A Mixed Method Evaluation of Early Childhood Education Program Models

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November 9, 2017
Overview

- Early Childhood Education: A Unique Challenge
- A Novel Approach to Program Evaluation
- From Learning to Action
- *A Proposal*: Evaluating Parent Perspectives
- *Workspace*: Applications to Similar Projects
Early Childhood Education: A Unique Challenge

- Necessitates novel approach due to uniquely complex landscape.
  - Funding Models (*For-Profit, Federally Funded*)
  - Center Structure (*Family vs. Center-Based*)
  - Approach (*Play-Based, Academic Focus*)
  - Philosophy (*Montessori, Reggio, etc.*)
Necessitates novel approach because of wide range of stakeholders.

- Children
- Policy Makers
- Parents
- Administrators
- Researchers

Early Childhood Education
A Novel Approach to Program Evaluation

- Typical Program Evaluation Models
A Novel Approach to Program Evaluation

- Outcomes of interest vary across stakeholders.
  - **Parents**: Safe and Happy
  - **Educators**: Classroom Management
  - **Researchers**: Measurable Gains
  - **Administration**: Operations & Resources
  - **Policy**: Accessible Care
A Novel Approach to Program Evaluation

- A Mixed-Model Approach
  - Tailored to capture outcomes that align with stakeholder interests.
  - *e.g.*, “Best Practices” and measures of “Quality Care” do not mean anything if the services are not accessible.
A Novel Approach to Program Evaluation

- A Mixed-Model Approach
  - Identify the outcomes that align with stakeholder interests.
  - Identify the data (sources and type).
  - Adopt the appropriate method and analysis.
A Novel Approach to Program Evaluation

- A Mixed-Model Approach
  - Most questions cannot be satisfactorily answered with a single approach.
  - Virtues exist in a wide range of paradigms and methodological approaches.
  - May require consultation and collaboration (*build a logic model*).
From Learning to Action

- Create **adaptive** rubrics and metrics.
- Index and report data in a way that is **accessible** to stakeholders.
- Allow for frequent **updates**.
- Leverage **results** for policy and advocacy.
Things to keep in mind…

- Who are the stakeholders?  
  *Who should be informing/directing the research?*

- What are the **variables of interest**?  
  *Consider those that are often overlooked.*

- What are the stakeholders’ **questions**?  
  *Identify methods appropriate for these questions?*

- What is the best way to **disseminate** the findings?
Group Activity
- Review *(or share)* your research question.
- Who are your stakeholders?
- What are your variables of interest?
- What are your stakeholders’ questions?
- What is the appropriate methodological approach? *Why?*
  - How will you triangulate data from multiple sources?
  - How will one approach inform another?

Group Activity Instructions
A Proposal

An Evaluation of Early Child Education Programs: Factors Influencing Parental Decision-Making
Research Questions

- What specific factors influence parents’ selection of early childhood education programs for their children?

- Do parent values align with the information that is presented to the public?

- Do parent values align with the values expressed by center directors?

- Are parent values influenced by demographic factors (race/ethnicity, income, education level)?
Parental Decision-Making Framework

- Family Income Level
- Parent Education Level
- Cultural Background

- Parental Decision Making
- Quality Care
- Practical Factors

- Center & Classroom Environment, Teachers & Instructions, Curriculum, Family Engagement, and Cultural Competency
- Accessibility, Availability, Affordability, and Awareness
Methodology

- Santa Clara County - diversity in population, geographic landscape, and economic status
- Mixed methods, 3-phase approach

**Phase I**  
Community Scan
- **Activities**: Program Indexing and mapping of 2,500 licensed child care center and family care homes
- **Output**: Program Index, GIS Map

**Phase II**  
Public Information Analysis & Evaluation
- **Activities**: Program analysis of 8 selected ECE program sites; Conduct 150 parent surveys, 8 center director surveys, 10-15 parent interviews, and 8 center directors interviews
- **Output**: Program Information, Evaluation results

**Phase III**  
Program Matrix
- **Activity**: Compile program index and programmatic information into a matrix template
- **Output**: Parent Decision-Making Tool
Research Design – Phase II

Randomly Select 8 ECE Sites

- 2 Federally-funded Head Start Sites
- 2 State-funded Preschools
- 6 Local ECE Sites:
  - 2 Academic
  - 2 Play-based
  - 2 Family Care

Data Collection

- Program Evaluation
- Public Information Analysis

Instruments

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Evaluation of publically-available information
Parents must navigate multiple systems to find information on ECE programs.
## Program Matrix - Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Federally-Funded Head Start</th>
<th>State-funded Preschool</th>
<th>Family Care</th>
<th>Academic-focused Center</th>
<th>Play-based Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affordability</strong></td>
<td>sliding scale avg $500/mo</td>
<td>sliding scale avg $700/mo</td>
<td>$650/mo</td>
<td>$1500/mo</td>
<td>$1200/mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access &amp; Continuity of Services</strong></td>
<td>Full Day Year Round</td>
<td>Half Day Year Round</td>
<td>Full Day Year Round</td>
<td>Full Day School Year Only</td>
<td>Full Day Year Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Center &amp; Classroom Environment</strong></td>
<td>ECRS: 4</td>
<td>ECRS: 8</td>
<td>ECRS: 8</td>
<td>ECRS: 5</td>
<td>ECRS: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers &amp; Instruction</strong></td>
<td>QRIS: 8</td>
<td>QRIS: 9</td>
<td>QRIS: 3</td>
<td>QRIS: 8</td>
<td>QRIS: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive Practices</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Competency</strong></td>
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Questions?

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