

E2: Threats to Validity in Quality Measurement: Using Observational Tools in Varied Settings and for Multiple Purposes

Thursday, April 18, 2019

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. | Cabin John/Arlington

1. Descriptive Information

E2: Threats to Validity in Quality Measurement: Using Observational Tools in Varied Settings and for Multiple Purposes

Observational measures of quality in early childhood classrooms are used for a variety of purposes including for research, QRIS, professional development, and program evaluation. Different settings, purposes, and populations pose different threats to the validity of those measure. This panel will bring together projects that have used observational tools in varied settings to discuss challenges and creative solutions for ensuring validity. The panelists will describe their experiences and engage the audience in a discussion of principles that can be applied to a variety of settings.

The first presentation will focus on the use of an observational protocol in the American Indian Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AI/AN FACES), with special emphasis on cultural adaptation of existing tools and ensuring validity in diverse settings.

The second presentation will focus on the implications of using common observational tools, like the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and CLASS, for different purposes within a program (e.g., accountability, professional development) how these multiple purposes can threaten validity, and efforts to address these threats.

The third presentation will focus on efforts in California to address equity and cultural responsiveness throughout their QRIS system, as well as, efforts to support the inclusion of Tribal Child Care in the state QRIS system.

The session will conclude with a discussion about how to apply the lessons learned to support research, policy and practice.

Facilitator

Jessica Barnes-Najor, Michigan State University

Panelists

Sara Bernstein, Mathematica Policy Research and **Jessica Barnes-Najor**, Michigan State University | *Understanding Contextual Variations in Classroom Quality Observations in American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start*

Sherri Castle, University of Oklahoma | *Validity Concerns Associated with Multiple Uses of Classroom Observations*

Sarah Neville-Morgan, California Department of Education | *Addressing Equity and Cultural Responsiveness in California's Quality Rating and Improvement System*

Scribe

Caroline Faux, ICF

2. Documents Available on Website

- Barnes-Najor_Understanding Contextual Variations in Classroom Quality Observations in AIAN Head Start
- Castle_Threats to Validity

3. Brief Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1: Jessica Barnes-Najor**
 - Started in 1997 and is conducted every three years.
 - How do we align with main FACES/adapt instruments or add new instruments into the study to make the study culturally relevant? In some cultures, gestures mean different things and observing in the classroom (e.g. eyebrows up), try to give at least the best information that we could.
 - CLASS is used in monitoring and for the study.

- We addressed the validity of CLASS in two ways: augmented our observation training and confirmatory factor analysis.
 - Adaptations to observer training: developing a culturally grounded observation training. This included near a region XI program, and observed there. Cross-cultural understanding module.
 - Show how what you're doing is different because of cultural components.
- **Second half of first summary of Presentation #2: Sarah Bernstein: Confirmatory Factor Analysis**
 - Estimating a model with a larger Head start classroom to account for differences
 - Estimated the FACES model with AI/AN FACES data.
 - Midrange on classroom organization. Variance is highest for structural support and lowest on emotional support. Behavior management should move from a focus on classroom organization, and away from focusing on emotional support. This has been found in other work. These variables' error terms for sensitivity correlated with each other.
 - Further considerations for observation trainings.
 - Future discussions about observer's abilities and depths.
- **Summary of Presentation #3: Sheri Castle Validity Concerns Associated with Multiple Uses of Classroom Observations**
 - Utilizing classroom for multiple purposes, exploring potential threats to validity
 - Professional development where teachers masters are trained. Programs want to understand class scores and observing in their classrooms. Looking at what might predict a student's scores.
 - Issue with transparency and clarity of expectations with the tools. There's a sense of quality, data accountability, what are the levers in dragging child development
 - Assuming the observation is representative of the rest of the school year, not representative.
 - In the field, they are really immersed in the data and the conversations. Unintended consequences like washing hands when observers come in. Providers also sometimes generalize observational feedback about their performance. Provider feedback about how the observations went are also unreliable- "all the kids are terrible" is a common response.
 - Teachers with a master's degree couldn't accurately predict what happens on observation date.
 - It's important to remember that we've provided feedback at the behavior marker.
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Sarah Neville Morgan Threats to Validity in Quality Measurement**
 - This team is working to have a more state driven model with QI at the local level. They've found that a lot of rural families were left behind as well. They are changing QRIS so that family and friends can participate. In their study, it providers were hesitant to not yet be rated. The studies aim was to help bring in lower tiers.
 - Family friend, neighbor, and license exempt show a mix of organizations that engage in quality improvement work.
 - One of the biggest opportunities was working with the staff.
 - We have been pushing to have an implicit bias training.
 - Project HOPE addresses inequities and building partnerships between State and Tribal nations.
 - Beneficiary voices are important in entering communities that might not want you.
 - Barriers and needs ended up in need for improvement for Tribal Communities and are in spots that are hard to access.
 - Operating alongside Tribes was important.
 - Translation is the most challenging part and will be looking at them next week

4. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- *Emerging findings that may be of particular interest to policy-makers and ACF?*
 - For the CLASS model, variance is highest for structural support and lowest on emotional support.
 - In terms of classroom observations, there are issues with transparency and clarity of expectations with the tools.
 - For threats to validity in quality management, beneficiary voices are important in entering communities that might not want you, as well as working alongside Tribes.
- *Methodological issues including innovative methodologies that may help maximize resources available for research and evaluation?*
 - With the CLASS model there were adaptations to observer training, more specifically, developing a culturally grounded observation training.
 - With regards to threats to validity in qualitative management, there has been a push for an implicit bias training.
- *Follow-up activities suggested addressing questions and gaps (e.g., secondary analyses of data, consensus meetings of experts, research synthesis or brief, webinar, etc.)?*
 - For CLASS, more work should be done on facial depths and observational trainings.
 - What do you do when teachers are performing bad practice?
 - Dual language learners don't get spoken to ever. Some parts of the class may be hard to look at as well.
 - Children in the classroom are having different experiences- individualized experiences. Time samples are also important.
- *Recommendations about future ACF child care research directions and priorities?*
 - Teachers don't understand why they're doing what they're doing. Even hand washing is obvious they know what they're doing. The more we provide for teachers, they become more confident and less afraid of a tool. Empowering teachers is most important. We have a huge way to go to give these teachers tools to use.
 - With regards to working with Tribes, translation will be the most challenging part.