



Leadership in Early Childhood Education: How Head-Start Directors Influence Quality

Joanna Skourletos

Loyola University Chicago, jskourletos@luc.edu

Luz Torres

The University of Illinois at Chicago, ltorre9@uic.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ecommons.luc.edu/grs>

Skourletos, Joanna and Torres, Luz, "Leadership in Early Childhood Education: How Head-Start Directors Influence Quality" (2021). *Graduate Research Symposium*. 9.

https://ecommons.luc.edu/grs/2021/Social_Sciences/9

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Leadership in Early Childhood Education: *How Head-Start Directors Influence Quality*

JOANNA SKOURLETOS¹ AND LUZ TORRES²

¹LOYOLA UNIVERSITY & ²UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

Overview

- **Background/Rationale**
- **Current Study**
- **Results**
- **Discussion**

Background/ Rationale

Benefits of ECE

Preschoolers who attend high-quality ECE programs receive positive benefits

(Lieberman, 2017; Mims, Scott-Little, Lower, Cassidy, & Hestenes, 2008; Wechsler, M., Melnick, H., Maier, A., & Bishop, J. 2016)

Children's developmental outcomes (Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997)

- Receptive language abilities
- Pre-academic skills
- Classroom behaviors



Quality Indicators

Structural Indicators (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014)

- Group size, teacher to child ratios, teacher qualifications

Process Indicators (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014)

- Focus on the nature of the interactions in the classroom between the teacher and the students

Leadership as a Quality Indicator

Leaders have been shown to be influential on quality

(Ang, 2011; Bloom & Abel, 2015; Dennis & O'Connor, 2013; Liberman, 2017; Talan, et al., 2014)

Teaching quality (Bloom & Abel, 2015)

- Leaders make major decisions that directly affect teachers' access to instructional supports and resources which impacts educators overall teaching quality

Climate (Bloom & Abel, 2015)

- Staff's collective perceptions of the policies, practices, procedures, and routines of the organization
- Leadership and management practices directly impact the climate of the early childhood program

Leadership as a Quality Indicator

Across decades of ECE research, a leader's role is often overlooked as an indicator of quality.

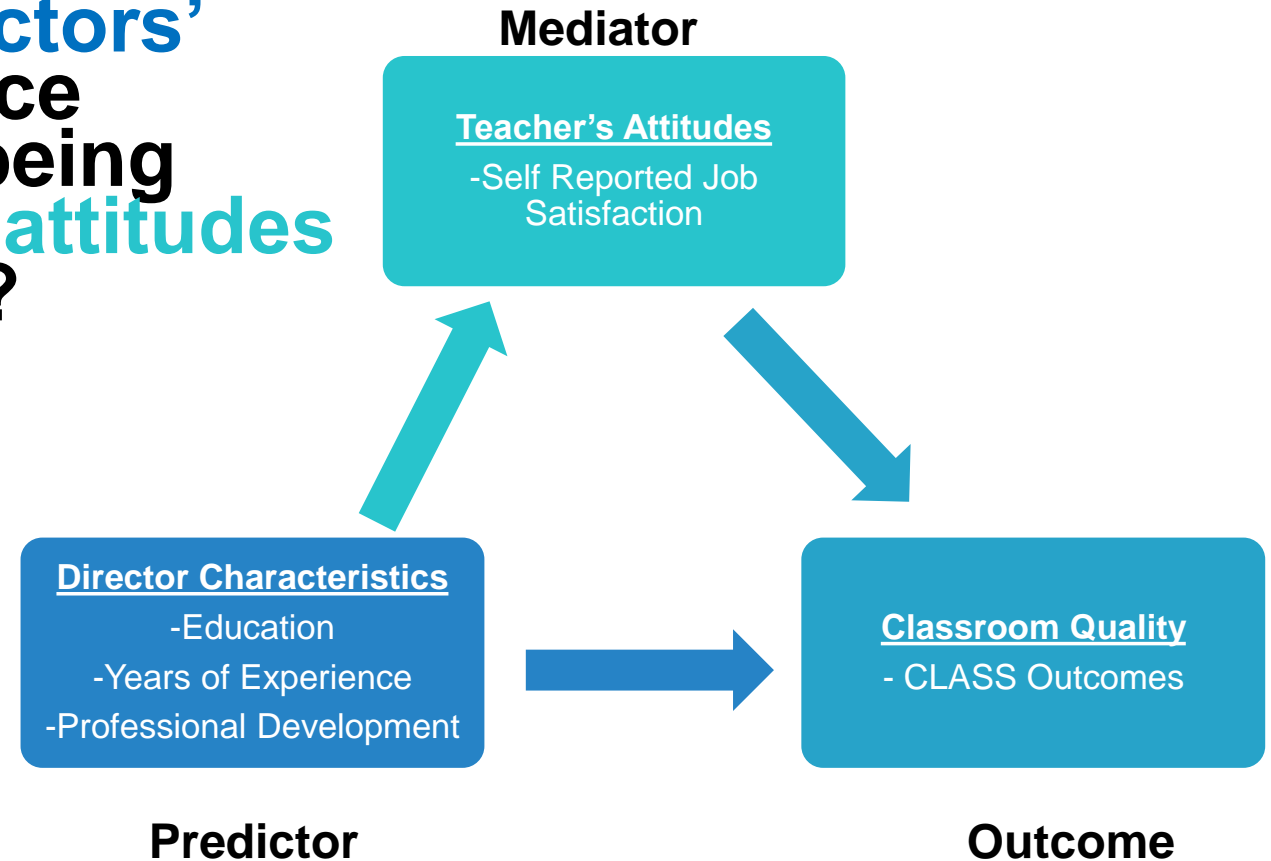
(Douglass, 2019; Klevering & McNae, 2018)

