed as being very important to help promote faculty's practices.

One participant suggested having a specific room filled with materials for students, which they would have access to at any time. Within a more open ended environment without set goals or time limits, it was stated how students may get to understand better how to use loose parts as well as experience firsthand the creative process that is inherent in play. They may also have time to reflect on what a child may feel during play along with what skills and other learning that can be acquired. Another participant described her dream ECTE world at her respective college, which would have a whole area where the program could have a large space of their own to build their own resources. This space would include room for students to post things on the wall, which would not have to be taken down after every class, making it a home for students. There would also be cabinets that would hold a variety of supplies and a video library.   This would lessen the effort of having to cart around materials from class to class and would provide a space to store them all together in an area that was accessible to all. "I think every teacher in our program would be more mindful of using amazing resources if it was just a reach away" (Participant 10). She describes how in the middle of this space would be a child care center that would allow students to observe children in action through a one-way mirror, acting as "a window into the lives of children," where students could immediately observe real children when discussing topics in class in a less obtrusive way that would not interrupt children's play. Having a child center or lab school on site was perceived by various faculty to be beneficial, as well as having access to the gym or outdoor and open spaces where class could be conducted.

Societal perceptions.   Perceptions of play, people who work in the field of ECEC as well as perceptions of education were viewed to be factors that affect the institution as well as the individuals within it. It was voiced how play is not valued in society, particularly for adults. It was discussed, for example, how students, when asked to give their own definitions of play within a faculty members' class, do not consider adults unless prompted.   It was also expressed how in ECTE "there's a bit of a bias I think sometimes against the value of teaching our students how to play and assumption that it ought to come so naturally that you shouldn't need to devote that much time and that much resources to it," (Participant 16).   Wanting to incorporate more play in her courses, Participant 7 stated that it requires

"letting go of some of the preconceived ideas of what the goal of an educator is, what the role of play is." A few people also addressed how there are certain perceptions to those working in the field of ECEC and ECTE "I think that there's a perception if you worked with young children, you're—well, you do, you just sit around and make puppets and you're probably not that smart really" (Participant 16), and "there's this general assumption that people who teach in early childhood education program might not be that bright" (Participant 17). These perceptions were not deemed as challenges but were voiced in terms of considerations as to how faculty may be perceived by others within the institution and society, as well as how their work and teaching practices may be undervalued.

It was also identified that faculty viewed others as having certain perceptions of education. It was voiced that an emphasis was placed on overachievement, which diminishes the value placed on play and play-based teaching, particularly in post-secondary settings. Participant 16 expressed the following:

Well because for many people, school, especially post-secondary is a means to an end. Right? So it's not something where you typically think of play and it's certainly not something--, if you think about it nobody ever says in their advertising of post-secondary, 'Curiosity or wondering.' They talk about knowledge based.

This then affects students' expectations and beliefs as to what learning should look like in ECTE programs and what is valued in society. Participant 1 expressed "and especially in the context of university, people want to, or they're told 'university is serious. You're coming and you're studying' so when you throw play at them they're like 'what? Like this is not within my realm of university." When describing an incident during which her students were dancing and singing in class, an individual popped in the door to yell "this is an academic institution!" (Participant 1).

Faculty related factors. Faculty's beliefs, education and training, as well as previous experiences were voiced to be influential in fueling what participants do. It was expressed how faculty should stay current, including pursuing ongoing professional development and continuing to engage in experiences with children.

Overview of faculty's beliefs, practices and influential factors. Overall, findings suggested a relationship between faculty's beliefs and practices. Participants indicated putting play into practice within their ECTE classrooms with adult learners and the type of play was reported to be guided and closely directed to course material and goals. Their practices were thus in alignment within their beliefs about play in adulthood as participants viewed play as being more goal directed for adult learners than children's play. Faculty's beliefs about the importance of getting to know students and creating and

fostering positive learning environments to allow students to actively construct knowledge for play and learning to occur were also indicated when faculty discussed their practices with a diverse community of learners within ECTE classrooms. In addition, many mediating factors, operating at different levels, were identified, which were reported to impact implementation of participants' beliefs. A conceptual model of the findings on faculty's beliefs about play and learning, related practices and mediating factors is illustrated in Figure 20.
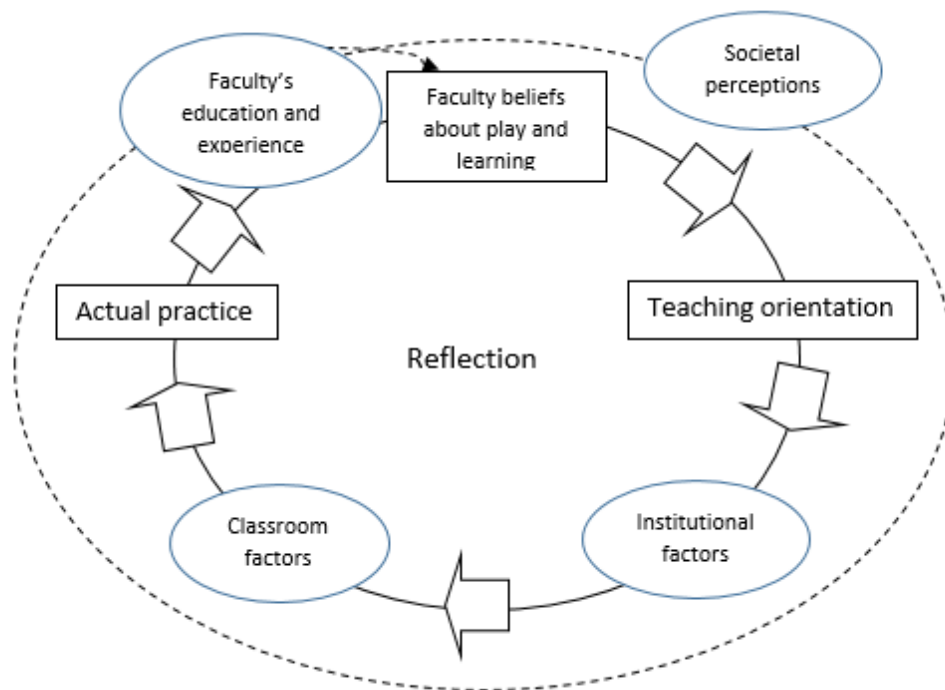
Figure 20. A conceptual model that illustrates a proposed relationship between faculty's beliefs about play and learning, related practices, and influential factors in Canadian ECTE settings.

The model illustrates how faculty's beliefs about play and learning, which were noted to be influenced by their own education and experience, fit into a broader teaching orientation.   Data indicated ways in which play related methods were used alongside other methods as well as incorporated broader pedagogical decisions, such as what type of learning environment to create, when and how to implement such play related practices, as well as both faculty and students' roles. Beliefs about play and learning, in practice, thus did not stand alone. Rather, play related practices fit within individual faculty's broader approach to teaching.

The implementation of participating faculty's beliefs about play and learning into practice was influenced by various contextual and situational factors, either within the institution or the classroom itself, which impacted their teaching practices. Beliefs and practices related to play and learning were both perceived to be influenced by perceptions operating at the societal level, which may impact all components within the cycle. These perceptions operate at a more implicit level, and thus are indicated within the figure with a dotted line.

Reflection was a process that was incorporated throughout data collection. By participants making implicit beliefs and practices visible through images and writing as well as questioning and co-constructing meanings through dialogue, a relationship between faculty's beliefs and practices became apparent. Participants' reflections were also identified during data analysis. Reflection was thus placed at the centre of the model.

Professional development, where reflective practices can occur, may be a way for current or future faculty to continue to explore their beliefs, contributing to the cyclical relationship as to what is being done in terms of play and learning in ECTE settings. Information and recommendations from participating faculty on faculty professional development initiatives specific to play and learning will now be presented.

Faculty Professional Development on Play and Learning

It was apparent throughout the study that many of the participating faculty members were active in seeking out and engaging in initiatives that help them continue to learn and grow as professionals. One way to do so is by engaging in professional development (PD). One individual expressed, PD is core as it helps individuals maintain competence as well as remain excited within their work, which then is modelled to students. It was stated that "professional development, I think, is core even, I think, maintaining and being, maintaining competence, I do, and also in remaining excited in the work that you do" (Participant 18).

Participants were asked specifically about how they felt about PD specific to play and learning. Many had commented that they had either participated in some form of workshop or training at one point in their careers or had even facilitated initiatives themselves. There was also unanimous agreement amongst participating faculty members that faculty could benefit from some type of PD that focuses on play and learning. While it was addressed that short workshops may not necessarily change teaching practices, participants' views as to what could be gained through professional development, who should participate, what should be included as well as additional considerations, will now be discussed.

Perceived benefits of faculty development specific to play and learning. Faculty professional development was seen as a valid arena to reinforce the value of play and reinforce play as learning, particularly as concerns were raised about the push of academics and testing into early childhood education settings. "I think there's a lot of like, buzz, especially in the States right now because they're, I see a lot of things where they are talking about testing for kindergarten, testing for school, and bringing that sort of academic down into the preschool" (Participant 9). Professional development was perceived to be valuable for faculty to learn about play itself. When speaking about play it was expressed how "I think there's definitely a lot to be learned. It's such a huge topic" (Participant 17).

These PD initiatives were also viewed to help reinforce what play and learning looks like in practice. "Because if we're focusing this play-based learning, play-based learning, we need to know what that means and we need to bring it into the classroom" (Participant 12). It was expressed how it can be a potential way to provide validation for what faculty are doing and provide concrete ways their teaching may improve. "I think that through play we can come, we can come to understand more about teaching others" (Participant 7).

Professional development was seen to potentially benefit faculty, especially those who have become too disconnected from play. It could reinforce the importance of direct experiences while enhancing faculty's creativity, inspiration and new ideas. Professional development could be a means to share and "think outside of the box of curriculum" (Participant 6).

Who should attend. Professional development initiatives were not only perceived to be of potential value to faculty working in ECTE but also to those in other departments and disciplines. "Who knows who would be interested?" (Participant 3). It was expressed that there is more room for faculty, not only those in early childhood education, to play more frequently in their classes and that direct experiences are noted to sometimes be forgotten by academics outside of the field. Professional development was also seen as beneficial to bring together faculty from other colleges to engage in experiences and discussions about play and learning.

What to include. It was suggested that PD initiatives should be specific to the field as compared to generic teaching workshops and should be based on the interest and areas of expertise of those participating. It was recommended by one participant, for example, to look at the course outlines of those in attendance in order to create an inclusive environment where all participants' teaching areas would be touched upon. It was also noted that PD initiatives should be adult oriented because if they were too childlike they may be seen as frivolous.

It was voiced that PD balance theory, active engagement and practical suggestions while being supported by research.   Topics should include what play is, what it looks like, how it helps with learning and retention, what is being taught in terms of play, as well as how to facilitate it in order to help students in post-secondary settings understand its importance.

A majority of participants indicated how they would like such initiatives to provide opportunities for faculty to have direct, experiential and hands on experiences as compared to someone presenting information and having to sit in desks taking notes.   Faculty, by experiencing things themselves, witnessing, exchanging ideas, and engaging in discussions with others was seen to potentially create meaning and understandings to take back with them to their classrooms. "I think we want useful as faculty members" (Participant 13).   An experience during which they would receive, engage, make goals, and receive feedback was also noted to be potentially valuable for some faculty. One participant expressed the importance of having a safe space without competition.   "I'm suggesting that if you were going to do PD workshops for playing to inspire learning, then it would have to be in a safe environment where people can take risks. And you can't do that if you're trying to win" (Participant 14).

It was noted by some individuals that it may be potentially beneficial to include children or time spent in child care centres within faculty professional development. It was stated how some faculty, after teaching in post-secondary settings for many years, have not been in early childhood education settings for a long period of time. It was also expressed that new faculty coming in do not necessarily have much experience working with children and their qualifications are based more on theoretical or research focused degrees.

Considerations. While there was agreement that PD specific to play and learning would be beneficial for faculty, various considerations were also noted to be kept in mind. These considerations included such things as beliefs, faculty members as participants, budgetary limitations and contextual factors as well as the impact of PD initiatives themselves.

Beliefs about play and teaching. Participants in the study addressed how play and hands on experiences are encouraged but are not necessarily embraced. It was acknowledged that some subjects are more conducive to directly incorporating play than others and that play was noted to be described as something that is associated with ECE yet may not be seen as serious enough to those in other departments. The term "play" itself was perceived to be something that people may not buy into. It was voiced how play is similar to active learning, experiential learning and active engagement, yet these terms were noted to have more support in regard to effective practices to help adults learn.   It was expressed how some faculty were more comfortable in their beliefs and teaching approach, for example

110

teaching facts and using formal assessments, while some faculty or systems simply did not want to change. This needs to be kept in mind to tailor and market the PD initiatives accordingly.

Faculty members as participants. It was reported how faculty may have their guard up and may have a hard time letting go with colleagues in professional learning situations. It was also noted that it is hard to teach teachers. Faculty in ECTE are noted to come in with teaching experience and a lot of education. Faculty may prefer to gain information as compared to enjoy engaging in the process. The importance of having a special type of facilitator who can take these factors into account and engage mature learners in play was noted, "so from a more experienced learner's point of view, I think it takes a certain kind of facilitator that can really harness the mature learner and engage them in play," (Participant 11).

One participant clearly indicated that there is currently a divide in faculty, which may also affect who participates in PD initiatives as well as what initiatives need to include. Participants have indicated that there are those who have been teaching in post-secondary environments for a long period of time. They are close to retirement and may not necessarily be interested in participating as they feel they have the expertise already. New faculty, on the other hand, are more likely to attend as they want to secure full time positions. They are perceived to have more theoretical than practical qualifications and may not necessarily be those who will be teaching students in the long term.   The following dialogue transpired with Participant 16:

> Participant: It's a very interesting time in our field, I feel just based on the things that I'm
>   seeing. There's a whole group of people who've been there, done that, just
>   going to ride it out, like a big faction, a really big faction. And then there are a
>   whole bunch that are younger, that are pure academics because the college
>   system is asking for Ph.D. So they haven't worked with kids and if they have, it's
>   been minimal.
>
> Interviewer: It's more about qualifications than experience.
>
> Participant: Yeah. So there's a real divide in there.

