



*Journal of Advances and  
Scholarly Researches in  
Allied Education*

*Vol. XI, Issue No. XXI,  
Apr-2016, ISSN 2230-7540*

**POLICY IMPLICATION AND RESEARCH ON  
PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AND ITS LASTING  
EFFECT**

AN  
INTERNATIONALLY  
INDEXED PEER  
REVIEWED &  
REFEREED JOURNAL

# Policy Implication and Research on Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effect

Dr. Pardeep Gautam\*

(Ph.D. Education), Assistant Professor in Commerce, Guru Dronacharya College of Education, Bhuna

**Abstract –** *The purpose of this study was to determine if a difference in achievement scores exist between students who attended the School System preschool program and those who did not as measured by standardized achievement test Reading/Language Arts and Math scores of students in the third and fourth grades. The variables of grade level and preschool attendance were considered. The population consisted of students who were in the third or fourth grades in the School System during the 2010-2011 school years through the 2012-2013 school years. Independent and paired t-tests were used to evaluate differences in the variables. The investigation of the relationship between attendance in preschool and achievement test scores might assist educators in planning and implementation of future preschool programs within the public school setting.*

**Keywords:** *Preschool, Education, Policy, Implication, Effect, population, programs, planning, investigation, etc.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Rapidly evolving preschool education poses challenges for local, state, and federal education policy. In 1960, just 10% of the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in any type of classroom. Less than a half century later, nearly three-quarters of children enroll in a preschool classroom at age 4 and about half do so at age 3.1 These trends have been accompanied by growth in private preschool education and child care, state-funded pre-K, preschool special education, and the federal Head Start program (Belfield, 2008). Public programs currently enroll about half of those in programs at ages 3 and 4. Children are therefore served by programs that vary widely in enrollment, program design and operation, and this is true across and even within states. Issues of quality also arise out of this miscellany. A recent study in California, for example, revealed that state pre-K offered the highest educational quality, but that educational quality averaged across all programs, public and private, was relatively low (Barnett, *et. al.*, 2007. Karoly, *et. al.*, 2008. Early, *et. al.*, 2005). This policy brief summarizes research regarding the short- and long-term effects of preschool education, with particular attention given to what is known about influences on program effectiveness. This information is relevant to public policy makers who must decide whether and how much to support various types of preschool programs, what standards to set for public programs, and how much funding to allocate.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Participation in early care and education (ECE) programs has become the norm for this nation's three- and four-year olds. Public investments in such programs have been promoted on the grounds that they can produce high rates of return in the form of academic outcomes, greater employment rates, and reduced crime. Yet, potential gains are not always realized, as benefits and costs depend on who is served by the program, the activities provided, and the resources required producing such activities (Blau, 2007). This study reviews the basis for claims related to the costs, benefits, and long-term effects of ECE programs, including effects on children's learning and development and parental earnings. It also summarizes what is known about the extent to which variations in child and program characteristics and the community context alter the magnitude of benefits from ECE, as well as policy choices that could increase educational gains and other benefits, thereby increasing the return on public investments. In 1965, just 5% of three-year olds and 16% of four-year olds were enrolled in some type of early care and education (ECE) program.

### 1. A Brief Survey of the Preschool Landscape:

Generally, preschool enrollment rates are lowest for children in families whose income is above the poverty line but in the lower half of income distribution. Children who attend preschool programs have widely varying experiences. Public programs

vary considerably in operating schedules, teacher qualifications, class size and ratio, auxiliary services (such as health and social services, or parenting education), monitoring and accountability, actual teaching practices, and effects on children's learning and development. Teacher qualifications in state pre-K programs range from little more than a high school diploma to a four-year college degree with specialized training in early childhood education. Head Start has national standards for program structure and operation. Private programs vary greatly as well (Gorey, 2001). State child care regulations are weak everywhere, but many centers exceed standards, even as others violate them. With programs varying so greatly, widely varied effects on children are to be expected.

