Social Environment as Related to School Achievement in Early Childhood

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SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AS RELATED TO SCHOOL
ACHIEVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

BY

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Abstract

Social environment as related to school achievement was investigated. It was found that the importance of the model which the parent sets for the child in addition to the role assumed by the teacher play an important part in the development of the early childhood student. The environment in which a child lives and the person with whom the child interacts both affect the child in complex ways to influence the child's development and life chances. Research also shows that academic and intellectual gains are produced during the Head Start program year and that children who attend Head Start programs do perform better than their disadvantaged peers on such global measures of school success as passing each grade, staying in regular school tracks, and graduating from high school.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

How is social environment related to school achievement and what changes can be implemented to affect achievement of early childhood students?

Rationale

This question was posed as a possible solution to working with small groups of early childhood students who became uncooperative and unorganized while working together.

Despite other observations done in early childhood, little is known about the effects of pre-school social experiences on adjustment in kindergarten, the primary or beyond (Moore, 1981).

Early childhood educators have long recognized the value of early socialization experience provided by the peer group. Early peer experiences contribute to social development in that the importance of cooperating, sharing, and competing among equals in learning for the first time (Moore, 1981).

In the last fifteen years, social and economic factors have enlarged the arena of relevance for early
childhood educators. Such factors as increased mobility of American families, the high rate of divorce, and the growing number of working mothers have contributed to changing the number and quality of contexts that affect children (Genishi, 1982).

During the past decade or more there has been a renewed interest in peer relations and the contribution of early peer experiences to socialization and learning.

Hunt (1982) has argued that solving a social problem calls for locating and understanding the cause, using the understanding to formulate a means of coping with the problem, testing the efficacy of this means of coping, obtaining sufficient agreement among people to obtain the support required for concerted action.

**Purpose**

In view of the fact that most early childhood experiences are socially involved, the purpose of this study is to increase awareness of how social environment is related to school achievement, and present alternatives to improve achievement of early childhood students.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

This study stresses the importance and awareness of how social environment is related to school achievement and present alternatives to improve achievement of early childhood students.

Discussed in this chapter are current issues in early childhood education as they relate to the question, what do children, parents, teachers and society itself think about early childhood education and the roles they play in providing an emotionally supportive and cognitively stimulating environment for the child that will help exemplify the realization of the child's potential for growth. The research in this report will also cover social environment as being concerned with human beings in their relations to each other within the surrounding conditions and influences that affect their development, and early childhood as being a unified field encompassing children from birth to eight years of age.

Early Childhood Programs

The decade of the 1970s was one of immense achievement in early intervention programs. Such
success is the best kept secret of educational policy. Moreover, the promise of the 60s, when federal support for children's programs mushroomed as an off shot of the war on poverty and in response to the research insights of Jean Piaget, had dimmed by 1969 in response to the disappointing findings of the Westinghouse evaluation of Project Head Start (cited in Calhoun & Collins, 1981). Serious analyses of social policy were prone to cite early childhood education as the classic instance of the government's tendency to overestimate its potential for intervening to accomplish good ends in complex human affairs (Calhoun & Collins, 1981). Jensen's study (cited in Calhoun & Collins, 1981) made headlines with the charge that compensatory education had failed, leaving the clear implication that the poor and minorities may be genetically incapable of learning. Meanwhile, volumes of learned critiques of the Westinghouse study and equally learned rebuttals filled library shelves. Decision makers in Washington got the message, effectively forestalling any significant expansion of child development services through the administrations of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter.
Moreover, since 1969, the research and evaluation evidence has been building up. Half a score of major studies have been completed on Head Start, preschool education, and day care. The breakthroughs in research methodology are impressive. Longitudinal studies following the same children over several years are now common. True experimental designs with careful controls and random assignment have proven to be feasible. Observational methods and parent and teacher ratings are used to supplement standardized tests. Work is under way to design evaluation measures sensitive to racial-ethnic, linguistic, and other life circumstances of low income and minority children and their families. An awareness of the criticality of parents, siblings and significant others to the child's learning and development has prompted researchers to broaden the focus of study to encompass the ecology of the family (Calhoun & Collins, 1981).

Head Start

The basic goals of the Head Start programs were reducing the health problems and increasing the quality of environmental experiences of the disadvantaged children (Van De Riet, Vernon, Resnick & Michael,
Since its inception in the summer of 1965, Head Start has served over 7.5 million low income children and their families at a cost of $6.5 billion. The Head Start budget for 1980 was $735 million. However, Head Start provides education, parent involvement, social services, and special education that is tailored to the needs of the 12 percent of handicapped (Calhoun & Collins, 1981).

