Defining and Measuring Quality

Description

This session explored commonalities and differences in definitions of quality as viewed from the multiple perspectives of child care and early education settings, provider qualifications, children's ages and backgrounds, and parents' goals for their children. What does quality mean in these different contexts? Are there congruencies that seem to hold true throughout? How can the diverse elements of quality be measured and translated into effective policies and programs? How can quality indicators be aligned across settings?

Facilitator

Susan Hegland, Iowa State University

Discussants
- Deborah Ceglowski, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- Rena Rice, Bank Street College
- Sharon Ramey, Georgetown University
- Donna Bryant, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Scribes
- Susy Willard-Toland, Kansas State University
- Sara Vecchiotti, Child Care Bureau

Issues
- Challenges of developing a common understanding and definitions of quality
- Inclusion of multiple settings and multiple domains
- Different perspectives among parents, providers, and policymakers
- The impact of differing perspectives on definitions of quality

Documents in the Session Folder
- Defining and Measuring Quality
- Four Perspectives on Child Care Quality
- Children's Perceptions of their Child Care Experiences

Discussion Notes

Overview
- Focus on Theories:
  - Child development and psychological research;
  - Early childhood education and curriculum research.
- Focus on Measurement:
  - Total classroom vs. individual child measurements;
  - Initial evidence related to correlation between measurements with different foci;
  - Measurements may not truly be measuring different constructs.
- Methods of Measurement:
  - Global ratings vs. time sampling;
  - Identifying which type of measurement is most appropriate for study purpose and methodology.
- Perspectives in Measurement:
  - When defining quality, researchers must recognize differing perspectives of observer, parent, child, and staff/provider.
- New Directions:
  - CCAT-R (Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives) focuses on family, friend and neighbor care – specifically relative care;

- o ROLE (Rameys' Observation of Learning Essentials) focuses on individualized learning activities, health and safety, adult-child interactions, and respectful caregiver-parent relationships.

Discussion

Two Theoretical Approaches to Quality (Susan Hegland)

1. Child development and psychological research
   - o Advantages (specific links between data elements and child outcomes)
   - o Disadvantages (lack of whole population data, only one perspective)
2. Early Childhood Education Curriculum Theory
   - o Advantages (descriptions of whole population)
   - o Disadvantages (lack of links between specific elements and child outcomes)
   - o Example of sand/water use in classrooms

Focus in Measurement (Susan Hegland)
   - o Total Classroom: ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised Edition)
   - o Individual Child: ORCE (Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment)

Methods in Measurement (Susan Hegland)
   - o Global Ratings (ECERS-R)
   - o Time Sampling (Snapshot, ORCE)

Correlations among Quality Measures in PreK Classrooms (Donna Bryant)
   - o Data are from NCEDL/SWEEP (National Center for Early Development and Learning/State Wide Early Education Program, an 11- State Study).
   - o Information about SWEEP can be found on the NCEDL website at http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/pdfs/sweeps_descrip.pdf.

   - o Study Measures:
     - o Day 1: ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, Cryer)
     - o Day 2: Emerging Academics Snapshot (Ritchie & Howes' Snapshot Observation) and CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System -Pianta, LaParo)

   - o Findings:
     - o Two ECERS factors were very highly correlated;
     - o Two CLASS factors were significantly correlated, although less so than ECERS; CLASS Emotional Climate was highly correlated with ECERS-R Teaching and Interactions; ECERS-R Provisions for Learning was highly related to proportion of time in Free Choice activities from the Snapshot; Teacher Scaffolds & Teacher Didactic factors are both higher when more time is spent in Whole Group activities; Correlations between prekindergarten and kindergarten quality & child outcomes:
     - o Measures include PPVT (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test), Woodcock Johnson, CTOPPS (Comprehensive Test of Phonological and Print Processing), and Teacher-Child Rating Scale; Small relationships were found with child outcomes.

   - o Questions and Comments
     Question: Did you look at individual children's gains?

     Donna Bryant: Yes, those data are in a paper under review. Our research group thinks it is important to use the specific factor scores from ECERS-R or CLASS when looking at child outcomes, not total ECERS-R scores, not individual items, not overall scores. Our study used the first six states for a factor analysis and found factors similar to those found in other studies by Clifford & Harms. Then we replicated the factor structure in the data from the second five states. I am interested in the practical use of these data for future research—is there a subset of these many observations that is most predictive of children's growth in the pre-k year?

Question: How does sample size and composition relate to prediction or correlation to ECERS-R scores? How stable are class interactions and activities over time (fall-to-spring observations)?

Donna Bryant: In the fall-spring global measures comparison (ECERS-R), it is quite stable (r = .67).

Sharon Ramey: There is variability within the individual teacher. Some teachers are stable across days and within one day; others are variable within single day). This variability is observed in studies I have worked on.

Rena Rice: Behavior isn't unidirectional: behavior of teacher is influenced by behavior of child, therefore creating variability.

Donna Bryant: The proportion of children in a class who were from low-income families was negatively related to quality; that is, classes with more than 60% of their children from low-income families had lower ECERS-R scores.

