

# EARLY LEARNING

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# Will cover:

- Debates on early learning within and across countries
- What early learning matters most
- New OECD study on early learning

# Early learning debates

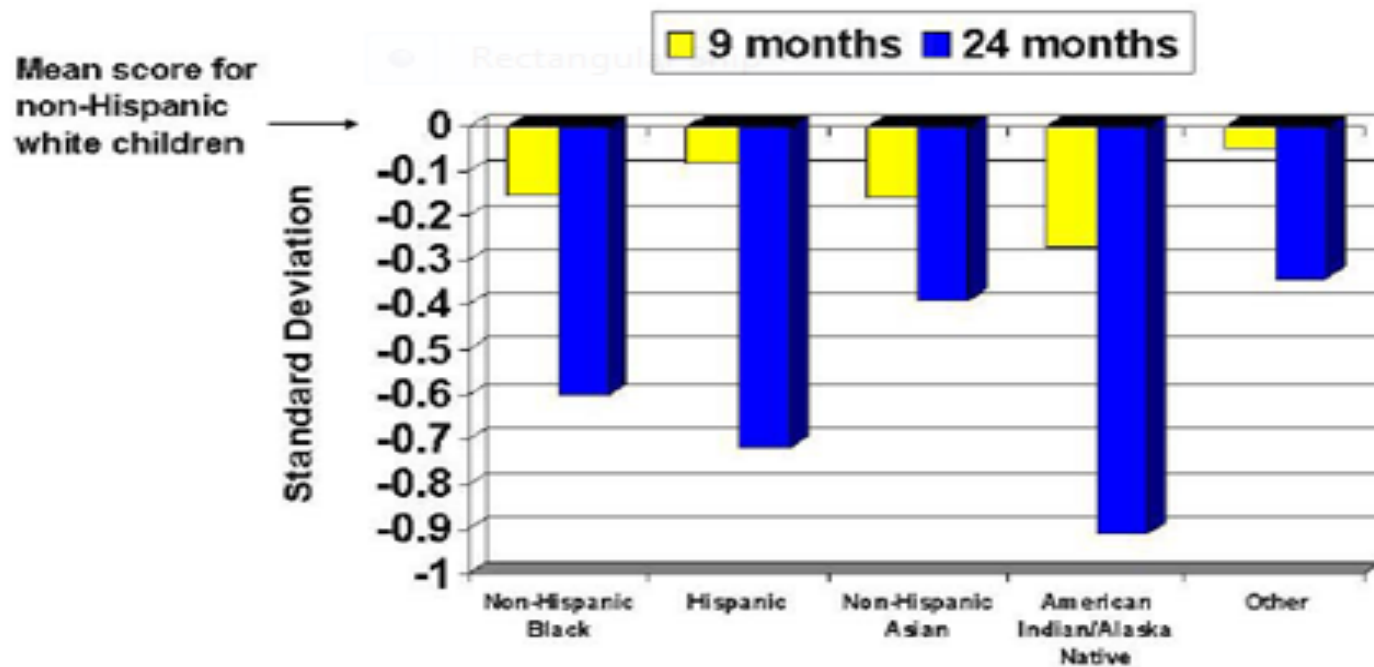
- Prior to starting school, children are too young to “learn”
- Early education is harmful
- Home circumstances are over-riding
- Any positive effects “wash-out” in early schooling

