

Professor Iram Siraj - Formal submission to The Productivity Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care

What do we know about how ECEC can support child development. Building a positive picture of population impact of ECEC from particular interventions.

FROM OECD – Please read Improving Early Equity

From Evidence to Action – from the OECD International Early Learning and well-being study IELS 2022

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/improving-early-equity_6eff314c-en

<https://oecdeditoday.com/oecd-education-webinars/>

Summary Evidence from the Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+- the research team: Kathy Sylva, Ted, Melhuish, Pam Sammons, Iram Siraj & Brenda Taggart. Funded: 1997-2017 by the UK, DfE)

How pre-school influences children and young people's attainment and developmental outcomes over time. (See attached refs)

Background: The early years landscape

What happens to young children between the age of 3 and 5 is now an important phase of education in its own right and one with long term implications for children as learners. Since the 1990s there has been radical reform (Taggart, 2010a).

The EPPSE sample

The EPPSE study was commissioned in to investigate the influences on children development, most notably pre-schooling. To this end 2,800 children were recruited to the study from 6 English Local Authorities. These children, from four academic cohorts came from different types of pre-school provision (141 in total) spanning the private, voluntary and maintained sectors.

The specific aims of EPPSE changed depending on the age of the children, but can be summarised as an exploration of the:

- short, medium and long term effects on children's academic and social-behavioural development from attending pre-schools of different type, with varying levels of quality and for different periods of time (duration);
- characteristics of effective pre-schools and primary schools with a focus on pedagogy;
- influence of a range of primary and secondary school characteristics on student outcomes;
- influence of child characteristics and a range of background family demographics on outcomes.

This short summary of the influence of pre-school at different time points cannot detail all of the findings from this 17 year project, instead it summarises some of the key findings on the importance of pre-school over time. Information on other important predictors, such as family characteristics etc. can be found in many Technical Papers and end of phase reports. For information on the economic returns of pre-school, student's views of school, case studies of effective practice, children who succeed against the odds and many other strands of this programme of research readers are advised to visit <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/153.html>

Key findings on the influence of pre-school and pre-school quality on outcomes, answering question

See also attached documents 1 and 2:

Impact of ECEC on development outcomes for vulnerable children and whole population
EPPSE explored pre-school as a predictor of outcomes over time. Data were analysed using multilevel modelling (Goldstein, 1995) enabling the net influence of attendance (attending v non attending), duration (in months), effectiveness and the quality of settings to be estimated having already taken account of other (individual, family, etc.) background characteristics. The key findings are outlined below:

- **Pre-school has a positive and long-term impact on children's attainment, progress and social-behavioural development.**
- **At school entry (age 5), attending pre-school improved children's academic and social outcomes with an early start (before 3) and attending a high-quality setting being particularly beneficial. Full time attendance led to no better gains than part-time (half day) provision.**
- **Pre-school continued to influence outcomes throughout primary school especially if it was of high quality. At age 11, high quality pre-school was especially important for boys, pupils with SEN and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. High quality pre-school enhanced the maths outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and for those of low qualified parents.**
- **The pre-school influence continued during secondary school. Those who attended high quality pre-school had higher attainment and better social-behavioural development at age 14 (KS3). By age 16 (KS4) there were no lasting pre-school effects on social behaviours but attending a pre-school predicted better GCSE results. This positive influence was greater for those who had started at an earlier age (before 3) or who had attended a pre-school of high quality. Beyond compulsory schooling, students who attended pre-school were more likely to go onto higher academic study, taking four or more AS/A levels¹.**

- **At a range of time points, disadvantaged children gained from high quality pre-school. It reduced the risk of anti-social or worried behaviour and improved attainment. It was particularly importance for children who had a less stimulating home learning environment or who were from families where parents had poor or no qualifications.**
- **The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimated that pre-school attendance and attending a pre-school of high quality lead to positive financial returns over life time earnings to the individual, a household and the Exchequer.**

QUALITY MATTERS - CASE STUDIES OF PRACTICE ACROSS MORE EFFECTIVE CENTRES – THOSE THAT ADD VALUE TO CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT – see attached paper by Siraj-Blatchford et al 2003

Introduction

In order to look more closely at pre-school pedagogy the EPPSE study conducted analyses on all 141 pre-schools to see whether or not some settings were more ‘effective’ than others. Having established that some pre-schools are more ‘effective’ than others² (Sylva et al., 2004a; 2004b) EPPSE sought to investigate the day-to-day practices evident in ‘excellent’ and ‘good’ setting in order to describe some of the characteristics of effective provision (Siraj-Blatchford 2008; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; 2003).