Budgetary constraints and contextual factors. Individuals outlined how finances are required to send faculty to PD events as well as offer them at the college itself, particularly if the area is not one that may be seen as an asset to the institution. A participant clearly pointed out how free play, or play in its pure form, may not be possible in post-secondary settings and another addressed how faculty may not be able or willing to share due to institutional considerations. A couple of participants mentioned not being able to share course outlines and practices with others.

Chapter Summary

An examination of data revealed that participating faculty believed in the value of play for both children and adult learners in formal educational environments. The educator was viewed as having a central role in fostering play and learning for learners of all ages. By getting to know learners and creating respectful relationships as well as safe and fruitful environments, participants believed that play and learning could be maintained to help benefit students in their active construction of knowledge.

Participants' expressed and represented different descriptions of play through interviews and self-selected images. Key characteristics were identified through the terms participants had used, which included active engagement, freedom, as well as wonder and curiosity. While children's play was discussed in more detail, play for adult learners was deemed to look different than it did for children and was viewed as being more goal oriented. Data revealed that the participants' viewed play and learning being hand in hand when discussing children. The relationship was perceived to shift for adult learners as compared to children. A variety of external and internal factors impact adult learners when they arrive within the context of ECTE settings. Characteristics of adult learners and their past experiences, prior knowledge and skills, contextual factors within the institution as well as societal perceptions were all seen to play a role in separating play and learning in terms of adults in post-secondary environments.

Findings highlighted the various ways in which participants put these beliefs into teaching practices. Play related practices included specific teaching methods, which shared similar features. Methods were active, social and involved real applications, which fit within individuals' general teaching orientations. Children were also often brought into faculty's practices. Safe environments were created for such practices to occur with students and play-based methods were used in conjunction with other teaching methods, including reflection, to help connect theory and practice as well as stay in line with course related goals and outcomes. Participants addressed how play in ECTE settings differs as compared to play in ECEC as ECTE is more structured and goal oriented. They reported various benefits of their play related practices on student learning and positive student feedback. Participants' questions and thoughts highlighted the complexities of implementing play within formal education settings.

Data also highlighted how faculty's own education and experiences impact what they do and how this is undermined when operating within larger systems. Mediating factors at the classroom, institutional and social levels were deemed to influence what they do and when they do it when it comes to play. Participants addressed having to adapt their methods based on such things as the range of diverse students in their classes, students' reactions to play related methods, the topic or course being taught, as well as the physical space and materials available. Societal perceptions about play and

learning, play in adulthood and those working in ECTE as well as faculty's own beliefs and experiences were voiced to influence the play and learning relationship and ways in which play and learning comes to life in post-secondary environments.   Participating faculty agreed that faculty professional development initiatives specific to play and learning would be beneficial and provided recommendations as to what they should include as well as voicing considerations to keep in mind to help designers create and market PD experiences.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The study was designed to explore ECTE faculty's beliefs about play and learning and related practices when teaching preservice educators in recognized post-secondary Diploma and Certificate programs in Canada. As discussed in the *Findings* section, this goal was accomplished. To answer the main research question this dissertation provides a description of the key ideas and concepts identified by examining, summarizing and verifying 19 participants' stories about their beliefs about play and learning and related practices. Through this exploratory inquiry, an incredible amount of data was generated and findings were presented. "What is important is that we as researchers take the time to think about the potential usefulness or otherwise of the research we engage in" (Lyons, 2007, p. 172). Using Hyson et al.'s (2012) model as an organizational framework, insights gained from the analysis of the data will now be discussed in terms of how they fit within existing literature, questions that still remain unanswered, the study's limitations and contributions, as well as recommendations for moving forward.

Play and Learning within an ECTE Professional Development System

As indicated in Figure 1 within "*Chapter Two: Literature Review*" of this dissertation, Hyson et al. (2012) illustrate a model of an ECTE professional development system, within which higher education components interact within a larger system. Various features, including external influences, individual learners, as well as workplace resources and supports in addition to faculty, pedagogy and content components of higher education settings work together to achieve improved child and family outcomes. Findings from this study address various areas in the model when exploring play and learning in post-secondary ECTE and extend key areas as noted in color within the adapted figure (Figure 21), this will be further explained below.

Findings reveal information specific to faculty, pedagogy and content components within higher education settings as well as individual learners, and institutional external factors. This study revealed social perceptions as an additional external factor, which influences post-secondary ECTE, and thus it has been added in the model.   It was also revealed through this study that individual learners impact what and when things are done within faculty's practices in ECTE settings. A new arrow thus shows this contribution. It is also suggested that post-secondary ECTE programs have the potential to influence external factors and thus a new arrow was included to indicate a bidirectional relationship between the two areas.   Ways in which the study has addressed each area and how they fit within existing literature will now be discussed.
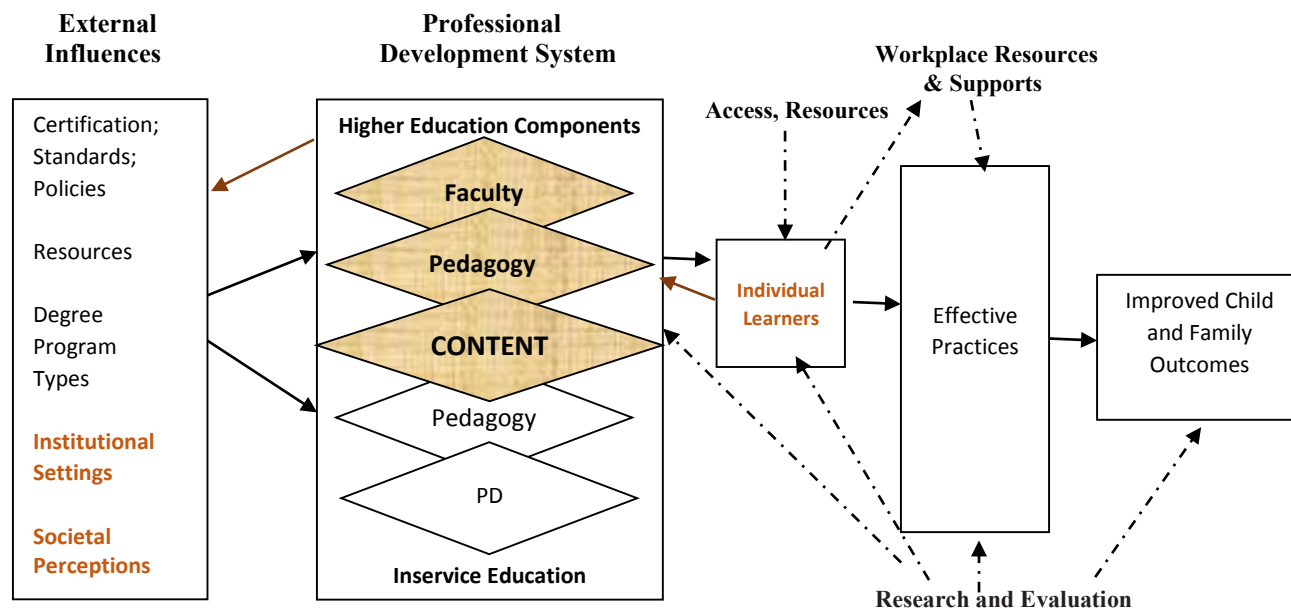
Figure 21. Findings illustrated within an adapted version of the ECTE professional development system model from Hyson et al., 2012. Areas addressed by this study's findings are highlighted in color.

ECTE faculty in higher education. The process of interviewing faculty members was one that was enjoyable. It was evident that they value play in education and wanted their voices to be heard. Individuals were eager and willing to share their stories, which in most cases, included elements of personal and professional lives. They were dependable, quick to reply when needed, and tremendously supportive throughout the process. The information shared by participants was a great source of insight, contributing to areas that had not previously been explored in great detail.

Findings from this study support how future research should include insights from ECTE faculty. Insights shared in this study helped provide information as to the role faculty members have within ECTE programs, their previous education and experience, and what they are doing as well as the challenges they face and factors that help support them. Faculty members are aware of the inner workings of the systems within which they work and have direct contact with many preservice educators. They help shape what preservice educators potentially learn and how they do so as they prepare to work with children in ECEC environments. It is also noted that they must increasingly guide early childhood professionals to be play advocates (Nicholson et al., 2014). Faculty are thus key players and their work needs to be explored, shared, and also evaluated to provide more support for them in their efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in ECTE programs.

Support was perceived as important, both at a departmental and institutional level, especially when there is a current lack of social recognition for those working in ECEC and play is seen to be

undervalued in education and in the lives of adults. As with the early childhood educators, faculty should also be offered continued, and varied, professional development opportunities designed to meet their needs and interests. Participants also provided indications that there is a need for future professional development for faculty specific to play and learning with recommendations as to what PD initiatives should include.

There is currently a lack of research on the professional development needs of those educating preservice educators. An online survey in United States found that they would like and could benefit from professional development initiatives but these courses and workshops have been hard to find (Byington & Tannock, 2011; Hyson et al., 2012). Findings revealed information as to the potential need for opportunities specific to play and learning as well the need for support from the department to attend such initiatives. As Weber-Mayrer, Piasta, and Pelatti (2015) state "it is important to explore participants' current beliefs and use this information as a basis for approaching PD content" (p. 55).

Within their recommendations, some participants, for example, voiced how important they think it is that faculty engage in ongoing work with children and expressed concerns that with higher qualifications placed on new faculty in ECTE programs, they will come into the field with limited practical experiences with children and have knowledge that is more likely founded in theory and research, which may impact having limited experience with children.   Providing known practical examples were voiced to help provide preservice educators keep informed and up to date as this was identified as a factor that helps faculty put their beliefs into practice.

Having experience teaching adults or education tied into adult learning principles may also be something for ECTE programs to consider as qualifications or included in future professional development initiatives to help support faculty. "Understanding of adult learning principles is also essential to ECE trainer effectiveness, enabling the trainers to provide professional development that is grounded in adult learning principles and is responsive to participants' skills and abilities" (Byington & Tannock, 2011, Adult Learning section, para. 1).   Within the current study it was also noted that participants mentioned being influenced by the works of various researchers and theorists, most of the names provided were specifically related to children's learning and development. Names of theorists and scholars whose work is specific to adult learning or teaching and learning in higher education were not discussed. Faculty's knowledge, experience, and interest in adult learning theory may be a potential area of future inquiry.

Play related practices (pedagogy). In addition to information about ECTE faculty, insights from this study are in line with and contribute to existing debates as to what is play, its relationship with

116

learning, as well as how it is implemented with adult learners within post-secondary ECTE settings. Findings also suggest that there is a potential relationship between faculty's beliefs about play and learning and their pedagogy thus key discussion points about participants' beliefs, practices, and the proposed relationship will be discussed within this section.

   How people learn. Participating faculty's views about children are congruent with evidence based principles of how children learn: being aware of developmental trajectories in childhood, seeing children as individuals who learn in different ways, helping ensure children's basic needs are being met while helping them develop skills that will help them succeed, children are active leaners, children learn best by interacting within their environments, and they learn with peers and adults in meaningful social environments (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2008).   Participants also addressed how "the process of learning is as important as the outcome" (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2008, Epilogue, How Children Learn section, para. 7).

   Faculty's views about how adults learn were also in line with adult learning theories, which state that adults are goal oriented and have gained knowledge through experience (Knowles, 1992), and that adults are more motivated to learn if they are active participants who can apply what they have learned and when material is relevant to them (Collins, Greeno, & Resnick, 2001). Adults were perceived as individuals who have more previous experiences, knowledge, and skills that they bring to the learning environment. While it was reported that students of various ages anywhere from 16 years to mature learners are enrolled in ECTE programs, developmental stages and developmentally appropriate practices were only discussed when participants talked about children, suggesting that development takes on a different meaning after childhood. Getting to know all learners as individuals, regardless of age, was perceived as key for educators to help students learn.

   In getting to know students, being flexible to adapt to students' needs and interests, and viewing learning as an active construction of knowledge, findings were corroborated with how children and adults learn, fitting within constructivist and learner centered approach to teaching.   There was acknowledgement that students actively create knowledge based on pre-existing knowledge and experiences, which is aligned with the idea that "to take learning seriously, we need to take learners seriously" (Shulman, 1999, p. 148). Findings supported existing research that highlights the importance of the educators' role in actively engaging learners within safe learning environments to help students learn. Participants' beliefs about how people learn fit within constructivist learner centered teaching approaches, which have gained popularity when the shift to a "learning paradigm" occurred during the latter part of the 20th century (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

What is play? This study's findings allude to the consensus that defining and understanding play is complex. Aligned with Smith (1988), there was no single definition of play given by participants. Similar characteristics (active engagement, freedom, as well as wonder and curiosity) were identified, which align with those within the literature (Neumann, 1971; Krasnor & Pepler, 1980; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Rubin et al., 1983). Findings within this study also support the presence of play in adulthood and outline how play looks a bit different in children as compared to adults. Play for adults was described to be more structured and goal oriented.

The relationship between play and learning. Findings support that a positive relationship exists between play and learning. The nature of the relationship, however, was perceived to change for adults as compared to children. Factors that may impact this change were identified and fit with Freysinger (2006)'s views on play in the context of life-span human development. She writes:

> A life-span perspective on play suggests that play's meanings, motivations, and forms are grounded within the context of the interaction of internal (biological and psychological) and external (social and cultural) factors and forces that change across time and with historical events – and that individuals are active in negotiating and directing their development…. Both continuity and change in the motivations for and forms of play across the life space emerge out of such interactions. (p. 60)

Freysinger goes on to suggest that adults are developmentally different from children and that engagement in play remains the same, however, how and why individuals engage differs. Play throughout the life span is stated to be impacted by age and psychosocial related factors, internal motivations, as well as social sanctions and expectations, particularly those that include extrinsic rewards in school settings.

The relationship between faculty's beliefs and practices. While it was not an intended goal of the study, the analysis indicated a relationship between faculty's beliefs about play and learning and their practices when teaching upcoming preservice educators in post-secondary ECTE settings. Within "*Chapter Five: Findings,*" Figure 21 illustrated a conceptual model as to how beliefs, practices and influential factors fit together within a proposed cycle based on the findings. The model, however, needs to be validated. Future research is required to support the relationship and to examine the presence and impact of mediating factors within the cycle. It is also noted that whereas Bennett et al.'s (1997) hypothesized model of a relationship between teachers' theories and action (Figure 2) displays mediating factors in terms of constraints that influence intended or actual practices, data within this study did not reveal information about this particular distinction and factors in this study were not

referred to as "constraints." Influential factors were considered elements that either helped or hindered implementation.