# Fixed or open mindset?



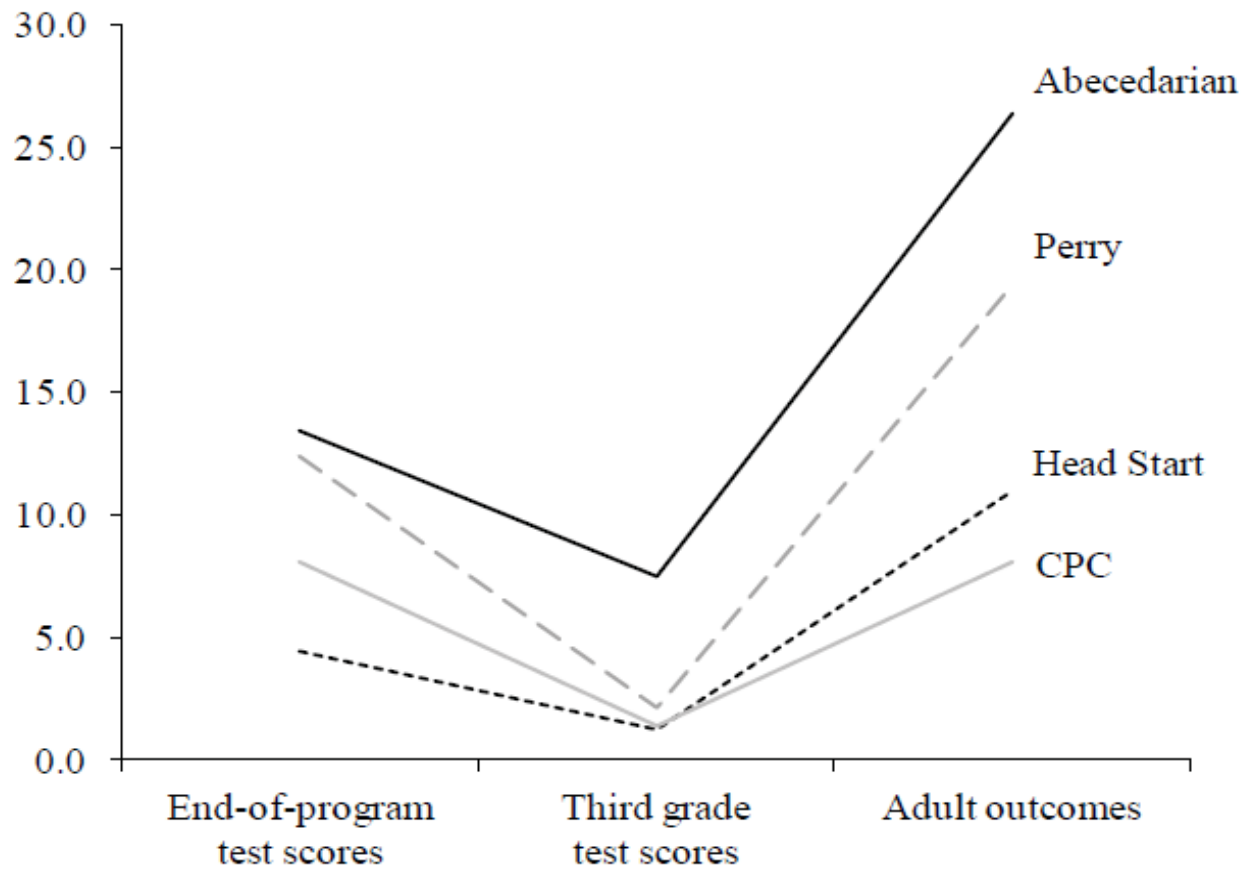
# The challenges are significant

Cognitive Disparities by Race/Ethnicity at 9 and 24 months ¶



Source: Tim Smeeding (2015). "Gates, Gaps, and Intergenerational Mobility: The Importance of an Even Start", University of Wisconsin-Madison. ¶

# Long term effects of ECEC



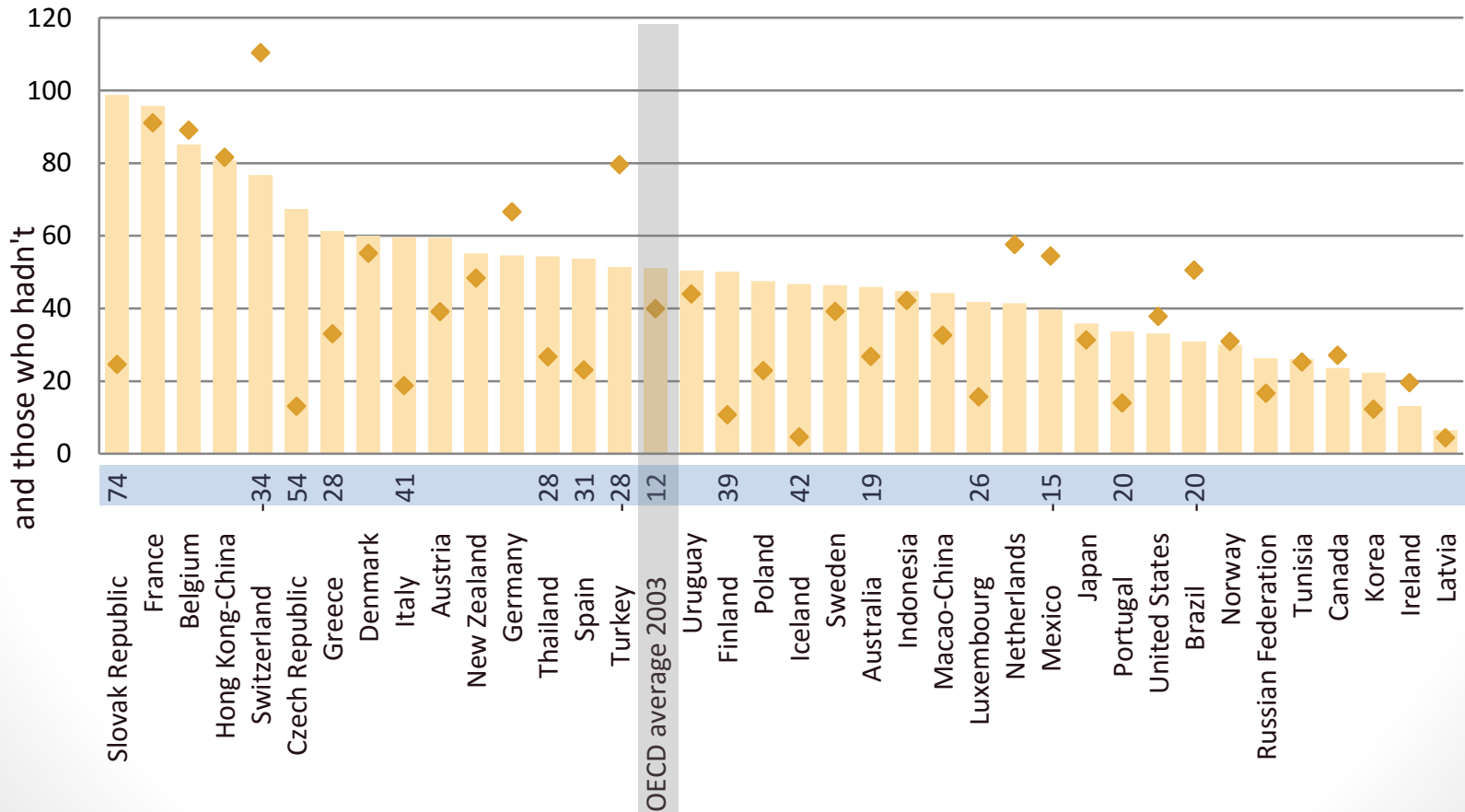
# Is ECE participation sufficient?