**There is a need to further
examine ECE leaders as
quality indicators.**

Current Study

Study Aims

To what extent do **directors' characteristics** influence **classroom quality** by being mediated by **teachers' attitudes** about job satisfaction?



Research Questions

- 1. To what extent do directors' characteristics predict classroom quality?**
- 2. To what extent do directors' characteristics predict teachers' job satisfaction?**
- 3. To what extent does teachers' job satisfaction predict classroom quality?**
- 4. Is teacher job satisfaction a mediator between director characteristics and classroom quality?**

Participants

2017 Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)

- 648 Head Start teachers
- 350 Head Start directors

Data

Teacher Attitudes

- Teacher Survey

Director Characteristics

- Center Director Survey

Classroom Quality

- Teachers were observed with CLASS observational tool

Director Characteristics

Education

- What is the highest grade or year of school that you completed?
 - Some college but no degree
 - Associate's Degree
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Graduate/professional but no degree
 - Master's Degree
 - Doctorate Degree
 - Professional Degree

Years of Experience

- In total, how many years have you been a director in any early childhood program?

Professional Development

- Select yes or no. In the past 12 months, have you participated in the following kinds of professional development?
 - College/university course(s) related to your role as a leader
 - Visits to other Head Start or ECE programs to improve you own work as a director
 - A network of ECE program leaders organized by someone outside of your program
 - Leadership institute offered by Head Start
 - Leadership institute offered by an organization other than Head Start
 - Training/conferences related to your role as a leader

Teacher Attitude's

How much do you agree with the following statements about teaching?

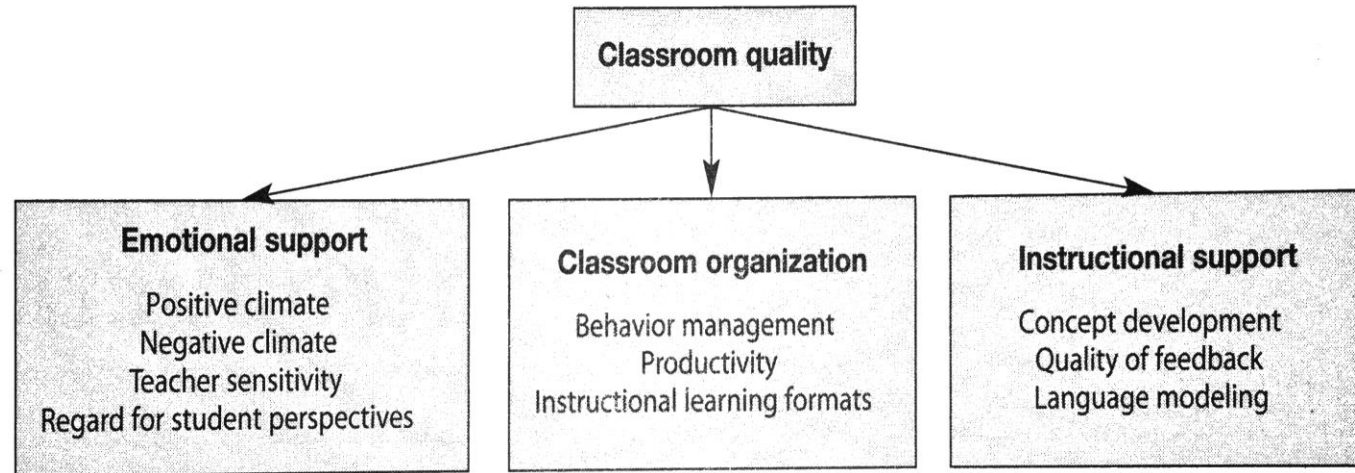
1. I really enjoy my present teaching job
2. I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of the children I teach
3. If I could start over, I would choose teaching again as my career

