Collaboration in Early Care and Education: Establishing a Framework for a Research Agenda

Measuring Collaboration: What the Public Management Literature Contributes

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Measuring Collaboration

• Measuring collaboration has been a challenging process in many different policy fields
• Collaborations are often treated like snowflakes
• Need to build theory, measures, and practice around what are the common characteristics of effective collaborations
Common Measurement Issues

• What is a collaboration (versus partnership, network, or other form of inter-organizational relationship)?
• Level of analysis at which the collaboration is being delivered or operated
• Measuring antecedents to collaboration
• Measuring collaborative design
• Measuring the process—what constitutes a quality process
• Measuring collaborative outcomes
What the Public Management Literature Offers

• Measuring capacity—
  – Management capacity
  – Administrative capacity
  – Collaborative capacity

• Measuring institutional effects—
  – Problem complexity—understanding of policy field and the need for collaboration in the field
  – Role of mandates in driving collaboration
  – Impediments of different problem definitions

• Measuring implementation processes—
  – The resources devoted to the collaboration
  – Inhibitors to the collaboration

• Primers—Bingham and O’Leary (2008) and O’Leary and Bingham (2009)
One Study Example

• Investigating Partnerships in Early Care and Education (I-PIECE)
• Pre-k, childcare, and Head Start partnership
• Multiple embedded case study design with mixed methods
• Measuring the impact of the collaboration on:
  – The organization as a whole
  – The classroom
  – The teacher in the class
  – Child outcomes
• How did we measure the collaboration?
Collaborations in ECE-I-PIECE Measures

• Motivations to collaborate—question that had organizations selecting and ranking reasons from a list of indicators

• Collaboration was mapped initially through an access protocol—what we learned through this study changed how we would have measured this

• Level of funding attached to the partners and level of interaction--would map this better quantitatively

• Collaboration in practice varied upon implementation and commitment of the partners (Sowa 2008):
  – Shallow Collaboration or collaborative contracting
  – Medium Collaboration or capacity-building collaborations
  – Deep Collaboration or community-building collaborations
Collaboration in ECE-I-PIECE Measures

• Teacher measures:
  – Satisfaction with pay and benefits
  – Turnover in the organization
  – Impact on professional development

• Classroom measures:
  – Impact on the diversity of services offered
  – Impact on curriculum
  – Impact on paperwork and administrative issues
Collaborative Outcomes

• Process outcomes-Thomson 2001
• Goal attainment—going to depend on the particular goal of the collaboration
• Systems change
• Improved relationships—trust measures, red tape measures (see Bozeman 2001)
• My work—Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort (2006)—Collaborative intensity impacts outcomes (parental perceptions of child readiness and classroom quality)
• Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2006)—outcomes and accountabilities—opportunities to leverage this in early care and education