Butler's (1971) research suggested that most Head Start programs produce an intellectual gain of five to ten points, but the final results are by no means consistent. The longitudinal studies also show that gains tend to level off over a period of two or three years.

Consequently, Head Start results (Calhoun & Collins, 1981) from a study carried out since 1969 showed a wealth of data to be considered. Head Start participants performed equal to or better than their peers when they began regular school and there were fewer grade retentions and special class placements. Head Start can render positive contributions to the development of socially mature behavior and self concept, when the programs have a high degree of parent
participation, the Head Start participants had lower absenteeism, fewer cases of anemia, and generally better health and nutritional practices. In addition, Head Start helped with the improvement in parenting abilities, enhancement of positive reactions between mothers and their children, and an increase in later parent participation in school programs.

Still more recent studies reinforce this picture of favorable Head Start impact and provide greater insight into which populations of children benefit in which ways. They also enhance understanding of just what combinations of program variables contribute to desired outcomes. Head Start children evidenced growth in physical, self-help, social and academic skills (Calhoun & Collins, 1981).

Likewise, data from the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) (cited in Calhoun & Collins, 1981) completed by all Head Start grantees and delegate agencies as of June, 1980, sketch a broad profile of services. Head Start also works with parents to insure linkage to community health resources so that the child and family continue to receive comprehensive health care after leaving the Head Start program.
Consequently, 80 percent of Head Start children completed all required medical screenings, 25 percent of the children screened were identified as having a health problem, 70 percent of Head Start children were provided dental examinations.

Moreover, Head Start has raised the expectations of parents for their children; it has raised their expectations for themselves; it has involved them actively in the education of their children which often carries over into public school settings; and it has given to parents a sense that they are effective people for their children, for themselves, and for their communities (Calhoun & Collins, 1981).

Pre-School Education

Rese and Marrow (1971) identified that one of the serious problems confronting American society is the large number of children who enter the public school systems with inadequate pre-school educational and social experiences to successfully cope with school experiences. Although the problem is not totally identifiable with any specific segment of the American society, the majority of these children come from the so-called poor class.
However, Calhoun and Collins (1981) reported that a silver lining in the cloud of silence that has surrounded inquiries into the impact of child development over the past decade is afforded by the pathbreaking research of the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies. This innovative project was launched to address the policy relevant question of whether preschool intervention programs have a significant long lasting impact on low income children.

Research also revealed that in a bold departure from conventional methodology, which tends to compartmentalize research in the human services, the Consortium represents a common enterprise of twelve distinguished investigators. These dozen researchers, all of whom had carried out experimental and quasi-experimental studies of preschool programs in the early and mid-1960s, collaborated in pooling their data and conducting follow-up studies. The follow-up utilized common instruments to analyze the longitudinal impact of preschool programs as measured on 1,599 youngsters who ranged from nine to nineteen years of age at the time the data were collected in 1976-77. These young people were tracked down and identified as
part of a population of approximately 2,700 children who had attended the original preschool programs located in eleven communities in the Northeast, Southwest, and Midwest. The preschool programs involved diverse delivery systems, theoretical orientations, and curricula. Some programs enrolled children as early as three months; some began at four years of age. Some program models focused on the homes, other on the center, and a few combined both approaches. The experimental programs typically used matched comparison groups of children who did not participate in preschool (Calhoun & Collins, 1981).

However, the reanalysis of the pooled original data and the follow-up data was carried out with unusual rigor by scientists at Cornell University who were not involved in any of the programs. Differential effects of attrition did not appear significant. The major findings, directly attributable to the impact of the preschool programs (Calhoun & Collins, 1981) resulted in a dramatic reduction in a proportion of children assigned to special education classes, a greater likelihood for children who had attended preschool to be promoted on grade level with their
peers, an improvement in children's scores on mathematic achievement, higher scores on I.Q. tests which held up for three years after the completion of preschool, and attitude differences consistently favoring former preschool participants with the children tending to give achievement related reasons for being proud of themselves.

Day Care

No overview of child development research over the past decade would be complete without a mention of the National Day Care Study (Calhoun & Collins, 1981). Moreover, this comprehensive analysis was carried out during the period of 1974-79 and touched on most aspects of federally supported day care. The principal conclusion of the study was that revision of current federal day care regulation would allow the government to buy better care at slightly lower cost--meaning that more children would be better served within current budgets.

