

*Findings from the UK's
Effective Provision of Pre-School Education
Study*

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Why the early years?

“ If the race is already halfway run even before children begin school, then we clearly need to examine what happens in the earliest years.” (Esping-Andersen, 2005)

“ Like it or not, the most important mental and behavioural patterns, once established, are difficult to change once children enter school.” (Heckman & Wax, 2004).

Early risk factors and poor outcomes

- poor literacy and educational attainment
- anti-social and criminal behaviour
- unemployment
- substance abuse
- poor mental and physical health
- adult mortality

3

Interventions with Disadvantaged Groups

“If people keep falling off a cliff, don’t worry about where you put the ambulance at the bottom. Build a fence at the top and stop them falling off in the first place.”

ECEC as Intervention for Disadvantaged Children

There are several studies with similar conclusions –

High Quality ECEC can improve development for children from disadvantaged backgrounds

e.g. Perry Preschool Project, Abecedarian, Chicago Child-Parent Center

General Population Studies

Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE)

Later EPPSE

Effective Pre-School and Primary Education EPPE



A Longitudinal Study Funded by the DFES

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EPPE Research Design

- **Adopts an *educational effectiveness* design**
- **Employs a mixed methodology involving:**
 - **large scale quantitative study, longitudinal tracking of sample approx 3000 children from 141 different pre-school settings from age 3+ to 7 years, including multilevel analyses of pre-school centre effects**
 - **focuses on a broad range of child outcomes (cognitive progress and social behavioural development) and investigates impact of processes eg quantitative measures of centre quality**
 - **detailed qualitative case studies of selected centres identified from multilevel analyses as having positive effects on different child outcomes**

Key Features of EPPE Mixed Research Design

- Quantitative analyses enable comparisons across settings and by type of provision taking account intake differences in terms of significant child, family and home factors including prior attainments or social behaviour (estimates of pre-school centre effectiveness based on 'value-added' for cognitive progress and social behavioural development).
- Detailed qualitative cases studies of more effective pre-school settings explore organisation and processes, including pedagogy, associated with positive child outcomes and increase understanding of best practice.

A Stratified Random Sample

- **Six local authorities in England, covering urban, inner city, suburban and rural locations and a range of ethnic diversity and social disadvantage**
- **Pre-school centres randomly selected within authorities to include:**
 - **playgroups**
 - **nursery classes**
 - **private day nurseries**
 - **day care centres run by local authorities**
 - **nursery schools**
 - **fully integrated centres**
- **A 'home' sample approx 300 who have no significant pre-school experience**
- **Approx 3000 children and 141 centres in total**

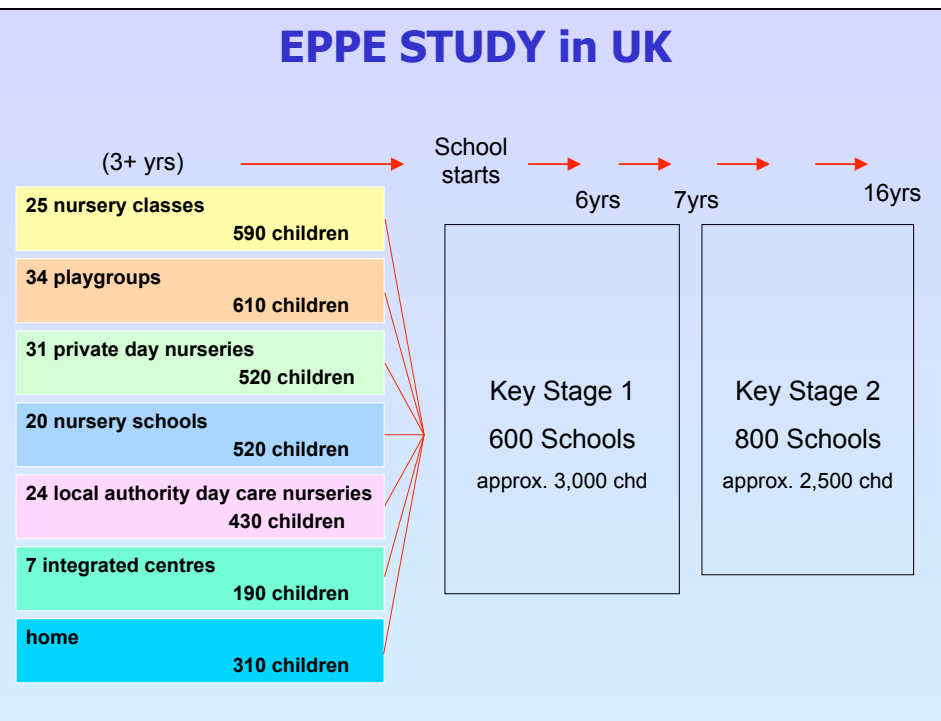
Effective Pre-School and Primary Education EPPE



