

# Improving the Measurement Of Early Childhood Professional Development:

## Working Towards A Recommended Common Core of Measures

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# Background

## Starting points:

- Paper by Kelly Maxwell, Dick Clifford and Cathie Feild (now available in *Critical Issues in Early Childhood Professional Development*, Brookes, 2006)
- Prepared for meeting on early childhood professional development as contributor to school readiness (2/03)
- Intended to put everyone on same page re use of terminology
- Instead put the issue of definition and measurement front and center as a major problem.
- Noted that research is “muddied” by lack of agreement on basic definitions and limitations of existing measures.

# Background

Examples of issues identified:

- Terms “education” and “training” not consistently distinguished.
- Lack of agreement on key dimensions within these.
- Training often examined only in terms of some vs. none.
- For both education and training, limited and inconsistent description of content.
- Markers of extent imprecise. E.g., BA in EC may be few courses or many.
- Certification: Certificates named but requirements not communicated. Many state-specific.

# Background

Workshop focusing on this issue in February 2004:

- How widespread are the problems with definitions and measurement?
- Clearly there are implications of lack of agreement on definitions and measurement for research
- But are there broader implications?

# Background

Paper by Richard Brandon and colleagues (also available in *Critical Issues, 2006*) on federal and state data collection on EC workforce

- Federal surveys do not include all categories of the EC workforce. Those who do not self-define as “teachers” are often excluded.
- Only a minority of states have reliable estimates of size and characteristics of the workforce.
- Those states that do collect data use different definitions and measures. Cannot look across states.
- State surveys have problems not only with definitions and measures, but also with data collection procedures

# Background

Conclusion of workshop that problems identified have important implications for policy and practice:

- Reliable information on numbers in the workforce *including all sectors* is lacking. This is a foundation for planning professional development
- Lack of agreement on the key dimensions of education and training means we often record only amount. But is that the only dimension that matters in planning for EC workforce? What is important to document regularly?
- Lack of agreement on definitions and measures hinders linking of administrative data within states
- Lack of agreement on definition and measures hinders capacity for individuals to transfer information about their professional development across states

# Background

“Workgroup on defining and measuring early childhood professional development” formed of those interested in addressing the issues identified. Goal to improve data collection in light of problems already identified:

- To collect *more detailed* data on professional development and examine linkages with outcomes to inform selection of most informative measures.
- To work towards *coordination of definitions and measures* within state administrative data collection efforts, and in data collection occurring across states
- \*\*\*To work towards a *recommended set of measures* of early childhood professional development that would address the limitations of existing measures

# Work Towards a Recommended Common Core

At Workshop in 2004, Jerry West (then of Department of Education, now at MPR) described:

- Similar issues in definitions of professional development in K-12 data collection
- Development of a process for working towards “Common Core” of items for state data collection
- Included identification of specific problems with definition and measurement and identification of candidate items for common core
- Consensus building process for deciding on recommended items

# Work Towards a Recommended Common Core

Parallel efforts now underway re measures of early childhood professional development:

- Review of existing surveys and administrative data collection instruments in light of problems that have been identified
- Review focused on data collection instruments or elements used in administrative data (e.g., HS PIR), large-scale studies (e.g., ECLS surveys), research consortia (e.g., PCER evaluations), state surveys, and systems data (e.g., NACCRRA, NRA)
- Identification of existing items that best address the issues
- In some instances, suggestions for modifications or new measures needed

# Work Towards a Recommended Common Core

- Initial draft of White Paper summarizes issues in definition and measurement for specific constructs
- Notes preliminary set of recommended items
- Input into preliminary set of items at Child Care Bureau's National Meeting in August 2006 with state child care administrators

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

Maxwell and colleagues recommended distinguishing between:

- formal education (completed in educational institutions) and
- training (professional development outside of educational institutions).

*Issue: How can this distinction be adopted in data collection and reporting?*

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

**Maxwell and colleagues found definition and measurement issues most problematic for this aspect of professional development. Current descriptors of Training merge components of Format, Auspice and Mode of Delivery**

In-service, informal, correspondence, workshops at professional meetings, training by referral or government agency, workshops in the community, conferences or workshops, internet, supervision and feedback, support person who comes to center/home, teleconferencing, continuing education or in-service training, professional development meetings

***Issue: How best separate out key components?***

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

## Format as a Component

- An implicit hypothesis is that Training in a planned sequence is likely to involve more in-depth and integrated content and materials than Training provided in an isolated session.
- Researchers are also identifying the potential importance of formats that include participants from the same organization or early care and education facility.

*Issue: Are these important aspects of Format to attempt to capture in measures? Are there other important aspects of format we need to capture?*

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

## Auspice as a Component

- **The organization offering or sponsoring Training may be important in terms of such issues as:**
  - whether there is oversight of the quality of the Training
  - the qualifications of those providing the Training
  - whether the Training is approved to contribute towards a pre-service or in-service requirement or certificate.

***Issue: What should be included in documenting auspice? Possible groups: CCR&R, membership organization, organization providing a certificate, government agency.***

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

## Mode of Delivery as a Component

- Mode of Delivery thus far has been used to describe whether Training was provided in person or through distance learning.
- Some distance learning provides for interaction on the internet among participants, or between participant and instructor; some involves no interaction.

*Issue: What are the important elements of Mode of Delivery to capture?*

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

## Content as a Component

- There is no agreed-upon typology for describing the Content of Training.
- There is a risk here of having a very long list of discrete topical areas. Difficult for respondents; difficult to summarize and use

***Issue: What headings are needed in a typology of Content and would be inclusive enough but efficient? Can the same typology be used for Training and for Formal Education?***

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

## Recency as a Component

- Training completed recently may be more likely to affect practice.
- Recent Training may be more likely to incorporate the most recent information from research and best practice
- There is no agreement on what should be described as recent: 6 yrs, 1yr, 2yrs?

***Issue: What time frame should be seen as recent? Should the same timeframe be used as for Formal Education?***

# Example: Issues in Measuring Training

## Extent as a Component

- There is a lack of agreement as to the appropriate “metric” for describing the amount of Training an individual has received.

*Issue: Should the unit of analysis be: 1) number of workshops completed and/or 2) hours of Training?  
Is there another metric that would be more informative?*

# Other Aspects of Professional Development Covered in White Paper

- Formal Education
- Credentials
- Motivation for Professional Development
- Supports for Professional Development

## Next Steps

- Distribute White Paper to Worgroup for review
- Revise in light of feedback
- Identify further contexts in which to get input and at same time get backing of potential stakeholders
- Suggestions appreciated