3rd International Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators

Conference Proposal

Title: Cross-national comparisons of Child Friendly Schools: An analysis of student-reported survey data from South Africa, Nicaragua and the Philippines

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Abstract:

Grounded in the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as other international human rights instruments and declarations, the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) initiative is UNICEF’s flagship education program. UNICEF now supports the regional and national implementation of the CFS framework in 95 countries worldwide (Osher et al., 2009). Implemented in context-specific ways, the CFS framework consists of a core set of principles emphasizing the right of all children to receive education in settings that are safe, inclusive, respectful, child-centered and democratic. In 2008, UNICEF contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct a mixed-methods evaluation of their CFS initiative in six countries. The evaluation consisted of student and teacher surveys assessing the core principles of CFS as well as interviews and focus groups with students, parents, teachers and school heads and observational reports. The evaluation provided important preliminary information about the implementation and outcomes of the initiative. However, a lack of resources limited its authors’ ability to use this data to create indicators of school quality to compare CFS across countries or monitor future progress. In this presentation, we describe psychometric work undertaken in support of that goal. Building off the evaluation for UNICEF conducted by AIR, we examine the psychometric properties of student CFS surveys in three countries Africa (South Africa), Latin American (Nicaragua) and Asia (Philippines). In the first stage, we employ factor analytic techniques to examine the reliability and validity of the dimensions hypothesized to underlie student-reported CFS within each country, and use ethnographic and observational data from each country evaluation to evaluate and interpret the results. In the second stage, we formally statistically compare the factor analytic structure of the student surveys across countries via multi-group comparisons using structural equation modeling and assess the extent to which they can be as used as cross-national indicators of school quality following the CFS framework. Implications of these analyses for monitoring policy are discussed.