The impact of ECEC is variable across countries ...

Change between 2003 and 2012 in the relationship between students' mathematics performance and their attendance in pre-primary school

2012  
2003

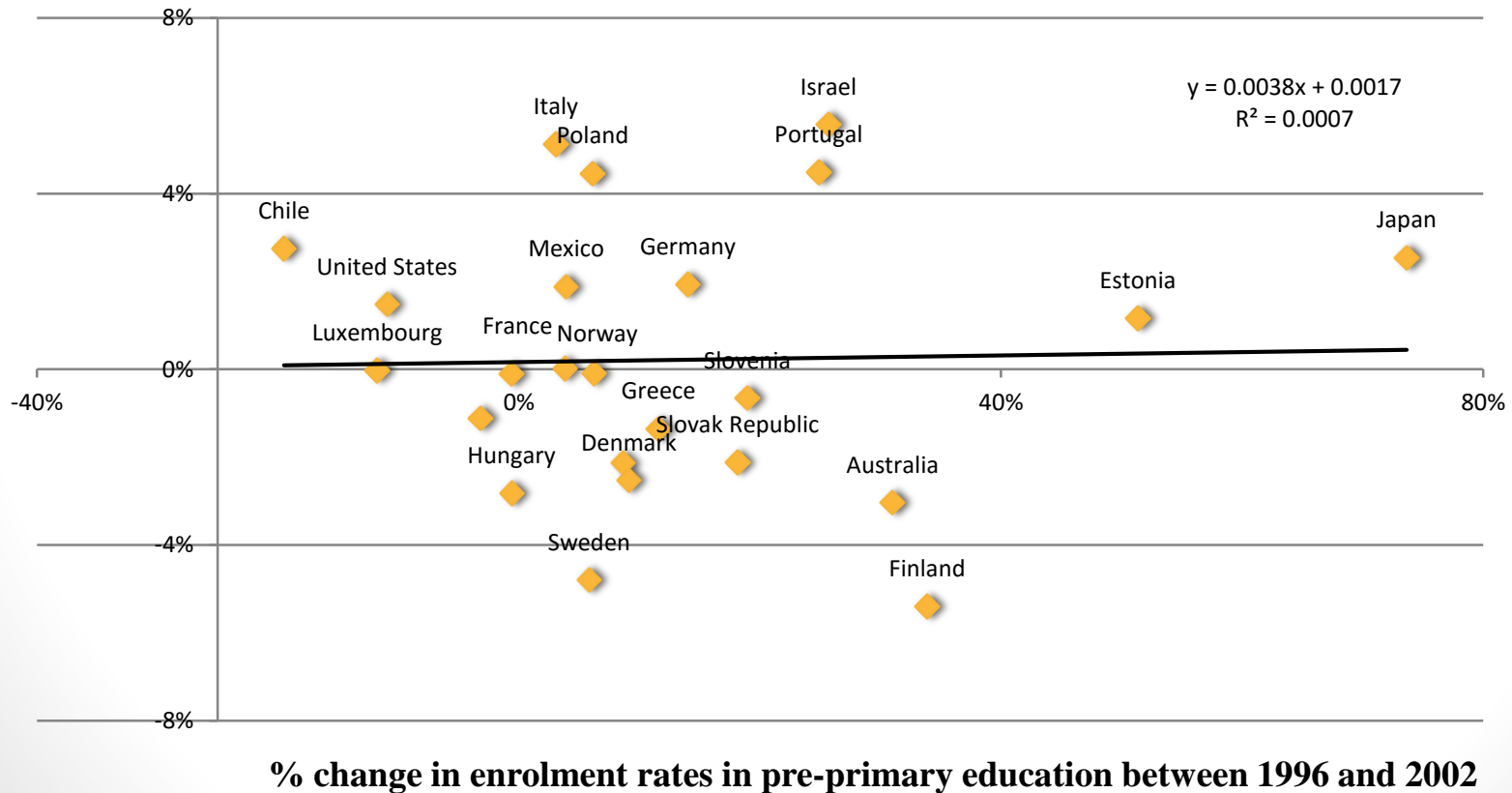
Score-point difference in mathematics performance between students who reported that they had attended pre-primary education (ISCED 0) for more than one year and those who hadn't



# Although increasing ECEC participation does not always lift student outcomes

Correlation between the raise in enrolment rates in ECEC and the increase in PISA mathematics scores

