



SCHOOL of HUMAN ECOLOGY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

# The Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities A Workshop Report

Aletha C. Huston

Department of Human Development & Family Sciences

University of Texas at Austin

Holly Rhodes

National Research Council

# About the Workshop

- Sponsored by ACF
- Conducted by the Board on Children, Youth and Families of the Institute of Medicine/National Research Council
- Planned by the Committee on the Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce
- Held in Washington, DC on February 28 and March 1, 2011

# COMMITTEE ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

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Virginia Buysse Dixie Sommers  
Deborah J. Cassidy Marcy Whitebook

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W. Steven Barnett

Margaret R. Burchinal

Jerlean E. Daniel

Harriet Dichter

Ellen Frede

Walter Gilliam

Lynn A. Karoly

Joan Lombardi

Tammy Mann

Jana Martella

Deborah A. Phillips

Sharon Ramey

Shannon Rudisill

Susan D. Russell

Linda K. Smith

Jerry West

Pamela J. Winton

Martha Zaslow

# The Workforce is Critical

- Changing children's developmental trajectories through ECCE depends on the workforce
- Early education and care is increasingly important to young children's lives
- Larger numbers of children in poverty and children who are English language learners

# Goals of Workshop

- Define and describe the nature of the early childhood workforce (ECCE)
- Examine how that workforce affects children
- Explore how best to build the workforce in ways that promote program quality and effective child outcomes, while supporting the essential individuals who provide education and care

# Defining and Describing the Workforce

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## **25-2011 Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education**

Instruct preschool-aged children in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth needed for primary school in preschool, day care center, or other child development facility.

## **39-9011 Childcare Workers**

Attend to children at schools, businesses, private households, and childcare institutions. Perform a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play.

# Issues in Standard Occupational Classification System

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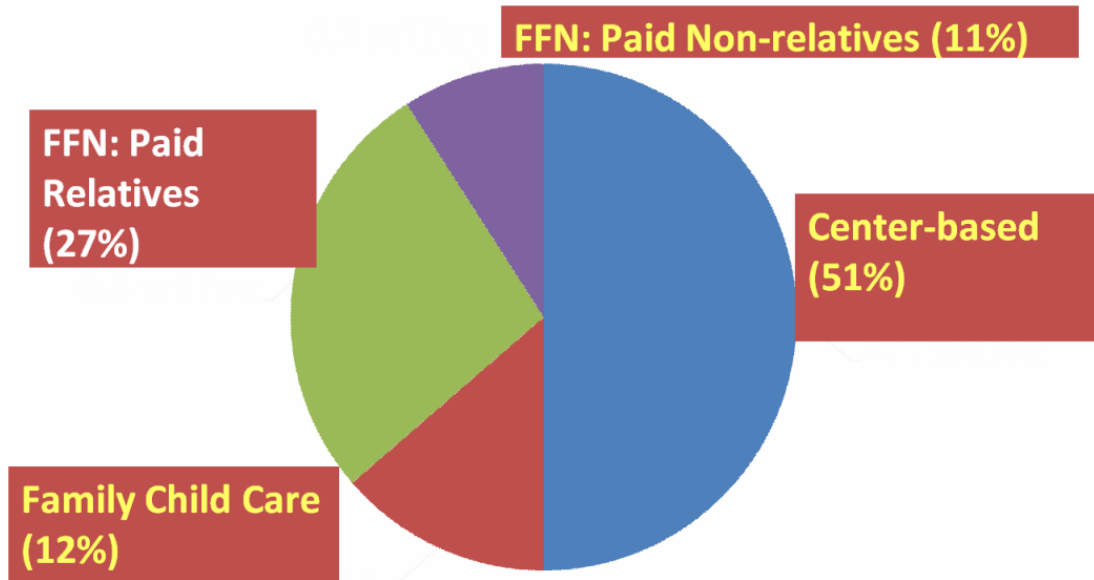
- Does not consistently distinguish workers who care for or instruct children from birth through age five from those who care for or instruct school-aged children
- Distinction between childcare worker and preschool teacher does not reflect the work performed



