Organizational Change & Quality Improvement in Urban Child Care Centers: Perspectives from Relational Bureaucracy Theory
Anne Douglass, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Executive Director
Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation, University of Massachusetts Boston
Anne.douglass@umb.edu

Purpose: The study investigated how early childhood educators in six urban child care centers learned and implemented new practices as a result of a quality improvement intervention called the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on trauma informed care. Trauma-informed care involves relational and responsive practices and effective cross-role communication. This paper addresses the following research questions: 1) How did the BSC facilitate improvement among participating child care programs, and 2) How did inter-organizational learning and intra-organizational learning influence improvement outcomes?

Theoretical Frameworks: The theory and research reviewed in this paper suggest the following hypotheses:

1) Adopting and improving trauma informed practices may be facilitated by three kinds of interventions: structural, work process, and relational, and
2) These interventions influence relationships in ways that can enhance learning both within and among the organizations participating in a quality improvement collaborative.

Study Design and Methods: The study used a structured, single case study methodology with six embedded cases (the six child care programs). Data sources included 107 meeting observations, 58 in-depth interviews, 48 classroom observations, and review of 43 documents. The research team developed an analytic template for use in analyzed data using a set of structured qualitative coding methods, triangulation, and cross-case comparison techniques.

Key Findings: The BSC included interventions to promote change at three levels:

- Structural changes (affinity group meetings, cross-role team meetings)
- Work process changes (monthly metrics, Plan Do Study Act cycles)
- Relational changes (safe space, self-care, permission to make mistakes, relational leadership)

These changes facilitated two types of collaborative learning: inter-organizational learning among different child care programs, and intra-organizational within child care programs.

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<tr>
<th>Type of Learning</th>
<th>Function of Collaborative Learning</th>
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<td>Inter-organizational</td>
<td>➢ Vicarious learning that accelerates improvement by allowing organizations to learn from others who already tried something; knowledge about dos and don’ts from early adopters</td>
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<td>➢ Exposure to new or contrasting ideas can stimulate innovation and change, which is particularly relevant for TIC where people are co-creating how to do this</td>
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<td>➢ Created hope by expanding participants’ ideas about what can be possible in their context</td>
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<td>Intra-organizational</td>
<td>➢ Cross role teamwork, to coordinate across roles (administrators, teachers, support staff, mental health staff, and parents); psychological safety to speak up, offer ideas</td>
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For More information: anne.douglass@umb.edu

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