Moreover, many young parents are finding that both husband and wife have to, and indeed want to, take jobs away from home for all or part of the day (Law, 1979) in order to pay for rising living costs. Whatever the
setting, all parents and children are concerned with the quality of caregiving, the stimulation and experiences provided and the meshing of family and institutional values.

Consequently, a major cost effectiveness study of center based preschool day care was conducted at 67 day care centers in Atlanta, Detroit, and Seattle. The study had a sophisticated research design and addressed three policy questions. First, are there program characteristics subject to federal regulation which can be related to differences in the quality of care received by children under six? Second, what impact do these program variables have on cost? Third, what is the potential impact of alternative federal policies regarding center characteristics on the cost and quality of care (Calhoun & Collins, 1981).

Meanwhile, the study found that group size and child-caregiver ratio were related to quality and cost, with the group size variable proving of paramount importance. Smaller groups were consistently associated with better care, socially active children, and higher scores on developmental tests. A reduction in group size from over eighteen to groups no larger
than fourteen produced a 15 percent gain on child scores on the Preschool Inventory and a 24 percent gain on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Caregiver qualifications, specifically child related education and training, also shows a moderately strong and consistent relationship to child outcomes, with but a minimal increase in cost of care (Calhoun & Collins, 1981).

Caldwell (1981) further concluded that the person who has done more than anyone else to call attention to both the potential and the problems associated with public school day care is James Levine. Levine's study (cited in Caldwell, 1981). Between 1976 and 1977, Levine contacted departments of public welfare in all fifty states, requesting information about whether they had licensed any day care programs in public schools. On the basis of follow-up contacts with personnel in each state, Levine visited many functional programs and observed the ways in which the programs were operated, administrative arrangements, extent to which parents were involved, etc. On the basis of his preliminary contacts, five communities were chosen for an indepth profile: Oakland, California; Brookline,
However, many people in the country both professional and lay, have difficulty accepting early childhood education as worthwhile in its own right and therefore there is among early childhood researchers a constant need to justify its existence. Many researchers have turned to the measurement of the I.Q. before and after school attendance for this justification. As early as the 1940s there was controversy over whether attending nursery school raised the child's I.Q. As new programs began in the mid 60s, researchers again began to look with renewed interest at I.Q. gains as measurable evidence of the success of the programs, particularly at Head Start and other intervention programs (Butler, 1971).

Hence, most Head Start programs produce an intellectual gain of five to ten points, but the results are by no means consistent. The longitudinal studies also show gains tend to level off over a period of two or three years (Butler, 1971).
Butler's recent research (Butler, 1971) supports the importance of the model which the parent sets for a child. If the child's parents and intimate associates typically do not exhibit the behavior and motives that the child needs most to learn, and do not reinforce sufficiently such behaviors, and motives when they are exhibited by others, it follows that any appreciable enduring change which is made in the child can be affected only through an appreciable enduring change in the person most intimately associated with the child on a day to day basis. This research supplies the basis for the involvement of parents in many early childhood programs.

Shipman (1976) suggested that when home and school work together to provide an emotionally supportive and cognitively stimulating environment for the child, this helps exemplify the realization of the child's potential for growth. She further suggested that it is a tragedy when home and school fail to interest the child and when there is a lack of communication and coordination among the adults representing various social agencies purported to service the child.
Also, there is a general agreement (Saunders, 1972) among theorists that the infant mother relationship, or attachment, significantly, affects the emotional and personality development of the young child. Separation of the infant and mother which interferes with or dilutes this relationship is believed to have serious developmental consequences. Hence, the child who has a healthy mother attachment is believed to be able to use the mother as a secure base from which to explore.

**Current Issues**

Bartolome (1981) has suggested that a great deal is being said these days about the school's failure to develop among children the attitudes, knowledge and skills that will enable them to cope with their world and with themselves. The school is being blamed not only for the incompetencies of youth but for much of societal malaise. Bronfenbrenner's study (cited in Bartolome, 1981) suggests that schools have become potent breeding grounds for alienation in American society.

Likewise, the role of government or professional organizations in setting standards and in certifying...
personnel has been hotly debated for decades. Care was welfare. Education was schooling. Gradually these identities have been merging. Care and education cannot be separated, any more than opportunity, encouragement and readiness can be separated from learning to walk (Law, 1979).