# Components of the ECCE workforce



# Distribution of ECCE Workforce



- ❑ Paid ECE = 31% of P-20 Educational workforce
- ❑ Plus 3.2 million unpaid, mostly relatives
- ❑ Infants 23%, toddlers 31%, preschoolers 47% paid workforce

# Educational Qualifications

## Percent BA+

- Directors: ..... 78-82%
- Teachers: .....43-52%
- Asst. Teachers: .....20-25%
- FCC: .....9-12%

## Percent teachers with

- AA in ECE: .....12%
- BA in ECE: .....31%
- MA+ in ECE: ..... 13%
- CDA: .....23%
- State Certificate: .....29-57%
- Teaching certificate or license: ..... 24-39%

# Wages and Earnings

- Women working in early childcare (other than preschool) earn 31 percent less than women with similar qualifications working in other occupations.
- Annual earnings
  - ▣ \$31,000 for preschool and kindergarten teachers
  - ▣ \$21,000 for assistant teachers
  - ▣ \$18,000 for other childcare workers
  - ▣ \$14,000 for paid family child care workers

# New Data Needs

- Information about the workforce (e.g., number, distribution across settings, caregiving activities, ages of children, qualifications and experience, job stress and satisfaction)
- Conditions of employment (e.g., compensation and benefits, characteristics of the workplaces)
- Geographic distribution
- Quality of ECCE

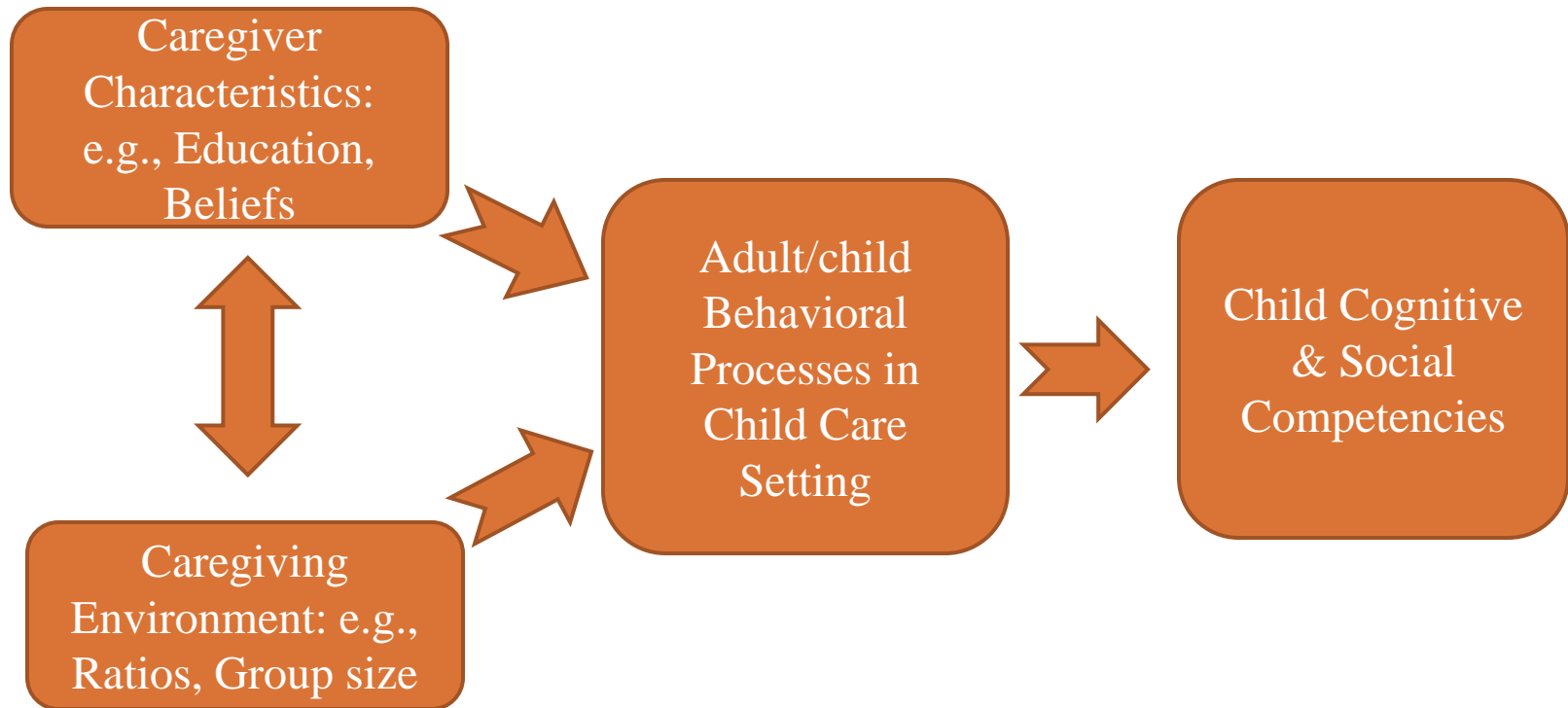
# Why Data and Definitions Are Important

