

Beyond Service: Shifting the Image of Early Childhood Education

Commentary on the ECEBC position paper of February 2022

By [ECPN](#) pedagogists Karen Samuel Boley and Leigh Kweon



Photo by Karen Samuel Boley

Early Childhood Educators of BC ([ECEBC](#)), an organization dedicated to the professionalization of early childhood educators, released the second in a [series of position papers](#) that envision the future of early childhood education (ECE) in British Columbia. This second position paper, [The Role of the Early Childhood Educator in British Columbia](#), offers a vision for the profession that can respond to the current conditions of our times.

It is a vision that departs from an image of early childhood educators as those who “apply skills and/or predetermined developmental knowledge to provide a service to keep children safe and healthy within a model of cost efficiency and minimum universal standards” (ECEBC, 2022, p. 2). *If we reject this image of early childhood educators as service providers, what, then, is the intention of early childhood education?* The position paper provokes a consideration of what early childhood education might be if it is not viewed as an economic tool that allows parents to work, but is viewed instead as a public good and “a space to co-create new worlds with alternative narratives” (ECEBC, 2022, p. 2). To this end the paper outlines five orientations of early childhood educators that each describe a complex, exciting, and necessary professional.



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As noted in the most recent issue of the ECPN newsletter [The Here & Now](#), pedagogists work to enliven this position paper's vision. For example, in our role as pedagogists, we collectively explore possibilities for respectfully living and learning together (BC ELF) as we engage in curriculum making with educators and children. We envision classrooms where educators and children learn alongside each other—classrooms where children's engagements in the world are opportunities for educators to join in. Not child- or adult-led but *co-created* responsive engagements fostered by a democratic process of dialogue, debate, and negotiation between all learners (Langford, 2010) and more-than-human participants (such as materials, land, waters). Through documentation, dialogue, and experimentation, pedagogists support educators to activate curriculum making and pedagogical processes that are situated and responsive to their current conditions.

The Government of Canada's commitment to and investment in ECE brings hope to many educators that they will receive recognition as competent "practitioner[s], theorist[s], and critical thinker[s]" (Moss, 2014, p. 89) and that this commitment will create new and continued opportunities for listening to educators to better understand the contexts and complexities of their work. ECEBC is advocating for educators and their role as responsive, ethical professionals who co-create curriculum with children as they "respond to the current conditions of our time" (ECEBC, p. 3). We strongly encourage all educators to read the position paper, discuss it with your colleagues and families, and consider what one (or more) of the ideas within it might bring to your professional practice.

References

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