5 point-Likert scale

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree/disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

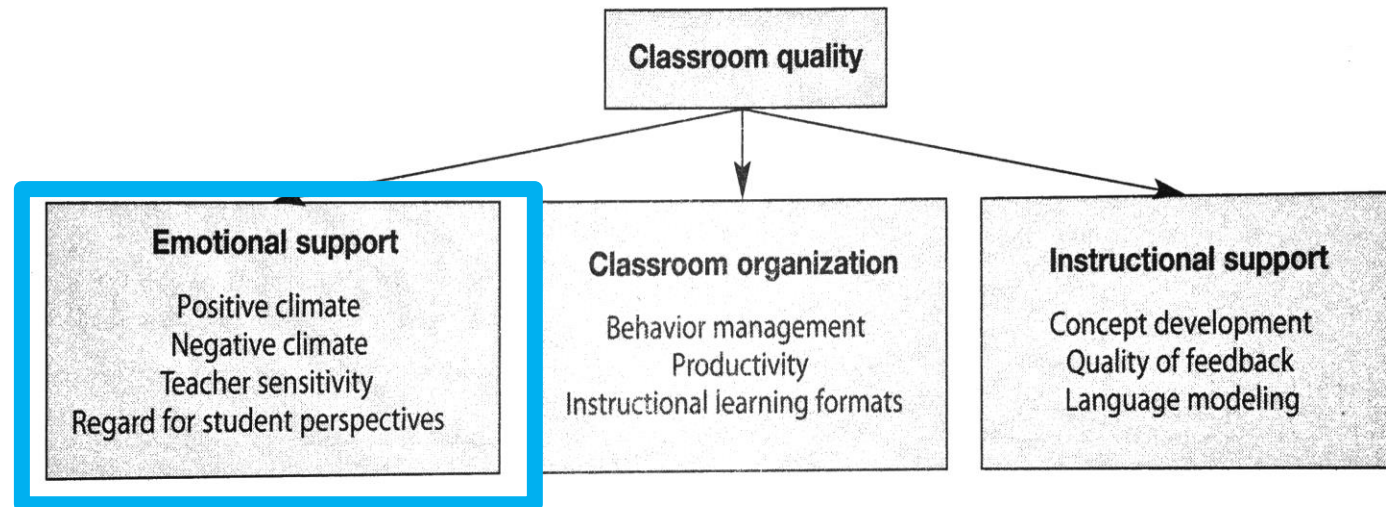
Classroom Quality

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)



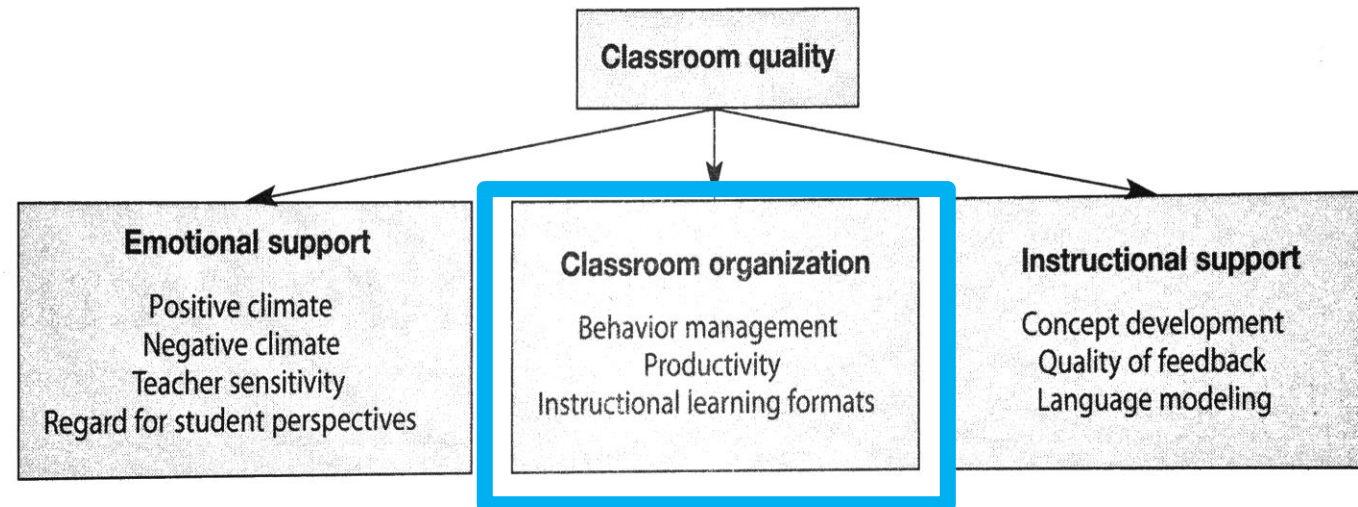
Classroom Quality

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)