The value of play in ECTE. "Play is not an option, but is absolutely essential in the new culture of education…" (Johnson, 2014, p. 2).   Echoing this, all faculty members voiced support for the value of play in formal educational settings, including both ECEC and ECTE environments.   Findings suggest that play is possible and has many potential benefits, including its positive role in helping students learn. Within the context of ECTE, play was deemed to be very important to help upcoming educators understand the value of play for children's learning and development, to develop the knowledge and skills to help facilitate play when working with children, advocate the value to parents as well as reflect on and see play as being valuable in their own lives.

With the reported decline of free play opportunities for children in the past decade and the need to expand research on how children perceive adult's engagement in play due to the important role adults have in their lives, Nicholson, Shimpi, Kurnik, Carducci, and Jevgjovikj (2014), explored children's views about their own personal play experiences as well as how they see play across the lifespan. Children expressed that adults do play but do not play enough and noted that adults should engage in more self-reflection about play in their own lives. "The children in this study demonstrated why our concerns and advocacy must include not only an emphasis on what is happening to reduce children's opportunities to play, but also the state of play in adults' lives" (p. 150).   Children recognize the benefits of play. As participants indicated, adults, however, seem to forget or lose sight of them. It is thus important for ECTE programs to ensure that play is not only included within students' learning experiences, but that using play practices within teaching helps students learn from children and gain understanding of the value of play throughout the lifespan.

"Teacher education programs should model a continuum of care for the learners from early childhood through adulthood." (Stremmel, 2015, P. 164) Play was deemed important not only in terms of learning about play and developing the skills to facilitate play with children, participants also discussed how play can help educators themselves and help them take on the role of play advocates. As Nicholson et al. (2014) state "…we argue that supporting early childhood professionals to learn to care for themselves through play, where they 'live' this ethic instead of just talking about its importance, is essential work" (p. 1205). Nell and Drew (2014), in discussing examples of play workshops for early childhood educators within the United States express the following:

Experiences that develop preservice teachers' abilities to relate to children with empathy and

insight prepare them for effective teaching. Intentional play experiences in undergraduate

119

programs can help preservice teachers connect ideas, feelings, and new understandings through

discovery and exploration that supports personal well-being. (p. 74)

In terms of advocacy, "if we want a future early childhood workforce who will advocate for children's

right to play in child care, preschools and public school classrooms, we need to support them to gain the

knowledge and dispositions they will need to speak articulately about the value of play in children's

lives" (Nicholson et al., 2014 p. 1205). To do so, it is recommended by the authors that those teaching

preservice teachers should help students examine their own relationships to play throughout the

lifespan. Helping upcoming educators embrace the potential benefits of play in their own personal and

professional lives, may help contribute to a shift in societal perceptions of play and its relationship with

learning for adults and its place in post-secondary settings.

     Implementing play in education. All participants stated that they implemented play into

practice within their teaching yet findings and participants' reflections throughout the process bring to

light the complexities inherent not only in defining play but also in describing how it can be effectively

implemented with adult learners in educational settings. Findings reveal various questions and

considerations, which will now be discussed.

     Benefits of play for student learning. Within today's society, current practices within colleges

and universities are geared to help students gain specific knowledge, skills and competencies that will

help them be prepared for the workplace as well as a rapidly changing world (Barnett, 2007), in which

they can cope with complexity and change (Entwistle, 2011). "Higher education should thus be

concentrating on helping students develop skills, attitudes, knowledge, and understanding that will be

of maximum value beyond academe; not just an induction into the world of work in a specific

profession, but also an effective preparation for life in the 21st century" (Entwistle, 2011, p. 20). As

findings suggest, play related practices can assist students' development of knowledge and skills that

may transfer outside of the classroom. Play also opens up opportunities to deal with complexities and

change. Play can allow for exploration and active engagement in learning opportunities. This

engagement, through play, may also be enjoyable for students.

     Is it actually play? The ways in which participants reported using play was in line with play they

described for adults in that it was more structured and goal directed than children's play. Findings

indicated that play was reportedly connected closely with theory and course goals when implemented in

practice. Freedom, which involved no rules, no structure, and no set agenda was a key characteristic

identified in the study to define play yet faculty reported how play is being used directly tied to theory

and specific outcomes. This raises the question if what faculty are reportedly doing in practice is really play.

When speaking about children's play, for example, some argue "the more closely the adults' intentions are foregrounded, the less likely it is that the activity retains elements of play or playfulness, or attends to children's purposes" (Wood, 2014, p. 150). Gray (2008) also states that:

> Play serves the serious purpose of education, but the player is playing for fun; education is the by-product. If the player were playing for serious purpose, it would no longer be play, and much of the educative power would be lost. (p. 154)

While participants consider their practices to be play, it is thus recognized that ways in which faculty described play in practice may be put into question.

In the study a participant also questioned that what a teacher intends to be play may not necessarily be play for the students themselves. If we use the definition of playing from Jones (2012) to be "choosing something to do, doing it and enjoying it" (as cited in Nell & Drew, 2013, p. xii), it could be perceived that methods directed by the instructor may not actually be play. While findings from this study contribute to the limited information on play and adult learners, it also suggests that future research delves further into play in adulthood. A new definition of play, which takes into account adults and their development, may be needed. Further explorations as to students' reactions to play related practices in post-secondary settings may also be beneficial in order to examine what is and what is not play in formal education environments.

A continuum of play. While there are no existing discussions within the literature as to different ways in which play is implemented with adult learners in educational practice, there are variations for play pedagogy for children. In applying participants' descriptions of play related practices within existing continuums it is proposed that what faculty described in their practices is play. Their practices, however, are seen to fit within an "Enhance-Learning-Outcomes-Through-Play Approach" (Trawick-Smith, 2012), or a "technicist version of educational play" (Wood, 2014). Free, unstructured play experiences in ECTE whereby adult learners had spontaneous engagement that was intrinsically valuable to the learner were extremely rare based on the information participants shared. Most play experiences were structured and dictated by the faculty themselves, and were designed to achieve particular outcomes. It is perceived that faculty use "play *in* educational practice" as compared to "play *as* educational practice" (Wood, 2014), and most practices in ECTE would land on the directed side of a play continuum as practices are viewed to be guided forms of play versus free play (Miller & Almon,

2009).   More research is needed to better understand play specific to adult learning and play in post-secondary contexts including potential variations within.

Play versus playful practices. Another question that emerged in this study is whether play is essentially being put into practice or whether faculty are providing playful activities and conditions within the learning environment. For example, Participant 10 voiced the following:

> Well that was my struggle when I sat down to write. I know I am really trying my best to have an environment that is playful, but when I had to think of concrete examples of how they get to play, that's where I got stuck…

When looking at how participants described play, playful and playful practices within the findings (Table 4), there was a distinction between the action of play itself, being light and carefree in environments where play is not necessarily possible, and practices that are planned and structured by the educator to promote the possibility of engaging in play.   Considering the factors mentioned by faculty within post-secondary environments for play to occur and the lack of choice and freedom for adult learners in ECTE settings, perhaps playful practices are implemented instead of play itself. Findings therefore suggests that to better understand play and learning as well as the implementation of play in teaching and learning, future research should explore not only play but also playful practices, and differences that differentiate them.

Play spaces. Participants explicitly stated the importance of creating environments for play and learning to occur. They expressed the importance that environments are safe. The impact of classroom safety has been reported to promote student engagement and allow for risk taking, which then allows students to learn from mistakes, try new or alternative thoughts and behaviours as well as play with possibilities (Barrett, 2010).

Play spaces, and the value of play spaces, have been previous described within the literature. Johnson (1991) defines a play space as "an enhanced space where the imagination infuses the ordinary" (p. 289).   Meyer (2010) outlines how play spaces within organizations are where new problems, change, innovation, relational and transformational learning are fostered. A ludic or play space is one that is reported to promote deep learning within various realms as it "expands beyond its limited existence in time and space to form a self-organizing community with tradition of its own" (Kolb & Kolb, 2010, p. 30). The notion of a "play space" to promote learning is an interesting and important finding, which may be a topic of future inquiry.   It is recommended that faculty further reflect on and researchers investigate (a) the role of the play space within their practices in ECTE programs, (b) the necessary conditions to

help create and foster a play space, as well as (c) the impact of play spaces on student learning and the implementation of such spaces when working in ECEC environments.

Outdoor spaces were perceived by participants to be important for children's play while only a few faculty members discussed engaging in play related practices outside with adult learners. If adults are uncomfortable and not know what to do outdoors they may be less likely to know how to promote outdoor play within ECEC settings. Within their study McClintic and Petty (2015) described that:

> Teachers viewed the indoor classroom as the learning place, which indicated a lack of understanding of the benefits and learning potential in outdoor play. Understanding the full teacher experience as it relates to outdoor play can contribute and expand the teaching profession's comprehension of the significance of outdoor play for young children. (p. 39)

It is also recommended that faculty development initiatives explore faculty's beliefs and practices specific to outdoor play and that ECTE program support faculty's endeavours when teaching preservice educators.

Play versus active, experiential and collaborative learning strategies. Examples were provided and key features of play related methods were identified in this study. Play related practices were reported to be methods that actively engage students with materials and with each other. They also involved real life applications.   Play-based methods thus share key features of adult learning theory, namely promoting adult's interest through immediate application of new knowledge (Merriam, 2001). In this study practices shared similar characteristics to examples provided in the literature. For example, Nell and Drew (2013) describe various cases of self-active play experiences with open-ended materials implemented with preservice educators.

Play related methods may be considered to be similar to active, experiential, or collaborative methods, which are methods that are noted to be good practices in post-secondary settings (Bain, 2004; Cameron, 1999; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Filene, 2005), as they promote active learner engagement, enhance understanding, and promote deep approaches to learning (Marton & Säljö, 1976). How play is similar or how it differs from other methods, however, is not clear. When discussing current professional development Participant 9 stated how:

> I don't know if they would call it play. I think there are a lot of things they call "active learning."
> And now that's a big, that's a BIG buzz, you know, area of concentration now for professional
> development for adults is active learning, which I guess is involving more variety of ways of, you
> know, there's an understanding that, you know, that not all students learn the same way and

sitting and listening in the big lecture hall isn't going to cut it…I guess that could be sort of play. I don't think they call it play.

Other methods that share similar features currently have support in education. In discussing her views on professional development initiatives, Participant 1 expressed:

... and perhaps you need to call it active engagement as opposed to play or joyful learning, or ... because this is a society, we're still seeing play as being childish and so it has no place in academia, so I think you have to sadly change the wording to active engagement or joyful learning or something like that, which is in essence play, in order to have people buy into it.

Future research that compares play related methods with other teaching methods may be beneficial, particularly as it may provide more support for the use of play in ECTE and other programs within higher education, and may potential help change the negative stigma that is described to be associated with play and learning.

A disconnect between practices and intended outcomes. Participants indicated keen support for free play with children in ECEC settings. They voiced the importance of providing time and opportunities for children to engage in play experiences in which they have freedom and the chance to lead.   Faculty supported spontaneous free play, which has been reported to have many benefits yet "this kind of play is often shut down by adults who experience it as noisy, messy, silly, chaotic, risky, uncivilized, dangerous and annoying" (Hewes, 2014, p. 296).   The type of play reported in practice in ECTE, however, is aligned with their views of play and learning for adults. It is reported to be more structured and goal oriented than the free play they associate with children. There thus appears to be a disconnect between what faculty practice in ECTE settings and what they ultimately want students to do with children.

By engaging in play related practices that are tied closely to theory and course goals faculty may be reinforcing the current discourse in which "the assumption, of course, is that play guided by teachers will lead to more cognitive and academic gains than solely child-directed play." (Cooper, 2014, p. 293). Participants indicated how they believe that to understand play, students need to experience it. It is recommended that faculty consider ways in which they can provide students more time, freedom, choice, and opportunities to engage in spontaneous free play themselves to better align their practices with what they would like students to do with children.   In attempts to help preservice educators understand the value of free play for children, faculty may consider how to model practices in which they implement free play.

Findings indicate that in most cases reported by faculty, play is incorporated as practice, as a way to apply and connect experiences with theory. In many of the examples shared, play was used after theory had been covered.   Based on theories of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), concrete experience and practice (play) can also be a primary source of learning for adult learners. It is recommended that children, as the ultimate teachers of play, continue to be included within faculty's practices. As reported by participants, however, implementing play is already difficult due to the various factors that influence what it is they can do. Early childhood teacher education departments thus need to consider ways to support practices that ultimately benefit preservice educators.

Play knowledge, skills, and playful dispositions. There is a current lack of information about the place of play in post-secondary ECTE programs and findings raise questions about what preservice educators need to know, be able to do, and what dispositions should be fostered in students. "The fact that the field has persisted in advocating for children's play but has done little to document what teachers need to know and do to be able to use play in the curriculum in meaningful and relevant ways allows others, such as policymakers, to use play as a site for their own interest" (Ryan & Northey-Berg, 2014, p. 212). Further dialogue is required between key players in ECTE programs before they can help ensure faculty's practices are aligned with the intended program outcomes.   Faculty's voices may be an important contribution to this conversation.

While most participants reported examples in which play was used as a specific method within a broader teaching orientation, a few faculty members alluded to using methods and creating conditions to help foster a play state or mindset.   This suggests ECTE role in developing particular dispositions.

> If play is considered to be valuable for developing learning dispositions, rather than for
> achieving predetermined curriculum goals, then its position remains vulnerable in a technicist
> discourse. This constitutes the 'knowledge problem' in early childhood curricula and in policy
> versions of play. (Wood, 2014, p. 150).

In voicing how early childhood educators should be playful, perhaps ECTE programs should consider developing playfulness and playful dispositions in students in addition to developing knowledge, and practical skills to facilitate play with children. Ryan and Northey-Berg (2014) also address that "…when teachers learn about play they also need to learn how to navigate, and contest work environments that counter the research-proven effects of play in the curriculum" (p. 208).

Non-traditional and traditional approaches to teaching. A common theme that arose within the study was the perception of play related approaches as being "non-traditional."   Comments were made, for example, that a play type of learning environment is considered non-traditional as it can involve such

things as being in the "yoga studio with feather boas" (Participant 5). Another faculty member commented on how she perceives herself as "non-typical" teacher. "I am not what they perceive as being your typical teacher. I am not there to pump you full of knowledge. I'm there to inspire you to figure out the knowledge yourself" (Participant 14). A more play-based approach was directly compared to students having to memorize terms and terminology that has been given to them verbally or through the use of PowerPoint presentations. When speaking about her students, Participant 1 stated:

> When they finally connect the dots they go 'oh my goodness' like 'I learned so much' and yet 'it was fun and we were active and I know everybody in the room.' And that's quite a different approach to sitting silently in your room writing notes for an hour and a half and then only engaging with the one person who happens to be sitting beside you, and that's only on break.

