

## The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project : Findings from the Pre-school Period

### Summary of findings

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### What is EPPE?

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project is the first major European longitudinal study of a national sample of young children's development (intellectual and social/behavioural) between the ages of 3 and 7 years. To investigate the effects of pre-school<sup>1</sup> education for 3 and 4 year olds, the EPPE team collected a wide range of information on over 3,000 children, their parents, their home environments and the pre-school settings they attended. Settings (141) were drawn from a range of providers (local authority day nursery, integrated<sup>2</sup> centres, playgroups, private day nurseries, maintained nursery schools and maintained nursery classes). A sample of 'home' children (who had no or minimal pre-school experience) was recruited to the study at entry to school for comparison with the pre-school group. In addition to investigating the effects of pre-school provision on young children's development, EPPE explores the characteristics of effective practice (and the pedagogy which underpin them) through twelve intensive case studies of settings with positive child outcomes. EPPE has demonstrated the positive effects of high quality provision on children's intellectual and social/behavioural developmental. This brief on the main findings of the research related to the pre-school period (for children aged 3 or 4 years of age to entry into primary school).

### Key Findings

#### *Impact of attending a pre-school centre*

- ❖ Pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances children's development.
- ❖ The duration of attendance is important with an earlier start being related to better intellectual development and improved independence, concentration and sociability.
- ❖ Full time attendance led to no better gains for children than part-time provision.
- ❖ Disadvantaged children in particular can benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences, especially if they attend centres that cater for a mixture of children from different social backgrounds.

#### *The quality and practices in pre-school centres*

- ❖ The quality of pre-school centres is directly related to better intellectual/cognitive and social/behavioural development in children.
- ❖ Good quality can be found across all types of early years settings. However quality was higher overall in integrated settings, nursery schools and nursery classes.
- ❖ Settings which have staff with higher qualifications, especially with good proportion of trained teachers on the staff, show higher quality and their children make more progress.
- ❖ Where settings view educational and social development as complementary and equal in importance, children make better all round progress.
- ❖ Effective pedagogy includes interaction traditionally associated with the term "teaching", the provision of instructive learning environments and 'sustained shared thinking' to extend children's learning.

#### *Type of pre-school*

- ❖ There are significant differences between individual pre-school settings in their impact on children. Some settings are more effective than other in promoting positive child outcomes.
- ❖ Children tend to make better intellectual progress in fully integrated centres and nursery schools.

#### *The importance of home learning.*

- ❖ The quality of the learning environment of the home (where parents are actively engaged in activities with children) promoted intellectual and social development in all children. Although parent's social class and levels of education were related to child outcomes the quality of the home learning environment was more important. The home learning environment is only moderately associated with social class. What parents do is more important than who they are.

<sup>1</sup> Pre-school centres in this document means those centres that included 3 and 4 year olds.

<sup>2</sup> 'Integrated' settings fully combines education and care and is referred to as 'combined' centres in EPPE Technical Papers.