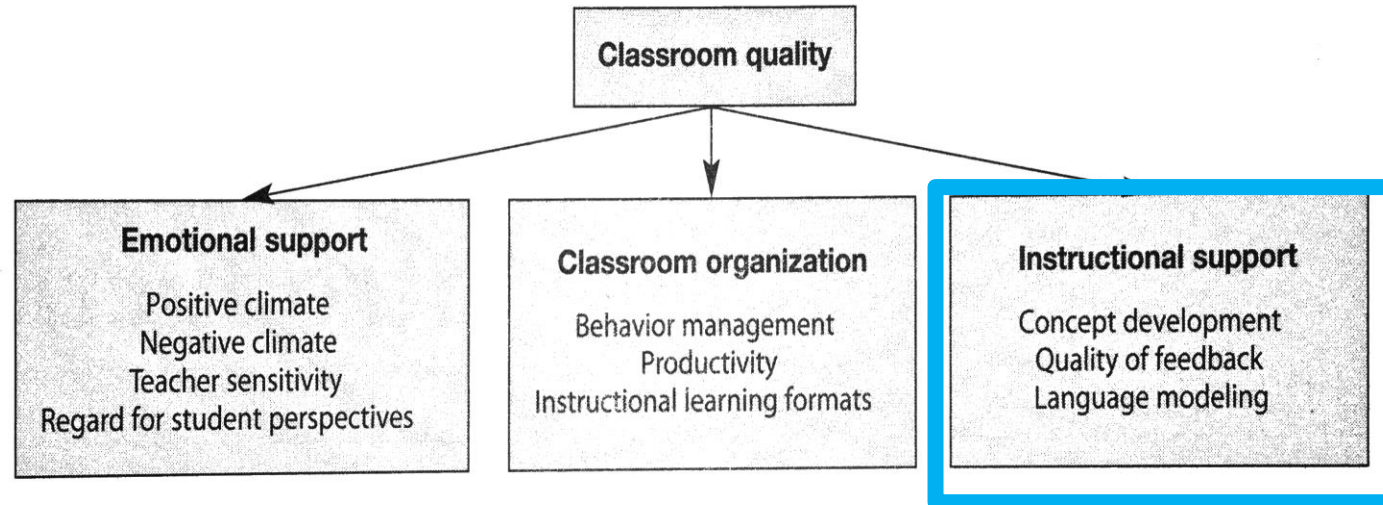
Classroom Quality

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)



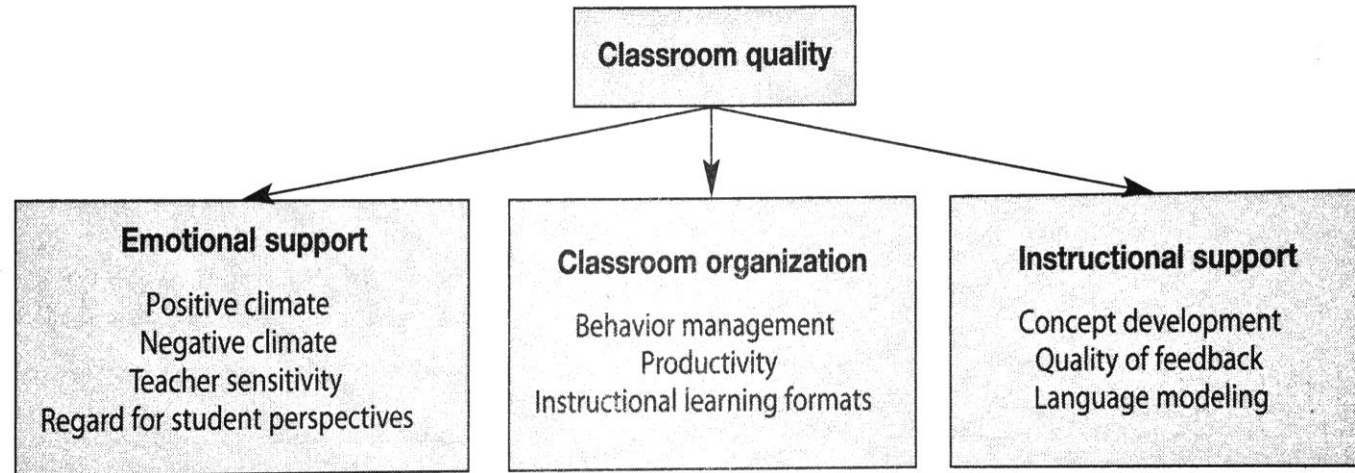
Classroom Quality

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)



