

Research Briefing N° 69

EPPE project: findings from pre-school to age 7

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE 1997-2004, subsequently extended to 2014) project was the first major European longitudinal study to specifically focus on the effectiveness of early years education. The project focuses on the relationships between various child, family, home, and pre-school characteristics and children's intellectual/academic (reading and maths) and social-behavioural ('independence & concentration', 'co-operation & conformity', 'peer sociability' and 'anti-social/worried' behaviour) outcomes at age 7 in Year 2, end of Key Stage 1(KS1).



Key words: EPPE; pre-school; early years; Key Stage 1; longitudinal; effectiveness; pedagogy; child development; UK.

Key findings of the final report

The final report describes the effects of pre-school education and care (e.g. duration, quality, type of setting, and specific 'practices') on children's development (intellectual and social-behavioural) monitored from age 3/4 to the end of Year 2 (age 6/7). It details other factors related to the family and home that impact on children's development. Only selected findings are presented here for more detailed findings see: http://www.ioe.ac.uk/EPPE_TechnicalPaper_12_2004.pdf

- Pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances children's all-round development.
- Duration of attendance (in months) is important; an earlier start (under age 3) was related to better intellectual development.
- High quality pre-schooling is related to better intellectual and social-behavioural development.
- Full time attendance led to no better gains for children than part-time provision.
- Disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school.
- The beneficial effects of pre-school remain evident at the end of KS1, although some outcomes were not as strong as they had been at school entry (age 5).
- Specific pedagogical practices including interactions traditionally associate with the term 'teaching', and 'sustained shared thinking' were evident in more 'effective' settings and these were associated with more highly qualified staff.
- Marital status, parent's socio-economic status and qualification levels related to child outcomes.
- The positive effect of a stimulating early years home learning environment continued to influence developmental profiles at the end of KS1.

The research

EPPE was the first UK study (first phase: 1997 to 2003) to investigate aspects of pre-school provision which have a positive impact on children's attainment, progress and development. Funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the first phase explored:

- What is the impact of pre-school on children's intellectual and social-behavioural development?
- Are some pre-schools more effective than others in promoting children's development?
- What are the characteristics of an effective pre-school setting?
- What is the impact of the family and home on children's development?
- Do the effects of pre-school continue through KS1 (ages 6/7)?

A range of pre-school settings were studied and the development of approximately 3,000 children from different social backgrounds were assessed and monitored at key points in their schooling. They will continue in the study till just after their 16th birthday (2014).

In addition children's backgrounds e.g. parents' qualifications and home learning environment,

Further information

There are twelve technical papers associated with this phase of the research (1997-2004). See <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/66740.html>

The EPPE project has contributed widely to 'evidence based policy' in early years education and care. Its findings are robust because they are based on sound and innovative research methods and have been used to inform policy development by successive governments. Findings from the case studies have informed the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum guidelines and are used extensively by practitioners who are concerned with issues of quality, learning and social justice.

The research has been extended to follow the same sample to their post compulsory school destinations (age 16+) to investigate how early experiences influence long term trajectories: see www.ioe.ac.uk/eppse

were also studied and twelve intensive case studies of pre-school settings where children had positive outcomes were carried out to explore the characteristics of effective practice and the pedagogy which underpins it.

How we did it

EPPE used the following sources of information: standardised child assessments taken over time, social-behavioural profiles completed by pre-school and primary staff, parental interviews, interviews with pre-school centre staff, quality rating scales and case study observations. The case studies included detailed documentation of naturalistic observations of staff pedagogy, and systematic structured targeted observations of children's learning. Information was also gathered and analysed using interviews with parents, staff and managers and through intensive and wide ranging documentary analysis and a literature review of pedagogy in the early years.

Many sources of data were used in statistical analyses to explore the contribution to children's development by pre-school settings after taking account of a range of child, parent and home background factors.

Contact

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