

Good Governance of Child Care: What Does it Mean? What does it look like?

Introduction, Template and Model Summaries

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

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INTRODUCTION

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) has a vision of a community-based, publicly funded, high quality, universal child care system. Just like other community and public services, we know that child care needs to be planned for, developed and delivered at the community level – with adequate and stable public funding and supportive policy. That is why “Our Child Care Plan” (www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/index.html) calls for “**parent/community controlled governing structures to oversee the planning, development, and management**” of child care services.

While community governed child care has always been part of our vision, our answers to important questions like “What do you mean by community-based governance?” or “How would it work?” haven’t been very clear or specific.

Now, with funding from the VanCity Community Foundation and in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (BC Office), we are working on a project to help move us from a vision of community-based governance for child care to concrete policy options and recommendations for what good governance of child care looks like.

Why Now?

When we began this project we anticipated significant new public investments in child care. In 2005, the provincial and federal government signed an Agreement in Principle on Early Learning and Child Care. Under this Agreement, BC was to receive over \$630 million from the federal government over 5 years to begin building a child care system in BC. With significant growth and expansion on the agenda, CCCABC felt that effective planning and good governance were essential to make sure that public investments met community needs and built community services that we would all be proud of.

Regrettably, after 2 years, the federal government cancelled its agreement with BC and other provinces. BC lost \$455 million dedicated to regulated child care. Even more regrettably, the province did not invest much of the \$177 million it did receive through this Agreement in building a child care system. As of January 2007, the province announced even more drastic cuts to child care. So, while the promise of significant public investment has been broken again, the need to foster a strong bond between communities and their child care services is more important than ever. Democratic community governance may be one of our best tools for building this bond during difficult times. **That is why we hope you will get involved in helping us shape a vision for community-based and controlled child care services in BC.**

What Do We Mean by Good Governance?

Governance is not always easy to define. Still, we are using the concept because it helps us think about the big picture of child care. Governance is bigger than coordination of services; it’s bigger than service delivery models and it’s bigger than management and administration.

We are drawing on several sources to define governance as: the institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice, and how decisions are made on issues of public concern. **For us, governance, as distinct from government, is the process through which communities make important decisions, set priorities, solve their problems, and render account.**¹

¹ Drawn from the following: Tim Plumptre, *What is Governance?* Institute on Governance, www.iog.ca; Government of Canada, Public Health Agency, *Voluntary Sector: Glossary of Terms*, www.phac-aspc.gc.ca (both retrieved October 17, 2006); and, Annis, Chudnovsky, Robinson & Wachtel, *When the Bough Breaks: Coordinating the Planning for Services to Children, Youth and Families in Vancouver*. for the Vancouver Regional Child and Youth Committee. Vancouver: United Way Research Services, 1993.

Questions about who has ‘the power to make decisions’ about child care don’t get much airtime. In communities, child care is ‘governed’ by a range of bodies such as non-profit parent and community societies; privately owned enterprises; and churches – most of whom are continually challenged to do the best they can with limited resources. Community tables like Children First and Success by Six also work hard to share information and identify priorities.

But, in spite of their tremendous effort, nobody has a clear mandate to plan, develop and deliver a comprehensive child care system that gives people a voice and is accountable for meeting community needs. Good governance of child care is the solution to this problem.

Where to Start?

The purpose of ‘good governance’ is to build and sustain the child care system that children, families and communities need. Good governance is a tool to this end – not an end in itself.

So, in our exploration of governance models for child care, we started by identifying the key elements of the child care system we are advocating for. We put these elements into a ‘template’ (see page 7) that became the lens through which to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the governance models.

Using this template, we examined 5 different governance models – 2 child care governance models used internationally (New Zealand, Denmark), one from another Canadian jurisdiction (Quebec) and two governance models used in other BC public/community services (Community Living BC, BC School Boards).

On their own, structural solutions can’t solve policy problems. So, our examination began with a look at the public policy context in which these governance models operate. We asked if there was adequate public funding and a societal commitment to universality, quality, affordability and accessibility. Then we looked at specific elements of the governance model to assess the degree to which this model advanced our principles and goals.

It came as no surprise that no model was perfect and that no model fit the BC child care situation to a ‘T’. Each model had strengths and weaknesses and each raised some interesting and important questions. (For a summary of models reviewed, see page 9)

What Next?