- Federal statistical structure exists
- Advantages of ECCE field participating
  - Comparing data across multiple contexts
  - Coordination of federal education and state data at the K-12 level provides a useful model
  - Cooperation between federal agencies, states, public and private enterprises
  - Supporting sound policy and improvements in quality in ECCE

# How Workforce Affects Children and Families

- Ultimate goal is *quality* of ECCE to promote child development
  - ▣ close teacher-child relationships
  - ▣ frequent sensitive interactions
  - ▣ high quality instruction
  - ▣ respectful and effective behavior management
  - ▣ high quality physical environment
- Caregiver and context together matter

# Expanded Model of ECE



Malerba, Catherine (2005)



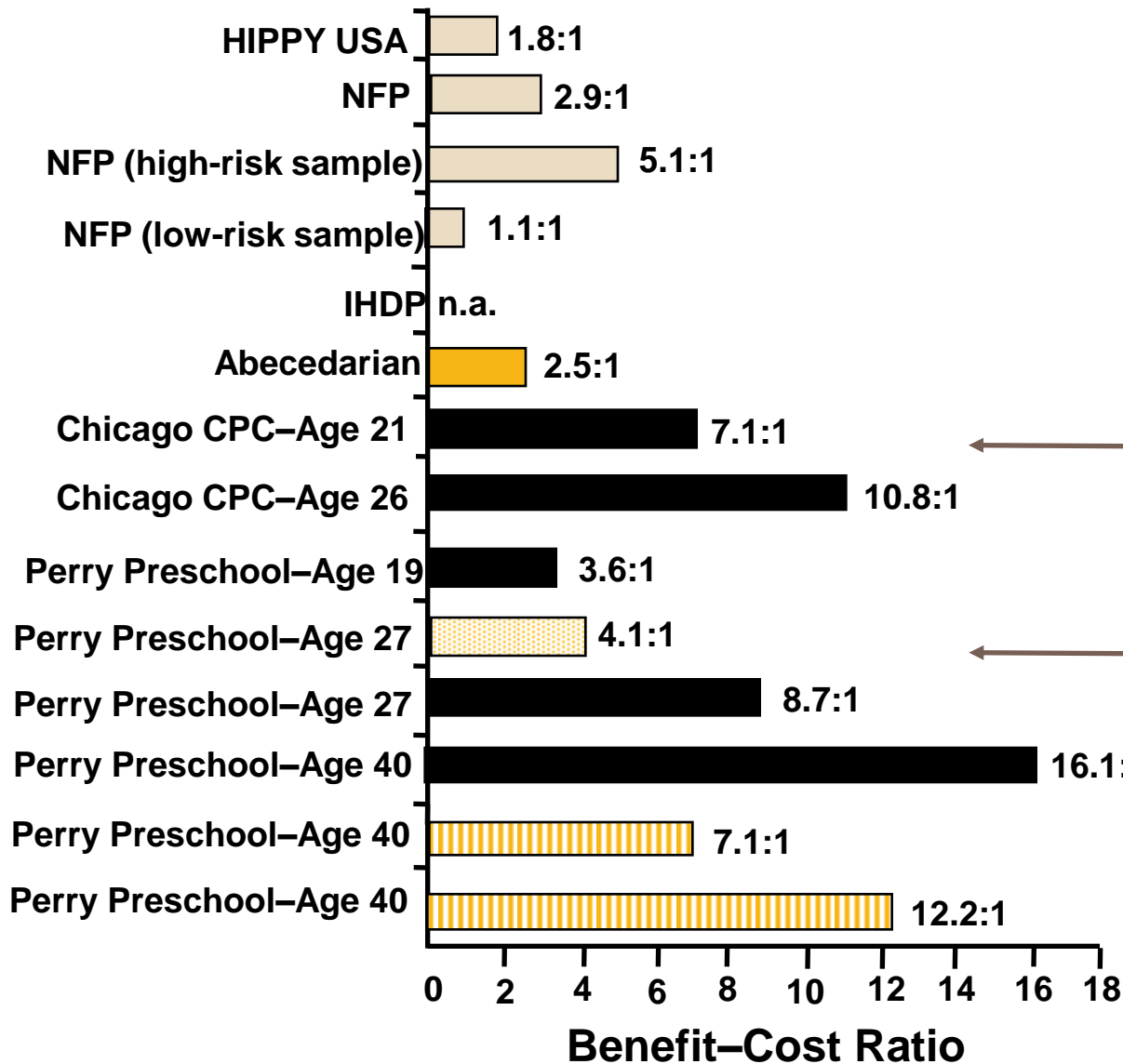
# Quality is the Mediator for Children's Development

