Characteristics and Professional Development Experiences of Early Educators in Massachusetts

Anne Douglass
Alice Carter
Frank Smith
University of Massachusetts Boston
Contact: anne.douglass@umb.edu
Professional Development and QRIS

• Professional development as a driver of change and quality improvement
• Targeting approaches likely to influence change in practice
• In this study, we examined professional development participation in relation to 2 policies:
  • Encouraging educators who work together to attend PD together
  • Prioritizing educators working with high needs children
Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of educators enrolled in the PQR?
2. What are the characteristics of educators who participated in professional development (PD)?
3. What are similarities and differences among educators who work primarily with high needs children and those who do not? (characteristics and PD participation)
4. To what extend do educators who work together participate in the same PD coursework?
5. What type of density is reflected in participation patterns (vertical or horizontal)?
6. Do we see increased density with the requirement to send multiple staff members from one program to a professional development course?
Data Sources and Limitations

- Professional qualifications registry (PQR) (n=55,749)
- Program priority rating list
- PD attendance records for educators (n=3410)
- PD “course catalog” FY12

- Limitations: missing data
Results: Characteristics of Early Educators in the Registry

- Average age: 37; 25% are 25 years old or younger.
- Gender: 94.1% female, 5.9% male
- Highest education earned:
  - 27.8% secondary education or a CDA
  - 23.8% some college coursework,
  - 12.4% associate’s degree,
  - 26.1% bachelor’s degree,
  - 9.9% graduate or professional degree
- Primary language: 86% English, 10% Spanish, 5% other
- 12% are family child care providers
Characteristics of Educators with PD Attendance Data

- 3410 educators
- Compared with all educators in PQR
PD Course Content: Core Competencies

Percentage of Educators Who Attended Professional Development in Core Competencies (N = 3410)

1. Understanding Growth and Development of Children and
   - 22.0%

2. Guiding and Interacting with Children and Youth
   - 20.1%

3. Partnering with Children and Families
   - 16.0%

4. Health Safety and Nutrition
   - 5.7%

5. Learning Environments and Implementing Curriculum
   - 30.8%

6. Observation Assessment and Document
   - 13.8%

7. Program Planning and Development
   - 17.1%

8. Professionalism and Leadership
   - 8.6%
PD Course Content:
3 content areas

Percentage of Educators Who Attended Professional Development in Content Areas
(N = 3410)

- Numeracy: 5.2%
- Literacy: 8.8%
- Social Emotional: 46.6%
Results: Participation Density

- Density: when people who work together obtain professional development on the same content
  - Measuring density
    - PD utilization: when an ECE program has one or more educators who attended a PD course/event
    - Density of PD participation from the ECE program level – the percentage of PD “utilizations” in which an educator attended PD that covered the same content as PD attended by one or more others from their workplace.

- Horizontal and vertical density
- Potential benefits of participation density
Results: Professional Development Participation Density

- Results:
  - Density in participation is uncommon
  - 74% of the time an educator attended PD that no one else from his/her workplace attended
  - 26% of the time there was density
    - 23% = horizontal density
    - 3% = vertical density
## Impact of Policy on PD Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Density</th>
<th>Density</th>
<th>Total number of PD utilizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD with Team Requirement (N=271)</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other PD (N=740)</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can these findings be used?

• Data systems
• Policy
• Professional development research