It has been apparent that schools serve a moral education function. Throughout the history of education teachers have directed the behaviors of children in their classrooms, creating in essence a hidden curriculum of acceptable interactions with lasting effects on children's understanding of justice, responsibility and social cooperation (Benninga & Crum, 1982).

Still, a growing concern presented in research (Genishi, 1981) suggested that a probable cause of poor children's failure to achieve in school was the lack of a particular context in their lives, that of a middle-class home. Middle-class parents unintentionally or intentionally helped prepare their children for experiences in school. The Head Start Program for four-year-olds was established to provide the missing context.
Nevertheless, research (Law, 1979) reported that the upsurge of interest in young children that occurred in the 1960s has expanded dramatically. The number of children in day care and kindergartens has tripled. Research on early development has increased. The beginning years of life have pushed into government, technology and economics. It was further explained that the roles and issues of early childhood education have become blurred. Staffing and community inequalities have become locked in controversy.

The Year of the Child dramatizes the need to ponder the meaning of the terminology of early childhood education and to take stock of current issues. For children, early childhood education is a place to play and learn. It has been organized to provide materials and guidance within a safe and reliable environment. For parents, early childhood education is a partnership in child-rearing, help in providing daily care and perhaps some guidance and support for themselves in the increasingly complex tasks of parenting (Law, 1979). Still, for the teacher, early childhood education is a professional choice. Those who work with young children are likely
to tolerate ambiguity rather well. Teaching and learning in the early years are neither crisp nor orderly. Nevertheless, for society, early childhood education is a cost. Demands for child care are seen by some to be the result of social changes they don't like, the breakdown of the traditional family and an increasing number of latchkey children (Law, 1979).

On the other hand, Bronfenbrenner's study (cited in Peters & Klein, 1981) has suggested that to fully understand the processes of learning and development one needs to grasp the context in which they occur. At least three levels of the environmental and historical context need to be considered; the microsystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem represents the most important environment in which the child is a participating member. For young children the microsystem is the home and perhaps, a day care center or preschool. The exosystem includes more of the environment that includes parents world of work and the mass media, agencies of government, transportation systems, and the like. The macrosystem represents the overarching institutional patterns of culture or
subculture and is manifest in the economic, social, educational, legal and political subsystem.

**Trends in Early Education and Development**

Genishi (1981) reported that in the last fifteen years, social and economic factors have enlarged the arenas of relevance for early childhood educators. Such factors as increased mobility of American families, the high rate of divorce, and the growing number of working mothers have contributed to changing the number and quality of contexts that affect adults and children.

However, when the War on Poverty began in the mid 1960s, many believed that providing preschool education for economically poor, often minority, children would help them compete academically with their middle-class agemates (Genishi, 1981).

Furthermore, as reported in Piaget and Inhelder's study (cited in Benninga & Crum, 1982) society has come a long way in the past sixty years in our understanding of children's development, particularly their socio-moral development. This research has altered not only our notions of individual cognitive development, but social development, as well.
Moore (1981) reported that every child in our society will spend many waking hours with other children. Learning to get along with such people is an important developmental hurdle for children. Although the antecedents of peer relations can be traced back to the earliest social interactions with parents and other caregivers, the task of adjusting to the peer group begins in earnest during the pre-school years. Moreover, traditionally, early childhood educators have placed high value on social development and the socialization experiences that occur in the peer group. Read's study (cited in Moore, 1981) revealed that during the past decade or more, there has been a renewed interest in peer relations and the contribution of early peer experiences to socializations and learning.

Genishi's (1981) investigation on the context of social setting that surrounds the child referred to the new emphasis on social factors and states that sociologists and anthropologists were brought into the study of educational questions regarding young children. Researchers from several disciplines worked on the premise that context or social situation had
major effects; the individual in one situation can behave differently in another situation. Further, what happens in one situation can affect what happens in others. What happens to the child at home, can affect a child's behavior at school.

A recent persuasive presentation of the view that individuals are understood best in terms of their total environments is that of Bronfenbrenner's study (cited in Peters & Klein, 1981). Moreover, the effect of social context on communicative performance is an underlying theme of many recent studies that focus not on literacy but on language as part of children's social or interactional competence. Researchers have begun to see the classroom as a context where it is impossible to separate the cognitive and academic from social.