- Centers
  - High education/training & low child/adult ratio associated with cognitive and social competencies—*mediated by observed quality*
- Family child care homes
  - Caregivers with more education and child centered beliefs show more positive caregiving and higher home environment quality
  - Children with better educated/trained CG performed better on cognitive and language tests

# Quality and Children's Stress

- Brain development affected by stress levels
  - ▣ Positive stress
  - ▣ Tolerable stress
  - ▣ Toxic stress (e.g., neglect, absence of protective adults)
- Some children more vulnerable than others
  - ▣ Stay on periphery
  - ▣ Self-soothing
  - ▣ Cling to adults
- High quality care can reduce children's stress

# Benefit Cost Analysis: Five Overarching Lessons



- Not every program yields benefits that exceed costs
- Those that do are not just smaller-scale demo programs
- Benefits from both higher-cost, more intensive programs and lower-cost, less intensive ones
- Returns can be higher with targeting
- Largest returns associated with long-term follow-up

# How Important is the BA Degree?

- One answer: It is not a good indicator of quality
- Analysis of 7 large programs, 27 analyses
  - ▣ Five of 27 showed statistically significant effects on quality or child development favoring possession of BA
  - ▣ Four that showed a benefit for possession of any degree
  - ▣ Two that showed a benefit for teacher certification

# BA May Matter in Context

- Effective Pre-k programs have set of features including
  - ▣ Well educated teachers (BA or higher)
  - ▣ Adequate compensation
  - ▣ Strong curriculum and professional development
  - ▣ Small classes and reasonable ratios
  - ▣ Strong supervision, monitoring, and review
  - ▣ High standards and continuous improvement
- Conclusion: Well-designed training can be effective, but available programs vary widely, often not providing important elements

# New Focus: What ECCE Workforce Needs to Know

- How to put up-to-date knowledge of teaching, learning, and child development into practice
- Capacity to provide rich conceptual experiences that promote growth in specific content areas
- Effective teaching strategies
- Capacity to identify appropriate content for preschool children
- Assessment procedures to inform instruction
- Teaching practices for children who from varied cultural/social backgrounds, have disabilities, or differ from the normal range of development
- Capacity to work with family members

# Building the Workforce and the Profession

Is ECCE a profession or a workforce?