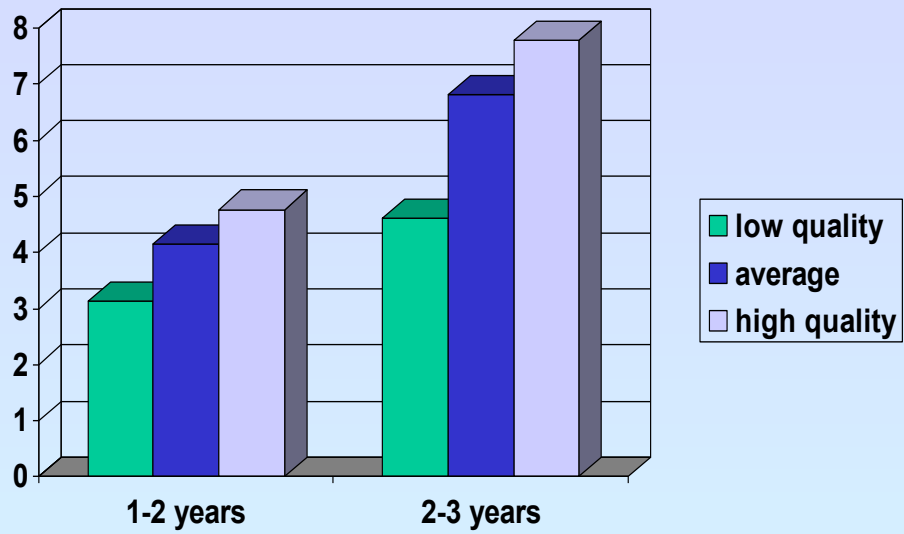
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EPPE STUDY in UK

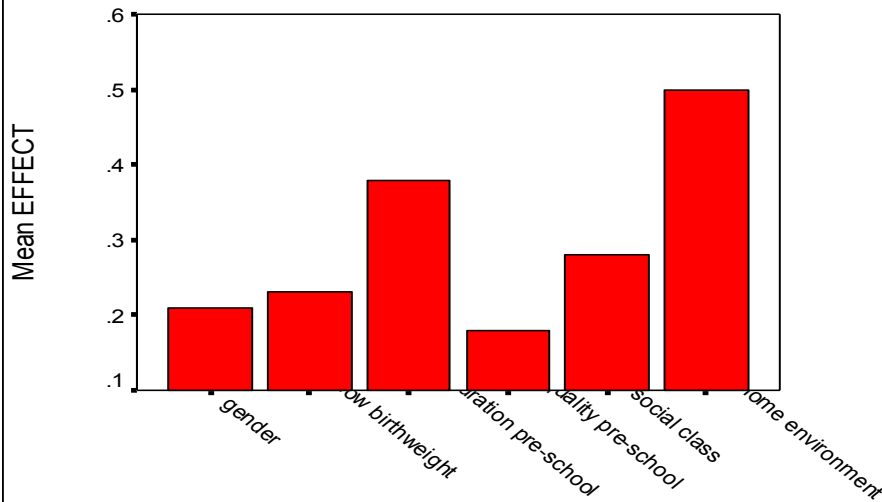


Quality and Duration matter (months of developmental advantage on literacy)



Effects of child, home, and pre-school compared

EFFECTS UPON LITERACY



Home Learning Environment

Parents asked about activities in the home.

A home learning environment (HLE) index constructed

(Melhuish et al., 2001).

Seven activities linked to development.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not occur *very frequent*

Reading to child

Library visits

Painting & drawing

Playing with letters

Playing with numbers/shapes

Songs/ poems /nursery rhymes

The Home Learning Environment in the early years has powerful long-term effects

“What parents do is more important than who parents are”.

(Melhuish et al., 2001)

Combining quantitative and qualitative methods

From quantitative analyses we identified ECEC centres that were particularly effective.