## 2. High/Scope Preschool Project:

"The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project has been the focus of an ongoing longitudinal study conducted by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation of 123 high-risk children. Participants were of low socioeconomic status, had low IQ scores, and were at high risk of failing school. Fifty-eight of these 3-and 4-year-old children were assigned to the program group, and these children were assigned to a control group that did not go through the program. Children attended the preschool program Monday through Friday for 2.5 hours per day over a 2-year period. During that same period, a staff to child ratio of one adult for every five or six children enabled teachers to visit each child's family in their home for 1.5 hours each week. In addition parents participated in monthly small group meetings with other parents facilitated by program staff." The mean school grade point average of those students who were in the High/Scope Perry Preschool project was higher than that of the control group and 71% of the program group graduated from high school compared with 54% in the control group.

## 3. Curriculum Development in Early Childhood Education:

stated curriculum was an organized framework that delineated the content children were to learn; it was a process through which children achieved identified curricular goals; it was what teachers did to help children achieve those goals; and it was the context in which teaching and learning occurred. The curriculum of any program should be an important aspect to structure the learning environment. (Guralnick & Bennett, (Eds.), 1987). Stated:

"An important contribution to the field of child development and early childhood education was the creation of Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment in Programs Serving Children. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association Early of Childhood Specialists in the State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) jointly developed these guidelines to assist teachers and

supervisors to: make informed decisions about appropriate curriculum, content, and assessment; evaluate existing curriculum and assessment practices; and advocate for more appropriate approaches (White & Casto, 1985)."

These national organizations called for schooling to place greater emphasis on:

- (a) Active, hands-on learning;
- (b) Conceptual learning that leads to understanding along with acquisition of basic skills;
- (c) Meaningful, relevant learning experiences;
- (d) Interactive teaching and cooperative learning; and
- (e) A broad range of relevant content, integrated across traditional subject matter divisions.

Stated the National Research Center examined model programs with long-term effectiveness and the following were found to be present in most programs:

1. Curriculum content and learning processes that cultivated school related knowledge with a heavy focus on language development;
2. Qualified teaching staff that used reflective teaching practices aided by highly qualified supervisors;
3. Low child-teacher ratios and small class sizes;
4. Intense and coherent programming; and
5. Collaborative relationships with parents.

## 4. Basis for Preschool Programs:

The 2012 report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation shared the latest Kids Count survey that showed 16.4 million children were living in poverty in the United States with 26% of children in Tennessee living in poverty (McKey, *et. al.*, 1985). In the United States the field of education is becoming increasingly attuned to the importance of preschool programs. Educators agree such programs facilitate children's academic and social adjustment while contributing to their acquisition of the skills and knowledge associated with academic success (Nelson, *et. al.*, 2003). The statistics indicate a continued need for preschool programs for at-risk children. When children begin school already behind they tend to continue to fall further and further behind. High quality early childhood education could help close this gap. One component of America's Goals 2000 was that every child would come to school ready to learn; unfortunately, that element has not been the case for millions of American children. Many of the nation's children have

not been coming to school physically, socially, emotionally, or cognitively ready to learn. (Ramey, *et. al.*, 1985). Found approximately 13 million children reared in poverty entered school with poor health and nutrition, low self-esteem, attention problems, violent experiences, and low expectations. Consequently many of these children have come to school with their own agenda which has focused on survival and attainment of basic needs (Aos, *et. al.*, 2004).

## CONCLUSION:

A substantial body of research is available regarding the effects of preschool education on young children's learning and development, including long-term outcomes. Much of the evidence is from rigorous studies, and findings have been replicated with considerable variations in program design, populations served, and social context. These studies provide a sound basis for conclusions about the benefits of publicly funded preschool education, and they can help inform key decisions about who to serve and how programs should be designed. Based on a detailed and comprehensive review of the evidence the following conclusions and recommendations are offered many different preschool programs have been shown to produce positive effects on children's learning and development, but those effects vary in size and persistence by type of program. Increasing public investment in effective preschool education programs for all children can produce substantial educational, social, and economic benefits.

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## Corresponding Author

### Dr. Pardeep Gautam\*

(Ph.D. Education), Assistant Professor in Commerce, Guru Dronacharya College of Education, Bhuna

E-Mail – [rohitkumarjangra1@gmail.com](mailto:rohitkumarjangra1@gmail.com)