Key Findings

The findings show that good outcomes for children are linked to early years settings that:

- **View cognitive and social development of children as complementary and do not prioritise one over the other. That is combining daycare and pre-school.**
- **Have strong leadership and long-serving staff (three years plus, this was even the case in the private daycare settings where the turnover of staff is normally the highest).**
- **Provide a strong educational focus with trained teachers working alongside and supporting less qualified staff.**
- **Provide children with a mixture of practitioner initiated group work and learning through freely chosen play.**
- **Provide adult-child interactions that involve 'sustained shared thinking' and open-ended questioning to extend children’s thinking.**

- **Have practitioners with good curriculum knowledge combined with knowledge and understanding of how young children learn.**
- **Have strong parental involvement, especially in terms of shared educational aims with parents.**
- **Provide formative feedback to children during activities and provide regular reporting and discussion with parents about their child's progress.**
- **Ensure behaviour policies in which staff support children in rationalising and talking through their conflicts.**
- **Provide differentiated learning opportunities that meet the needs of particular individuals and groups of children e.g. bilingual, special needs, girls/boys etc.**

The aim of the intensive case study analyses has been to tease out the specific pedagogical and other practices that are associated with achieving 'excellent' outcomes compared to those centres with 'good' or more 'average' outcomes. This analysis has been extended significantly in the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) study (Siraj-Blatchford, et al 2002), which added case studies of two reception classes.

Other references useful to the Commission

Goldstein, H. (1995), *Multilevel Statistical Models*. (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.

Sammons, P., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., and Elliot, K. (2002), *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Technical Paper 8a – Measuring the Impact of Pre-school on Children's Cognitive Progress*. Institute of Education, University of London. London.

Sammons, P., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E.C., Siraj, I., Taggart, B., Toth, K. & Smees R. (2014) *Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-16 Project (EPPSE 3-16) Influences on students' GCSE attainment and progress at age 16* Department for Education Research Report RR351

Sammons, P., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E.C., Siraj, I., Taggart, B., Toth, K., Draghici, D. and Smees, R. (2011a) *Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE 3-14): Influences on Students' Attainment and Progress in Key Stage 3: Academic outcomes in English, Maths and Science in Year 9*. London: Institute of Education, University of London / DFE.

Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Taggart, B., Sammons, P., Melhuish, E.C., & Elliot, K. (2003) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Technical Paper 10 - Intensive Case Studies of Practice across the Foundation Stage*. London: DfES / Institute of Education, University of London.

Siraj, I., Melhuish, E., Howard, S.J., Neilsen-Hewett, C., Kingston, D., De Rosnay, M., Huang, R., Gardiner, J. & Luu, B. (2023) *Improving quality of teaching and child development: A randomised controlled trial of the leadership for learning intervention in preschools*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 04 January 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1092284>

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj, I. and Taggart, B. (2014) The Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE 3-16+) Students' educational outcomes at age 16. Department for Education. RR 354

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E.C., Sammons, P., Siraj, I. and Taggart, B. (2012) Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 Project (EPPSE 3-14) - Final Report from the Key Stage 3 Phase: Influences on Students' Development from age 11-14. Department for Education Research Report 2022

Quality and Inspection in Australia:

This paper compares Australian ECEC centre NQS ratings with ECERS E and SSTEW – validated quality ratings in the same centres and reaches the conclusion that NQS rating uplift practice for low quality centres but do not lift quality sufficiently at the higher end to support child development. Quality could be further improved with the use of validated instruments. See their use below in appendix 6 by Goodstart Early Learning, changing quality in one provider.

Siraj, I., Howard, S., Kingston, D., Melhuish, E., Neilsen-Hewett, C. & de Rosnay, M. (2019) 'Comparing regulatory and non-regulatory indices of early childhood education and care (ECEC) quality in the Australian early childhood sector' in *The Australian Educational Researcher* 46(3), 365-383 <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13384-019-00325-3>
Article DOI: 10.1007/s13384-019-00325-3

Issues around the early home learning environment can also be discussed and what this means for parent partnership, there is strong evidence from EPPSE and OECD studies.