Question about choice of methodology

Susan Hegland: When you go from global ratings to time sampling, the costs of observations go up. What information do we lose when we don't use time sampling (especially with special populations)?

Rena Rice: The CCAT-R is useful with special populations, specifically with child care providers who are related to the child.

Susan Hegland: Researchers may need to ask themselves such questions as, when would I use a total classroom scale and when would I use a child-specific tool? You might choose a certain child-specific measure but miss the overall picture because the children may be experiencing a different environment and different variables would be required to capture that.

Perspectives in Measurement (Deborah Ceglowski)
o   My background is as an ethnographer and qualitative researcher.
o   We must look at quality from four perspectives: Observer, parent, child, staff. What outcomes are linked to each perspective? See handout article: "Four perspectives on Child Care Quality" (in session folder). Figure 1 p. 88: shows observer/researcher perspective (top down), parent perceptions, staff/provider
o   perceptions (lateral), and child perceptions (bottom up).

o   Findings of a recent Ceglowski study:
    o   Use of media is off the charts in all types of programs and settings; Children over six in after school or summer programming have highly
    o   uneven access to literacy materials.

Questions and Comments

Susan Hegland: Parent work and child outcomes are related to parent perceptions of child care (is it affordable and accessible?) and to child perceptions. We must also look at staff perceptions in relation to developing intervention programs.

Rena Rice & Deborah Ceglowski: Key characteristics that parents seek in providers include: caring nature, trust, safety, and similar values.

Susan Hegland: Also ask why parents left their last provider. You won't get information about quality from parents unless you ask questions about the previous child care provider and why they left or changed providers.

Deborah Ceglowski: We must remember to consider the complexity of

child care arrangements in time and over time and effect.

- o New Directions
  - o Specific Curriculum Focus:
    - Literacy: ELLCO
    - Math: ECERS-E (English variation of ECERS)
  - o Curriculum & Child Assessment (NAEYC accreditation)
  - o Quality in informal FFN (family, friend and neighbor care)
  - o Non-English speaking settings

Discussion of *Right from Birth*, Sharon Ramey
(Ramey & Ramey, 1999 http://che.georgetown.edu)
- o Quality of care is multifaceted.
- o Our "four diamond" definition of care includes:
  - o Health and safety practices;
  - o Learning and language activities (individualized, developmentallyappropriate, and frequent);
  - o Adult-child interactions (frequent, warm, and responsive);
  - o Caregiver-parent-child relationships (respectful with frequent, supportive,an informative interactions).
  - o Quality of care influences outcomes:
    - o Supportive child care context;
    - o Favorable political and economic climate;
    - o Good administrative fiscal & policy supports.
  - o These factors are related to a positive family environment and positive child outcomes.
  - o All tools measure the supportive context, and specific elements (such as professional development, management/leadership, physical resources, curricula,group size, wages/benefits, and cultural/diversity) increase the likelihood of quality but do not guarantee it.
  - o This leads to the question: Why don't we try different models within one state and let practitioners decide which program might work for them, then evaluate all models rather than trying one model for 3-5 years before evaluating it and trying again?

Quality in Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (Rena Rice)
The CCAT-R was developed because of an emerging consensus in the field that tools
developed for regulated settings, such as the FDCRS (Family Day Care Rating Scale),
might not be appropriate for evaluating child care by family, friends and neighbors. We
looked at several existing instruments to create individual measures. Among them are the
FDCRS, the CC-HOME and the C-COS. We also developed new measures.

- o The CCAT-R components are the Action/Communication Snapshot and Behavior Checklist (time sampling), Health & Safety Checklist, Materials Checklist (availability, not quantity), and Caregiver Interview (child care arrangement)which includes attitudes towards child care in general, caring for the focus child in particular, relationships with parents, and demographic characteristics of thecaregiver.

- o Confirmatory factor analysis produced four factors (caregiver nurturing, caregiver engagement in activity with focus child, caregiver/child bidirectional communication, and caregiver's unidirectional communication to child) that are related to the caregiver's support for child development domains.

- o The CCAT-R is used for program evaluation to identify areas for improvement as well as strengths — it was not originally designed for individual assessment though it is likely to be used for that purpose.

- o More information is available at the Bank Street ICCC website: http://www.bankstreet.edu/iccc

Questions and Comments

Question: Is the CCAT-R applicable to care in the child's home as well as in the caregiver's home? Is it applicable to small, unlicensed family child care settings?

Rena Rice: Because we developed it based on the basic needs of all children, we feel it could be used in a variety of settings such as you described.

Question: Age range?
Rena Rice: The overall range is 0-5 with separate checklists for children under 3 and for 3-to-5 year-olds.

ROLE - Rameys' Observation of Learning Essentials (Sharon Ramey)
- o   ROLE involves minute by minute coding of interactions using a time sampling method.
- o   Seven Essential Transactions:
  - o   Encourage exploration;
  - o   Mentor teaching of basic skills;
  - o   Celebrate children's accomplishments and developmental advances;
  - o   Rehearse and extend new skills;
  - o   Actively protect children against inappropriate disapproval, teasing and punishment;