

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

LABOR TURNOVER IN THE CHILD-CARE INDUSTRY: VOICE AND EXIT

What relationship exists between working conditions and teacher turnover in child-care (early care and education) programs? Research has shown high staff turnover is a major factor affecting the quality of care. Using a new survey and data set I designed of union and randomly selected non-union programs in Massachusetts, I examine factors other than compensation that might be related to lower teacher turnover.

Focusing on different institutional settings, including unionization and regional unemployment, I use economist Albert Hirschman's theory of exit, voice and loyalty to see if "voice" alternatives to quitting are an effective method of reducing exits.

"Voice" alternatives studied include working relationships and practices between management and labor; identified paths for promotion and compensation; and processes for making decisions and addressing grievances.

I discuss three research questions:

What working conditions or practices affect teacher turnover in child-care programs in the private market? Results indicate the presence and type of worker voice affects teacher turnover. Programs with collective bargaining agreements have lower rates of turnover than those without. Unionized programs also employ more staff per child, pay higher wages, and serve a higher percentage of state-subsidized children.

How does "voice" differ in nature and quantity across different types of workplaces? I find there is more voice in unionized programs. Also different voice practices are used in programs operating in a high-unemployment compared to a low-unemployment environment.

What, if any, is the statistical relationship (correlation) between teacher turnover and voice, and how does this relationship vary across workplaces? My results show a consistently negative relationship between teacher turnover and voice in these workplaces even when controlling for wages. Programs with more voice aspects have less teacher turnover.