

Abstract

Title: Experiential learning to seed collaboration with state level administrators around early childhood education in Mississippi

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Intro

Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Mississippi faces a number of challenges ranging from inadequate and inequitable provider availability, increasing challenges of cost and affordability, and inconsistent quality. State-level investments in early childhood education have focused on funding state-wide provider collaboratives that have been limited by coordination challenges & fragmented strategies.

Approach

Social sciences researchers with deep ties with state-level administrators and funders of ECE see GMB and system dynamics as a promising approach to building common language & aligning strategy. The research team partnered with SD consultants to host 3-day experiential learning workshop in Jackson, MS. The workshop blended hands-on training and GMB workshops to build team capabilities, develop insights into structural drivers of quality ECE, and expose state-level stakeholders to the methods.

Results

The 3-day workshop generated a synthesis CLD representing structural dynamics around efforts to improve ECE quality in Mississippi. The process highlighted insights around threats of uncoordinated multi-sectoral action; Opportunities for dynamic theories of change for ECE Quality; and opportunities for policy narratives reframing ECE roles. Further, the experiential learning workshop seeded a number of opportunities for collaborative work and further opportunities for GMB and SD in the state.

Discussion

This approach to linked experiential learning and demonstration workshops with government and funder stakeholders is a promising approach to rapidly developing structural insight and building buy-in for further use of GMB and system dynamics tools. From this formative work has emerged new opportunities to leverage GMB as a tool for building a new ECE governance model in Mississippi, and multiple other nascent projects and collaborations that leverage this approach.