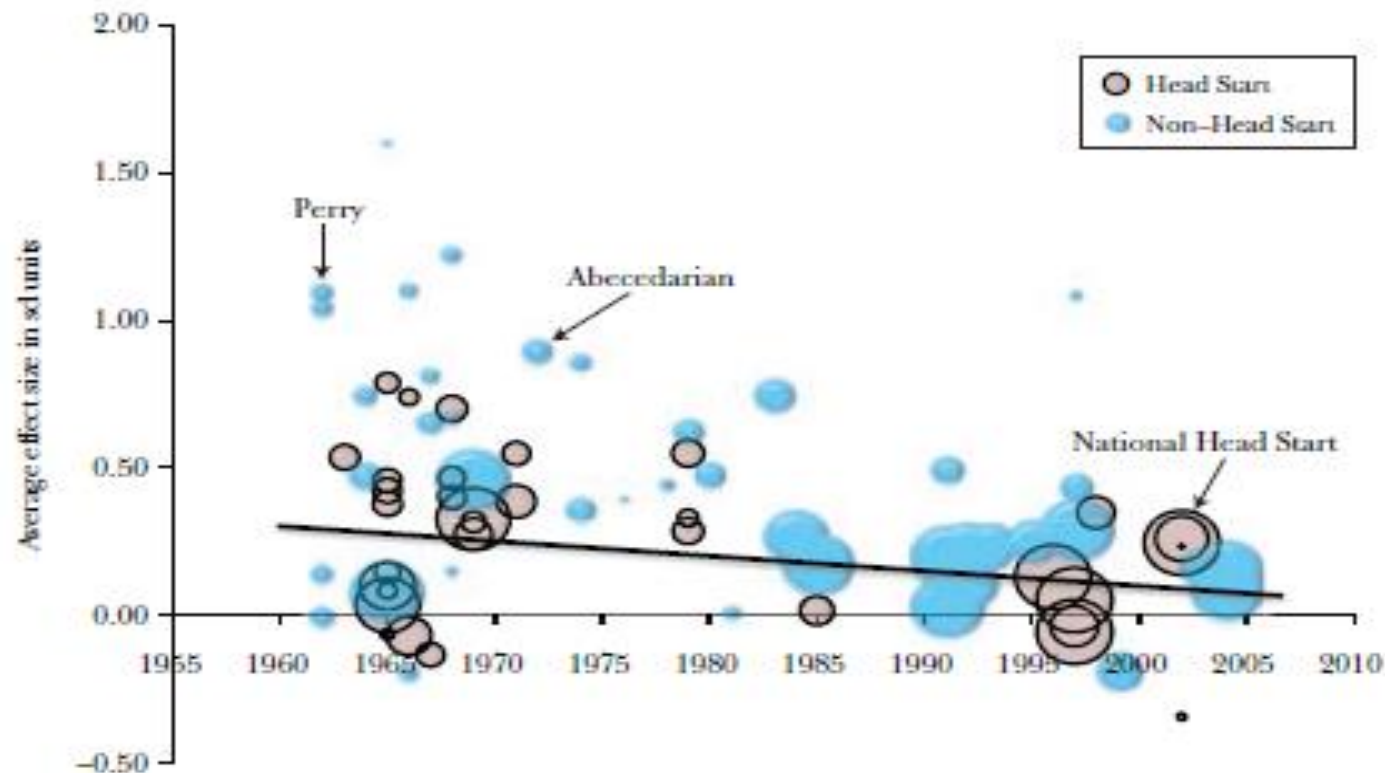
% change in mathematics scores between 2006 and 2012





# A meta-analysis in the USA suggests declining impacts

**Average Impact of Early Child Care Programs at End of Treatment**  
(standard deviation units)



# Can't we measure the quality and impact of ECEC?

- Measures of quality and impact exist
- Measures of quality:
  - Tend to focus on structural aspects
  - Have weak predictive capability
  - Are subject to variability, and
  - Are costly.
- A number of measures of child outcomes have been developed, which are robust.

