The state of data on early childhood education and care in Canada

National Data Project final report

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This project began with the premise that it would be desirable to collect, collate, analyze and disseminate pan-Canadian reliable data on programs relating to the care and education of young children that are comparable across provinces/territories. There are two main rationales for this perspective. First, there is wide agreement that public accountability for public spending, programs and services is essential. Second, good data are fundamental to designing social indicators and formulating intelligent public policy. These views have been strengthened in the last few years in the context of Canadian developments regarding ECEC as well as by work on ECEC in the international context. The report consists of five sections. Section I introduces the paper. Section II analyzes the purposes and requirements for which ECEC data could-and should-be collected, organized, analyzed and used; the section discusses the value of indicators in assessing the availability, affordability, and quality of different types of ECEC services and of indicators of potential outcomes fostered by those services. Section III briefly outlines and describes current and past data collection in Canada and presents some international data approaches to ECEC data that may be useful in Canada. Section IV outlines what types of provincial/territorial administrative, program and monitoring data about ECEC services are currently collected. It also looks at the strengths and weaknesses of this administrative data for answering various questions and for producing indicators of progress and recommends reforms. Section V focuses on conclusions and recommendations. Detailed appendices are included.

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