HOW RESEARCH EVIDENCE CAN INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AND PRACTICE?

Kathy Sylva¹, Edward Melhuish¹, Pam Sammons¹, Iram Siraj², Brenda Taggart¹

Background to the topic

EPPSE is known for contributing to 'evidence based policy' in early years education. Findings have been used in the development of policy and guidelines for practice. EPPSE set out to contribute to the debate about early years education; the mixed-method design explored factors that 'make a difference' to young children. Seventeen years on, EPPSE is a frequently cited contributor to this important debate.

Research questions/focus of the enquiry

The original Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project study answered questions about the contribution of different types, duration and quality of pre-school to children's outcomes. Over 17 years, EPPSE has responded to research questions from many Government departments including the Treasury (Spending Reviews), The Cabinet Office (Equality Reviews) and the Department for Education (Early Years Foundation Phase).

Research methods/or mapping the literature

EPPSE monitors 'impact' through citations in 'key' documents. Examples include:

Strategies


Reviews


Enquiries

- DCSF (2009), Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupil in England, Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4

Analytical and/or theoretical framework

EPPSE used a range of analytical techniques to explore both quantitative and qualitative data. The 2006 DfE review of research said EPPSE's, "...robust multi-level modelling, high response rates on data collection, low attrition rates, and the contribution of in-depth qualitative evidence have all been important in enabling this degree of influence on policy and practice".

Research findings and /or contribution to knowledge
Undoubtedly part of the success of EPPSE is being in the ‘right place at the right time’ and timing cannot be overestimated in how research can influence policy. However, it is insufficient to just ‘push on an open door’ for research to be acted upon. This paper will explore how EPPSE contributed to the development of policy and practice by working in partnership with policy makers to enhance the quality of early experiences for young children and bring about changes to early years education.