

Ages 3-7 Design and sample

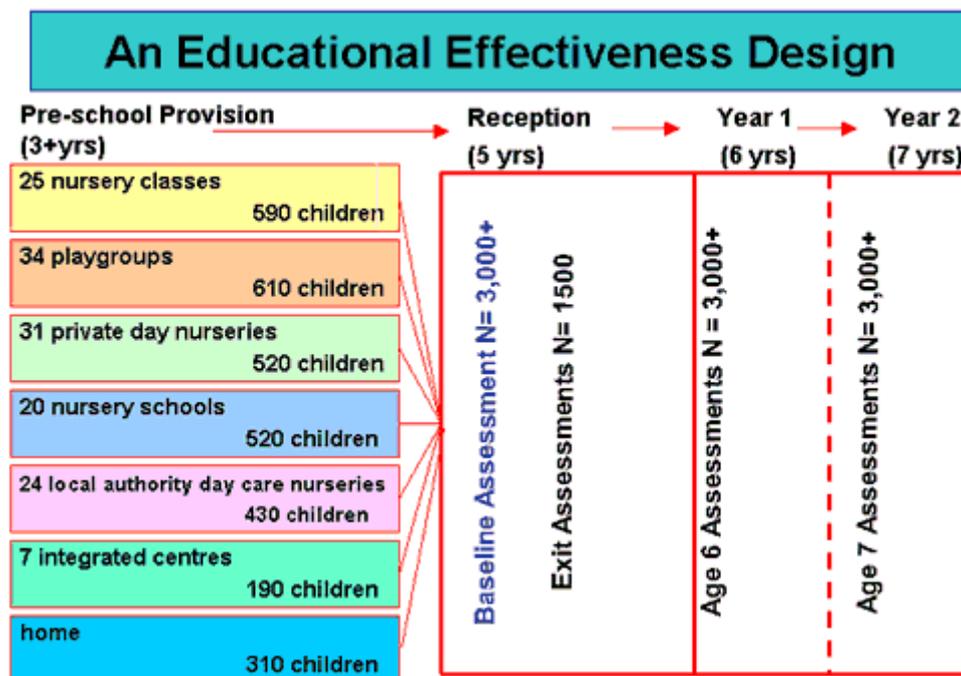
The original EPPE longitudinal study (1997-2003) assessed the attainment and development of children between the ages of 3 to 7 years. Both quantitative and qualitative methods (including multilevel modelling) were used to explore the effects of pre-school education on children's cognitive/academic attainment and progress as well as their social-behavioural development at entry to school and any continuing effects on such outcomes two years later at the end of Key Stage 1 (age 7).

The Children

Around their third birthday, or up to a year later if the child entered pre-school provision after age three, each child was assessed by a researcher on four cognitive tasks: verbal comprehension, naming vocabulary, knowledge of similarities seen in pictures and block building. A profile of the child's social and emotional adjustment was completed by the pre-school educator who knew the child best. If the child changed pre-school before school entry, he or she was assessed again. At school entry, a similar cognitive battery was administered along with Early Number Concepts and knowledge of the alphabet and rhyme/alliteration. The reception teacher completed the social emotional profile. Further assessments were made at exit from reception and at the end of Years 1 and 2. In addition to standardised tests of reading and mathematics, information on National Assessments were collected along with attendance and special needs status. At age 7, children completed questionnaires about their attitudes to school.

The Families

In addition to pre-school centre effects, the study investigated the contribution to children's development of individual and family characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, language, parental education and the learning environment of the home. The research design addresses a variety of research issues (methodological and practical) in investigating the impact of pre-school provision on children's developmental progress.



The Pre-school centres

Centres selected for the study were stratified by type and geographical location.

Six English Local Authorities (LAs) in five regions were chosen strategically to participate in the research. These were selected to cover provision in urban, suburban and rural areas and a range of ethnic diversity and social disadvantage.

Six main types of provision were included in the study as they represented the most common forms of provision at the time; playgroups, local authority or voluntary day nurseries, private day nurseries, nursery classes and schools and the newly emerging 'integrated' setting (providing both education, care and family support). Centres were selected randomly within each type of provision in each authority. In order to make comparisons across the different type of provision, the project recruited 500 children, approximately 20 in each of 20-25 centres, from the six types of provision. This yielded a total sample of approximately 3,000 children in 141 centres. Within each LA, centres of each type were selected by stratified random sampling.

Children and their families were selected randomly in each centre to participate in the study. All parents gave written permission for their children to participate.

In order to examine the impact of no pre-school provision a sample of 200+ children were recruited from families who did not use pre-school provision. These children were recruited at age 5 from the primary schools (reception classes) attended by the EPPE sample.