There was an underlying message that on a continuum, participants viewed play as being on the opposite end of traditional forms of teaching and "serious work." Traditional forms included such things as direct instruction lecture, rote learning and theory related components.

> When students are engaged in a way that you can obviously see their creativity, their imagination, their thinking changes. They're not just trying to memorize facts and details. They're actually trying to experience it, and to me that's when play is happening in the classroom. (Participant 5)

Theory heavy courses or topics were noted to not be conducive to play related practices and in many cases faculty did not engage in play related practices in such cases. Adult learners' past school experiences, when described, were noted to impact what they brought to post-secondary environments and were perceived to negatively impact students' reactions to play related methods.

Within this binary, however, traditional forms were identified to take precedence. Play related methods were always used in conjunction with other methods, such as direct instruction. In many cases theory was covered before students engaged in practice (play). Based on the findings, the relationship between play and "traditional" teaching is perceived to look like Figure 22, where both play (coloured giraffe) and traditional (black and white giraffe) methods have a place in ECTE play and yet traditional methods reign.

Figure 22. Image depicting the current relationship between traditional and non-traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Reprinted with permission. © http://www.hartung.net

With further research efforts, which examine the effectiveness of play related teaching methods and the relationship of traditional and non-traditional forms of teaching as well as continued advocacy from ECTE programs and faculty about the benefits and value of play as learning, this image may change. With creative and play related teaching being modelled in ECTE, preservice educators may then be able to implement effective "non-traditional" practices in order to have positive outcomes on children and their families.

> Although at times it seems as though academic freedom has been reduced in the era of standardization, we have found that thoughtful, inquisitive, and imaginative professors can practice what they preach. Our hope is that our candidates echo our efforts – taking reflective practice, a stance toward inquiry, creativity and differentiation back to their very own classrooms. (Griess & Keat, 2014, p. 108)

Content. The study did not focus on collecting and analyzing information specific to play related content within ECTE programs. In talking to faculty, however, play is perceived to be incorporated within existing programs although there are not necessarily play specific courses or play specific outcomes for student learning. Course content was identified to be a factor that influenced faculty's practices yet some faculty discussed their practices solely in terms of teaching play content, whereas others did not. It is also recognized that upcoming educators need more than knowledge about play. "Further research is needed to develop effective strategies to help teachers implement play in public school kindergartens, beyond a narrow focus on increasing teachers' knowledge regarding play's benefits (valuable though this may be)" (Lynch, 2015, p. 365). While Johnson (2014) suggests that play courses should be mandatory for teachers in ECEC and elementary schools, more details on play content

127

within ECTE programs along with a more detailed exploration of play related teaching methods based on course content is recommended.

       Institutional setting. In line with Figure 21 above, institutional settings were identified to be an external factor that influences how faculty's beliefs about play and learning are being put into teaching practices within higher education settings. ECTE programs are housed within larger institutional structures and elements such as learning spaces (classrooms, access to outdoors and large open spaces), along with such factors as resources, funding and requirements were found to be very influential in terms of faculty's teaching practices. Due to the large number of participants as well as taking into consideration the timelines and having one sole researcher work on this study, contextual data, including the information about the institution and the province or territory where faculty are employed was not included. In future studies it may be beneficial to examine elements of higher education factors and how they are operating in relation to external factors within the ECTE professional system.

       ECTE programs, as being sites in which preservice educators prepare to work with children, also have a responsibility to emphasize and advocate for play. By more explicitly emphasizing the importance of play throughout ECTE programs within their courses, curriculum, student outcomes and faculty's teaching practices, they can in turn potentially influence institutional views and policies about the need for play and its benefits when used in teaching. The relationship is thus bidirectional, as indicated in Figure 21.

       Societal perceptions. The study's findings reveal that societal perceptions are an additional external influence impacting the ECTE professional development system and yet ECTE programs can also act as a model to help change societal views. Societal perceptions and their relationship with higher education components have been added within Figure 21.

       Participants addressed how play is undervalued, particularly in adulthood and voiced how play is not commonly viewed as having a place in post-secondary settings. These societal perceptions were seen to impact students' expectations and behaviours thus resulting in influencing faculty members' play related teaching practices.

       While the value of play and its place in adulthood is gaining some recognition in some non-academic circles, as evidenced within marketing campaigns, online blogs, and magazine articles, the findings indicated that there needs to be a shift in discourse about play and its role in education, not only for children. Selander (2008), in discussing how to design spaces for play and learning, reinforced the need to change how we think about learning. Instead of seeing play and learning as separate entities, Selander suggest that we perceive "learning as creative processes, as ludic engagements and

transformational processes" (Selander, 2008, p. 151).   It is also recommended that we "place value in play conceptually, 'for its own sake' as a relevant form of behaviour rather than limited to its role as a means to other ends'" (van Leeuwen & Westwood, 2008, p. 160). Again, as ECTE programs are sites that should recognize the value of play, act as advocates in helping transform societal views about what play does for children and adult learners as well as value "non-traditional" teaching methods and ways that learning in post-secondary education can actually be fun.

     Individual learners. Findings from the study indicate that individual learners within ECTE programs are not only affected by education and professional development that occurs within higher education settings, the characteristics and needs they bring impacts faculty and their teaching practices. Within post-secondary environments it is reported that "current conditions increase the pressure to develop learning environments that respond to a more diverse student body and to create higher-quality learning environments that prepare all student for the 21st-century global marketplace and a lifetime of continuous learning" (Kinzie, 2011, p. 139).   Participants' discussed the importance of getting to know students as individuals as much as possible within the context of their classrooms. They also described the increasingly diverse range of students they teach and that students' characteristics, moods and reactions to play related teaching methods impacted what they do and when they do it. This supports Day, Lovato, Tull, and Ross-Gordon's (2011) findings that suggest "…that faculty in many cases have become aware of adult learner characteristics and can articulate teaching strategies that have been impacted by the presence of this student population in their classrooms" (p. 82). Individual learners were a key factor in influencing the implementation of faculty's play and learning centered beliefs and this is illustrated by the inclusion of a new arrow in Figure 21. It is recommended that future research explore faculty's beliefs and practices in conjunction with information about individual learners' characteristics and experiences.

     Summary. In summary, this study only provided a glimpse, on a small scale, of information about faculty, pedagogy and content features related to play and learning within the ECTE professional development system in Canada. Further research is required to examine how these elements are influenced and impact other features within the ECTE professional development system.   Findings from this study raise many questions and highlight the importance of future research specific to play and learning within post-secondary ECTE settings. It is recommended that key players, including faculty and individual learners, engage in serious dialogue as well as act as a source of information for researchers about the needs of early childhood educators' education specific to play and ways in which it is being done.

While the study revealed an extensive amount of information and findings raised various questions, the study is not without limitations. The study's limitations along with its main contributions will be now discussed prior to outlining future directions and recommendations.

Limitations

It is recognized that while there was more interest in participation than expected, 19 faculty members do not represent the whole landscape of ECTE faculty teaching in Canada. Participating faculty were from 13 institutions in 6 different provinces and territories. There are thus many more stories to be heard if we hope to get a good look at what is happening in terms of play and learning within recognized preservice education programs in Canada.

Faculty members who volunteered to participate in the study were those who valued play and learning and who believed they implement play and learning in their practices. It was apparent that participants were interested in reflecting upon and improving their practices or were using this as an opportunity to participate in a form of professional development. It is recognized that most participants (84%) were between the ages of 40-59, and most were working within college settings, which may potentially be a factor in how they perceive play and what they do.

This qualitative study aimed to "understand and explore the central phenomenon, not to develop a consensus of opinion for the people you study" (Creswell, 2008, p. 141). Due to the nature of the research, generalizations cannot be made for others outside of this study. Individuals' beliefs and practices were unique to their own respective experiences and contexts and were shared to provoke further dialogue and research.

The large number of participants influenced the richness of the cases presented. While each individual case was given a great deal of attention prior to identifying group themes and data from each participant is included within the dissertation, it is acknowledged that some participants' quotes and images were included more than others. Contextual details about each specific case and the equal representation each faculty members' voice within the findings is thus somewhat limited.

In terms of data collection, it is acknowledged that when answering the questions as to how people learn prior to the first interviews about their beliefs, participants were aware that the focus of the project was play and learning. Their answers may thus have been prompted to include elements specific to play. This study also relied on self-reported information and thus observations, student input and course evaluations are required within future studies to examine the effectiveness of play related teaching methods for individual learners.

Contributions

There are various ways in which this study has contributed to research and practice. It provides the foundation and serves as a catalyst for further dialogue, research, and reflection within ECTE. As mentioned, research on play and learning in adulthood is limited. One of this study's key contributions to literature is information shared by faculty on play and learning in educational settings from childhood to adulthood, and potential contributing factors that may influence the shift. This study may provoke continued research on the area of play and learning throughout human development.

Research on play and learning in higher education is also limited. Findings contribute to knowledge by providing examples of how play related practices are implemented in post-secondary ECTE settings as well as reveals various factors that may influence implementation. This helps fill the gap as well as lay the foundation for further dialogue and research.

Research on play and learning in ECTE settings has not previously been given much attention, and this study provides a foundation for those interested in research on ECTE, particularly in Canada. Findings from this study come at an important time during which there are concerns that play is on the decline for children and there is presently an increase in post-secondary education qualifications for those planning to work in ECEC. This study therefore has various players who may benefit from the findings, which may result in various implications.

Whereas research on teacher beliefs has included teachers and early childhood educators, despite their important role in educating preservice teachers, this is the first extensive research study that has included faculty as participants across a diverse landscape of ECTE in Canada. Findings reveal information about some ECTE faculty members in Canada, paving the way for future research and supporting the value of providing opportunities for faculty to share their stories.

The study was unique as it integrated various methods to embrace complexity and multiple ways of knowing, creating and representing data while placing participants' stories and reflective practice at its core. It introduces a way to study teacher beliefs and practices.

Findings may also be of interest to faculty, ECTE departments, as well as faculty and educational developers. The study contributes to research on ECTE faculty's professional development needs. Findings from this study and recommendations provided by faculty also help inform faculty and educational developers as to how to design, market and recruit for play specific faculty professional development initiatives in the future. The use of a model (Figure 20) to instigate conversations about the relationship between faculty's beliefs and practices is also proposed. Faculty can be guided to think about the relationship between their beliefs and practices as well as constraints and supports that are

131

applicable to them. Faculty may also be guided to create their own models to help provide further insights. The study provided participants with an opportunity to discuss play and learning. "Isn't that funny, I haven't really thought of this in detail before" (Participant 5). She went on to state

>And it's given me an opportunity to kind of think about it. It not only helps me improve my practice as well, it will help me just being able to have, to put into words, to you what I thought about play and why I think it is important and why I think it is important really I think, like I do bring play into my teaching and I do bring play into my classroom but this might make me become more thoughtful about it. More, about how I am doing it, about how I am doing it.

Considering that "reflection is considered to be a critical component of the development of teaching expertise at all levels" (Kane et al., 2002, p. 183), and reflection is perceived to act "as a mechanism for the improvement and development of teaching" (McAlpine & Weston, 2000, p. 382) as well as through reflective practices beliefs can be made explicit, and thus scrutinized (Meier & Stremmel, 2010), the study, due to its four-stage model and the types of data collected, acted as research and a form of professional development for the researcher and the participants.

Participants indicated how participation in the project contributed to their own development and how it may influence their own practice and the study may be the foundation for a faculty members' participation in an applied research project. Sending participants' a copy of the researchers' understandings for verification was also viewed as a valuable piece of the research.   Many participants were thankful to receive a summary of their views and practices from someone who had listened to their stories. It was voiced, for example that "it is interesting to read about our conversation and to 'see' my perspectives in print!! This helps me to keep my vision clear in my collaborating with students and children, so I thank you for including me in your research" (Participant 6).

The study's methodology and subsequent findings give practical considerations to researchers, scholars, faculty, faculty professional developers, and individuals within ECTE programs in various ways. The study thus sets the stage for future directions.

Recommendation and Future Directions

In moving forward, a summary of specific key recommendations for research, ECTE departments, and ECTE faculty are noted below.

Research. It is recommended that future research continue to examine play specific course content, related outcomes and teaching practices within ECTE programs, including the effectiveness of such practices and influential and contextual factors. Based on the findings, it is also recommended that researchers (a) explore characteristics and types of play specific to adult learners, (b) include faculty,

students, and administrative input, (c) compare faculty's play related beliefs and practices within particular institutions or provinces and territories, (d) explore university based ECTE degree programs, (e) use smaller samples to provide richer descriptions of individual meaning embedded within specific contents, (f) use larger samples that provide a broader outlook as to who faculty are and what they do in terms of play and learning, (g) include observations of faculty's play-based practices, (h) include students' (both current students and graduates) input and explores the effectiveness of play related methods, (i) provide participants a choice as to their level of disclosure, when possible, (j) include narrative and arts based methods to elicit and disseminate information, (k) consider the use of photo-elicitation interviews as a form of data collection in IPA studies, (l) include more than one researcher to help provide general descriptions of the content of images, (m) blend methods and research traditions to best answer research questions, and (n) use research as a form of professional development for both participants and the researcher.

When conducting research involving multiple sites and multiple provinces and territories, researchers should also be aware that undergoing numerous ethic review applications is a daunting task. While it should not be a deterrent to including multiple voices, it is recommended that one be cognizant of policies as well as different application procedures in order to plan accordingly. Researchers also should be aware of copyright and ethic related issues when deciding how to use images within research.