Based on this initial review we are now consulting with communities to help us answer some of these questions.

After we hear from you, we will take the next step of identifying the important elements of a good child care governance model for BC.

TEMPLATE FOR REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE MODELS

This Template reflects key elements of the child care system that the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC advocates for. The Template became the lens through which we examined the strengths and weaknesses of 5 different governance models in advancing a non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable. The Template begins with an examination of the public policy context in which the different governance models operate. It then outlines specific elements of the governance model to assess the degree to which this model advanced our principles and goals as follows:

The Public Policy Context

The broader public policy context in which the governance model operates.

1. **Universal** *Universal entitlement as opposed to a targeted or market approach.*
2. **Quality** *Government is responsible, and sets high standards, for relevant services that are enforced and resourced (i.e. strong public policy framework, ensures workforce and administrators have appropriate education, wages and working conditions).*
3. **Affordable** *Parental fees are no more than 20% of the service revenue.*
4. **Publicly funded** *Government provides the majority of funding for relevant services.*
5. **Accessible** *There is a space for everyone in a resource that supports his or her full development.*

The Governance Model

1. The degree to which the governance model has a **Clear Mandate**
There is a clear and formal mandate for the assessment of need, planning, development and delivery of child care or other service (mandate enshrined in legislation with a budget to back it and full accountability).
2. The degree to which the governance model promotes **CCCABC's Values**:
 - a. **Accountable** *The model promotes accountability to the community through government for ensuring standards/regulations are met and financial reporting is transparent and that the service is responsive to individual needs.*
 - b. **Coordinated** *The model promotes coordination and integration of service (avoids overlap, duplication and ensures efficiency of available resources).*
 - c. **Equitable** *The model promotes equitable access across regions.*
 - d. **Inclusive and responsive to diversity** *The model provides those who require additional supports and those who come from different backgrounds with the services they need to support their full development.*
 - e. **Community-control** *The model promotes democratic community control, meaning it will:*
 - i. Be **participatory**, with children, parents, caregivers, and community members at large involved,
 - ii. Reflect a high level of **community ownership**,
 - iii. Be delivered through **non-profit or public** organizations,
 - iv. Allow for political **autonomy**,
 - v. Be of a size/scale that allows a **direct relationship** between users and caregivers,
 - vi. Have the **infrastructure** (administrative support, etc.) to support community involvement,
 - vii. Allow service delivery to be **decentralized**; and it will,
 - viii. Build on the **strengths** that currently exist in the community and province (probably using a community development model).

THE ANALYSIS

This Template was used to describe and assess the following Governance Models:

- New Zealand's Child Care Governance Model
- Denmark's Child Care Governance Model
- Quebec's Child Care Governance Model
- Community Living British Columbia's Governance Model
- British Columbia School Board Governance Model

The degree to which each of these governance models advanced (or not) the key elements in the Template was assessed based on a review of the literature listed at the end of each model and the collective judgment of the Consultant and project Reference Group.

Each element of the model is 'rated' using one of the following five symbols:

Legend

☑	Indicates general achievement of this element
☒	Indicates relatively little or no achievement of this element
➔	Indicates forward movement on achieving this element
➔	Indicates backwards movement on achieving this element
?	Not enough information, unknown, or not applicable

SUMMARIES OF THE GOVERNANCE MODELS

Each of the 'models' identified below are complex systems comprised of a diverse set of factors involving the public policy context, governance structures, service delivery models, etc. The following summaries are not intended to be evaluations of the overall effectiveness of these systems. For this project, we have focused on the governance aspects and their relevance to good governance of child care in BC. It is important to note, however, that this review highlights the interdependence between public policy and governance structures and the difficulty in separating one from the other.

Below we have done the following: briefly summarized each of the governance models examined for this project; extracted some of the highlights of the model; and, posed some further questions for the model. The full description and analysis of each of the governance models is available in CCCABC's *Good Governance of Child Care* report.

The New Zealand Child Care Governance Model

The New Zealand model draws together a pre-existing plethora of early childhood education models (including private child care) under the jurisdiction of the education ministry, which, in the early 1980s, established a common funding structure, common training requirements for staff, common management or 'chartering' structures, and facilitated the development of a common curriculum for children aged zero to five years that applies to all child care.