Quality as important in driving impact and characteristics of high quality ECEC – case study of Goodstart Early Learning using quality rating scales (QRS)

Enabling environments and children's agency: Connecting the pieces.

The following is an abstract written and with permission from Catherine Tisdell of Goodstart Early Learning

National Lead Data and Policy.

The Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009, p. 45) defines agency as being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world. Children's agency is supported through intentional teaching, involvement in decision making and reciprocal, attuned responsive interactions. (ACECQA, 2018) all of which constitute the environments that teachers/educators provide for children.

Enabling environments that support teaching and learning for all children provide opportunities for both planned and spontaneous teaching and learning, they show evidence of an understanding of children's learning, development and well-being as they are challenging, promoting the notion of

high expectations for children (DEEWR, 2009) and stimulating. They are underpinned by children's theories, perspectives and ideas that engage and challenge them to what to extend on their learning in new and exciting ways.

At Goodstart Early Learning, we have adopted the use of two internationally renowned environmental rating scales to focus on environments to improve outcomes for children across our services. They are:

- *ECERS-E: The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2010)
- *Assessing Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care : Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being (SSTEWS) Scale for 2-5-year-olds provision* (Siraj, Kingston & Melhuish, 2015).

Research suggests that these tools can raise standards of quality in 3- 5 years rooms (Siraj, Howard, Kingston, Neisen-Hewett, Melhuish, & de Rosnay, 2019). This program has now been in place for two years in all our early learning centres. Teachers and educators use the scales to self-assess in order to understand the quality of learning environments and teaching practices. Results are then used to set goals to focus improvement in each particular centre. These resources make very clear what is required in identified areas of learning to ensure high-quality, enabling environments that supports teaching and learning and children's agency.

two of our teachers from Goodstart Early Learning, share their experiences with the tools:

Below, describes how the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-E) has supported the design and resourcing of the room.

ECERS-E has helped me in planning, reflecting and self-evaluating the physical environment in the kindergarten room. It has helped me in deepening my knowledge of what "high quality early childhood education" looks like, our strengths and areas of development. Based on the assessment results as well as I was able to design the room into areas that consider literacy, mathematics, science and the natural environment, and take into account diversity. Critically reflecting on all the areas in the room, brainstorming with colleagues about having specific resources in the areas as well as listening to children's voices and understanding their interests, helped in the design of the room. I always make sure to keep the areas refreshed and 'alive' by adding or taking away resources and provocations. Making sure the areas provide support to the ongoing projects, emergent interests of the children and cater to the specific needs, has helped in children being engaged and has immensely improved the learning and development outcomes for the children.

reflects on one of her goals as a self-assessment using SSTEWS:

One of my goals focuses on "Encouraging sustained shared thinking through storytelling, sharing books, signing and rhymes" (p. 30) and I have been working on building resources and engaging in shared and sustained conversations with children in small groups. Hand-made puppets and felt boards have been added to our book corner for children to access and use alone, in small groups or with the support of an educator. Consideration of grouping sizes has further enabled me to engage in better conversations with children and focus on scaffolding learning. I

have also learnt that this way of working allows me to provide many opportunities for children to revisit their own learning in their own ways. They are given ample space and time to co-construct and deepen their knowledge base and I find myself balancing my role as an observer, facilitator or researcher in children's learning.

By providing quality learning areas and facilitating a positive learning environment we are able to create and sustain enabling environments that authentically supports children's agency.

References

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- DEEWAR. (2009). *Belonging, being and becoming. The early years learning framework for Australia*. Downloaded from: https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-02/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf
- Siraj, I., Howard, S.J., Kingston, D., Neisen-Hewett, C., Melhuish, E.C. & de Rosnay, M. (2019). Comparing regulatory and non-regulatory indices of early childhood education and care (ECEC) quality in the Australian early childhood sector. *Australian Educational Researcher*. 46, 365–383 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00325-3>
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- Sylva, K., Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Taggart, B. (2010). *ECERS-E: The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Curricular Extension to ECERS-R*. Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom: Institute of Education Press.