Likewise, Piaget's study (cited in Benninga & Crum, 1982) suggested the fact that as children develop, they move from an egocentric, self-centered perspective of the world to one in which they are able to cooperate socially with other individuals and groups. Therefore, social development is prerequisite to higher levels of moral decision-making.
On the other hand, Porter's (1982) survey indicates the finding that preschool experience made little difference to children's cognitive development in the first years of infant's school, and further indicated that preschool experience had negligible influence on children's cognitive and social development at school entry, the end of kindergarten and at the end of first grade. However, Porter's findings did indicate the importance of the influence of the family environment, and suggested it would seem important that programs which actively involve parents as learners and teachers be implemented.

Consequently, empirical and theoretical studies conducted over the past 40 years Hurly, Kag, Moss and Marjoribanks' study (cited in Hanson, 1975) have clearly indicated home environments and their performance on I.Q. tests. The home environment in these studies has been measured in various ways, ranging from rather gross indicators of social class status to specific behavior interactions between child and parent.

Research shows (Hanson, 1975) that in spite of the variability in the measurement of environmental
measures, virtually all the studies reported statistically significant correlations between home environmental measures and I.Q., with values ranging from +.30 to +.70. These results have led to consideration of the nature and operation of home environmental variables in affecting I.Q. (Hanson, 1975).

Shipman (1976) suggest that it is well established that children from low socioeconomic status families generally do not achieve academically as well as middle class children. While a number of researchers have related this finding to various aspects of the differing environment of lower and middle-class children, there is considerably less evidence describing environmental factors associated with performance differences solely within an economically disadvantage population.

However, in a follow-up study (Wright, 1979) comparisons were made of the performance of three groups of low-income children in the primary grades. Two groups consisted of children who had been in preschool programs two years and one year. The third group consisted of children with no preschool
experience. It was found that the academic achievement of the two groups with preschool experience was superior to that of the group with no preschool experience and the group having two years experience performed somewhat better than the group having one year in preschool. The findings strongly support the view that preschool education for children from low-income families can significantly reduce their risk of failing the elementary school and reduce the cost of their education by eliminating their need for placement in special classes and reducing their need for remedial instruction.

Fowlkes (1984) in a study realized that the acute need of the moment in early childhood education appears to be the rescue of childhood before it disappears. We are in danger of reverting to an earlier era that treated the young as miniature adults, obliterating the heritage bequeathed us by those who carefully carved out the field of childhood education as we know it today.

Expressing concern for parents, Bartolome (1981) reiterated that today as parents seek better job opportunities, families have become isolated from the
world of work, from the community, and from relatives and friends. Homes have become private places where working members renew themselves for the next day's struggles in the world of work. In spite of the changing needs of the time, the myth that raising a family is the sole responsibility of individual parents is perpetuated. Consequently, young parents receive less support for parenting and growing children receive less affection and guidance and less opportunity for socialization.

**Summary**

Whether children are eight months or eight years old, being cared for in a private home or public school, by their mother or a certified professional, the children's reach for other people is primary. Their total development and learning are intermeshed in their transactions with adults and other children. Social exchanges sharpen their knowing, expand their language and deepen their self-regard as well as their regard for others (Law, 1979).

Because of the narrow perspective in education, the bulk of research over the past 15 years has not provided educators and policy makers with much help in
designing and implementing early education programs. A great deal of the so-called preventive and innovative programs have not answered the right questions, nor have they addressed the right issues, since society is dealing with problems caused in part by family structures and functions. In so doing, society might gain some insight in designing and implementing effective policies and programs for the young child. Moreover, the promise of early childhood is, for now, at two or four or seven years of age. All children need a safe, carefully planned and flexible environment now in which to explore an expanding world of activities and materials, children and adults, feelings and ideas.

In Hill's study (cited in Fowlkes, 1984) a classic comment about children and their teacher suggests that since God made them all so different, how can people feed them a standard diet.
CHAPTER THREE

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to increase awareness of how social environment is related to school achievement, and present alternatives to improve achievement of early childhood students.

Conclusions

Preschool programs vary in orientation, and parents differ in parenting behaviors and child-rearing practices. Since many young children attend some kind of formalized care program outside their homes, an analysis of the characteristics of the overlapping sets of home and preschool practices can provide a basis for encouraging the development of the child through the continuity of home and preschool practices.

Currently, trends in both the public and private sectors point to continued development and support of preschool programs along several theoretical positions and financial bases.

Children need a variety of experiences to help them differentiate their worlds, therefore, children profit from opportunities to do more than simply look or watch; they need environments that will allow them
to explore. Furthermore, all students of a given age level do not and cannot learn essentially the same material. Concrete experiences must come first with young children.