ECTE departments. "In short, early childhood teacher education has a rightful role and distinct responsibility to guide teacher candidates in how to guide young children's play" (Cooper, 2014, p. 295). ECTE programs have a very important role in advocating for play. They are not solely influenced by external factors, as Hyson et al.'s (2012) original model suggests. Rather, ECTE programs in higher education settings and key players within can act as advocates to help shift institutional and societal views of the value of play and its importance in teaching and learning. Based on the rich qualitative data from this study, it is recommended that ECTE departments (a) provide support for practices that promote play and learning, (b) provide time, funding, and opportunities for faculty to share, study, and engage in play related conversations and professional development, (c) provide time for faculty to share insights about what they need in order to promote play and learning better (space, resources, schedules, class sizes) and act upon insights provided, (d) advocate for play related practices and what is needed for implementation from senior administration, (e) engage in conversations, research and evaluation about play within the program, in terms of content, practices and goals (competencies), (f) market play and play pedagogy as a central feature of ECTE programs, and (g) engage in conversations about faculty qualifications and ongoing professional development requirements.

ECTE Faculty. In terms of ECTE faculty, information has been identified and based on this, it is recommended that faculty (a) engage in continuous reflection on their beliefs, practices and mediating factors that impact play and learning in the education of preservice educators, (b) seek and attend professional development opportunities specific to play and learning, (c) embrace their role as advocate and model by speaking up, engaging in further dialogue and demonstrating the value of play and learning throughout the lifespan, (d) seek out support from within the department, institution, learning communities, organizations or family members, (e) engage in further self-study, research, and disseminate information about their play related beliefs and practices through workshops, conferences, scholarship of teaching and learning, (f) continue to celebrate their role and the importance of their practices and (g) engage in play in their own lives.

While there are many future paths that lie ahead, overall the study answered its main research question and did what it set out to do that is, highlight the voices of ECTE faculty, whose responsibility is to educate the upcoming ECEC workforce. The study contributed to promoting play and learning in education in the future, as evidenced by the feedback provided by participating faculty members and the conversations that have resulted. "I must say that I thought of you today when I chose to let the students play vs. following the protocol to 'push through' content lecture style because of the time crunch of the end of the term" (Participant 7). Another participant stated that she felt she should write parts of her beliefs and practices as a manifesto, to remind her of the importance of play in learning, especially when becoming faced with challenges. "Reading this reminds me how important it is to shake things up, to make people move around, to disengage from complacency, and to just generally laugh and play more!" (Participant 5).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

"Our teaching lives are ultimately stories not just of what we do, but of who we are" (Stremmel et al., 2015). Through images, narratives and conversations, 19 faculty members from 13 different post-secondary settings within 6 provinces and territories shared stories about their own and students' experiences, contributing data to how they have come to perceive play and learning as well as who they are as faculty members. Through a multi stage collaborative and reflective meaning making experience, insights about play and learning within the realm of early childhood teacher education emerged. Individuals' stories highlight the complexities of play and learning as well as the diverse landscape of ECTE in Canada.

The central topic of this study was play and its potential relationship with learning within formal educational settings. It was created based on recognition that play has a place in the lives of children and adults as well as the reported value play has for learning and development. The place of play in the lives of children and adult learners in formal education settings is an area that warrants more consideration. Participants voiced that free play is at risk within socio cultural contexts that are emphasizing accountability, standardization and school readiness at younger ages. As findings within this study suggest, play is central to the lives of children and it is how children learn. Play is also present within the lives of adults and can promote adult learning in various ways, yet play in adulthood and in post-secondary settings takes on a different shape, and is not as readily valued. While participating faculty voiced their own contributions to promoting play and learning, continued efforts to understand and advocate for play and learning throughout the human lifespan are worthy of attention. There is a need for further dialogue and research.

While play is most commonly associated with children and has a longstanding tradition in early childhood education settings, information about the role of play in adult learning has been limited and the place of play in post-secondary environments is not known. This study contributes insights within these particular areas, including ways in which the play and learning relationship differs for children and adults as well as factors that may impact the change. Higher education settings are potentially a place in which play can be of value for student learning, particularly for those wanting to obtain education in ECTE programs in preparation for their key role in creating optimal environments for children's learning and development in the ECEC workforce. The importance of play in ECEC and its place in post-secondary ECTE settings is supported by faculty within this study yet continued conversations, reflection and research are required in order to discover ways in which it can be effectively implemented, including the use of experience and children as sources of learning, in order to benefit both adult

learners as well as children who will be under their care. Continued dialogue may promote support for "non-traditional" yet effective methods of teaching and learning and may begin to change societal views on the value of play and learning in educational settings.

Implementation of play within ECEC settings has been an area of great debate, with no consensus as to the most effective practices to help promote positive outcomes that will benefit children, families and society. Various factors are at work, including the indefinable play term itself, as well as the what, how, when to implement it, and the appropriate interaction with children during play experiences.   The complexities surrounding putting play into practice within education have reportedly contributed to the creation of different terms and approaches to play-based pedagogy. They have also been noted to create obstacles, which result in play not being implemented in practice even when educators have stated how they believe in its value.   What educators do with children has been described as being vital, and thus it is essential to explore what and how they are being taught.   The present study echoes the complexities involved in implementing play in educational settings yet reveals ways in which some faculty are reportedly implementing play in their own practices to help preservice teachers understand, value and be comfortable implementing play with children, which contributes to gaps in the literature on play with adult learners in post-secondary ECTE settings.

This study additionally gave voice and cast a spotlight on ECTE faculty teaching within various institutions across Canada. As findings show, implementing play within ECTE brings on its own array of interrelated factors that influence what and how it is done.   There are multiple avenues within this topic area that are yet to be explored.

Education and training for early childhood staff has been shown to be an important factor contributing to quality ECEC experiences for children and as a result, higher education qualifications for early childhood educators are on the rise.   Early childhood teacher education has been perceived to be a fruitful environment for educators to develop play related knowledge and skills, and thus is a venue that can influence educators' play related practices with children in the workplace. While information about play specific content within recognized post-secondary ECTE programs is currently limited, however, less is known about ways in which play is taught. This is particularly true within the Canadian ECTE landscape, a vast and complex system that has not previously been explored in great detail. This study provides examples and key features of play related practices that are reportedly used with preservice educators within the professional development system as well as highlights ECTE faculty's voices, which provide a foundation and encourages further research in Canada as well as other countries.

The study celebrates Canadian ECTE faculty and for the first time their contributions are voiced. They are given an opportunity to share information about who they are, what they believe in, and what they do. Faculty members can be a great source of information, as demonstrated through their insights on play and learning provided for both children and adult learners within this study. Individuals' participation in this research reinforces how interested some faculty are to share their stories and the willingness of most participants to reveal their real names within the project indicates how they take ownership and pride in their work. This is again something to be celebrated.

Findings outlined faculty's beliefs about play and learning for both children in ECEC as well as adults in ECTE settings. Examples of play related practices within ECTE programs were outlined, ways in which these practices fit within broader teaching orientations were described, and various influential factors operating at various levels were identified. The study was based on the assumption that a relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices exists and findings with this particular sample supported the existence of a relationship. A model outlining the proposed relationship and mediating factors was provided. The model may help understand and contribute ways to explore the teacher beliefs-practices relationship further as well as the complexities of implementing play with adult learners in formal post-secondary settings.

The study does not promote definite conclusions and caution must be taken when making generalizations outside of the particular sample through which the findings were identified. What the study has done, however, is facilitated a group of faculty members and a student researcher to reflect in detail upon play and learning, an exercise that has potentially changed their views or impacted their lives in some way. It has also provided findings that act as a starting point and raises further questions about play and adult learning, and its potential role in formal post-secondary settings in order to ultimately help early childhood educators understand the value of play and implement it with children and perhaps in their own lives. The methodology is one that integrates various methods, with its own strengths and limitations, which can be used or adapted to explore teaching beliefs and practices in the future. It is a qualitative method that utilizes various forms of data to elicit and represent participants' meanings, as well as promotes co-creation of meanings through dialogue and continuous opportunities for reflection.

As Johnson (2014) writes, "…play has come a long way; and the current state of play, researching play, and teaching play is a dynamic one full of possibilities for new research, theory and application" (p. 2). It is hoped that this study helps instigate further conversation, innovation,

reflection, and faculty professional development specific to play and learning in our Canadian landscape at this exciting time.

Chapter Seven: Researcher's Reflections and Rumbling Thoughts

Reflective practice is "the practice of periodically stepping back to ponder the meaning of, what has recently transpired to us and to others in our immediate environment….In particular, it privileges the process of inquiry, leading to an understanding of experience that may have been overlooked in practice…It typically is concerned with forms of learning that seek to inquire about the most fundamental assumptions and premises behind our practices" (Raelin as cited in Hoyrup & Elkjaer, 2006, p. 36).

While the document is intentionally written in third person in an attempt to provide details about the study while highlighting participants' voices, it is acknowledged that I have played an active role in the in the (co)-construction of knowledge as represented within this dissertation. I am aware that my own knowledge, beliefs, and experiences have implicitly impacted all stages of the research process. Although it is difficult to pinpoint accurately when and explicitly how all subjective elements involved in the study intersect, the current chapter aims to invite readers into my own reflections and revelations of my own assumptions throughout the journey. I will begin with information about me, including key experiences and moments that were pivotal in providing the foundations for my beliefs as well as the creation and design of the study itself.

From the Beginning: Key Experiences and Foundations for Further Learning

Both play and learning have always been integral parts of my life. I was raised in a family that not only modelled playful and silly behaviours but also encouraged them. My family also had a keen appreciation for the arts. I have always gravitated to people who are open to play, or who are extremely playful themselves, and are those who have become my closest and dearest friends. I have always somehow sought playful environments and experiences, whether it be for fun, work or for study. I have also personally experienced how play can promote both personal and professional growth while having endured the negative effects of play deprivation as an adult. When starting the study I was thus an advocate for play.

Playing in theatre. As an undergraduate student, I was interested in people and human development and thus naturally gravitated to psychology. Along the way I also rediscovered a key area that was prominent during my adolescence, an area that, along with music, provided much fun, joy, and growth. It was while in University that I rediscovered the world of theatre. Taking on roles, exploring the possibilities, being spontaneous, being in the moment, and engaging with the world through the body, the senses - play becomes an essential part of the theatre world. Theatre, dramatic activities, and performances were fun. They were hard work. They were physical. They were social. They were, in a

way, therapeutic. Within the realm of theatre, individuals regardless of age, are taken out of the everyday into the "as if" space where anything is possible. A community is created and engaging in theatre allows one to discover, grow, and learn in a way that incorporates full body and senses learning about oneself, one's craft, others and the environment.   I was thus a believer in dramatic forms of play as well as the role of pretence and imagination.

        Growing through play within play spaces in drama therapy. With an undergraduate degree in both psychology and theatre in hand, I was then introduced to the field of Drama therapy, a field that fused my interests and fuelled my interest in pursuing a Master's degree. Drama therapy, which uses drama and theatre processes intentionally in working towards psychotherapeutic growth and change (Emunah, 1994), supports the value of play throughout the lifespan. It emphasizes the central role play can have in helping others' achieve therapeutic goals, regardless of age or difficulties they may be facing. Within drama therapy, processes such as embodiment, projection, imitation, symbolic play, role taking and role-playing are used in order to help and heal others. Within certain models of drama therapy, dramatic play is a basic human need and any halt in play during early stages of development may cause later disturbances.   Play in drama therapy is also perceived to be a way for individuals to "let go" and revisit the spontaneity and imagination of childhood (Blatner & Blatner, 1997). Without being aware of it at the time, I thus subscribed to humanistic and psychoanalytic theories of play.

        Another essential element for drama therapy related work, is the notion of creating safe environments, which are commonly called "play space." These "sacred" spaces are ones that are safe both physically and emotionally. They provide freedom for possibility, spontaneity and expression while removing conventional 'real life' consequences. I thus believed in the importance of not only implementing play activities for therapeutic growth but also in the vital importance of creating spaces for individuals to feel comfortable engaging in play.

        Dramatic reality and dramatic projection are involved in drama therapy (Butler, 2014).   Within play spaces that hold both what is real and not real, individuals can project parts of themselves onto external objects, roles and stories.   By externalizing parts of their inner world, distance is provided for such aspects to be worked, reworked and transformed within a safe environment.   Through learning about the theory and practice of drama therapy I thus perceived the imaginative world of the individual as an extension of their true selves, the powerful use of projective techniques, and importance of listening to and respecting individuals' stories.   I also learned about the key process of reflection for it is considered a critical element in one's own personal and professional development in being a drama therapist.

Learning through experience. My academic experiences, which included a number of internship opportunities with adults and children with differing abilities and challenges, provided my understandings of the value and need for play in human development. These learning experiences were also pivotal in helping me learn about teaching and learning. Experiential learning was a primary tool used for teaching theatre and drama therapy as I engaged in activities and practical experiences both within the classroom and within the field. In most courses, experiencing the process was the primary sources of learning, after which it was reflected upon with the cohort or alongside the primary practicum supervisor. Performances, reflective journals, and written assignments were the main forms of assessment. Based on the idea that "a focus on learning from experience presupposes that there are many ways in which we come to know, and that different kinds of knowledge are important for practice, (Kinsella, 2001, 196), I thus believed in the importance of "doing" and reflection in teaching and learning and the various forms through which knowledge can be formed and expressed.

Ignoring Spiderman on the playground. During my studies in Drama Therapy, along with other positions working with children, I worked at a centre-based daycare as an early childhood educator, where I remained employed for eight years. This daycare centre received a number of students in a teacher-training program on a regular basis. I was thus emerged in the world of play with young children. I witnessed how play is something that children naturally do, how it involves various types of play, and has various observable benefits. I was also introduced to the world of schedules, activities, and complex tasks that educators face. It was at the daycare that I observed the following interaction, which was a pivotal moment on which the creation of this particular study is based.

> *Tommy flew across the playground whizzing by a younger girl who plopped onto*
> *the pavement and started to scream.*
> *"Tommy, you get back here!!"*
> *The young boy swaggered back sheepishly towards his teacher.*
> *"Go get Peggy a kleenex and ask her if she is ok."*
> *"Why?"*
> *"You know why. You pushed her, and now you will have to sit and miss the rest*
> *of playtime."*
> *"But Miss Jill, I'm not Tommy. I'm Spiderman. See, I was trying to get the bad*
> *guys over there, I didn't even see Peggy. Spiderman doesn't push girls."*
> *"Tommy, there is no Spiderman here at daycare. Sit down and think about what*
> *you did."*

It was this at particular moment that I began to question how early childhood educators learn about children's play within their education and training. In the particular situation described above, I saw an invitation for Tommy's teacher to step into and join Tommy within his dramatic, playful, creative, and make believe world. The educator, however, chose to dismiss this invitation. Instead, Tommy's world was disregarded and he ended up being reprimanded. Perhaps, if the educator fully understood the significance of Tommy embodying a character and enacting a role, she may have intervened differently. As my own learning experiences were mainly based in experiential learning practices, I was thus curious about what early childhood educators were learning about play in their education and training as well as how they are learning it.

