

Research Briefing N° 65

EPPSE project: findings on students' development at age 14

The Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education project (EPPSE 3- 16+:2008-2014) is the third phase of the original Effective Provision of Pre-school Education project (EPPE 3-7: 1997-2003 subsequently extended to 2014). It focuses on the relationships between student outcomes (academic and social-behavioural) and their own characteristics, family and social backgrounds alongside any continued influence of pre-school and primary school. It looks at students' secondary school experience and their self reported perceptions of themselves as learners and their views of their secondary school. It compares these findings to the impact of the same factors when these students were younger. These findings are reported for young people age 14 in Year 9 at the end of Key Stage 3 (KS3).



Key words: EPPE; EPPSE; pre-school education; early years education; primary education; Key Stage 1; Key Stage 2; Key Stage 3; longitudinal; mixed-method; child development; UK

This Research Briefing is related to others on the **Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education project (EPPE/EPPSE)**: N°s 64, 66, 67, 68 and 69.

Key findings at age 14

Only selected findings are presented here, for more detailed findings see: [‘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’](#) (pdf 5.3mb)

- The gender gap widened during KS3. Girls had better attainment in English and also made more progress in English, maths and science although scored higher on levels of ‘anxiety’.
- Both academic and social-behavioural outcomes were influenced by the education level of students’ parents. A more stimulating early years Home Learning Environment (HLE) helps to promote better longer term academic outcomes and improved self-regulation.
- Higher pre-school quality was still important for attainment in maths and science and for better social-behavioural outcomes and had particular benefits for children who had a poor early years HLE.
- The academic effectiveness of the primary school attended predicted better outcomes in maths and science but not for English or social-behavioural outcomes.
- Students’ views of their secondary school (e.g. ‘enjoyment and ‘homework’) predicted academic attainment and progress and social behavioural outcomes.
- Specific secondary school characteristics (e.g. emphasis on learning) influenced student outcomes.
- Attending a school judged as ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted was associated with better academic and social-behavioural outcomes and students’ dispositions.
- Students who ‘succeeded against the odds’ had parents who exhibited ‘active cultivation’. These parents valued learning, provided emotional support, and had high aspirations and standards of behaviour for their children.

What we did

Since 1997 the Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education project (EPPE/EPPSE) has investigated the attainment and development of approximately 3,000 children from pre-school to the end of KS3. This third phase, funded by the Department for Education (DfE) investigated the influence of the following on students' outcomes at age 14:

- individual, family and out of school learning characteristics;
- pre-school, primary and secondary school experiences (singly and combined), in terms of quality, academic effectiveness and change over time;
- being more or less disadvantaged;
- students' dispositions;
- students' views of their secondary school.

How we did it

The research design is based on an educational effectiveness and mixed methods approach. Statistical models were used to predict students' academic outcomes and social-behavioural developmental progress in KS3 allowing for differences in their families, home environments, schools, and neighbourhoods.

However, analytic models can only identify statistical patterns; they cannot take account of the unique characteristics of each child, their personal and individual life experiences. Case studies of 50 individual children and their families sought to capture some of this uniqueness. The selection for the qualitative case studies utilised the quantitative analyses using the wealth of data already collected on these students, thus linking the two approaches.

Implications

The findings show there is no 'one' predictor which explains students' attainment, progress and development. It is the combination of factors that make a difference to young people's long-term life chances. The message for policy is that there is no 'magic bullet' because addressing one factor in isolation is unlikely to have an impact on 'narrowing the gap'. The adolescents in this phase of the study shaped their own pathways and this research highlights the importance of students own self-perceptions and listening to their views.

Impact

The EPPSE 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.

Further information

For further reports on the end of secondary phase see the [EPPE webpage –publications](#). Also see the [final report from the secondary phase](#) (as above) (pdf 5.3mb).

Also see the [project website](#) for information on this and other project phases.

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