Contrary to the beliefs of many educators, children must have opportunities to interact frequently and naturally with their peers. Conversing, sharing experiences and arguing with one another are major tools that assist them in acquiring knowledge. Consequently, the needs of children are simple really: growth, nourishment for growing minds and bodies; activity, with its own purposes, real to the child; struggle, to attain purposes, even anguish and disappointments while overcoming obstacles; and play, with its refreshment and its natural rewards in the discovery of ethical values and quiet, with time for rest and reflection. Children need in childhood a normal development program in readiness for the courage, judgement, integrity and dedication, said to be essential today.

Early childhood education programs already offer a variety of curricular, as well as a wide range of associated health and social services to children and
their families. However, is is strongly recommended that attention be given to the direction of societal change and its implications for the child and the family be considered as early childhood programs continue to develop. Only in this way can children adequately be prepared to meet and create the challenges of the future.

Recommendations

Early childhood educators need to accommodate children from varied backgrounds; children who live in intact families, who have no families, who have one parent, or who live with both parents alternatively, children who are exceptional handicapped, gifted, bidialectal, bilingual, or monolingual in a language other than English; children who go from school to a day care center and children who comfortably go from school to home. All of these needs should be accommodated by early childhood education.

Steps to safeguard the Head Start program's quality and to protect the program from the deleterious impact of inflation are:

2. Begin a program of controlled expansion to serve a larger share of the income eligible children.

3. The extension of services to children of working parents.

4. The extension of services to children under age three.

5. Broader options for full day care for working parents.

Early childhood educators together can help educate the public about what is good and bad in early childhood education, help parents become educated consumers in the child market by training them to recognize quality in early childhood programs and demand it. Early childhood educators can help build community interest in early childhood programs by being more responsive to community needs for children and by using early childhood professional organizations to develop materials for use with the public.

Design and operation of an early childhood program should be organized so that it:
1. Is appropriate to the stage of cognitive development of the child.
2. Makes maximal use of the child's abilities.
3. Uses a planned sequence of environmental stimulation based on the knowledge of the stages of cognitive development.
4. Emphasizes the process of learning.
5. Guides and structures the learning experiences with the goal for the child of self-support rather than presenting the child with a large amount of random unorganized stimulations.

Society must make it possible for children to experience the environment as a series of interrelated institutions that appreciate children's existence and their potential contributions.

The school, the parents' places of work and community institutions should be used as extension of the family setting, complementing the role and function of the home.

Business organizations should welcome and encourage involvement of young children in their plants and business offices.
The narrow perspective of education should be changed and attention should be focused on young children, their families and their relationships.

Teachers need to be better informed as to the child's family environment so that a better understanding of the out of school learning environment may ensue.

Summary

Researchers have been concerned with the effect of early childhood education on later school achievement. A decided factor in the results appears to be the degree of continuity or discontinuity between the early childhood and the later school program. However, a great deal of research supports the importance of the model which the parent sets for the child. In addition, the role assumed by the teacher makes a big difference. Teachers who are more resourceful stimulate more student cooperation, involvement, and activity.

Early childhood education has also been widely accepted among its advocates as a contributor to better human relations, therefore, the growth of new early
childhood education programs seems to be on the upsurge in the United States. It is concluded that education must contribute to the young child's self-fulfillment in the broadest sense, and early childhood education is a challenge to our best creative thinking.

The environment in which a child lives and the persons with whom the child interacts all affect the child in complex ways to influence the development and life chances of the child. These are complex personal, social and environmental interactions.

The studies reviewed for the impact of Head Start on children, families and communities suggest that while the bulk of the studies focused on cognitive effects, researchers also investigated impacts on social, emotional and physical development of children as well as effects on their parents and larger communities. These studies point to positive effects on Head Start and the social competence of children.

While academic and intellectual gains are produced during the Head Start program year, these tend to grow smaller with the passage of time. Evidence shows, however, that these children do perform better than their disadvantaged peers on such global measures of
school success as passing each grade, staying in regular school tracks, staying in school and graduating from high school.

Parents, thus, have a growing set of alternatives to choose from in meeting their family needs. Many of these alternatives represent a change in the relationship between the family and society. They indicate the emergence of a personal service system that relates to but is not identical with welfare systems, the educational and health systems, and the like. However, in the future, the range of early childhood service alternatives available to families is likely to increase rather than decrease.
References