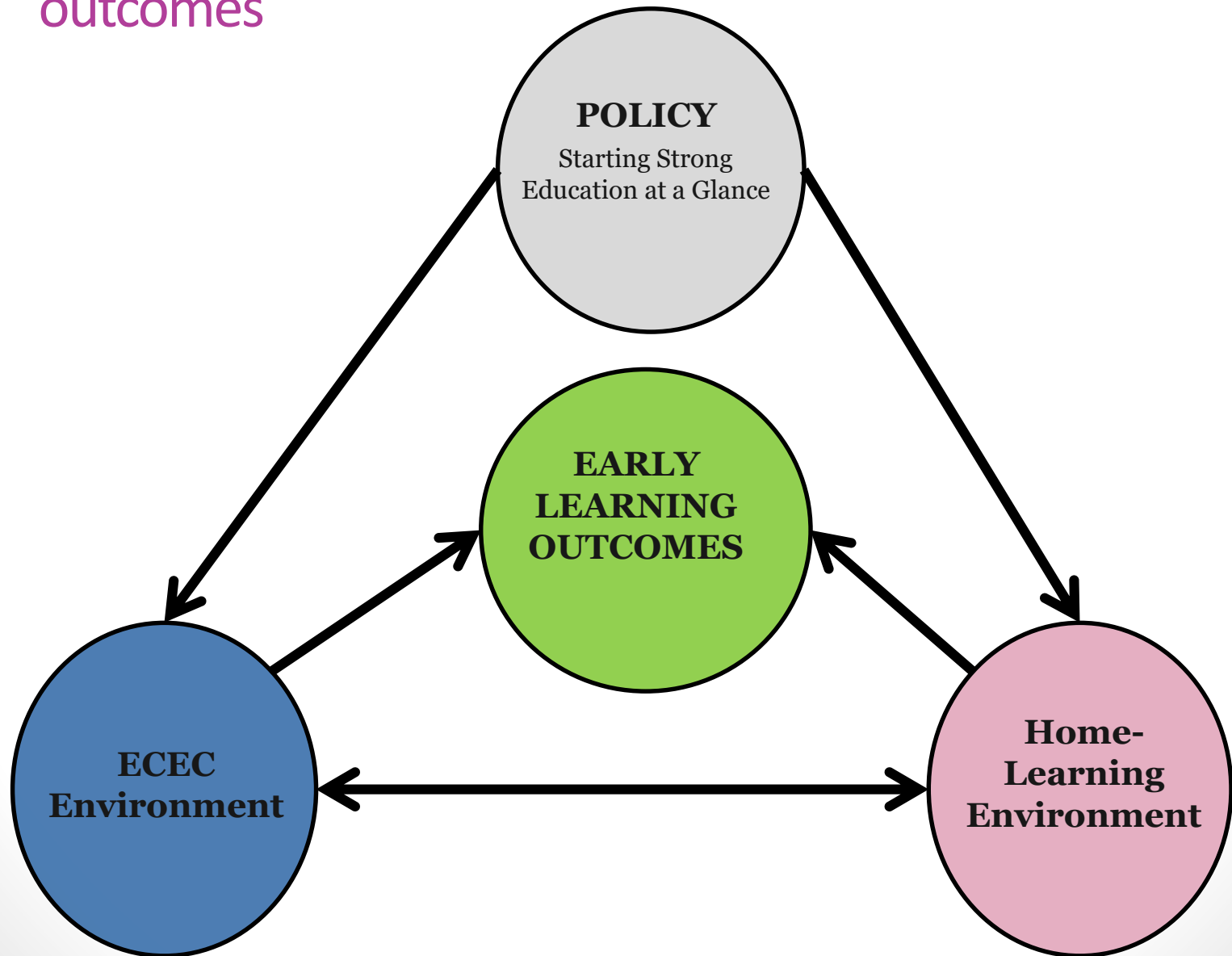
# Origins of the Child Well-being and Early Learning Study

- Initiated by the OECD's ECEC Network in 2012
- Interest in children's early learning outcomes arose from:
  - Interest in improving equity for disadvantaged children
  - Concern about uneven quality of ECEC provision and poor measures for assessing quality
  - Limited means to demonstrate the impact of increased expenditure on ECEC on children's learning.

# A common direction across OECD countries

- Increasing participation and investment in ECEC
- Interest in how early learning relates to later student success and well-being
- Greater emphasis on quality in ECEC provision and the role of monitoring
- Increasing focus on how to support parents in providing strong home learning environments.

The ECEC Network shaped a long-term data development strategy, including early learning outcomes



# The next step was to scope a possible study

- To gain greater specificity on countries' objectives and preferences
- Identify whether sufficient common ground amongst countries exists
- Develop a proposal for countries to formally consider.

# Countries objectives for the study

- To help countries improve children's experiences and outcomes
  - at a critical point in their development
  - across emotional and social well-being, and emerging cognitive skills
  - in the context of children's individual characteristics, their home environment and their early learning experiences.

# Origins of the Child Well-being and Early Learning Study ...

- Interest is from countries that:
  - Intend to lift ECEC participation, and want to ensure quality and impact, or
  - Have raised participation, but are unsure of quality and impact, or
  - Want to ensure they are getting the maximum value from ECEC for their students.



# What outcomes?

- Educational attainment
- Employment and earnings
- Physical and mental health
- Civic engagement
- Law abiding
- Happiness and life satisfaction.

