



Re-thinking the Early Childhood curriculum for the 21st century

Professor Kathy Sylva
Professor of Educational Psychology
University of Oxford

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Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care (CARE)

CARE was a collaborative project funded by European Union. It aimed to develop an evidence-based and culture-sensitive European framework of developmental goals, quality assessment, curriculum approaches, and policy measures for improving the quality and effectiveness of early childhood education and care (ECEC)



<http://ecec-care.org/>

EU Project CARE What should be the aims of ECEC?

Views were sought in 11 countries via:

- Focus groups with teachers and other staff
- Focus groups with parents, plus on-line survey
- Survey of senior researchers in 11 European countries
 - What is your country's curriculum?
 - What is your preferred pedagogy?
 - What are your philosophical roots?
 - Age ranges
 - Qualifications of staff
 - Training and professional development

Sylva, K., Erekly-Stevens, K., Pastori, G., Slot, P. L., & Lerkkanen, M. K. (2016). Integrative Report on a culture-sensitive quality & curriculum framework: EU Project CARE

CARE identified a common European heritage: Theoretical models and pedagogical principles

Froebel



Montessori



Steiner



Piaget



Holistic, child-centred view
Respect for the unique child

Learning as an active process involving play, exploration, and creating

Learning shaped by context and community

Key role of the environment, social interactions, and relationships

Importance of safety, security, pleasure and joy

Vygotsky



Bronfenbrenner



Bowlby



Malaguzzi



**Sylva, K., Ereky-Stevens, K., Pastori, G., Slot, P. L., & Lerkkanen, M. K. (2016).
Integrative Report on a culture-sensitive quality & curriculum framework.**

‘In CARE a strong socio-emotional orientation was identified in all countries... referring to children’s confidence, social participation, sense of identity, and sense of belonging, often *in combination* with a weaker emphasis on learning-related skills’ (Sylva et al., 2015).

However, the last decade has witnessed a more integrated view that acknowledges children's (academic) competencies but also emphasizes processes and skill development related to self-regulation, problem-solving, creativity and collaboration ... In all countries, educators valued the goals of children’s autonomy and independence, their sense of belonging and interdependence, but also learning processes - not ‘just’ learning outcomes. ‘

An emerging consensus on the aims of ECEC

Learning in all areas is about

Developing a positive self-concept, and engagement in social relations

e.g.

- confidence,
- collaboration,
- communication,
- emotional self-regulation

Learning processes that include self-regulation and executive skills

- e.g. critical thinking and reasoning, problem solving, organisation and planning, decision making, enthusiasm for learning, curiosity, imagination, creativity, perseverance, self-management, adaptability, concentration
- Cognitive self-regulation

Acquiring knowledge about a subject and specific skills

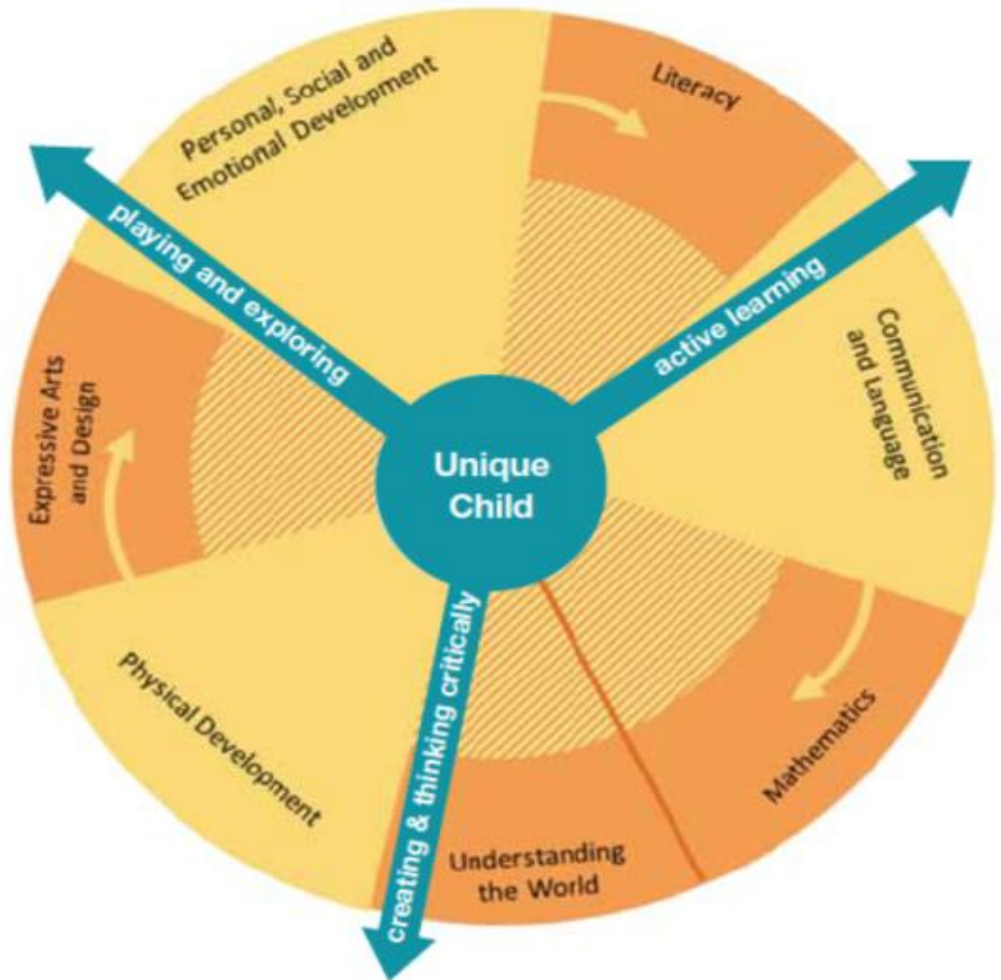
- Content that is rich and helps children to develop knowledge of the world as well as higher order thinking skills
- Specific skills, including *emerging academic skills*

