

### SIG convenors:

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### SIG members:

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#### 1. Aim of the SIG:

Our aim is to bring together international perspectives on transitions in early childhood to:

- promote the wellbeing of young children and their families at times of transition;
- support, share and disseminate SIG member's research on educational transitions and related issues;
- explore and debate emerging research, professional practices and theories in relation to transitions;
- contribute to debates about transition in relation to the wellbeing of children and adults;
- strengthen understandings of transitions for children and their families, as well as for communities and educators, and within a range of educational contexts.

#### 2. Activities 2016-2017:

The following notes report the sharing of research at the SIG meeting in Bologna, 2017.

##### Transitions research

We heard about a wide range of exciting work in transitions – some of which was presented at the conference and more that we will hear about as the work progresses. Some of the areas addressed were:

- *The International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study (also referred to as 'Baby PISA')*.

While it is not clear which countries have agreed to participate, some have indicated that they will not (New Zealand, Germany, Denmark, Ireland). Work is underway in Estonia to translate and trail the materials (Marika). There is a range of information available about the study, including some detail about the study itself, and some commentary. A list of some of these is included at the end of this report.

In contrast to the OECD assessments, we heard about increased emphasis in Denmark on 'soft skills', such as social and emotional development, during transitions (Rikke). Denmark's new National Pedagogic Framework for Day Care highlights transition from home to crèche as well as from kindergarten to school. One issue noted was the gap between when children left preschool (May) and started school (August), with a lack of clarity around whether this period will be treated like preschool, or school, both or neither.

- *Collaborating with families*

Researchers in Australia (Grant), Iceland (Bjorn, Johanna) and Denmark (Persille) reported on projects to engage with parents/families, recognising that often parents' perspectives are not always a genuine focus of transition approaches (Grant); that there is diversity among families as well as diverse backgrounds for families (Bjorn, Johanna); and exploring collaboration between parents and pedagogues as they engage with children's perspectives of their learning environments (Persille).

- *Collaborating with professionals*

Building relationships and connections between educators in prior-to-school and school settings was a feature of several projects. Aline-Wendy outlined the development of a Transition Statement for Scotland, developed through collaboration, and a project involving New Zealand (Sally) and Iceland to work with local authorities to generate learning networks of professionals to focus on curricula cross the sectors. Bob and Sue also noted the importance of cross-sector networks in building curriculum connections around the transition to school.

Feedback from schools about transition approaches featured in Japanese work (Etsuko), and a large project to build professional connections between educators in Australia (Liz, Rosemarie) described the importance of

building the skills of educators to articulate and reflect upon their own professional practice. Similar challenges were raised by Eleni, whose focus was helping teachers to talk about transition and to build common perspectives that move beyond superficial understandings. Petra's new pilot project might help address this, as she explores a new tool created to help educators undertake self-evaluation to analyse the quality of cooperation between preschool and school. Wendy's focus on how adults come together during the transition to school to support children's learning also addresses this area.

Two transitions were described by Rosina in her work with student teachers: the transition to teaching and their transition to becoming users of digital technology within this space.

- *Collaborating with children*

Children's perspectives of transition were highlighted in research reported by Petra, Angel and Daniela. The EECERA Board recently accepted a proposal for a book developed through the SIG about Children's perspectives of transition to school and school aged care. The book will sit within the EECERA Book Series: Towards an Ethical Praxis in Early Childhood: From Research into Practice.

- *Contextualising transitions and transitions research*

Much of the research reported during the SIG meeting highlighted the importance of contextualising transitions research. Angel reminded us of the general lack of transitions research in Latin American countries; Zoyah noted that there was little Caribbean transitions research; and Daniela reported the same for Chile.

Discussion of the challenges in mobilising government support for transitions research foregrounded the importance of grass roots change that challenged some of the differences between preschool and school, and promoted collaboration across sectors. The role of teacher unions was also noted.

As well as considering community contexts, Jenny and Anne drew attention to the transition experiences of children with learning disabilities and their families. In particular, their project explores the disjunction experiences as children make the transition from inclusive preschools to special schools. Peter's new longitudinal study which explores transitions from family contexts to kindergarten and then to school will also consider these transitions for children with special education needs, and how professionals support both children and parents during these transitions.

Johanna M reminded us that notions of childhood and provisions for children are tied strongly to policy, particularly those related to the economy, the welfare state and labour market. Such issues have been highlighted in the recent increased marketisation of early childhood education in Germany, and in reviews of Australian policy related to the development and implementation of new curriculum documents (Sue, Bob).

Transition in diverse contexts was one of the features of Bob's project, which involves evaluating a program delivering kindergarten to children living in remote Australian sites, through integrating kindergarten with school.

- *Maths and transition*

Several researchers described projects supported educators to work across preschool and school sectors with a focus on children's mathematics. These included Camilla and Anne whose Norwegian project seeks to bring teachers together to learn from each other and to reflect on beliefs about mathematics and Wendy's Australian project that explores how educators work together to support children's mathematics learning, especially in challenging circumstances. Sally also reported her New Zealand research exploring early childhood mathematics.

## **Publications**

Several researchers referred to new publications. These included:

- Anne and Jenny's new book about transition for children with special education needs (Swedish);
- Aline-Wendy's entry for Oxford Bibliographies on transition;
- Sally's involvement in the revision of Te Whairiki (New Zealand), now with a section on transition;
- Persille indicated that the Scandinavian data base of early childhood research was available and being updated;
- Aline-Wendy and Sally's planned research methods book on transition;

- Sue, Johanna and Bob's planned edited book on children's perspectives of transition to school and school age care; and
- Sue, Wilfried and Bob's edited book entitled Families and Transition to School was available at the conference. This book was generated by the SIG and includes chapters by many SIG members.

### **3. Future activities:**

See above for several planned publications. The Transitions SIG Facebook page provides a forum for networking and the sharing of ideas and information.

Plans for future collaborations will be discussed at the 2018 SIG meeting.

### **4. Networks established with other institutions and organisations:**

Individual members of the SIG are involved with a number of other SIGs and projects. While there are no formal affiliations, the Transitions SIG welcomes collaboration with other institutions and organisations.

### **5. How do the SIG's activities fit with aims and ethos of EECERA:**

The Transitions SIG provides a forum for researchers investigating educational transitions. We are interested in sharing and exploring perspectives about transitions experiences for children, families, educators and communities, as well as policy and practical approaches that support these. Transition SIG members utilise a diverse range of theoretical approaches and methodological designs to explore transitions in worldwide contexts.

In keeping with the aims and ethos of EECERA we are an inclusive and supportive group, focused on the 'promotion, development and dissemination of high quality research' in educational transitions. The many and varied publications of SIG members provide avenues for collaboration and cooperation between researchers around the world and raise the visibility and status of that research.