

# Early childhood education and young adult competencies at age 16<sup>[1]</sup>

Competent Children, Competent Learners Study

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**Source:** Government of New Zealand. Ministry of Education & New Zealand Council for Educational Research

**Format:** Report

**Publication Date:** 1 Aug 2007

## AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf<sup>[2]</sup>

- Summary in pdf<sup>[3]</sup>

Excerpts from the summary report:

The Competent Children, Competent Learners Project is funded by the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. It is a longitudinal study which focuses on a group of about 500 young people from the greater Wellington region (Wellington, Hutt, Kapiti, Wairarapa).

It charts the development of their competence in numeracy, literacy, and logical problem-solving and their competence in social and attitudinal skills. It also explores the contributions of home and education experiences to find out which may account for differences in patterns of development and performance in these competencies.

The project started in 1993, when the children were close to five years old and in early childhood education. Seven phases of the study have now been completed & the first when the children were near age 5, the next when they were at age 6, and at two yearly intervals since then (ages 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16).

Earlier studies in the Competent Children, Competent Learners Project found children benefited from quality early childhood education in both the cognitive and the social/attitudinal competencies.

In the age-14 study, the researchers found that aspects of students' early childhood education still had associations with performance nine years later.

The aspects that showed a lasting contribution were: high quality staff interactions with children; an environment providing lots of books and written material and where children could select from a variety of learning activities; the child's starting age and the total length of early childhood education; and the socio-economic mix of the children attending the centre.

Generally the associations applied regardless of maternal qualification or family income; that is, there were benefits for all children, regardless of their background.

We found that these earlier patterns continued at age 16. Some aspects of ECE were still making a statistically visible contribution to young people's competency levels, 11 years later, over and above the contribution it had made to their performance levels at age near-5. The associations at age 16, however, were weaker, on the whole, than they were at age 14.

We found that young people who had attended an ECE service which had high ratings for the quality of teacher-child interaction, and those whose ECE service had moderate or high ratings for providing lots of printed material to use or display on the walls of the centre had higher scores on average for literacy, numeracy, logical problem-solving, and their social skills.

These aspects of quality in their ECE experience contributed about 4 percent of the variability in young people's numeracy & about the same level as maternal qualification levels, which give an indication of the kinds of resources and learning experiences children are likely to have had at home. They also contributed about 4 percent of the variability in logical problem-solving scores at age 16, about half the level of the contribution from maternal qualification levels.

The ECE quality aspects and whether children had attended an ECE centre that served mainly middle-class families also contributed 4-7 percent to the variation in the young people's social skills at age 16. This is half or more of the contribution made by maternal qualification levels. We found that good quality ECE can provide some protection against getting into trouble at age 16, by reducing the likelihood of mixing with peers who get into trouble, of being influenced by peer pressure to do things out of character, and to stay away from bullying, or being bullied.

**Related link:** Read more about the Competent Children, Competent Learners study<sup>[4]</sup>

**Region:** Australia and New Zealand<sup>[5]</sup>

**Tags:** quality<sup>[6]</sup>

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