Structure of the English curriculum 0-5+ years

Seven domains of development, and three pedagogical processes to nurture them

Effective pedagogy/learning involves:

- Playing and exploring
- Active learning/problem solving
- Creating and thinking critically



Components of self regulation

Cognitive

- Persists with difficult tasks
- Chooses activities on their own
- Does not need much help with tasks
- Persists with tasks until completed
- Waits their turn in activities
- Likes to work things out for self

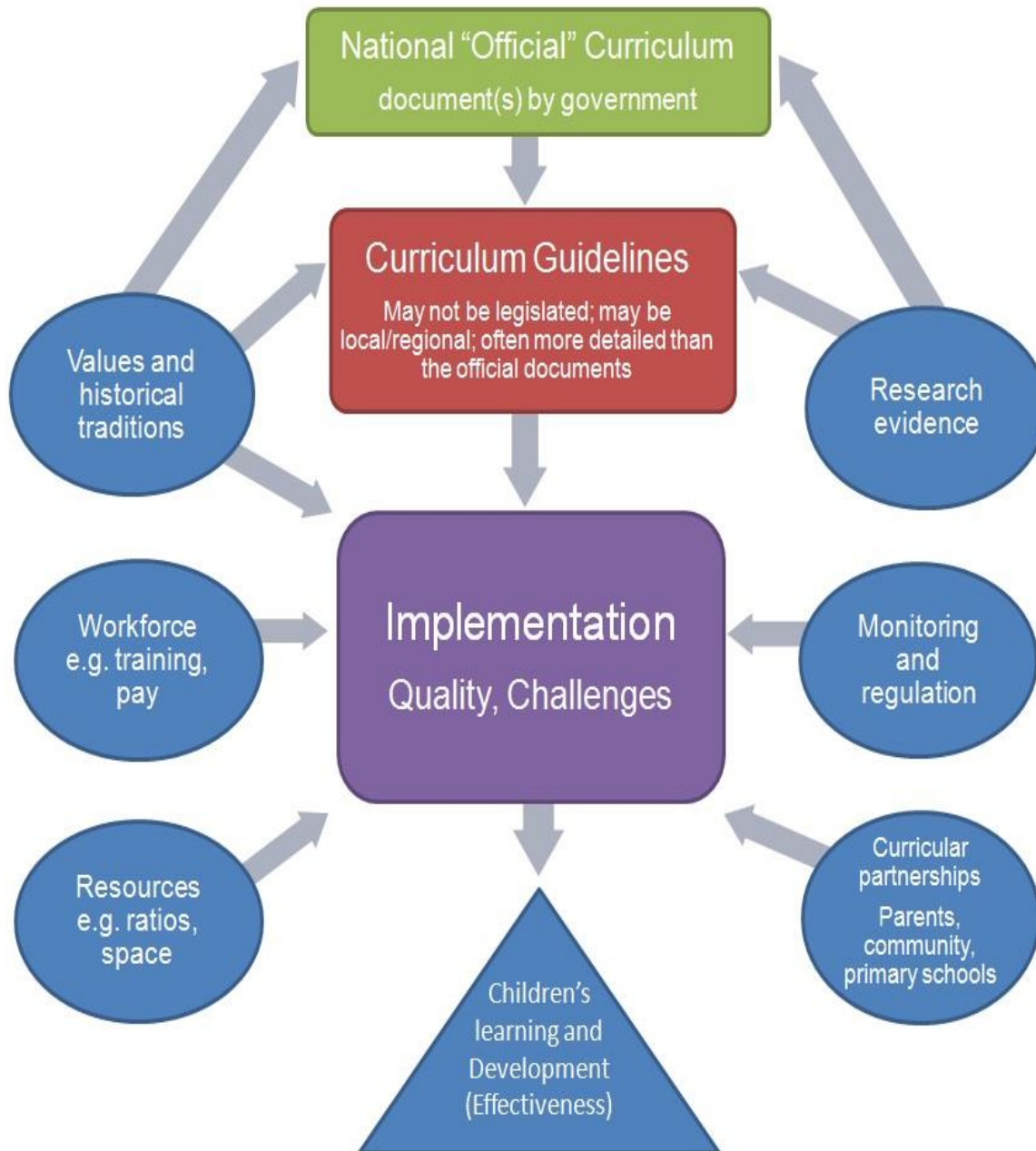
Emotional

- Is calm and easy going
- Gets over being upset quickly
- Waits their turn in activities
- Usually obeys instructions or requests
- Argues with adults (reversed)
- Often loses temper, has tantrums (reversed)
- Shows wide mood swings (reversed)

Behavioural

- Fidgets or squirms a lot (reversed)
- Waits their turn in activities
- Gets over excited (reversed)
- Usually obeys instructions or requests
- Argues with adults (reversed)
- Restless, does not keep still for long (reversed)
- Cooperates with requests
- Is impulsive, acts without thinking (reversed)

