

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ACCREDITATION AND LICENSING STANDARDS, TRAINING, AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Richard Fiene, Ph.D.

Capital Area Early Childhood Training Institute
Pennsylvania State University

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship of child development outcomes to accreditation systems (NAEYC & NECPA), training (Wheelock & NAEYC), and standards (APHA/AAP & Stepping Stones). The purpose of the study was multi-dimensional to re-validate the NECPA accreditation system and to compare various standards with child development outcomes. Twenty centers from Pennsylvania with 200 children and 100 teachers participated in the study. Several child development as well as accreditation, professional development, and standards based tools were used in the study. The results from this study clearly show a positive relationship between licensing and accreditation standards, and training with program quality and child development outcomes. All areas of a child's development are positively related with those programs that would be accredited, have an effective and efficient professional development system, and meet or go beyond licensing standards.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is multi-dimensional. The first purpose is to re-validate the NECPA—National Early Childhood Program Accreditation process by completing a comparison study of NECPA standards with NAEYC—National Association for the Education of Young Children standards and the American Academy of Pediatrics/American Public Health Association national child care standards. The second purpose of this study is to compare the various standards, in particular NECPA, with child development outcomes.

The first portion of this study was a replication of the 1991-1993 validation study of the NECPA standards. In that study, a comparison was made between NAEYC and NECPA standards (Fiene, 1996). That study clearly demonstrated the very strong relationship between the two sets of standards. It demonstrated the valid nature of the NECPA standards. This study is to re-validate that original study to make certain the relationship still holds after five years of implementation. NECPA was particularly

concerned to make certain that the key indicators were still valid as originally designed. This re-validation process is something that all accreditation and licensing systems need to go through in order to update their standards (Griffin & Fiene, 1995). NAEYC had gone through a similar process only a few years ago as well.

The second portion of this study is a replication of a study completed by Kontos and Fiene (1987) in which various standards and measures of quality were compared to child development outcomes. The same design used in that study will be employed in this study.

Literature Review

Child care research has explored the various dimensions to program quality by examining the impact of training, licensing and accreditation (Clarke-Stewart, 1987; Goelman & Pence, 1987; Howes, 1987; Phillips, 1987; Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, & Shinn, 1994; Helburn, 1995; Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Love, Schochet & Meckstroth, 1986; Katz, 1994; Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deater-Deckard, 1994; Fiene, 1995; Griffin & Fiene, 1995; Iutovich, Fiene, Johnson, Koppel, & Langan, 1997). All the various components point in the direction that these three major interventions have a positive and enduring impact on child care quality. Training systems have been driven by the national work of Wheelock College (1993) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children in their training institutes and initiatives. On the national front with licensing, the American Academy of Pediatrics/American Public Health Association's *Caring for Our Children* (1994) and more recently *Stepping Stones* (1997) have been used as default national standards related to health and safety in child care. Most of the research has used the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)* (Harms and Clifford, 1980) as the default measure for program quality. In measuring accreditation, the *National Association for the Education of Young Children's National Academy* (NAEYC, 1984) program has been used as the standard.

This study will expand upon these above initiatives and resources by comparing the above tools with the *National Early Childhood Program Accreditation* (NECPA) system that utilizes an indicator checklist methodology (Fiene, 1996). The purpose of this study is to take the next step in validating the various approaches to ensuring high quality child care programs. The child care research literature has many examples of the key components of child care programs that predict positive outcomes for young children (Clarke-Stewart, 1987; Phillips, 1987; Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, & Shinn, 1994; Helburn, 1995; Love, Schochet & Meckstroth, 1986; Katz, 1994; Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deater-Deckard, 1994). How do these positive outcomes for young children relate to accreditation, licensing and training as defined by NECPA, *Stepping Stones*, NAEYC, and Wheelock? That is the purpose of this study. How do we know that these various national systems have a positive impact on quality and children's development? Several more recent studies (Cost-quality and Florida training studies) have begun to answer these questions, but this study will look at all these components in a unified manner.

Methods

Centers: Twenty centers from South-central Pennsylvania were selected to participate in this study. These centers had an equal representation of urban, rural settings, profit, and non-profit status. The programs varied in size from 60 children to 120 children. All programs were licensing by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. None of them had outstanding non-compliance nor were they presently accredited by any National Organization.

Children/Staff: Child care directors provided a list of all 3-, 4-year-old children who attended the center full-time (more than 20 hours per week) for at least 6 months. Of these, 200 randomly selected children participated in this study. These 200 children were divided by gender (104 females and 96 males), were predominantly White, and were from all socioeconomic levels. Children's average age was 50 months. One-hundred teaching staff participated in this study. Teaching staff's educational background varied from high school to bachelor's degrees in early childhood education.