What is needed to make it a profession?

What is a profession?

“A group with an identifiable body of knowledge that most people value and feel they do not possess”

# Learning from the Health Care Field: A Template

- Defining and describing the profession
- Safety and efficacy
- Government and private sector recognition
- Education and training
- Proactive practice model and viability of profession
  - ▣ Are there practice guidelines?
  - ▣ Are there inter-professional teams?
  - ▣ Are clients satisfied, and how measured?
  - ▣ Is field innovative?
  - ▣ Are practitioners and service accessible?
  - ▣ Are there professional or advocacy groups?



# Issues in Building ECCE as a Profession

- Lack of attractive career paths
- Low wages
- Stressful work conditions
- Inadequate training
- Lack of recognition

## **One director's view:**

*“I see these young girls starting out in the early childhood teaching field today and I want to say, ‘Do you realize what you are doing? You’re spending a lot of time getting into a field that’s not going to offer anything in the long term.’ And I really hate to say that, because teachers are needed.”*

# Wages and Stability

Occupation	Average wage	Rate of turnover
Registered nurses	\$31.99	5%
K-8 teachers	\$30.60	10%
Preschool teachers	\$13.26	10%
Home health aides/nurses	\$10.39	18%
Child care workers	\$10.07	29%
Food counter workers	\$9.13	42%

Could reflect positive changes – incompetent workers leaving  
Often appears to reflect negative work conditions  
High turnover is related to low quality of care

# Barriers to Increasing Wages

- Available workforce is elastic, with many low-skilled individuals available
- Parents pay most of costs of child care
- Despite expanding need for child care, many parents do not elect to buy high quality at higher cost
- Absence of criteria to guide parent decisions as well as limited resources

# Strategies to Address Low Wages

- Closed delivery systems (e.g., military)
- Require parity with pre-k
- Wage subsidies to programs
- Individual salary supplements (often contingent on improving education)
- Assistance with health insurance costs
- Comprehensive scholarships (e.g., T.E.A.C.H.)

# Education and Training: Professional Development

*“Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice.”*

- ▣ Who? Characteristics and contexts of learners
- ▣ What? Content imparted
- ▣ How? Organization of learning experience

# Training for a Diverse Workforce

- Wide range of backgrounds, skills
- Many are first-generation college students, sometimes lacking basic skills (e.g., math)
- Much training and education occurs while working
- Costs of books, etc. can be barrier
- Implication: Need wide range of offerings with flexibility and support

# Effective Professional Development

- Defining competencies by aligning standards across groups (e.g., NAEYC and Zero to Three)
- Design modules focused on research-based practice rather than general knowledge
- Sufficient duration to allow guided practice and feedback
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Connect content to standards and assessments
- Methods of establishing proficiency

# Major Theme 1: Definition and Data

- ECCE workforce numbers 2.2 million
- Consists of people with range of training working in wide variety of settings
- Clearer definitions of the profession are needed
  - ▣ In the federal labor and statistical systems
  - ▣ To inform policy
  - ▣ To make the field more visible
- Data describing the workforce needed and can serve important purposes for policy



# Major theme 2: Workforce and Quality

- Quality of interactions and programs matter for children's cognitive and social development
- Unclear whether BA or other degree is a good indicator of competence to provide quality
- Effective training includes concrete, explicit instruction, research-based practices, opportunities to apply knowledge in practice
- Need new research testing professional development strategies systematically

# Theme 3: Strengthening the Workforce

- ECCE is relatively low status, low paying
- Moving to a profession involves changes in required qualifications, pay, recognition, proactive responses to changing conditions
- Career pathways include guidance and range of training opportunities, mentoring, career ladders that offer advancement and financial compensation
- Need research to gain understanding of best practices in training and education of ECCE workforce.

# Bottom Line

- ECCE workforce are an important part of life for many young children
- The benefits for children's development of investing in quality ECCE are well-documented
- The immediate costs are large and the barriers high