# Guiding principles

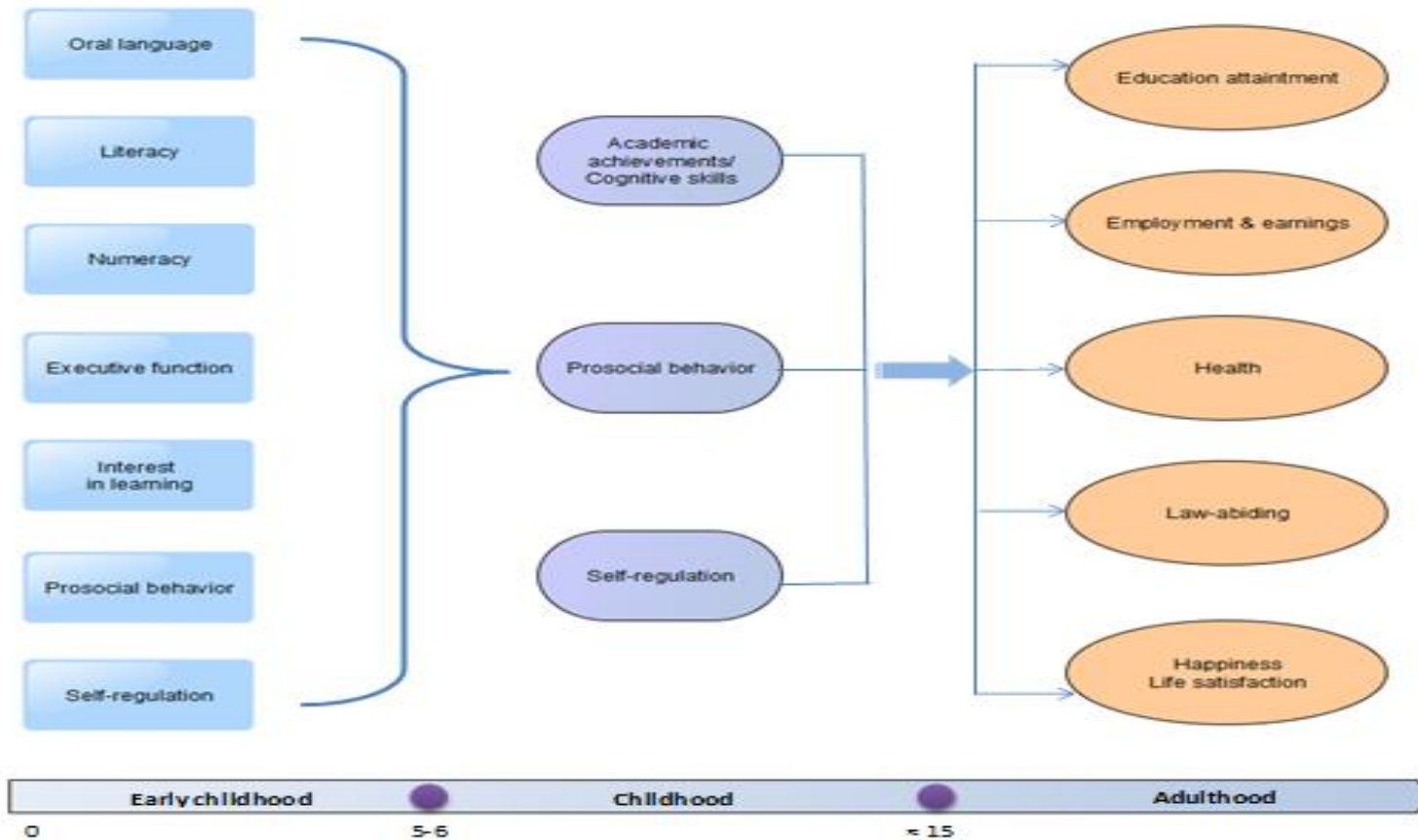
- Policy relevance
- Practical
- Reliability, validity and comparability
- The well-being of children is central
- Limited burden on parents and teachers/practitioners.

# Direction from countries

- The focus of the study should be “broad” but not “too broad”, on early learning that is:
  - Predictive of later success
  - Malleable in the early years
  - Balanced across social and emotional and cognitive skills
- The age of the children in the study should be between 4.5 to 5.5 years
- Contextual factors are critical and should be included
- Input from parents and teachers/ECEC practitioners is also essential.

# What learning matters most

## Early skills and learning areas predictive of lifetime outcomes



# What early learning is most predictive

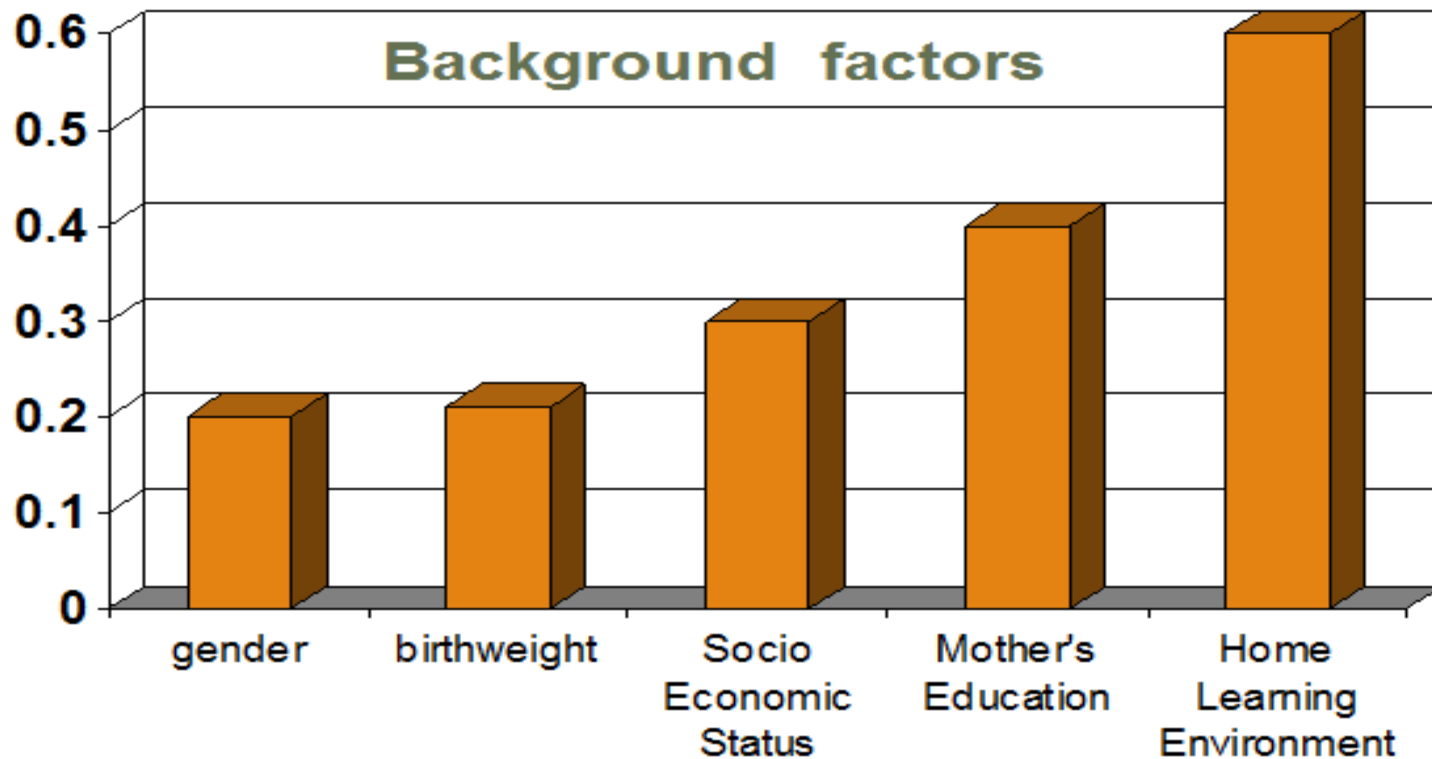
- Self-regulation
- Oral language and communication
- Early numeracy
- Fine motor skills
- Locus of control
- Social skills, including trust and empathy.