Then qualitative case studies looked at what made them effective.

Effective Pre-schools

Five areas were particularly important:

- **Quality of the adult-child verbal interaction.**
- **Knowledge and understanding of curriculum.**
- **Knowledge of how young children learn.**
- **Adults skill in helping children resolve conflicts.**
- **Helping parents to support children's learning at home.**

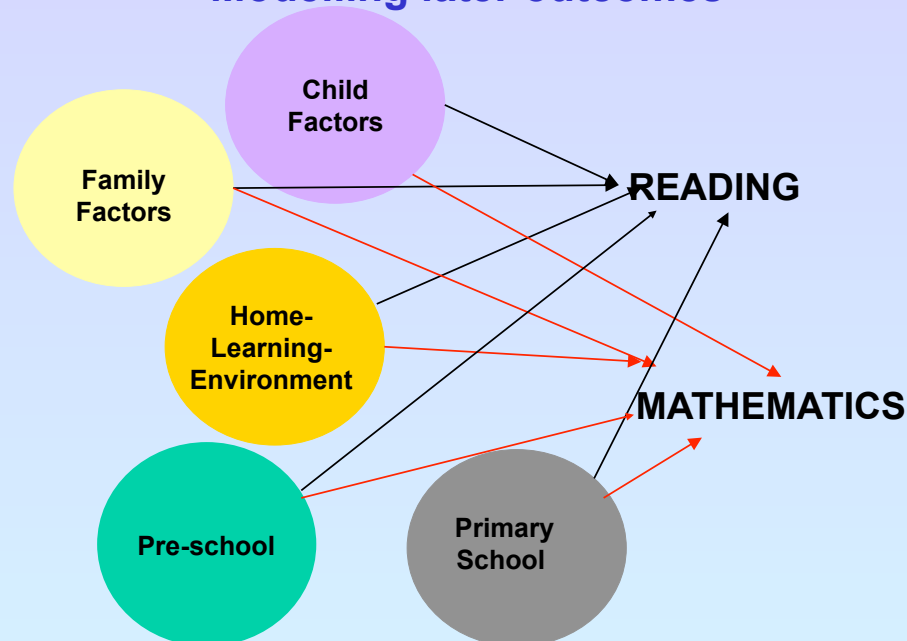