Items taken from a teacher/parent completed Questionnaire from E Melhuish and S Howard 'Early Years Toolkit' (2016)



‘Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education’ (EPPSE) 1997 – 2016



A longitudinal study funded by the UK Dept for Education, Sutton Trust

**Principal Investigators: Kathy Sylva¹, Edward Melhuish¹, Pam Sammons¹,
Iram Siraj¹ and Brenda Taggart²**

¹University of Oxford; ²Institute of Education, University of London

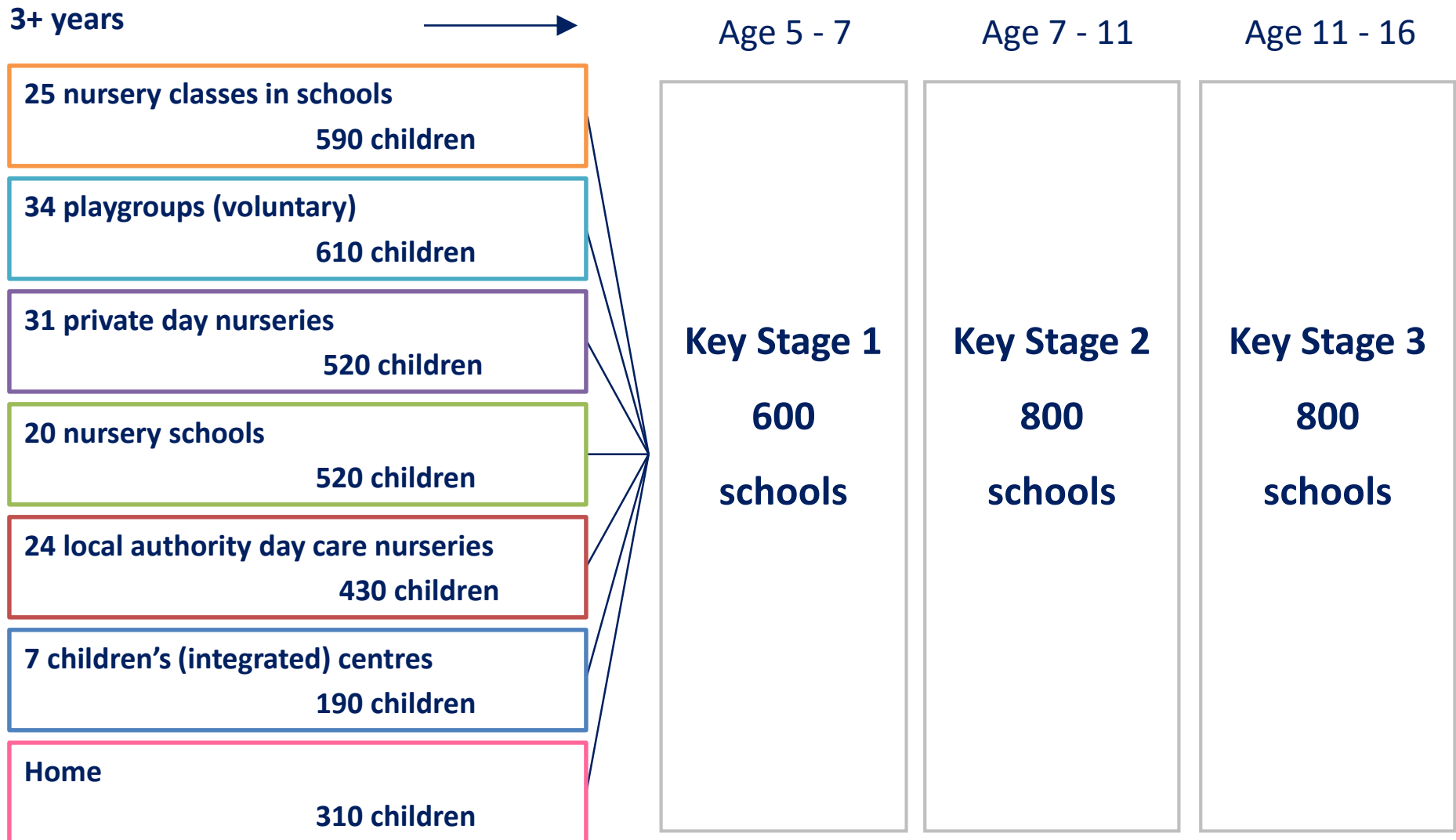
The (Early) Education System in England

- ECEC is free from age 3-5+ years , and from age 2 for disadvantaged children
- All Pre-school providers follow the 'Early Years Foundation Stage' national curriculum
- Development of all children is assessed at age 5 via the 'Foundation Stage Profile' (observation by teacher)
- Final year of the Foundation Stage is compulsory and all children attend 'reception class' in primary school
- Children are formally assessed at age 7 & 11 (national tests & teacher assessment) and by national tests at age 16/18