Teaching undergraduates through play. When provided with opportunities to design and facilitate an undergraduate course on drama therapy, I was thrilled to take all I had learned and put it all into practice. Implementing elements of the same type of experiential approach that was used within my experiences as a student, I discovered that play had a potential place in education. I also noticed when teaching the course various times, however, that students, especially those who voiced working with children, were hesitant to engage in play and experiential types of learning situations. Many wanted clearer directions and wanted to know the purpose of the activities before they engaged in activities within the classroom. My curiosity was peaked even further as I firmly believed that individuals working with children should be comfortable engaging in play and yet they may not be, even within their own educational experiences.

Learning is fun within the *Graduate Seminar in University Teaching*. Prior to entering the Ph.D. program, I was provided with an opportunity to enrol in a graduate seminar, which, at the time, prepared Ph.D. students for academic teaching careers in post-secondary settings. It was a pivotal experience, which changed my academic and professional direction as I became keenly interested in teaching and learning in higher education. The seminar, which promotes becoming a reflective practitioner, developing a teaching philosophy, and using active and experiential practices to help make learning fun, stimulated my desire to apply for further studies within education and pursue further involvement with the seminar and endeavours specific to faculty development. Not only was I interested in how early childhood educators were taught about play, I was curious about faculty themselves, their philosophies of teaching and their practices when teaching in higher education, particularly as within Canada faculty do not need to have experience learning how to teach adults to take on teaching roles in higher education.

Life's experiences, both professional and academic, as well as my inherent curiosity thus created the passion for further studies as well as provided the initial conception of the study.

Entering the World of Research: Building upon Existing Beliefs and Designing the Study

The study that was initially proposed for entrance for the Ph.D. program was the one that was conducted for this dissertation. Courses in the Education Department and professional experiences encountered during the program, including further work within the area of teaching and learning in higher education and experiences with the Centre for the Arts in Human Development, however, provided the background theory and knowledge, which helped extend the development and implementation of the study as well as the context and rationale behind it. Experiences also challenged me to develop my professional practices as well as reflect on who I am as a researcher, including my epistemological and ontological views, my role within the research process, and how I see play and learning prior to embarking in the study with participants.

My epistemological and ontological views. When travelling I came across the image in Figure 23 in a little bookstore. At the time, I did not know why I was so drawn to it but it was later revealed that the image actually depicts my main views and therefore I decided to include it here. I firmly believe that there is not one reality. Rather, the world is viewed and knowledge is created through the subjective lens of the individual. It is not what is in the book that is of upmost concern, it is how it is viewed and being used by the person using it. It was therefore essential to listen to individual's perceptions and meanings attributed to play and learning as well as recognize my own views throughout the research process.
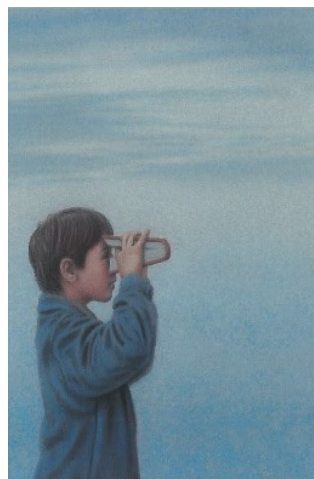
Figure 23. Image depicting my epistemological and ontological views.

Designing the study. The study was designed not only based on past experiences but also newly formed understandings about me, the topic, and the practice of research. Overall, I wanted a methodology that reflected the topic of play, fit the main research question, and fit with my own views. I realized that my views fit within a qualitative research paradigm, which places an emphasis on the importance of individuals' stories, different ways of knowing and expression as well as on reflection on beliefs and practices within professional development in teaching and learning.

As play is so complex and it would be easy to provide "textbook" answers, I felt it was important to think of another method that may promote the elicitation of personal accounts and meanings that then could be "played" with. The design itself borrowed the idea of images from the use of the arts and projective techniques in drama therapy. To explore and transform something, one needs to externalize it. The idea of the use of images was also borrowed from the use of metaphor cards used to reflect upon one's views of teaching in the *Graduate Seminar in Teaching and Learning* at Concordia University. The use of narratives was also based on my previous knowledge and practice within therapeutic and educational contexts. They were techniques I believed in and I have facilitated before. It was, however the first time that I used them for research purposes. It was also deemed essential to provide participants' choices to best depict and represent their own beliefs and stories. Time in between each stage of data collection was intentionally included to help promote reflection on behalf of the participants and myself. I was also aware of the participants' busy lives and respectful of the time that participation in this inquiry required of them.

Beliefs about play and learning. Prior to this point in my life's trajectory, play was perceived to be something that is experienced, fostered and promoted. It was not, however, something that I really thought about in detail. Play was something you do, not something you think about.

During my doctoral program, I was introduced to its various theoretical underpinnings as well as its potential role in adult learning and development. Courses and readings reinforced my beliefs in the value of play as well as informed me as to its complicated relationship with learning and its role in educational settings. My beliefs about the value of play were reinforced and yet I was challenged to navigate the different ways in which play is perceived and to come up with my own views in terms of play and how I perceive its relationship with learning.

Overall, before the study began, I agreed with the characteristics of play as described in the literature and realized that I subscribed to psychoanalytic theories of play but also agreed with the types and functions of play as described by Piaget and Vygotsky. I did not necessary agree, however, with the set developmental stages they outlined and was surprised that most understandings of play are based

on observable behaviours. To me, play was perceived to be more than a particular activity.   The key

characteristic of play is its subjective nature. Play is believed to be a subjective experience and thus

could only be called play by the individual engaged in it. I believed that play may not necessarily be

observed by others as play can equally involve mental thoughts as it can behaviours and in some cases,

play related behaviours may not actually be enjoyed by the player, and thus it is not play. These beliefs

include both adults and children. While I was surprised at the lack of information about play within

adulthood and perceived some play activities to be different for adult than children, I believed that the

inherent process involved in play was similar for all people regardless of age or ability.

My views about the relationship between play and learning were pretty straightforward as I felt

as though play, as an experience, automatically resulted in learning for anyone who engages in it.

Furthermore, when practicing drama therapy, it is recommended that you do not facilitate activities

with clients unless you have experienced the activities yourself. I thus decided that prior to asking

participants to submit images about their beliefs about play and learning, I too needed to select an

image to depict my own beliefs.   I selected two images, which are illustrated in Figures 24 and 25.

Figure 24. Image depicting my views about play and learning.

The first image is meant to represent discovery, growth, fantasy, interaction, and the innate

possibilities for an individual learner. These are believed to be characteristics of both play and learning.

It also included the different types, elements and levels involved in play and learning. There is no end to

the boxes and the play can help propel or scaffold the individual to where they need to go, where new

discoveries are waiting to be made. The image suggests that while risk may be involved, the learner is

encouraged to continue moving up and building upon what they have already experienced. It is meant

to include my beliefs about play and learning for both children and adult learners.

The second image (Figure 25) was chosen to depict my views that both play and learning can occur simultaneously and that it can be hard work. Play, while being enjoyable, was perceived to not necessarily be a frivolous activity. Concentration, challenges and seriousness can be involved in play yet that is where growth and change can prosper. While the image includes children, its implicit message about the seriousness of play is also meant for adult learners as well.

With new understandings gained within the Ph.D., and a proposed study ready to go, I embarked into the research process. This process had many moments that were key in helping scaffold my learning about the topic as well as being and becoming a researcher.

Figure 25. Image depicting my views about the seriousness of play and its relationship with learning. Reprinted with permission ©Billy Howard Photography Inc.

Being and Becoming a Researcher

Near the onset of the project, while I was eager and excited to engage in the discoveries that lay ahead, I encountered the first learning curve by having to apply for additional ethical clearance from the centres where I wanted to recruit participants. Seventeen different applications were submitted ranging in level of details and bureaucratic demands. One of the institutions required that both my supervisor and I take the Tri-Council training module and the exam in order to receive ethical clearance and certification (and we did!). The amount and the variance within institutional ethics requirements and paperwork involved and the wait period in-between was overwhelming. Recruitment, however, resulted in having more interest from faculty members than anticipated, which was advantageous since it helped highlight as many faculty voices on the topic as possible. It also created awareness on the importance of having clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation prior to engaging in

recruitment within future research endeavours and raised questions as to how to balance delicately the multiplicity of all participant voices, including my own throughout the process.

The data collection process itself was both enjoyable and anxiety ridden. I was eager to hear participants' stories, see their images, read their narratives, and see how the research would unfold. As a first time researcher, however, I was lacking confidence in my own abilities to do what was "right." While listening to individual's stories, I was concerned about the recording equipment, capturing their insights and best guiding the interviews through the questions asked. I wanted to do what a researcher is "supposed" to do. Eventually, the nerves did diminish and I allowed myself to "let go" within the process of inquiry.

The stages of data collection were very useful as it was valuable to read the demographic information, to see the images prior to the first interview as well as have time to transcribe the first interview and read the individual's narrative prior to the second interview. It not only helped me feel grounded in knowing a bit about the participant but, also helped me keep focus and create follow up questions specific to the individual, which ended up being the initial stage of analysis. Both images and narratives were great sources of information as individuals were keen to speak about their images and many meanings of their beliefs were revealed

I was slightly taken aback at this stage, as I had expected more images depicting adults at play as compared to images specific to adult learners in ECTE settings. Participants helped change my focus and expectations and it reinforced the fact that I needed to be at the same level as they were at within the process. It was also acknowledged that participants were eager to talk about their practices, indicating a need to provide faculty more time and opportunities to share thoughts about their teaching practices, their research and/or other professional activities., I truly perceived participating faculty as experts who could help me as a learner and researcher learn more about the topic, as well as help develop my own teaching practices.

Conversations during the interviews flowed easily, and in many cases had to be cut short, as they could have continued for much longer. I realized how nice it was to engage in conversations with others about play and learning as well as the importance of dialogue and multiple perspectives when trying to understand the role of play and learning and its place in education.   As it is a complex concept, I learned that understanding play and its value takes time and reflection. It cannot be something that is covered by a few readings or lectures. Conversations and varied perspectives can help within the process of clarifying and transforming one's own beliefs about play and learning as well as one's relationship with play.   Within the variety of perspectives that were gathered, the verification process

was key to ensuring that individuals' information was represented as accurately as possible, being objective as well as contributing to the trustworthiness of the research itself.   All attempts were made to share and represent the voices of all 19 individuals.

The interview process reminded me of the concept of co-construction within the research process. Throughout the conversations, I was struck with the responsibility of eliciting information from participants while silencing my voice. While it was frustrating at times, I was scared to divert too far from the interview protocol and was aware of not overshadowing participants' voices. I began to understand later that my voice is represented in other ways through the creation of the study, the questions asked during the interview as well as the analysis, interpretation and decisions about representation within the written dissertation.   The process also reminded me of teaching - you may have particular objectives in mind yet, one needs to balance where students are at and where you and they want to go.

After the first interviews about play and learning, I realized how participants helped reinforce my own beliefs as to its value for both children and adults. I was also reminded of the messiness of trying to define play and the various forms it takes.   There are many personalized definitions and yet the key elements of play remain the same.   The process made me realize that perhaps operationalizing play and striving for one sole definition, is not something to strie for, as it would take away a part of its essence.

Transformation of my own beliefs. First of all, I found that in listening to others define play and its inherent characteristics, while looking at various images of play, changed my own subjective definition of play. It was not a result of one particular conversation; rather, it occurred through the culmination of discussions and various periods of contemplation. While I still saw play as being a subjective experience, after the interviews I felt as though the active engagement and free choice characteristics of play, deserved more attention as they truly make play what it is- an action that involves free choice.   I thus turned my attention to the verb of "playing" and resonated deeply with the definition outlined by Jones and Cooper (2006), who talk about play as being something you choose to do, you do it and enjoy it. Play then becomes the result of the active yet subjective experience of the player and thus may not necessarily need to be defined in detail on a general or universal level. The definition, for me, fit for both children and adults. In different conversations with participants I was led to consider the term play as compared to playful, playful practice and playfulness. I agreed that play is an act, playful practices are guided toward a particular goal or learning outcome, whereas playfulness is a disposition.

After the interviews I realized that my beliefs rested on how play can naturally result in learning for both children and adults yet experiences within educational settings play a big role in taking individuals away from play.   My views included how humans have an innate curiosity and drive to figure out how the world works and who they are within it. To do so, they interact within the world. As children this interaction is simply done and it is something that is enjoyed. Interaction is achieved through the body and senses with their only constraints being developmental and by societal boundaries that are in place whether it be by parents, institutions, culture and/or society. In observing these interactions, adults have come to label the behaviour as "play." Once children attend school, they are told what they should know, what they should do and how they should come to know it in order to become socially acceptable citizens. By the time children become adults they are ingrained with what is acceptable, the importance of being productive and what that looks like, as well as the importance of setting and achieving set goals.   Play, which is a reflection of adults' true selves, is forgotten or takes on a form that involves goals and socially acceptable behaviours for adults.   What participants' shared allowed me to reflect upon my beliefs in greater detail and I realized that I have an issue with the control and conformity that are present within formal education settings, which I believe contribute to fear in students and undervalues different ways of knowing and being.

It was fascinating to hear all the examples given by the participants of how to put play into practice. It was interesting to hear about the importance of creating a comfortable and safe space for play and learning to occur, as it is in line with the notion of play spaces in drama therapy related contexts.   I realized more and more the importance of making time for play and the need to understand play within ECTE programs so that we can better allow free play situations with children. I truly felt honoured to have heard about the challenges and job related responsibilities faculty face when attempting to put their beliefs about play and learning into practice. Throughout the conversations and reflections that occurred in the data collection phase, while I was not surprised that play related methods were perceived to be non-traditional and undervalued, I really started to believe that play, based on its key characteristics of being free and self-chosen may not have a place within formal education settings with adults.   Rather, playful practices do, and creating the right conditions and activities may potentially help develop students' comfort with play and their levels playfulness

Discovering and revealing meanings through play in higher education. After data collection was completed, I became "analytically immobilized," which is described as "anxiety as to whether or not what one is doing qualifies as a legitimate version of a specific method" (Lyons & Cole, 2007, p. 27). I

hit a wall. I questioned all that I was doing and what I had yet to do. With mounds of data, I felt completely overwhelmed. The process came to a stop for a period of time.