Sustained shared thinking

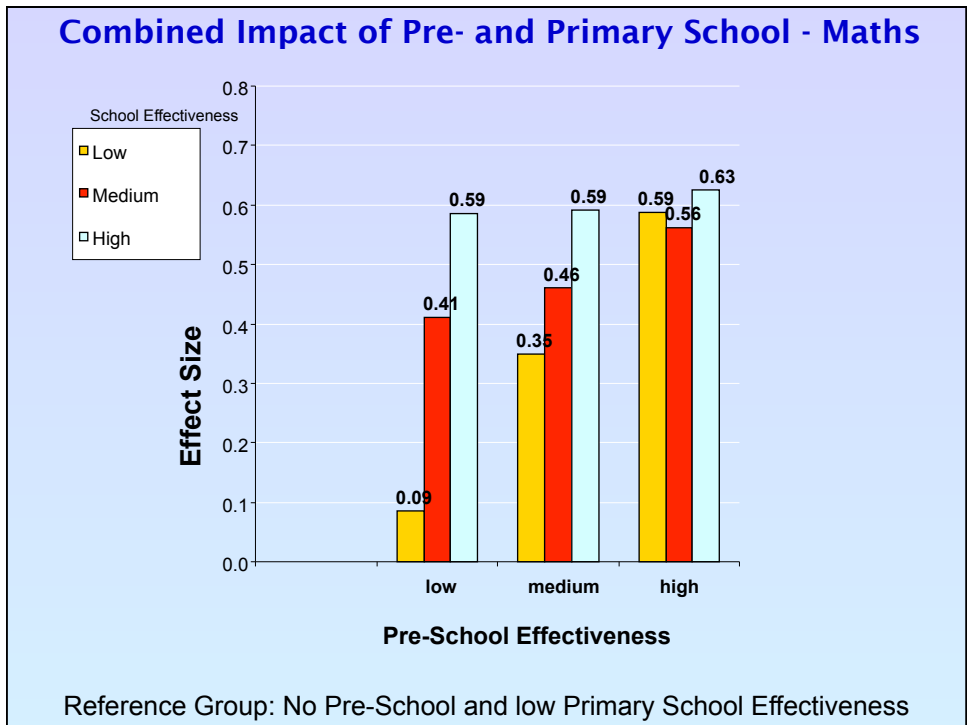
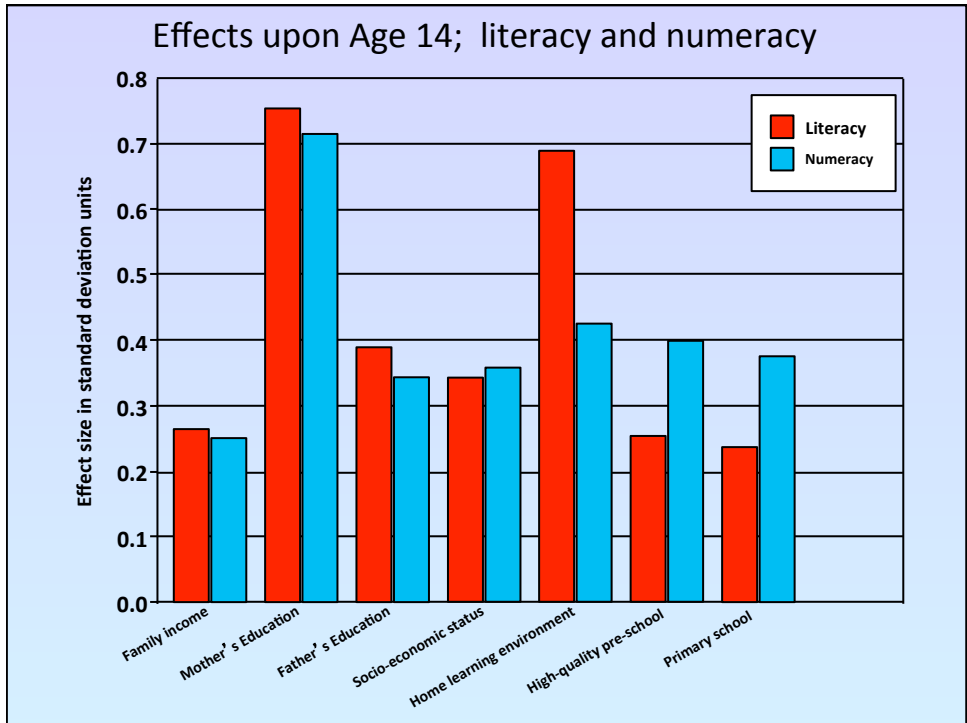
Good outcomes are linked to:

Adult-child interactions that involve 'sustained shared thinking' and open-ended questioning to extend children's thinking

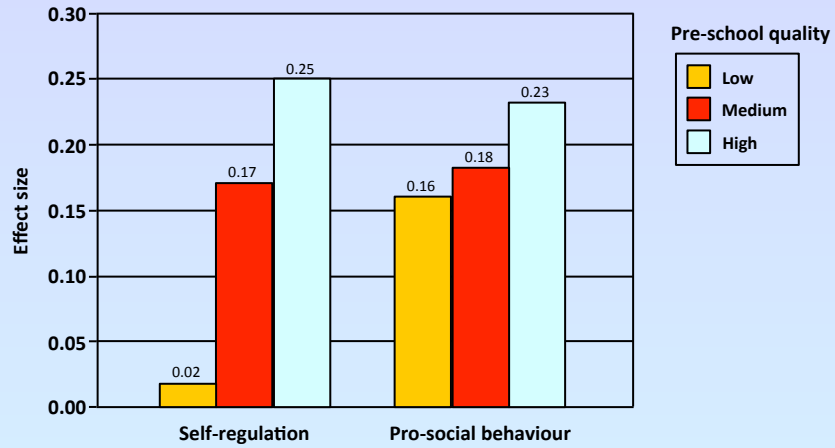
Sustained shared thinking: An episode in which two or more individuals "work together" in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend.