Effective Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) design

6 Local Regions, 141 preschools, 3,000 children

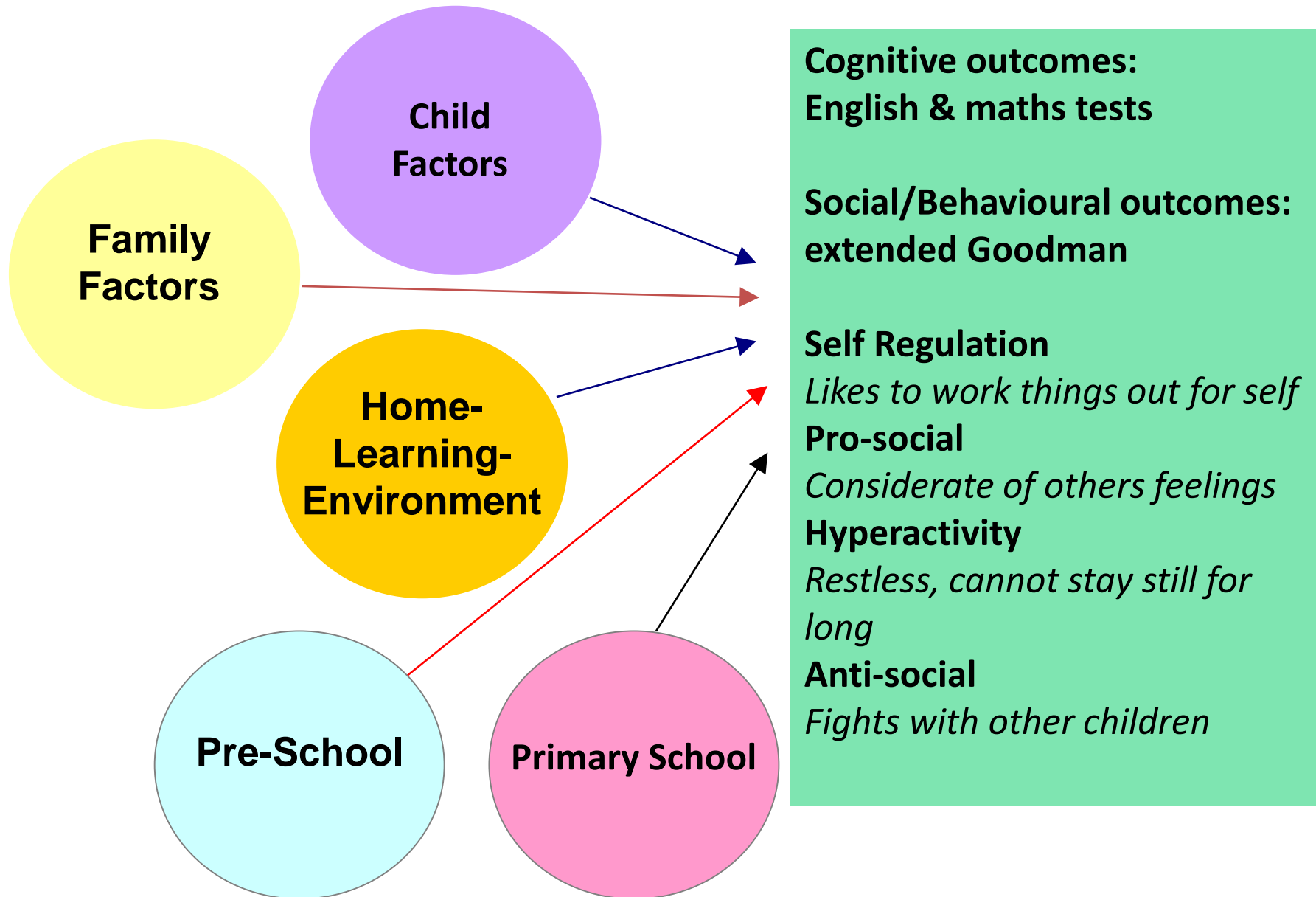


Sources of data

- Child assessments over time
- Child/Family background information, e.g., SES, birth weight, home learning activities
- Interviews with all parents, teachers
- Questionnaires for children
- Case studies of children who 'succeeded against the odds' (Siraj)
- Observation quality rating scales of pedagogy



Many influences on child outcomes at age 11



Two Early Childhood Environment Quality Observation Rating Scales

ECERS-R

- Based on observation
- 7 sub-scales:
 - Space and furnishings
 - Personal care routines
 - Language reasoning
 - Activities
 - Interaction
 - Programme structure
 - Parents and staff
- *Harms, Clifford & Cryer (1998)*

ECERS-E

- Based on observation
- 4 sub-scales:
 - Literacy
 - Mathematics
 - Science and environment
 - Diversity
- *Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart (2010)*

Example ECERS-R item: Greeting/departing (Personal Care Routines)

Inadequate`		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.1 Greeting of children is often neglected		3.1 Most children greeted warmly (Ex. staff seem pleased to see children, smile, use pleasant tone of voice)		5.1 Each child is greeted individually (Ex. staff say “hello” and use child’s name; use child’s primary language spoken at home to say “hello”)		7.1 When they arrive, children are helped to become involved in activities, if needed
1.2 Departure is not well organised		3.2 Departure well organised (Ex. children’s things ready to go)		5.2 Pleasant departure (Ex. children not rushed, hugs and good-byes for everyone)		7.2 Children busily involved until departure (Ex. no long waiting without activity; allowed to come to comfortable stopping point in play)
1.3 Parents not allowed to bring children into the classroom		3.3 Parents allowed to bring children into the classroom		5.3 Parents greeted warmly by staff		7.3 Staff use greeting and departure as information sharing time with parents

Example ECERS-E item: Book and literacy areas (Literacy)

Inadequate

1

2

1.1 Books are unattractive and/or not of a suitable age level

Minimal

3

4

3.1 Some books of different kinds are available

3.2 An easily accessible area of the room is set aside for books

3.3 Some reading takes place in the book area

Good

5

6

5.1 A variety of types of book are available

5.2 Book area used independently by children (outside group reading times)

Excellent

7

7.1 Book area is comfortable (rug and cushions or comfortable seating) and filled with a wide range of books at many levels of complexity