# What matters about the home environment?

- Quality of the child's home learning environment
- Extent to which ECEC can enhance parents' support for their children's learning
- Family characteristics, eg parents' education, socio-economic status

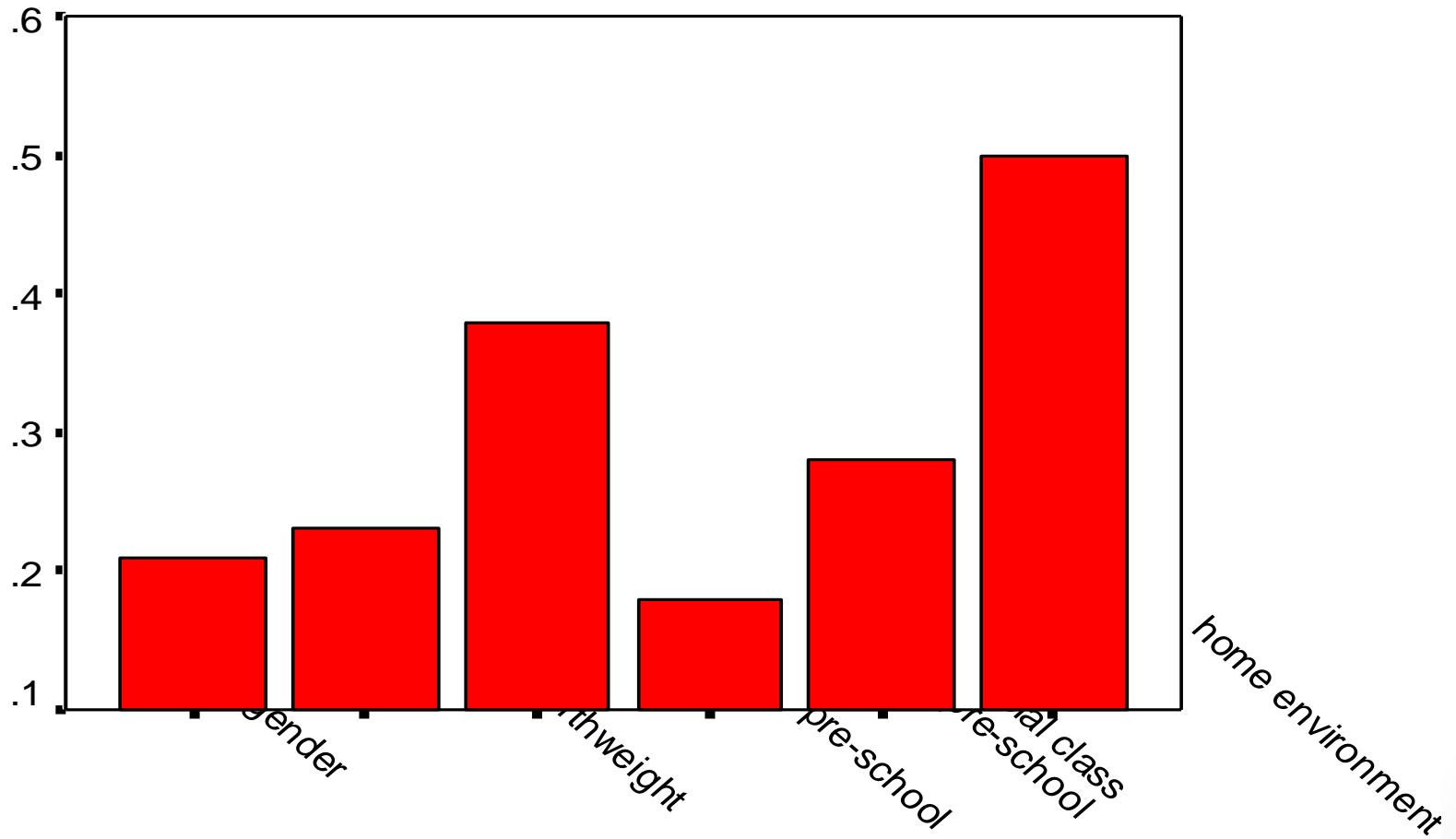
# What parents do is most important ...

