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The Massachusetts Early Education and Care: Professional Development Study

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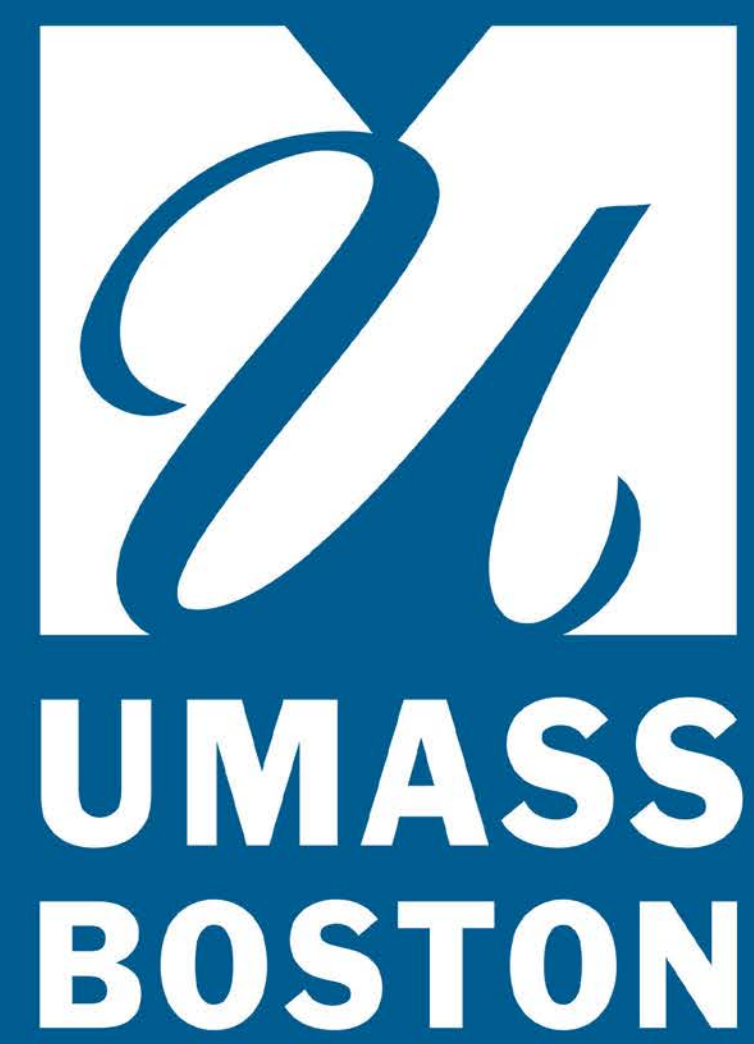
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The Massachusetts Early Education and Care Professional Development Study

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Summary/Abstract

This study is a research-policy partnership. This study used workforce registry (n=55,768) and professional development attendance data to examine early educator characteristics and patterns of professional development participation in one state.

In the paper, we describe how these new workforce data can inform professional development. We present the concept of density in professional development participation, discuss its potential benefits, and highlight the utility of state-wide digital tracking of early educators' patterns of professional development for informing policy. We suggest that professional development policy can impact professional development participation density, and can thus be used intentionally to promote investments that have the potential to improve quality. We conclude the paper with implications for research and policy.

Goals and Objectives

- 1) Describe workforce characteristics (MA & regional level)
- 2) Identify patterns of professional development (PD) usage at individual educator and early childhood program levels in MA
- 3) Provide information/recommendations about enhancing data quality and collection.

Professional Development Participation Density

What percent of the time an early childhood program had more than 1 employee attend the same PD course

Potential benefits of participation density:

- Improve transfer of learning and team collaboration
- Improve program quality & movement in QRIS

Results:

Density in participation is uncommon:

- 74% of the time, an educator attended PD in isolation from others from workplace

26% of the time there was density:

- 23% = horizontal density (co-workers attended)
- 3% = vertical density (administrator & staff attended)

Impact of PD policy on participation:

- Almost half (45.4%) of the professional development requiring team participation included density, compared with approximately one fifth (19.6%) of all other professional development ($\chi^2(1)=67.737, p < .001$).
- Vertical density was higher in the team professional development than in all other professional development (4.4% vs 2.6%), suggesting that the policy also resulted in increased vertical density ($\chi^2 = 68.7 (2), p < 001$).

4 independent databases cleaned and merged:

- New state-wide Professional Qualifications Registry
- Program Priority List (*ratings based on % children served who are most likely to face multiple risk factors*)
- PD attendance records for educators
- PD "course catalog" FY12

Limitations:

Missing data (all sources are emerging systems)

Early Educator Characteristics (in Registry; n=55,768)

Average age: 37; 25% are 25 years old or younger.

Gender: 94.1% female, 5.9% male

Highest education earned:

27.8% secondary education or a CDA
 23.8% some college coursework,
 12.4% associate's degree,
 26.1% bachelor's degree,
 9.9% graduate or professional degree

Primary language: 86% English, 10% Spanish, 5% other

Family Child Care: 12% are family child care providers. This is likely an underestimate, as family child care providers are not yet as well represented in the PQR.



Early educators in EEC-sponsored professional development course

Approaches and Methods

Research Questions:

1. What are the characteristics of educators enrolled in Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR)?
2. What are the characteristics of educators who participated in professional development (PD)?
3. To what extent do educators who work together participate in the same PD coursework?
4. What type of density is reflected in participation patterns (vertical or horizontal)?
5. **PD Policy: Do we see increased density with the requirement to send multiple staff members from one program to a professional development course?**

Next Steps

Use findings to inform: Data systems, Policy, Professional development research

Manuscript Under Review:

Douglass, A., Carter, C., Smith, F., Killins, S. (2013). ECE Workforce Registries and Professional Development Participation Density.

Resources

This study is supported by the MA Department of Early Education and Care through Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funding.