

Social Research Call

Title:

The broad impact of Early Childhood Education and Care



Acronym: EDUCARE

Project leader: Antoni-Italo de Moragas

Host organisation: CUNEF Universidad

Main purpose of the project: EDUCARE will collect novel data to study the causal impact of providing early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children aged 0 to 2 on both the children and their parents.

Design/methodology/approach: Our study will leverage a quasi-natural experiment triggered by ECEC enrollment in Catalonia, enabling us to identify the causal effects of ECEC. Convincing causal identification is crucial for assessing the effects of ECEC because observational evidence could be biased due to differences in the unobserved characteristics of families who choose to enroll their children in ECEC. We will utilize existing administrative data sources and collect our own data through a survey conducted in schools.

Potential results: We will investigate whether ECEC can boost learning outcomes for children from lower-income families, who often lack access to alternative educational resources. We will examine whether ECEC can facilitate the reintegration and progression of mothers in their professional lives post-childbirth, thereby reducing the persistent wage gap between men and women. Finally, we will analyze whether increased employment opportunities for mothers due to ECEC can reshape children’s perceptions of gender roles.

Social relevance of the research: Insights from this study will shed light on the potential benefits of ECEC provision. This project can help guide policies aiming to achieve the universalization of ECEC and optimize the prioritization of current admission requests and the expansion of the public childcare system.

Originality/value of the project: Most studies examine ECEC provision for ages 3 to 6. However, by that age, both maternal labor force participation and child development might have already experienced irreversible setbacks. This study will be a pioneer in examining the very early stages of ECEC. Given the literature on the importance of “the first 1,000 days” and the “child penalty,” this study has the potential to find substantially larger effects than previous work and provide crucial evidence for the design of ECEC policies.