

Press release

Leidschendam, 26 April 2007

Education projects: structural evaluation advisable

First systematic evaluation completed

Road safety education projects are rarely systematically evaluated. Therefore SWOV carried out a study into the effects of road safety education in the recently completed 2003-2006 research programme. This recent study showed that more than half of the projects resulted in a small but significant improvement in safe traffic behaviour a month after such the project had finished. Therefore SWOV is in favour of structural evaluation in order to contribute to a further professionalizing of traffic education in the Netherlands.

Self-reported behaviour

The researchers in the project entitled EVEO, Study of the Effects of Traffic Education, have concentrated on the question of how to best quantify the effects of education programmes. The number of crashes is inadequate as a measure of effectiveness because crashes are rare, and because their causes are partially determined by a sequence of events. It is difficult to isolate education's role in an individual crash. That is why it is better to use a measure which is directly related to the behaviour that should be learnt.

In the EVEO project the choice was made to use participants' self-reported traffic behaviour as the measure of effectiveness. This self reported behaviour and the behavioural changes as a result of traffic lessons show whether the project has been effective. We made corrections for influences external to the programme by measuring self-reported behaviour in a control group that had not followed the programme.

More than half the projects lead to safer traffic behaviour

As it turned out, SWOV assessed eleven education programmes. These were mainly targeted at the young and children, and were mostly part of the school curriculum. Sometimes the projects were aimed at specific groups of road users, such as young moped riders. Most of the education projects were aimed at making participants aware of traffic's dangers and safe and unsafe behaviour. This is done by, for example, classroom discussions, demonstrations, and information campaigns and films.

A month after the programme has finished, more than half of the projects resulted in improved traffic behaviour. The changes measured were perhaps small, but can generally be traced as effects of the programme concerned.

Modest effect

SWOV explains the effects measured as follows:

- The duration of the projects assessed is short, while repeating the message has been proven to increase the effectiveness;
- Traffic behaviour is a type of habitual behaviour; breaking a habit requires strong motivation and many external stimulants such as reward and punishment;
- The EVEO project was aimed at isolated effects of education. Combined effects were ignored, whereas the literature argues that combination like for instance education plus police enforcement may in fact be very effective.

Professionalizing

The EVEO project has given an initial impetus to a systematic and manageable evaluation method that can contribute to improving evaluation projects. We there recommend including the EVEO project in Toolkit, a database of the most commonly used educational programmes in the Netherlands (www.kpvv.nl). Structural evaluation of education programmes is advisable in order to make a contribution to further professionalizing traffic education.

The complete report entitled [When is education effective? Systematic evaluation of education projects, R-2006-28](#), has been available since 26 April 2007 at www.swov.nl.

More info:

Information & Communication SWOV

[Jolanda Maas](#): 070 - 317 3315

[Patrick Rugebregt](#): 070 - 317 3318

E-mail: info@swov.nl