After thinking about this and worrying about everything, the cloud of anxiety was suddenly lifted when I saw police tape surrounding a building during a walk in the neighbourhood. I started to think differently and developed another perspective, which helped me with the early stages of data analysis. Within my thoughts I became Sergeant Blom, head of the Post-Secondary Education Division of the Play Police Department located at Concordia University, Montréal. I was called in to investigate reports that there was a disappearance of play within early childhood education and care settings in Canada. In creating an entire scenario in my head, I went and bought props and changed my office to look like a squad room. Figure 26 illustrates me in role with my props. I told colleagues (and my supervisor!) to call me by my character name. I chatted with strangers about the case and my research. Every morning I got up, put on my badge, had updates and debriefing sessions with my imaginary "squad." Analysis took on a whole new meaning. I was excited. Learning and research was really fun.

Figure 26. Sergeant Blom with my badge and imaginary identification.

As a student researcher studying play and learning in post-secondary settings, my views shifted yet again as I started to uncover meaning and understandings about the topic and the research process through a different layer. The process, albeit "non-traditional" helped provide a new perspective, which shifted my focus and kept me on track. The role-play provided me with confidence to do what I needed to do. It provided an imaginary social scenario that I was lacking in the process. When discussing "the case," others were engaged and interested and even wanted to take on their own roles. It felt as though research was more accessible to others. Within this part of the process I felt as though I had freedom along with choice and control in the process. It was something I chose to do; I did it and thoroughly enjoyed it. I felt as though I could be me and that I could learn and engage in research in a way that worked for me. Again my views shifted, I started to sway towards the idea that play does have a place in higher education.

This scenario lasted all the way through the analysis of all individual cases to be sent to participants for verification. The squad room door, however, then closed. The door, as well as the imaginary case has yet to be reopened.

Living the constraints. The end of my own form of play ended due to similar factors participants mentioned when discussing factors that help or hinder their implementation of play and learning in ECTE programs. After playing the role of the Sergeant, I was faced with various deadlines and requirements, which shifted my focus on setting specific goals and creating an end product. The process became a serious form of work with pressures that diminished the desire to engage in play. I also realized that my own engagement in play was not first and foremost an element of the study. It did not take a primary place in seeking out the answer to the research questions.   What mattered was identifying the main themes of the participants, interpreting the findings, and creating the written document itself.

Throughout the last stages of analysis I focused on being as accurate as possible to the main ideas that were present within the data.   I also tried to find the best way to weave the participant's insights with my own interpretations. While writing the document I faced some challenges as I tried to follow the Departmental requirements in terms of structure, language and format, while including images as a form of knowledge representation while using these images to corroborate the participants' viewpoints. The process was definitely a great learning opportunity in many ways, and I felt as though I was actually living some of faculty's reported difficulties and challenges. I was also back to square - when and how does play have a place in higher education?

Reflecting Back and Looking Forward

The study answered the research question at hand. However, like most studies in Education, the findings raised a number of questions moving forward. While the study's findings provide a great deal of information and recommendations for future research, there were some important concepts that did not come up in the data yet retain a crucial role in education and teaching. For example, a central feature of teaching and learning is assessment and evaluation in ECTE classrooms, however, it was not a key theme that was identified.   Assessment can bring along with it elements of judgment, competition, and challenges in developing evaluation criteria for assignments. I thought it would have been a prominent element of teaching and learning that would be discussed when talking about implementing play and learning within education settings for both children and adults.

I was also surprised at the lack of the mention of "pretend play' when participants described play and subsequently described their practices. Wonder and curiosity was discussed as a characteristic

of play and was described by some as something to be fostered in adult learners, however, only one participant emphasized the importance of dramatic play for children. Due to the value of dramatic play for human development, it was something that I expected to hear more often. Other than occasional examples of role play, which in many cases were not perceived to be play by students, there was also a lack of engaging adult learners in the performative, embodied learning and the pretend element of play in ECTE classrooms. Within education settings, Selander (2008) states how "overall, learning seems to be about the 'real' world, not a 'fictitious' one, as in play" (p. 147).   Play was discussed more in terms of active engagement with materials and other people, rather than taking on roles and engaging in fictitious realities. This is intriguing since the value of dramatic play within human development is well documented, pretend play throughout the life span has also been reported (Perone & Göncü, 2014) and practices such as improvisation can be of value to professionals in ECEC (Lobman, 2005).

Due to the current prevalence of technology in society and in education, it was really surprising to me, that more discussion about play and technology within conversations about faculty's beliefs and practices did not emerge. It was mentioned with regards to online learning environments, but not identified as a tool that can help incorporate playful elements in the learning environment. This point is made while acknowledging that faculty's beliefs about technology and its role in play and learning could be a topic for another study in and of itself.

The current dissertation is a representation of many subjective realities collectively brought together by the faculty's voices and exemplified by my own particular lens. My hope is that in being transparent with my views and my own process during the study, readers gain another level of understanding of the interwoven complexities, voices, and experiences that were involved in the research process.   It is also hoped that the dissertation stimulates readers to think about their own beliefs and related practices and provokes further questions and conversations about play and learning within ECTE settings.

I have been privileged in that I was given the freedom to pursue my own curiosity and area(s) of interest within a safe and supportive learning environment with others invariably acting in multiple roles, whether as cheerleaders, guides, mentors, and supporters on the sidelines - a gift! At no time forgetting the importance of occurrences that have contributed to my path, including Spiderman and other characters, participating faculty members were the expert voices here that lead the way.   While this whole doctoral journey was more labour-intensive than anticipated and posed many challenges, I end this journey having been transformed as a student, a researcher, and a practitioner. While my knowledge and insight have shifted during this particular journey, there are many questions left to

consider when engaging in future endeavours, whether it be teaching, research or professional development. I am comfortable and comforted in not having definite answers about play, its relationship with learning and its place in education. It means more play related reflection, conversations, learning, experiences, and inquiry are awaiting. Another journey begins…

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Appendix A: Definitions of Terms

Adult learners – students enrolled in post-secondary ECTE programs, which may include individuals 16 years and older.

Beliefs – "...implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught" (Kagan, 1992, p. 66). This will include terms such as views, perspectives, and conceptions.

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) – "...all arrangements providing care and education of children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content." (OECD, 2001, p. 14). This study will focus on regulated daycare centres for young children in Canada.

Early childhood educator – a term used to describe individuals working in ECEC settings. This term will include other common titles such as childcare provider, child development worker, caregiver, and early childhood teacher.

Learning – "learning is an enduring change in behavior, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience" (Schunk, 2008, p.2). Within this study learning in childhood and adulthood will be explored.

Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) – formal programs offered in higher education settings, including colleges and universities, which are geared to prepare students for employment in fields related to early childhood. This study will focus on Diploma or Certification Programs offered in English within College and University ECTE settings. It encompasses Early Childhood Education, Early Learning and Child Care, Early Childhood Care and Education, and Early Childhood Development programs offered in Canada.

Early Childhood Teacher Education Faculty – individuals who have a teaching role within accredited college or university Early Childhood Teacher Education programs. It included titles such as instructor, professor, and teacher educator. Faculty may also hold other positions (department chairs and coordinator) yet for the purpose of this study, only the term faculty will be used.

Play – a specific definition and theoretical framework will not be used to frame the study as one main aim of this project is to explore individuals' personal meanings of play, which may include definitions, types, and theoretical perspectives. These will be included within the project's finding. Reflections on the researcher's views on play will also be included throughout the project itself keeping in mind that her lens may play a role in all stages of the research.

Appendix B: E-mail Correspondence to Program Heads for Participant Recruitment

Hello,

My name is Marleah Blom and I am currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Education at Concordia University (Montreal, QC). I am writing to you as my doctoral research interests center on play and learning within post-secondary early childhood teacher education.

Currently I am looking for faculty members working in recognized post-secondary Early Childhood Education programs across the country to participate in my study. The study specifically aims to explore faculty members' beliefs about play and learning and related teaching practices when educating pre-service early childhood educators.

If you know of anyone who may be interested in participating in the study please have them contact me directly. Detailed information outlining what participation entails is attached.

I would sincerely like to hear more from individuals as a way to celebrate ECE faculty while gaining a better understanding of how early childhood educators are educated to promote play for children's learning and development in Canada.

Sincerely,
Marleah

Marleah Blom, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Education
Concordia University
e-mail contact information

Appendix C: E-mail Introduction to Potential Participants

Hello (*name*),

Thank you for the information you provided in regard to the place of play within (*name of post-secondary institution*). As previously indicated, I am currently conducting a doctoral research project on play and learning in post-secondary Early Childhood Education programs across Canada.

I would like to hear more from you as your work is important and I believe you would provide valuable insight into what and how play is included in the education of upcoming early childhood educators. I am thus writing to inquire whether you would be interested in participating in my study.

The project is entitled 'Learning and teaching through play: Faculty voices within early childhood teacher education in Canada'.   Detailed information is included within the attached document. If, once you've read the document and you decide you would like to participate let me know.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions and thanks in advance for your consideration,

Marleah

Marleah Blom, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Education
Concordia University
e-mail contact information

Title: Learning and teaching through play: Faculty voices within early childhood teacher education in Canada

Researcher: Marleah Blom, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Education
Concordia University
1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W.
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
H3G 1M8
e-mail contact information

Purpose of study:
The project aims to explore faculty members' beliefs about play and learning and related teaching practices when educating preservice early childhood educators within accredited post-secondary Early Childhood Teacher Education Certificate and Diploma programs (offered in English) within Canada.

Specifically, it aims to highlight your voice by identifying your:
  (a) personal beliefs about play and learning within both Early Childhood Education and Care and Early Childhood Teacher Education settings,
  (b) self-reported teaching practices that reflect these conceptions when educating adult learners in Early Childhood Teacher Education programs, and
  (c) perceived contextual factors that either support or hinder enactment of their intended and actual practices.

What will happen during study:
If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to provide informed consent. After doing so, you will be contacted to provide basic demographic information as well as asked to collect documentation from the Early Childhood Education program in which you teach (basic program your course outlines and related teaching materials, if applicable).   At this time we will also schedule the first interview.

In preparation for the first interview, you will be asked to select two images:
  (a) one that depicts your views about play for the promotion of children's learning within Early Childhood Education and Care settings, and
  (b) one that best depicts your views about play for the promotion of adult learning within Early Childhood Teacher Education programs

With the aid of the images you have chosen, during the interview we will engage in a conversation about your beliefs about play and learning. We will then schedule a second interview.

In preparation for the second interview, you will be asked to reflect on our previous conversation about your beliefs and to write a short narrative about how you put (have put, intend to put) your beliefs about play and learning into practice when teaching within post-secondary Early Childhood Education

programs. During the interview we will engage in a conversation about your practices as well as any influential factors. Based on our discussion, you have the option of editing your narrative prior to submitting it. You are also are invited to provide any other data (documents, images, videos, etc.) that help illustrate your beliefs and practices throughout the study, if interested.

Each interview will take approximately 1- 1.5 hours. We will negotiate if interviews will be conducted face-to-face, via telephone or via Skype. They will be audio recorded and transcribed to aid with analysis and verification.

To better ensure that your voice and information is authentically represented, throughout the study you will be asked to verify if information is being interpreted correctly. Once the interviews and subsequent analysis has been completed, you will also be asked to verify the findings.

Please note that all data you provide (documents, images, narratives, etc.) will be included as part of the study unless you clearly indicate otherwise. During the course of the study, data will remain confidential (I will know your real identity by this identity will not be disclosed). After analysis and verification is complete you will have the option to choose what level of disclosure you wish to have within the final report and related publications.

Are there any risks in participating in the study:
There are no expected risks in participating in this study. You are not obliged to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or do not want to answer. You are able to withdraw from participating in the study without penalty at any time by contacting me in writing with your wishes to do so.

Who will know the information shared during the study:
During the study, myself and my supervisor will have access to information you provide. Data will be saved on password protected computers so that only I can gain access. Confidentiality will be respected in that no information revealing your identity will be shared unless you clearly indicate otherwise at the end of the study.

Information about the study results:
The projected timeline is to have the project completed by January 2015. You will be sent a summary of all the results.

What if I change my mind about participating in the study:
Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You can stop participating at any time, even after having signed consent. If you decide to stop participating there will be no repercussions.

Ethical clearance:
Please note that the study has been reviewed by Concordia University's Office of Research and ethical clearance to proceed has been granted.

Appendix E: E-mail to Participants to Receive Consent and Set up the First Interview

Hello,

I am writing to follow-up in regard to participation in the current doctoral research study entitled '*Learning and teaching through play: Faculty voices within early childhood teacher education in Canada*'.

What is next?
1) if you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign the attached consent form and send it to me via e-mail,

2) there will be two interviews (approximately 1 hour each). Let me know when (date/time) would convenient to schedule our first interview, and

3) let me know your preference for the interview - telephone or Skype

Once we have a schedule in place, I will send you details about what is needed for the first interview. You will be asked to answer some basic questions as well as find two images about play and learning. For your records, details of what participation entails throughout the study are included within the attached document.

At any point, if you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact me. I sincerely hope to have the chance to hear more about you and your work.

Thanks,
Marleah

Marleah Blom
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Education
Concordia University
e-mail contact information

Appendix F: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN

Learning and teaching through play: Faculty voices within early childhood teacher education in Canada

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted Marleah Blom from the Department of Education of Concordia University, Montreal Québec, (*e-mail contact information)* under the supervision of Dr. Miranda D'Amico, Department of Education of Concordia University, (*e-mail contact information).*

A.   PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to explore faculty members' beliefs about play and learning and related teaching practices when educating preservice early childhood educators within accredited post-secondary Early Childhood Teacher Education Certificate and Diploma programs (offered in English) within Canada.

B.   PROCEDURES

As a participant in this study I understand:

- that I will be asked to engage in two interviews with the researcher (approx. 1 each) to reflect on personal beliefs about play and learning, my teaching practices that reflect these conceptions, and perceived contextual factors that support or hinder enactment of these practices. These interviews will take place in 2014 either in person, via telephone or via Skype. They will be audio recorded and transcribed.
- I will be asked to engage in tasks to prepare for each interview. Time taken to engage in these tasks is up to my discretion. These tasks include selecting two images that best depict my beliefs about play and learning, and writing a short narrative on my teaching practices.
- I will also provide relevant documentation outlining information about the program, courses, and related materials from my teaching practices (if applicable) from the institution in which I work.
- all data provided (documents, images, narratives) will be included in the study for analysis unless I indicate otherwise.
- all data will be stored in a password protected environment or a cabinet with a locked key, as applicable.
- data collected will be used in the researcher's dissertation and the researcher will inform me of additional uses in the future.
- images or documentation that do not have appropriate referencing information or include others' identity will not be included in publications.
- data will be stored for 5 years and later physically destroyed.