Measures: The following measures were used related to accreditation: National Association for the Education of Young Children's National Academy for Accreditation (NAEYC) Observation Tool (1987) and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) Observation Tool (1995). The following measure was used to assess quality: Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)(Harms and Clifford, 1980). The following measure was used to assess health and safety: *Stepping Stones to Caring for Our Children* (SS)(Stepping Stones)(1997). The following measures were used to assess children's development: Slosson Intelligence Test (Slosson)(1983), Classroom Behavior Inventory—Preschool Form (CBI)(Schaefer & Edgerton, 1978), Test of Early Language Development (TELD)(Hresko, Reid, & Hammill, 1981), Adaptive Language Inventory (ALI)(Feagans & Farran, 1979), and the Preschool Behavior Questionnaire (PBQ)(Behar & Stringfield, 1974). The following measures were used to assess training, professional development, and organizational climate: Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (ECWES)(Jorde-Bloom, 1988) and the Child Care/Early Childhood Development Training Survey (CCECD)(Iutovich, Fiene, Johnson, Koppel & Langan, 1997).

Results

Study 1: This study assessed the relationship between the NECPA standards and the NAEYC standards. This study addresses the first question raised in the introduction. Figure 1 presents the comparison of *Stepping Stones* and the NAEYC and NECPA accreditation system components by raw scores with component areas/criteria as measured in the *Stepping Stones*, NAEYC and NECPA tools. Figure 2 presents the relationship of *Stepping Stones*, NAEYC and NECPA accreditation systems based upon compliance with *Stepping Stones* and the observation sections of the NECPA and NAEYC tools.

It is evident from Figures 1 and 2 that there is a very strong relationship between *Stepping Stones* standards and the NAEYC and NECPA accreditation systems. Those programs that scored very high on the NAEYC accreditation system, also scored very high on the NECPA accreditation system. The reverse is also self evident, those programs that scored very low on the NAEYC accreditation system, also scored very low on the NECPA accreditation. A similar relationship was found between NECPA and the *Stepping Stones* checklist. These results are not surprising because the NECPA system is an indicator/predictor assessment system that draws very heavily from the NAEYC and APHA/AAP standards.

Study 2: This study assessed the relationship amongst the NECPA, NAEYC, *Stepping Stones* (SS) standards, EWECS, CCECD and the ECERS. This study and the next study address the second question raised in the introduction--what is the relationship amongst the various licensing, accreditation and training tools with program quality. Figure 3 presents the correlation coefficients amongst the various measures of quality—licensing, accreditation systems, and training.

It is evident from Figure 3 of the very high inter-correlation amongst the various measures. All the measures show a positive and strong relationship with the ECERS. This is particularly encouraging although not surprising based upon the other studies completed relating licensing, training and accreditation to program quality.

Study 3: This study assessed the relationship amongst the NECPA, NAEYC, *Stepping Stones* standards, ECERS, EWECS, CCECD and child development outcomes. Figure 4 presents the inter-correlation analyses amongst the child development outcomes and the various measures.

It is evident from Figure 4 the significant relationships amongst the various measures of accreditation, licensure and training with the child development outcome measures. All areas of children's development shows a very strong positive relationship with all the licensing, training and accreditation tools.

Conclusion

These studies clearly demonstrate the very strong relationship between licensing and accreditation standards, and training with program quality and child development outcomes. For those policy makers who are concerned about these types of systems having any positive impact on young children need to be reassured that these licensing, accreditation and training systems are having their intended impact.

The relationship between NECPA and NAEYC and *Stepping Stones* is not surprising because the NECPA standards have a great deal of overlap with these standards. The expectation would be that this should occur. This is a particular strength of the NECPA system. Although it is shorter than both the NAEYC accreditation system and the APHA/AAP standards, it does not compromise the comprehensiveness of these standards because it utilizes an indicator/predictor methodology. The relationship

between the ECERS and the various standards is very encouraging because these systems are obviously measuring quality as part of their assessment systems.

The most significant results are with the various licensing, accreditation and training systems and their relationships with the child development outcome measures. These results are the most encouraging in clearly demonstrating the strong relationship between these scores. All areas of a child's development, language, social-emotional and intellectual are positively related with those programs that would be accredited, have an effective and efficient professional development system, and meet or go beyond licensing standards.

References

American Public Health Association/American Academy of Pediatrics (1994). *Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards*, Washington, D.C.: APHA/AAP.

Behar & Stringfield (1974). A behavior rating scale for the preschool child. *Developmental Psychology*, 10, 601-610.

