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Giving Children a Better Start: Preschool Attendance and School-Age Profiles

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Organizing Theme	Education and Skills
Status	The preschool interventions are ongoing, the analysis is complete
Intervention Category	Preschool
Sector	Education
Abstract	We study the effect of pre-primary education on children's subsequent school outcomes by exploiting a unique feature of the Uruguayan household survey (ECH) that collects retrospective information on preschool attendance in the context of a rapid expansion in the supply of pre-primary places. Using a within household estimator, we find small gains from preschool attendance at early ages that get magnified as children grow up. By age 15, treated children have accumulated 0.8 extra years of education and are 27 percentage points more likely to be in school compared to their untreated siblings. Instrumental variables estimates that attempt to control for non random selection of siblings into preschool lead to similar results. Pre-primary education appears as a successful and cost-effective policy to prevent early grade failure and its long lasting consequences in low income countries.
Gender Connection	Gender Informed Analysis
Gender Outcomes	Gender disaggregated school attendance, school attainment
IE Design	Instrumental Variable
Intervention	In 1995 the government started a rapid expansion of public preschool program. By 1999 414 new classrooms had been built, mainly through addition to primary schools. Between 1995 and 2004 public enrollment grew from 49618 to 87236.
Intervention Period	The program began in 1995
Sample population	The sample comes from the survey Encuesta Continue de Hoagres (ECH) which is a nationally representative survey covering about 18000 households each year. In 2001, the survey began collecting retrospective information on pre-school. The study focuses on individuals aged 7-15 who live in two parent famillies where all children are children of the head of household. The sample includes 23042 children over 5 years old, 90% of the sample attended at least one year of preschool.
Comparison conditions	The study compares the outcomes of individuals who recall that they went to preschool to those who recall that they did not go to preschool in a nationally representative survey many years after the intervention.
Unit of analysis	Student Level

Evaluation Period	The study uses data from 2001-2005
Results	There is a significant positive effect of preschool attendance on completed years of primary and secondary education. This works through both a fall in grade retention rates and a reduction in dropout rates as teenagers. The gains in attending preschool increase as children grow older. The impact of preschool is greater for children of mothers with low education. The impact of preschool is larger for boys than girls, however, the difference in impact between genders is not statistically significant.
Primary study limitations	The greatest limitation of the study is there is no baseline data on the children. Thus the study is based on ex-post recall of preschool attendance. Additionally, there was no randomization in preschool attendance, therefore, there may be selection bias.
Funding Source	Nuffield Foundation New Career Development Fellowship, ESRC DFID grant
Reference(s)	Berlinski, S., Galiani, S., & Manacorda, M. (2008). Giving children a better start: Preschool attendance and school-age profiles. Journal of Public Economics, 92(5), 1416-1440.
Link to Studies	http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0047272707001971
Microdata	