7.2 Adults encourage children to use books and direct them to the book area

7.3 Books are included in learning areas outside of the book corner

Example ECERS-E item: Food preparation (Science)

Inadequate

1 2

1.1 No preparation of food/drink is undertaken in front of children

Minimal

3 4

3.1 Food preparation is undertaken by staff in front of the children

3.2 Some children can choose to participate in food preparation

3.3 Some food-related discussion takes place where appropriate

Good

5 6

5.1 Food preparation / cooking activities are provided regularly

5.2 Most of the children have the opportunity to participate in food preparation

5.3 The staff lead discussion about the food involved and use appropriate language

5.4 Children are encouraged to use more than one sense (feel, smell, taste) to explore raw ingredients

Excellent

7

7.1 A variety of cooking activities in which all children may take part are provided regularly

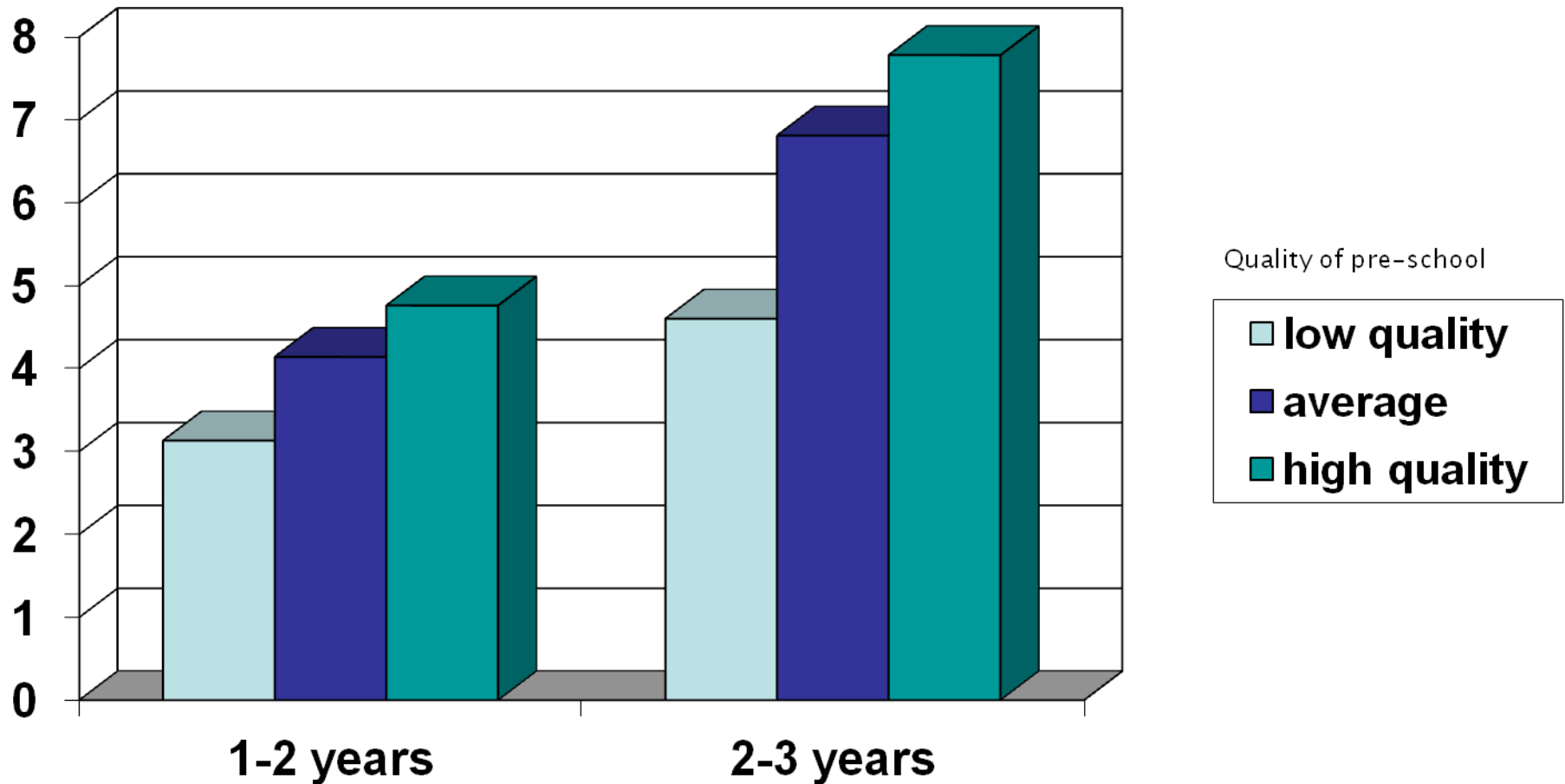
7.2 The ingredients are attractive and the end result is edible and appreciated