Clarke-Steward (1987). In search of consistencies in child care research. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Quality in child care: What does research tell us?* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Feagans & Farran (1979). *Adaptive Language Inventory*. Unpublished instrument. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Fiene (1995). Utilizing a statewide training system to improve child care quality. *Child Welfare*, 74(6): 1189-1201.

Fiene (1996). Using a statistical-indicator methodology for accreditation. In S. Bredekamp (Ed.), *A Decade of Accreditation*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, & Shinn (1994). *The study of children in family child care and relative care: Highlights of findings*. New York, NY: Families and Work Institute.

Goelman & Pence (1987). Effects of child care, family, and individual characteristics on children's language development: The Victoria day care research project. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Quality in child care: What does research tell us?* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Griffin & Fiene (1995). *Child care planning and evaluation*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three, National Center for Infants and Toddlers.

Harms & Clifford (1980). *The early childhood environment rating scale*. New York: Columbia University Teacher's College Press.

Helburn (1995). *Cost, quality and child outcomes in child care centers*. Denver, CO: Center for Research in Economics and Social Policy, Department of Economics, University of Colorado.

Howes (1987). Quality indicators in infant and toddler child care: The Los Angeles study. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Quality in child care: What does research tell us?* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Hresko, Reid & Hammill (1981). *The Test of Early Language Development*. Austin, Texas: Pro-Ed.

Iutovich, Fiene, Johnson, Koppel, & Langan (1997). *Investing in our children's future*. Erie, PA: Keystone University Research Corporation.

Jorde-Bloom (1988). Assess the climate of your center: Use the early childhood work environment survey. *Day Care and Early Education*, summer 1988: 9-11.

Katz (1994). Perspectives on the quality of early childhood programs. *Phi Delta Kappan*.

Kontos & Fiene (1987). Child care quality, compliance with regulations, and children's development: The Pennsylvania study. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Quality in child care: What does research tell us?* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Love, Schochet & Meckstroth (1986). *Are they in any real danger: What research does--and doesn't--tell us about child care quality and children's well being*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Maternal and Child Health Bureau (1997). *Stepping stones to Caring for Our Children*, Washington, D.C.: Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services.

Morgan, Costley, Genser, Goodman, Lombardi & McGimsey (1993). *Making a career of it: The states of the states report on career development in early care and education*. Boston: The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education, Wheelock College.

NAEYC (1987). *Accreditation standards*, Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

NECPA (1995). *Accreditation standards*, Conyers, Georgia: National Child Care Association.

Scarr, Eisenberg & Deater-Deckard (1994). Measurement of quality in child care centers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 9: 131-151.

Schaefer & Edgerton (1978). *A method and a model for describing competence and adjustment: A preschool version of the Classroom Behavior Inventory*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Canada.

Slosson (1983). *Slosson Intelligence Test*. Slosson Educational Publications. PO Box 280, East Aurora, NY 14052.

FIGURES

Figure 1
Comparison of NAEYC, NECPA and Stepping Stones Comparison Scores on Component Areas

	<u>Accreditation System</u>		
	NECPA	NAEYC	Stepping Stones
Program	10*	12*	11*
Health	15	20	45
Safety	24	34	65
Parent Interactions	12	17	na

* Raw scores for component areas.

Figure 2
Relationship of NAEYC, NECPA Accreditation Systems and Stepping Stones

	<u>Accreditation System</u>		
	NECPA	NAEYC	Stepping Stones
High level group	77*	99*	150*
Mid level group	61	78	119
Low level group	45	69	85

* total raw scores.

High level group = accreditation
Mid & low level groups = deferred

Figure 3

Correlation of Accreditation, Training and Licensing Tools

	NECPA	NAEYC	SS	EWECS	CCECD	ECERS
NECPA	--					
NAEYC	.78*	--				
SS	.71*	.49	--			
EWECS	.67*	.70*	.51	--		
CCECD	.50	.60*	.51	.79*	--	
ECERS	.61*	.42	.45	.57*	.73*	--

* p < .05

Figure 4

Correlation of Accreditation, Licensing and Training Tools with Child Development Outcome Measures

Measure	<u>Quality</u>	<u>Training</u>		<u>Accreditation</u>		<u>Licensing</u>
	ECERS	EWECS	CCECD	NECPA	NAEYC	SS
Slosson	.23*	.33*	.34*	.29*	.30*	.19
CBI-INT	.25*	.15	.14	.41*	.21*	.08
TELD	.09	.28*	.22*	.31*	.35*	.22*
ALI	.44*	.01	.11	.13	.04	.06
PBQ	.37*	.32*	.23*	.44*	.40*	.29*
CBI-SOC	.26*	.21*	.20*	.19	.23*	.18

* p < .05