Classroom Quality

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)



Results

Results

1. Directors' characteristics (education, professional development, years of experience) did not predict with classroom quality

2. Teachers' attitudes about job satisfaction have a significant relationship with classroom quality

Teacher Attitudes: Job Satisfaction	CLASS: Classroom Organization Score	CLASS: Emotional Support Score	CLASS: Instructional Support Score
I really enjoy teaching at my present job	0.82*	0.71	0.13**
I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of the children I teach	0.10*	0.82*	0.13**
If I could start over, I would choose teaching again as my career	0.20	0.01	0.11**

* Significant at the 0.05 level

** Significant at the 0.01 level

Results

1. Directors' characteristics (education, professional development, years of experience) did not predict with classroom quality

2. Teachers' attitudes about job satisfaction have a significant relationship with classroom quality

Teacher Attitudes: Job Satisfaction	CLASS: Classroom Organization Score	CLASS: Emotional Support Score	CLASS: Instructional Support Score
I really enjoy teaching at my present job	0.82*	0.71	0.13**
I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of the children I teach	0.10*	0.82*	0.13**
If I could start over, I would choose teaching again as my career	0.20	0.01	0.11**

* Significant at the 0.05 level

** Significant at the 0.01 level

Discussion

Limitations

Center directors can carry out different roles

- Administrative Leadership Role
 - Ex: Balancing budget, hiring staff
- Instructional Leadership Role
 - Ex: coaching teachers, facilitating professional development

Future Research

1. Examine how do leaders who have an instructional role relate to classroom quality
2. Explore factors that influence teachers' attitudes around job satisfaction

References

- Ang, L. (2012). Leading and Managing in the Early Years: A Study of the Impact of a NCSL Programme on Children's Centre Leaders' Perceptions of Leadership and Practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 40(3), 289–304.
- Burchinal, M.R. (2018). Measuring Early Care and Education Quality. *Child Development Perspectives*, 12(1), 3–9.
- Dennis, S. E., & O'Connor, E. (2013). Reexamining quality in early childhood education: Exploring the relationship between the organizational climate and the classroom. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 27(1), 74–92.
- Douglass, A. (2019). "Leadership for quality early childhood education and care", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 211, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Ishimine, K., & Tayler, C. (2014). Assessing Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care. *European Journal of Education*, 49(2), 272–290.
- Klevering, N., & McNae, R. (2018). Making sense of leadership in early childhood education: Tensions and complexities between concepts and practices. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy & Practice*, 33(1), 5–17.
- Lieberman, A. (2017). A tale of two pre-k leaders: How state policies for center directors and principals leading pre-k programs differ, and why they shouldn't. Washington, DC: New America Foundation.
- Mims, S. U., Scott-Little, C., Lower, J. K., Cassidy, D. J., & Hestenes, L. L. (2008). Education Level and Stability as It Relates to Early Childhood Classroom Quality: A Survey of Early Childhood Program Directors and Teachers. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 23(2), 227.
- National Head Start Association. (2018). Head Start Facts and Impacts. Retrieved from <https://www.nhsa.org/facts-and-impacts>
- Peisner-Feinberg, E.S. & Burchinal, M.R. (1997). Relations Between Preschool Children's Child-Care Experiences and Concurrent Development: The Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 43(3), 451–477.
- Shonkoff, J., & Fisher, P. A. (2013). Rethinking evidence-based practice and two-generation parenting programs. *Developmental Psychology*, 25(4), 1635–1653. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579413000813>
- Sparling, J., & Meunier, K. (2019). Abecedarian: An Early Childhood Education Approach that has a Rich History and a Vibrant Present. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 51(2), 207–216.
- Talan, T. N., Bloom, P. J., & Kelton, R. E. (2014). Building the Leadership Capacity of Early Childhood Directors: An Evaluation of a Leadership Development Model. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 16(1).
- Wechsler, M., Melnick, H., Maier, A., & Bishop, J. (2016). *The building blocks of high-quality early childhood education programs*. 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2012.701500>

Thank you!