Effect sizes on literacy, age 5



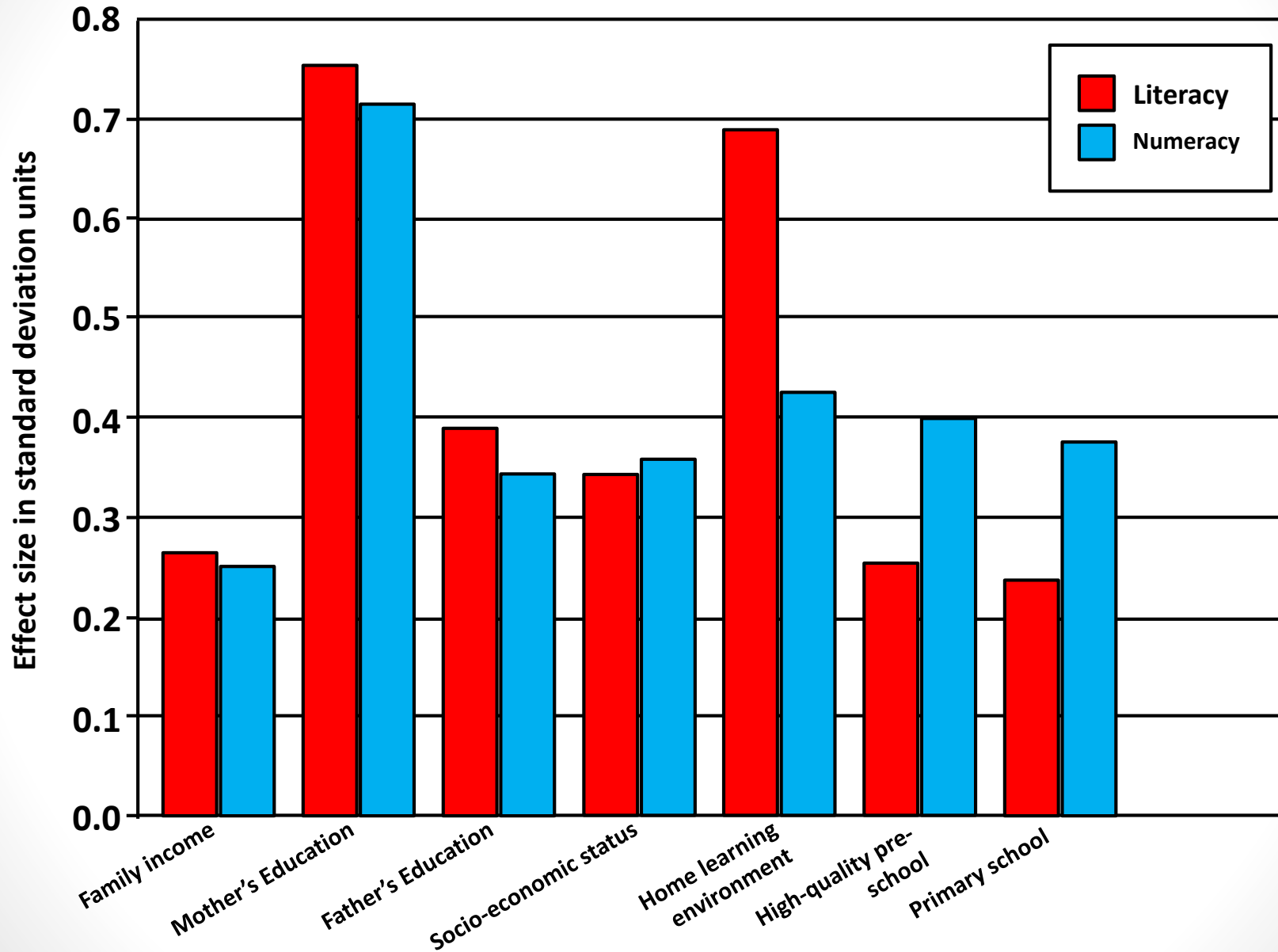
# More important than ECEC ...

## EFFECTS UPON LITERACY





## And longer lasting ... (Effects at age 11)



# And ECEC?

- Participation
  - Age of entry
  - Duration
  - Intensity
- Provision
  - Type of approach
  - Indicators of process and structural quality.

# How will this help countries?

- Robust, comparative data will help countries to understand what is possible
- And what helps different groups of children in:
  - ECEC participation and provision
  - Parenting and early intervention programmes
- And what is needed in early schooling, eg curriculum and teacher professional development
- And benchmark and monitor progress over time.

# And what will this enable countries to better achieve?

- To mitigate disadvantage, before it is more difficult and costly to do so in later years
- To lift overall performance of their education systems
- To gauge the value-for-money that ECEC is providing at a system-level.

# Next steps

- Bids are now being evaluated and an international contractor will be selected in the next few weeks
- Finalise the timeline for the key stages of the pilot study, ie implementing the full study in 3-6 countries.

Thank you!