7.3 The staff lead and encourage discussion on the process of food preparation and/or question children about it

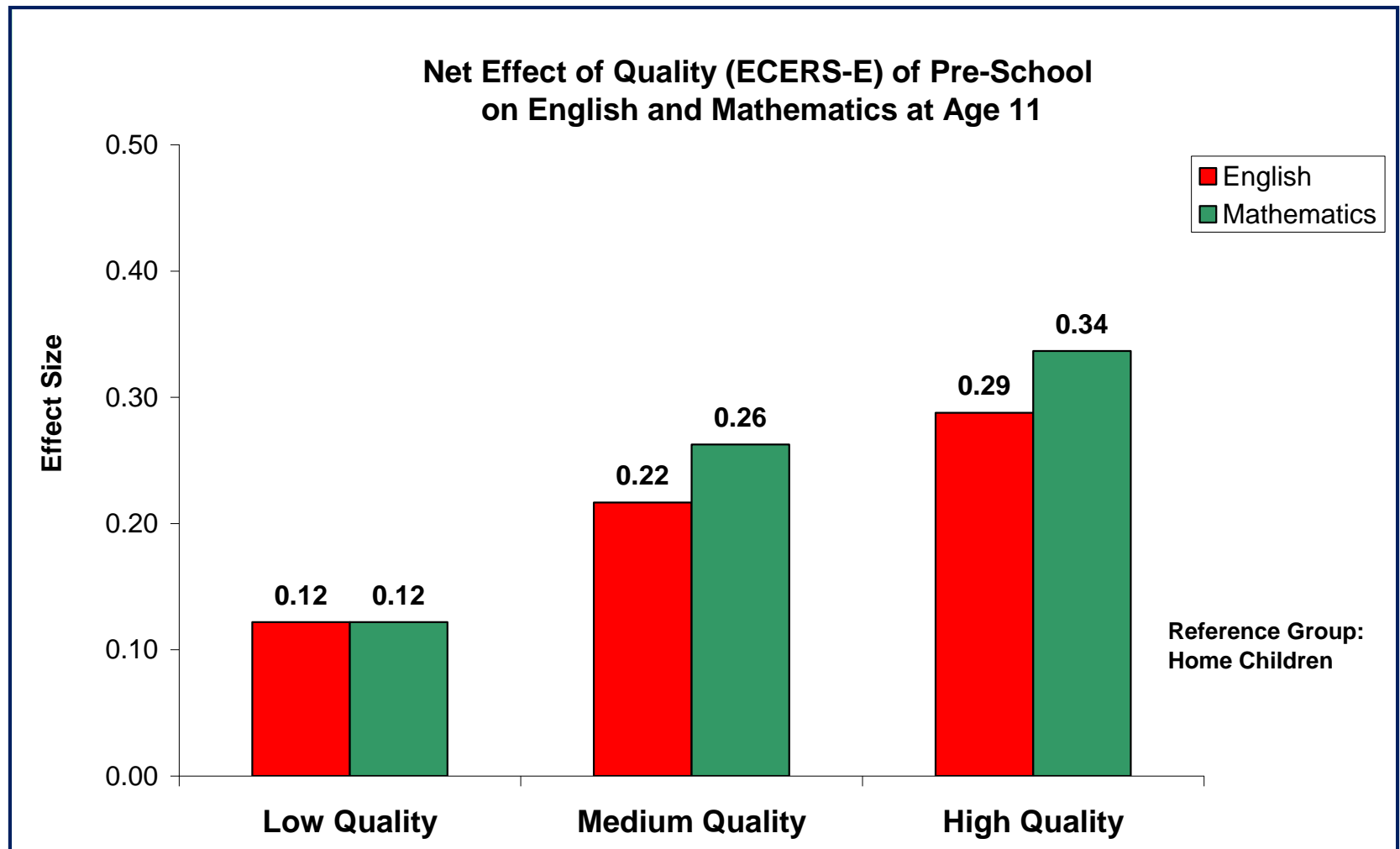
Duration and pedagogical quality of preschool make a difference

Value added fixed effects models

Pre-literacy Outcome : phonological awareness plus letter knowledge
Developmental advantage (in months of development) on pre-literacy at school entry: scores at age 5



The impact of pre-school pedagogical quality (ECERS-E) on English and Mathematics tests: controlled for pre-test at baseline and family and child co-variates