Modelling later outcomes

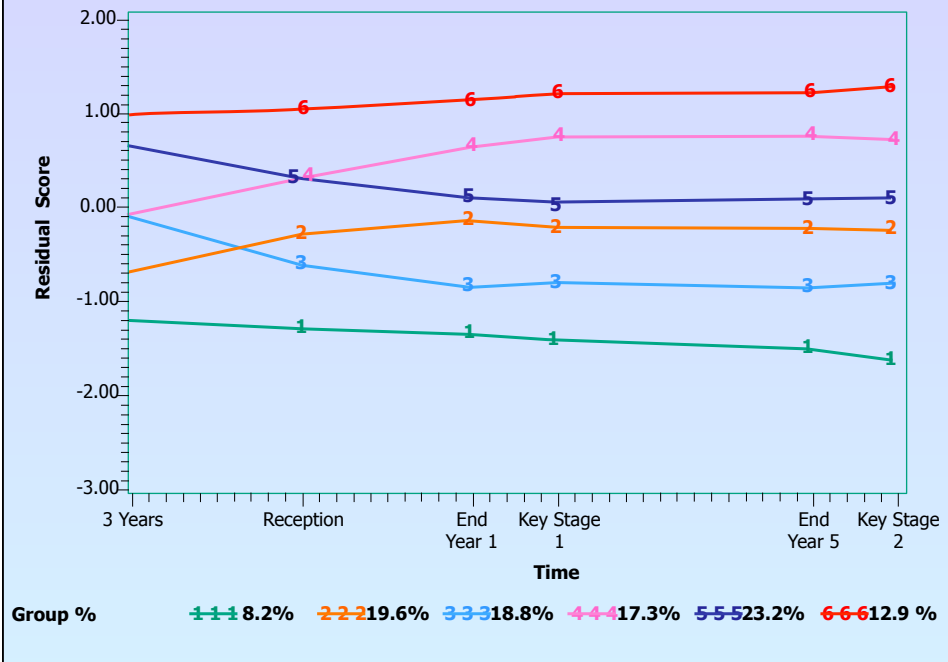




Pre-school Quality and Self-regulation and Pro-social behaviour (age 11 and 14)



Trajectories for Numeracy



EFFECTIVE PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION IN NORTHERN IRELAND (EPPNI)

Study in Northern Ireland

850 children followed from 3 to 11 years of age.

Similar results to EPPE in England.

At age 11, allowing for all background factors,

The effects of quality of pre-school persist until age 11 years

High quality pre-school – improved English and maths,
And improved progress in maths during primary school.

Children who attended high quality pre-schools were **2.4**
times more likely in English, and **3.4** times more likely in
mathematics, to attain the highest grade at age 11 than
children without pre-school.

What matters

3 elements for good educational and social success

Good Home Learning Environment (before school)

Good preschool for longer duration

Good primary schools

Those children with all 3 will out-perform those with 2
who will out-perform those with 1
who will out-perform those with 0
All other things being equal

Conclusions

- From age 2 all children benefit from preschool.
- The quality of preschool matters.
- Part-time has equal benefit to full-time.
- Preschool effects persist until teenage years
- High quality preschool can protect a child from effects of a low effective school.

The Impact of Research on Policy

DfES's Analytical Strategy (DfES, 2006)

“The results of the EPPE study have already had a significant impact on policy development in early years, especially through clearly demonstrating the vital influence of the quality of provision on successful outcomes. Continuation of the cohort will enable us to understand the lasting impact of early years experience and the factors which either enhance or negate this” (DfES, 2006, p20).

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‘the main source of analyses of the impact of pre-school provision on child development in the UK is the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (HMT, 2004, p65).

Effects on policy in UK

- Free part-time pre-school from age 3 (2004)
- Extension of parental leave (2004)
- 10-year Childcare Strategy (2004)
- Guidance for Children's Centres (2005)
- Childcare Bill (2006)
- Acceptance that money spent on pre-school produces savings later

LESSONS

1. Early years are very important
2. Preschool is part of infrastructure for a successful society
3. High quality preschool boosts development
4. Parenting is also very important
5. Preschool lifts population curve.

Tensions in policy making

- Universal or targeting
- Individual community designed,
or standardised with central guidelines
- ‘interventions’ or ‘system reform’
- Structural solutions, workforce solutions,
cultural change

ECEC as part of society's infrastructure

ECEC is a means of advancing educational and social development for all and it becomes part of the infrastructure for long-term economic development (Melhuish & Petrogiannis, 2006).

Some countries, e.g. China (Shenglan, 2006) have adopted this perspective in their focused development of ECEC.

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