C.   RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that the nature of the study has no potential risks.

D.   CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that throughout the study my participation is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity) throughout data collection and analysis
- I understand that near the end of the study I will be asked whether I want my real name or pseudonym used in the write up of the dissertation and any other form of dissemination of findings (conference presentations, journal articles or book chapters)
- I understand that the data collected for this study will be published in a dissertation, and may be used in other forms of publications (conference proceedings, journal articles, book chapters)

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print)   _____

SIGNATURE   _____

DATE   _____

If you have questions about this project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Marleah Blom at *(e-mail contact information)*

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 ethics@alcor.concordia.ca

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix G: E-mail to Participants in Preparation for the First Interview

Hello (name of participant),

Thank you for sending along your signed consent form.   Please find attached some brief demographic questions to try and get to know you a little bit better before the interview. For the interview itself, you are kindly asked to select two images:

1) one image that you feel best depicts your beliefs about play and learning specific to children within Early Childhood Education and Care Settings, and

2) one image that you feel best depicts your beliefs about play and learning specific to adult learners within Early Childhood Teacher Education settings.

These images can be images you create yourself OR can be images you find somewhere else (magazines, internet, post-cards, etc.). These images will not be analyzed. They will provide the foundation of our conversation during the interviews themselves, will act as a tool to potentially help me better understand your beliefs and your work, and may be used to represent your story when findings are disseminated. That being said, if you do find the images somewhere, please try to keep any reference material as to where they came from. If no reference material is possible, it is ok but that means we will not be able to share the images with others (in the thesis, etc.).

Let me know when works for you and if ever you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks,
Marleah
e-mail contact information

Appendix H: Demographic Questions and Questions about How People Learn

Pre-interview Questions (for participants to answer in writing prior to the first interview)

1. Gender? Age?

2. What is your history of employment within the field of ECEC? Please elaborate.

3. Where are you currently employed?

4. What is your title?

5. How long have you been working in a post-secondary ECE program?

6. Do you have a teaching role within the post-secondary institution?

7. What courses are/have you taught?

8. Where did you receive your formal training in ECEC? Please describe your training (length, focus, type of program).

9. What are your views on how children learn?
   Do children learn in different ways? Please describe how.
   What do you think is most important when working with young children?

10. What are your views on how adults learn?
    Do adults learn in different ways? Please describe how.
    What do you think is most important when working with adult learners?

Appendix I: Interview Protocol for Interview 1

Interview 1: Open ended questions about beliefs about play and learning

To help get to know you a bit better, let us take a few minutes to go over the questions you had answered prior to this interview.   Please feel free to add anything or correct me if I have misinterpreted anything.

Now, as we had previously discussed, you were asked to select two images for this conversation. These images will be the basis of our discussion about your beliefs about play and learning.

Part A. Image - beliefs about play and learning for children in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings

1. Tell me about the image you have selected.
2. Why did you select this particular image?
3. What is it about the image that specifically speaks to you about play and learning with children in ECEC settings?
    Possible prompts (if needed)
    - time and opportunity for children's play and learning
    - access for children's play and learning
    - space for children's play and learning
    - materials/equipment for children's play and learning
    - children's choice/initiative in play and learning
    - the early childhood educator's role in promoting children play
4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Part B. Image - beliefs about play and learning for adult learners in post-secondary Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) settings

1. Tell me about the image you have selected.
2. Why did you select this particular image?
3. What is it about the image that specifically speaks to you about play and learning with adult learners in Early Childhood Teacher Education settings?
    Possible prompts (if needed)
    - time and opportunity in regard to play and adult learning
    - access in regard to play and adult learning
    - space in regard play and adult learning
    - materials/equipment in regard to play and adult learning
    - adult learners' choice/initiative in play and learning
    - the instructor (faculty)'s role in adult play and learning
4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Part C - Overall reflections on play and learning

I notice (similarities/differences) between the two images you provided...

1. Tell me more about how you see place and learning for children in ECEC (vs./and) for adult learners in ECTE settings.
2. Anything else you would like to add?

Before our second interview I would like you to write a short narrative about how you put your beliefs into practice when teaching upcoming early childhood educators in the post-secondary ECTE program in which you work.

Appendix J: E-mail to Participants in Preparation for the Second Interview

Hello,

Thank you for sharing your beliefs about play and learning during our conversation.

As mentioned, in preparation for the next interview I will kindly ask that you reflect upon our conversation and write a short narrative about how you put your beliefs about play and learning into practice when teaching upcoming early childhood educators in the post-secondary program in which you work. It can be as long as you would like it to be and it is to be sent to me before we chat again. Also, feel free to send along any other information/documents that you feel help support what you would like to share about your practices.

Let me know when would be a good time to chat again, at your convenience. The interview will be approximately 1 hour.

Thank you,
Marleah

Appendix K– Interview Protocol for Interview 2

Interview 2: Teaching practices

During our last conversation we looked at images you had selected and discussed your beliefs about play and learning. We are now going to talk about your teaching practices. In preparation, you were asked to reflect upon our last discussion and write a short narrative about how you put your beliefs into practice when teaching upcoming early childhood educators in the post-secondary ECTE program in which you work.

1. Tell me about what you have written.
2. Can you give an example of how you implemented your beliefs about play and learning in one of your classrooms?
3. I would like to hear more. Tell me more details.
   Possible prompts (if needed):
   - What was your role? What did you do?
   - What did your students do?
   - What kind of materials/equipment were used?
   - What kind of space was created to encourage this?
   - Is this what you had initially intended?
   - How did it turn out? Did you meet your goals? Why or why not?
   - Is there anything you would do differently?
   - How does this reflect your beliefs about play and learning for children or adult learners (or both)?
4. Can you think of any factors that help you put your beliefs about play into practice when teaching upcoming early childhood educators?
5. Can you think of any factors that hinder the implementation of your beliefs?
6. What kinds of professional development opportunities about play and ECEC have you been involved in?
7. Would you find it beneficial to have professional development initiative specific to play for faculty working in Early Childhood Teacher Education programs? If so, what could these initiatives focus on? What would you include and how would you structure it?

Once these interviews have been transcribed, they will be sent back to you along with your narrative. At that time, if there is anything you would like to add or change you will have an opportunity to do so.

Appendix L: Information Included in Researcher's Narrative for Each Participant for Verification

<u>About you:</u>

Age:
Experience (ECEC):
Education:
Title:
Years in ECTE:
Teaching (Courses):
Special Needs:

<u>About the images you had sent to depict your beliefs about play and learning</u>:

Children in ECEC settings

The image you sent is one …

Adults in ECTE settings

The image you sent is one …

<u>Summary: Beliefs about play and learning for children and adults and related teaching practices</u>

How people learn

What is play?

Play and learning

Teaching practices in post-secondary settings

Influential factors that support or hinder your practices

Faculty professional development – play and learning

Appendix M: E-mail to Participants Requesting Verification of Researcher's Narrative and Consent for Disclosure of Identity within the Report

Hi (*name of participant*),

Thanks again for taking the time to participate in this doctoral study on learning and teaching through play. It has been a pleasure getting to know you, your views, and your teaching practices a little bit better as I have been 'getting my hands dirty' with the information you sent along and transcripts of our conversations. It has been very busy but it is an interesting process indeed!

As promised, I am writing to check back with you to verify my understandings of your views and practices before going on to complete the final group analysis and write up.   Attached is a document that includes descriptions of the images you provided as well as a summary of my understanding of your views and practices. I need your help with the following:

1. SUMMARY - If there is anything that you do not agree with within the summary or would like to clarify further please let me know. Quotes used in the summary as well as others taken directly from transcripts of our conversations may be used to support general findings.

2. ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS - Feel free to share any additional comments that have arisen since our conversations (on your views, practices, or this particular research experience itself).

3. DISCLOSURE - In recognizing that you may want to have your voice acknowledged and take ownership of the information shared throughout the project, you will be given control as to the disclosure of your identity. FYI: While you may be associated with the province in which you are teaching within the write up, NO information specific to your post-secondary institution will be shared.

You are asked to indicate how you would like to be identified within the final report, related publications and presentations. Choose one of the options below and include it within your response.

I, (*name*), after participating in the doctoral research study entitled Learning and teaching through play: Faculty voices within early childhood teacher education in Canada, conducted by Marleah Blom, Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Education at Concordia University, would like to:
a) disclose my full name,
b) disclose my first name only,
c) choose a pseudonym, which is _____.

It is appreciated if you could send your response as soon as you can in order to proceed. Once the project has been written up and defended I will more than happy to send along a copy of the findings.

Thanks again for your time and consideration to help highlight faculty's voices on play and learning. The project wouldn't happen without you!

Play on,
Marleah

Appendix N: Coding Framework for Analysis

1. Beliefs about how people learn
   1.1 Children
      1.1.1 Conditions
      1.1.2 Educator role
   1.2 Adults
      2.1.1 Conditions
      2.1.2 Educator role

2. Beliefs about play
   2.1 Description
   2.2 Conditions
   2.3 Educator role
   2.4 Potential effects
   2.5 Play vs. Playful

3. Teaching practices in ECTE
   3.1 Approach
   3.2 Conditions
   3.3 Educator role
   3.4 Potential effects
   3.5 Reactions

4. Influential factors that affect teaching practices
   4.1 Support
   4.2 Hinder

5. Faculty professional development
   5.1 Involvement in
   5.2 Need for
   5.3 What to include
   5.4 How done

Note. Conditions (1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.2) refer to elements such as time, space, materials, and learners' characteristics. Beliefs about play (2) include beliefs about play for children and adults, unless indicated by participants.

Appendix O: Themes and Subthemes Identified Through a Thematic Analysis of Verified Data
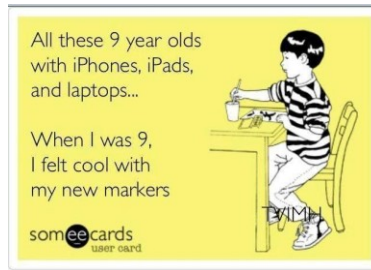
1. Beliefs about how people learn
   1.1 Learners are individuals
      1.1.1   Children
      1.1.2   Adults
   1.2 Learning as an active construction of knowledge
      1.2.1   Children
      1.2.2   Adults
   1.3 Importance of the learning environment
      1.3.1   Children
      1.3.2   Adults
   1.4 Educator
      1.4.1   Children
      1.4.2   Adults

2. Beliefs about play
   2.1 Description
      2.1.1   Active engagement
      2.1.2   Freedom
      2.1.3   Positive affect
      2.1.4   Wonder and curiosity
      2.1.5   Distinguishing from other terms
   2.2 Types
   2.3 Play environments
   2.4 Play materials
   2.5 Educator Role
      2.5.1   Observe
      2.5.2   Create environment
      2.5.3   Allow time
      2.5.4   Different roles
      2.5.5   Support
      2.5.6   Model and advocate
      2.5.7   Understand children, play and environment
      2.5.8   Be playful
   2.6 Perceived benefits
      2.6.1   Sense of self and competence
      2.6.2   Interaction and retention
      2.6.3   Positive affect and rejuvenation
      2.6.4   Learning and development
   2.7 Concerns and considerations
3. Teaching practices in ECTE
   3.1 Importance of play in ECTE
      3.1.1   Understanding children
      3.1.2   Becoming comfortable and advocating for play
      3.1.3   Play in the lives of early childhood educators
   3.2 Approach
      3.2.1   Key features
      3.2.2   Perceived benefits
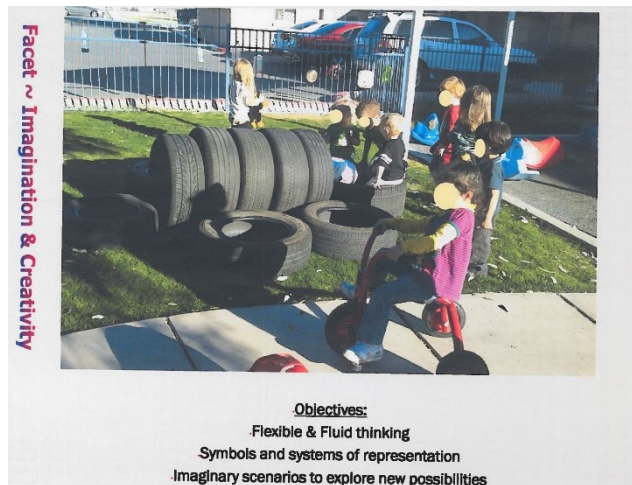   3.2.3   Reflections on beliefs and practices

Appendix P: Complete List of Courses Taught by Participants

- Introduction to ECEC
- Child development
- Curriculum and programming (including courses on different curricular models)
- Learning environments
- Developmentally appropriate practices
- Issues in ECEC
- Observation
- Reporting and Assessment
- Caring, learning and responsive caregiving
- Guiding and promoting behaviours
- Social emotional health & behaviour
- Inclusive care, children with diverse abilities and exceptionalities
- Health, safety, nutrition
- Quality assurance
- Administration
- Language, literature and literacy
- Creative expressions and arts (sound, movement, music, art) in ECE
- Math and science
- Child abuse
- Social justice
- School age child care and curriculum
- Practicum/field placement
- Working with parents and families
- Community resources
- Sociology
- Leadership
- Professionalism and advocacy

Appendix Q: Examples of Images Submitted by Faculty

All these 9 year olds
with iPhones, iPads,
and laptops...

When I was 9,
I felt cool with
my new markers

someecards
user card

An example of an image with text incorporated by the original creator.

Facet ~ Imagination & Creativity

Objectives:
Flexible & Fluid thinking
Symbols and systems of representation
Imaginary scenarios to explore new possibilities

An example of an image with text incorporated by the participant.

An example of clip art based images of an animal and materials.

An example of an image of a landscape

An example of an image within an indoor environment. Reprinted with permission from the participant.

An example of an image with a mixed age group within an outdoor environment.

Example images of materials and spaces. Photographs reprinted with permission from participants.