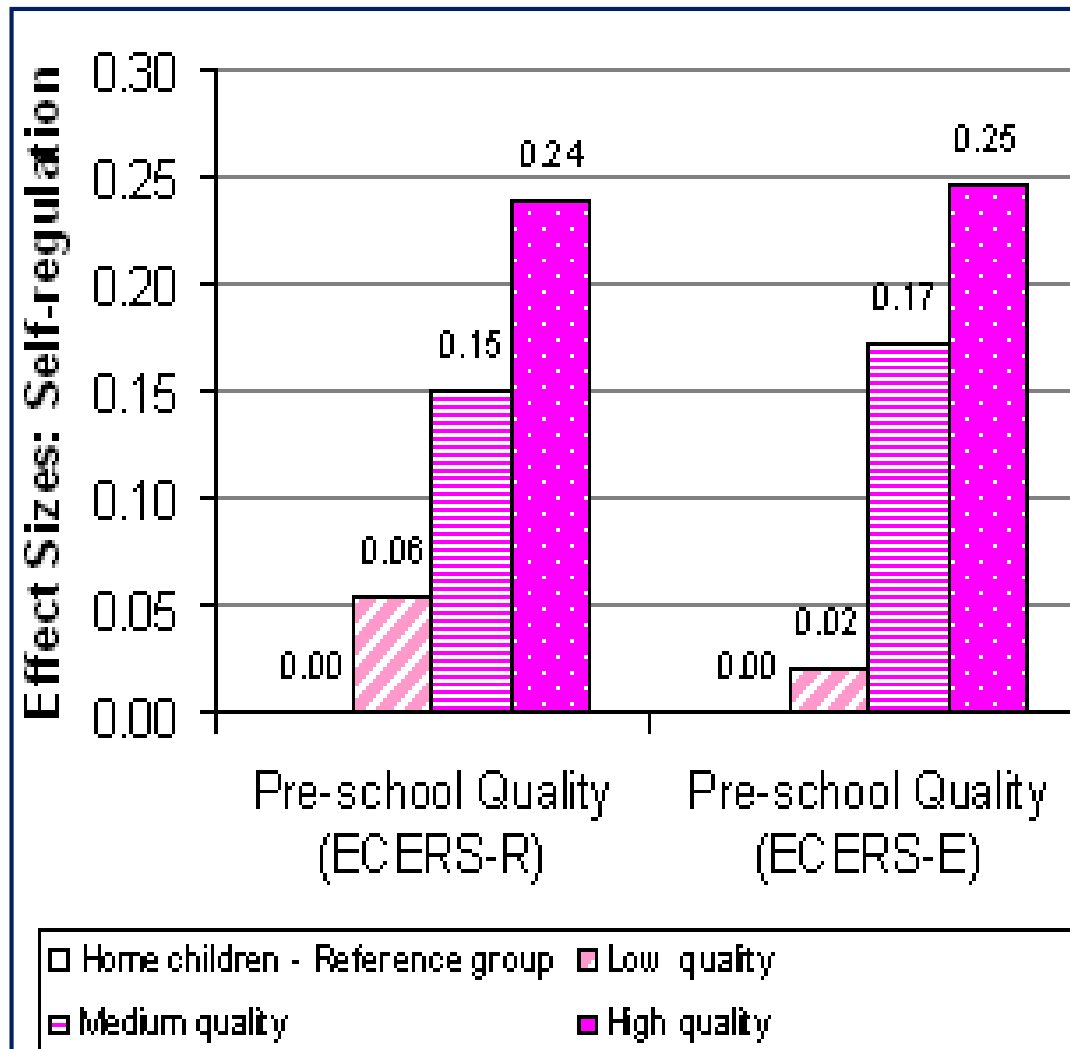


Effects of the global quality (ECERS-R) on academic attainment

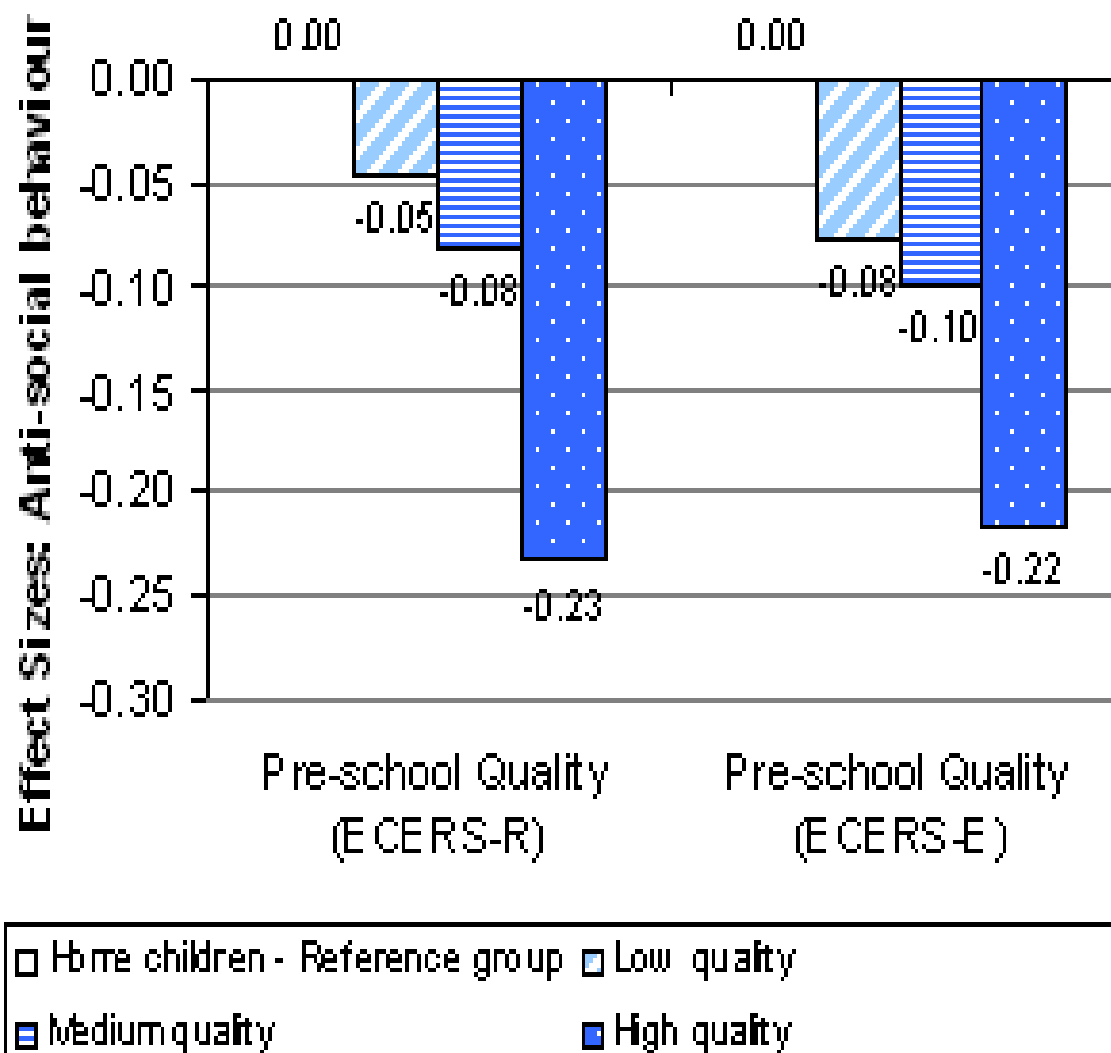
There is no effect of the ECERS-R on English or Mathematics at age 11. (However there was an effect on social behavioural outcomes)