An initial examination of this model reveals many strengths: the public policy movement towards 'universal entitlement', the methods used to draw on the strengths of pre-existing early childhood education providers, and the development a very non-traditional early childhood education 'curriculum'. This curriculum, and other components of the system, serves to unite the previously patchwork system and honour the cultural integrity of Maori and Pacifica children.

The mandate of the Ministry of Education for child care provision is clear and the accountability mechanisms, through the Education Review Office, are strong. The ministry plays a very proactive role in promoting access to quality child care across regions and across cultural groups. An initial review indicates local childcare agencies playing a significant role in regional and district governance of child care. The ministry is setting higher standards for caregiver qualification and supporting this through increased funding to offset increasing costs of wages. Questions remain about the role that 'chartering structures' and membership based 'umbrella groups' of related service providers play in the governance structure.

The Denmark Child Care Governance Model

The Ministry of Social Affairs has the main responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care provision in Denmark for children 0-6 years. Local authorities have the overall responsibility for providing daycare facilities for children, to ensure a sufficient supply of places, and to provide support for children with special needs. Local authorities determine their own daycare structure on the basis of local needs, the framework and objectives of daycare facilities, and the level of responsibility to be given to parent boards in daycare centres.

The public policy context for child care in Denmark is strong – i.e. a long-standing policy of universal entitlement – and it reflects well on the model. Local authorities have a clear mandate, service delivery is highly decentralized with infrastructure support, and the structure allows a very direct relationship between users and caregivers. The model ensures coordination of services, equitability across regions, and is highly inclusive of parents and caregivers.

Questions remain about how responsive the model is to diversity. There has been a recent recognition of the barriers "new Danes" encounter in accessing child care; although, the response has been to integrate these children through special Danish language programs. Given the highly decentralized nature of the model, Denmark is exploring new approaches to ensuring quality.

The Québec Child Care Governance Model

Québec child care is a two-stream model: non-profit child care centres for children aged 0 to 4 evolved into *centres de la petite enfance* (CPE), housed under the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine, and family care organizations are housed under “Coordinating Offices”; and, school-based care for 5-to-12-year olds is housed under the Ministère de l’Éducation.

The public policy context for this model is strong, with care primarily funded by government and a cap on parental fees at \$7 a day. The CPEs currently have a clear mandate, considerable autonomy, and there is a strong provincial-wide planning process involving regional development councils that ensures coordination and equitable access across regions. The model is highly participatory, with parent-users comprising 2/3 of the boards of CPEs and have been developed drawing on the pre-existing strengths of the non-profit child-care community.

Recent political decisions (2003) in Québec have created a growth of for-profit child care service delivery. Also, there are now questions about political autonomy and coordination of services given a recent decision to separate the governance of child care centres from that of family care.

The Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) Governance Model

CLBC is a BC provincial crown agency responsible for: the delivery of services and supports primarily to adults with developmental disabilities living in the community, independent planning support, family support, and residential services for children age 6-18 with developmental disabilities.

The board that governs CLBC is relatively inclusive, given that it must be comprised of a majority of adults with developmental disabilities and their families (members are appointed by the minister, rather than elected). Accountability mechanisms to the provincial government are strong. This model was developed by a group of dedicated self- and family-advocates who felt this model reflected the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

This model is relatively new; therefore the evaluative literature is limited and it is difficult to adequately assess the relevance of this model for child care governance. It is challenging to envision it as a model for child care governance given that a key feature of the model is an individualized funding model and, currently, it primarily supports adults.

The BC School Board Governance Model

The BC school board model is a well-established governance model through which elected boards govern K-12 public education in their districts.

The strength of this model is partially in the strong public policy context in which it operates – universal entitlement to education, inclusion of children with special needs, no user fees, etc. Other strengths of this model include the democratically-elected board, the clear mandate they have to deliver education in their district, and public not-for-profit delivery of education.

There are recent challenges to the autonomy of schools boards. Provincial funding decisions have put limits on school boards’ abilities to meet the changing needs of their districts and a recent decision to expand the mandate of school boards beyond K-12 compounds this challenge. Also, questions have been raised about the real level of parental and student involvement in governance, as well as the size and scale of some districts/schools that undermines the direct user/teacher relationship and the level of decentralization of service delivery.