
IEA PREPRIMARY PROJECT: AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

The IEA Preprimary Project is a three-phase multinational study investigating the nature, quality, and effects of the experiences of children prior to formal schooling. This research project was initiated because of (1) a growing awareness of the importance of children's early years, (2) an accelerating demand in countries throughout the world for early childhood services due to demographic, social, and economic changes, and (3) a growing body of research demonstrating the long-term benefits of high-quality early childhood programs. The study's participating nations, realizing their need for adequate sound information on which to base early childhood policy decisions and program development, have joined together to conduct parallel studies of their ongoing early childhood services.

INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE AND COORDINATING CENTER

During the early years of the Preprimary Project, its international steering committee consisted of four experienced early childhood researchers: Marcel Crahay, Ph.D., University of Liege, Belgium; Lilian Katz, Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana, USA; Sylvia Opper, Ph.D., Hong Kong Institute for Education, Hong Kong; and David P. Weikart, Ph.D., High/Scope Foundation, Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA. In 1993, Cigdem Kagitcibasi, Ph.D. Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey, replaced Marcel Crahay as a member of the committee. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA) is the study's international coordinating center.

THE THREE PHASES OF THE STUDY

Phase 1 (1986-1993). This phase began with a review of national policies and statistics regarding early childhood services in each participating country and resulted in the book *How Nations Serve Young Children: Profiles of Child Care and Education in 14 Countries*. Phase 1 also involved conducting a household survey of representative samples of families in 11 countries to document parents' use of early childhood care and education services for their 4-year-old children. The findings of this household survey are reported in *Families Speak: Early Childhood Care and Education in 11 Countries*.

Phase I answered such questions as these:

- What kinds of early childhood care and education services do families use in various countries around the world?

- What are the factors (e.g., socioeconomic, cultural) that influence parents' choice of education/care arrangements for their 4-year-old children?

Phase 2 (1989-1998). This phase included collecting extensive observational, interview, and assessment data to examine children's experiences in early childhood environments and to explore how children's developmental status at age 4 is related to early childhood program factors and family factors. Phase 2 has also included production of an international videotape series that shows typical early childhood settings in each participating country, *Sights and Sounds of Children*. The Phase 2 findings will be reported in a series of four monographs to be published in 1997-99.

Phase 2 is exploring such questions as these:

- What are the beliefs of teachers in various countries about child development, and how do these beliefs affect the experiences children have in the setting?
- How do children's experiences in the early childhood settings relate to their age-4 developmental status?

Phase 3 (1993-2001). This phase will complete the project by documenting how early experiences affect children's development at age 7, an age when study children in all of the participating countries will have completed at least a year of formal schooling. The purpose of this final phase is to examine the relationship between children's experiences at age 4 and their cognitive, language, social, and academic development at age 7, all of which is relevant to primary-school performance and later school success. Nearly all participating countries have at this time completed the Phase 3 data collection.

Phase 3 will answer such questions as these:

- What is the relationship between 4-year-old children's experiences in care/education settings and their age-7 developmental status?
- What role might early childhood care and education play in preparing children for formal schooling?

ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING

Seventeen IEA member countries have so far participated in one or more phases of the Preprimary Project. Each participating country has established a national research center, appointed a national research coordinator (NRC) to supervise the study, and assembled additional staff to coordinate data collection and processing. In its capacity as international coordinating center (ICC), the High/Scope Foundation has appointed a research team to provide general supervision of project activities and to provide technical assistance to participating countries.

Each participating country has located the funds and other resources necessary to conduct the Preprimary Project nationally. Support for the ICC has been provided by many agencies and foundations, including the National Academy of Science, the Carnegie Corporation, the Pew Charitable Trust, the Packard Foundation, and the Spencer Foundation.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

(no asterisk = all phases; * = phase 1; **=phases 1 & 2; ***=phases 2 & 3)

Belgium (French)**	Nigeria
China (PRC)**	Poland***
Finland	Portugal*
Germany*	Romania***
Greece***	Slovenia***
Hong Kong	Spain
Indonesia***	Thailand
Ireland***	United States
Italy	

PUBLICATIONS

The first major **Phase 1** publication is a book of national profiles prepared by researchers in each participating country. These profiles provide a general picture of the early childhood services available within each country, the history and characteristics of these services, and the role of government in supporting these services.

Olmsted, P. P. & Weikart, D. P. (Eds.) 1989. *How nations serve young children: Profiles of child care and education in 14 countries*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

The **Phase 1** cross-national findings are reported in the following volume(s).

Olmsted, P. P. & Weikart, D. P. (Eds.) 1995. *The IEA Preprimary Study: Early childhood care and education in 11 countries* [Hard cover edition]. Oxford: Pergamon (Elsevier Science).

Olmsted, P. P. & Weikart, D. P. (Eds.) 1994. *Families speak. Early childhood care and education in 11 countries* [Soft cover edition]. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

The **Phase 2** findings will be presented in a series of four monographs to be published by the High/Scope Press between 1997 and 1999. **Phase 2** also yielded a set of 15 videotapes.

Sights and Sounds of Children. (A set of 15 videotapes) Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

The **Phase 3** findings will be presented in a volume to be published by the High/Scope Press in 2001.