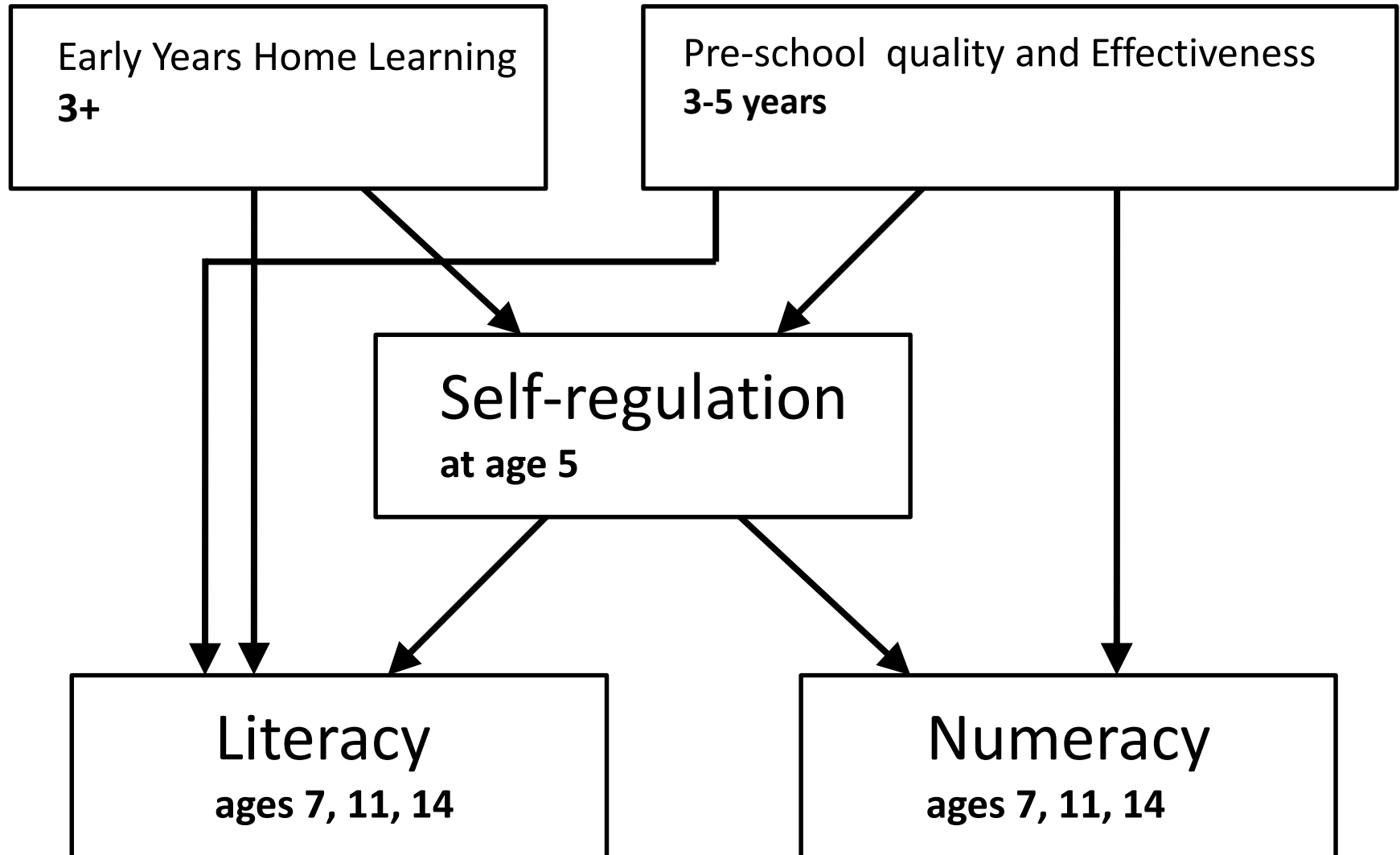
The impact of pre-school quality (ECERS-R and ECERS-E) on self-regulation at age 11 after controlling for co-variates



The impact of pre-school quality (ECERS-R and ECERS-E) on anti-social behaviour at age 11



Pathways to attainment in literacy and numeracy



Limitations

- Correlations and not causal experiments
- Sample not 'purely' representative (i.e., oversampled high quality maintained provision in England)
- This talk did not report on qualitative case studies of pedagogy in effective settings (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002)

Towards a common European curriculum?

- European curricula are the consequence of different cultural, political and historical traditions
- They also have a strong values base, which leads to variation across Europe
- Emerging consensus on adding 'soft skills' like self regulation to ECE curriculum (CARE 2015, 2016)
- The English EPPE study shows that 'quality' varies even within a centralised curriculum and quality drives children's outcomes.
- Perhaps there will be more agreement amongst countries on the nature of 'quality' and how to achieve it.

References

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