

SIG Report

Special Interest Group

Transitions

SIG Convenors

Sue Dockett, Charles Sturt University, Australia; Helena Ackesjö, Linnæus University, Sweden

Number of SIG members

100

Activities undertaken by the SIG since establishment

The SIG was established in 2000 at the 10th EECERA conference, held in London. Since that time, the SIG has supported and coordinated multiple publications, including books and monographs, symposia and international collaborations, such as the EECERA themed monograph on Transitions (2003) edited by Dunlop and Fabian, an edited book focused on Families and Transitions (Springer), edited by Dockett, Griebel and Perry, and a the recent book entitled "Listening to Children's Advice about Starting School and School Age Care", edited by Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry, which forms part of the EECERA series, Towards Ethical Praxis in Early Childhood.

Report on SIG Activities this past year

Publications

Several SIG members contributed to the book Listening to Children's Advice about Starting School and School Age Care.

Symposia at last EECERA conference

Multiple papers addressing a wide range of topics related to transition were presented at the 29th EECERA conference in Thessaloniki, Greece.

The SIG meeting provided opportunities to share research and promote connections. The notes from this meeting are reproduced below.

As in previous years, a great deal of interesting and innovative research is occurring within the field of transitions. Much of this work was presented at the 2019 EECERA conference, in several symposia addressing issues of transition and/or readiness, along with several other papers and posters.

Some of the connections across the work discussed at the SIG meeting were:

Children's rights to participate in research. Petra & Birgit (Germany) are working with models of rights to participation, along with focusing the voices of children and didactical approaches focusing children's participation. Children's role as active parts in research is also focused by Mirja (Germany) who is doing a post doc-study on Sri Lanka using children's drawings. She is asking some interesting questions around accessing children's perspectives and data analysis.

Anja (Germany) is studying teacher's beliefs about children's learning and participation in transitions and is involved in several EU-project focusing on this topic. Bob (Australia) also presented a study of the impact of mathematics learning in transitions by focusing on preschools in remote areas. Bob and Sue (Australia) are working on a proposal for a new book - evaluation of transitions.

Lina (Sweden) is studying the cooperation between teachers in the preschool class, leisure time centers and primary school. In addition, Peter, Frauke, and Katja (Germany) are focusing on teamwork and interaction in the work with children's transitions using the concepts of inclusion and educational partnership. This is a longitudinal study focusing on the construction of childhood as well as the construction of parenthood. They have a book published in German relating to the project. A book in English is anticipated in 2020 - focusing on German perspectives on childhood education, including transition. Their project considers many forms of transition - for example, from home to kindergarten, kindergarten to school, as well as between different systems. Mirja

(Germany) is also studying cooperation in transition through learning workshops including teachers from preschool and school.

Children's minority language in transitions is focused by Christina (Austria), and Johanna (Iceland) is focusing transitions from the perspectives of teachers and immigrant children.

Zoyah (Jamaica) spoke about parents' and teachers' expectations, successful transitions and readiness – what does that mean? Emma O'Brian (Ireland) also focused parents' perspectives on children's school start and teachers advising parents. Arianna and Lucia (Italy) presented their Erasmus funded project on transitions which aims to challenge the concept of readiness. The project is based on action research and includes both parents and teachers from primary school and preschools in the UK, Italy, Belgium, and Slovenia. The project report has been published and can be accessed on-line.

Aline-Wendy (Scotland) spoke about her longitudinal study on how the early transitions impact on later transitions (the study followed children from 6 to 16 years). Ongoing collaborative work in Scotland has generated a Scottish Transition to School Position Statement, which has been endorsed by the Scottish government. Aline-Wendy has also written an entry for the Oxford Bibliographies on early childhood transitions.

Petra & Birgit (Germany) have a focus on assessment and evaluation in transitions. Their pilot project seeks to bring kindergarten and primary school teachers closer together in collaborations. They are looking at a self-evaluation tool to analyse the nature of these collaborations. Helena (Sweden) presented a project about the Swedish preschool class in transition and the consequences of the positional shift to a more curriculum-steered and knowledge-based education including assessments of children's abilities just after the transition to school. Asato (Japan) also has a curriculum focus on transition as transitions in Japan are based on children's competences.

Lina (Sweden) is focusing children's transition to school and the Swedish preschool class as well as children's perspectives on the everyday transitions. Persille (Denmark) spoke of transitions from the perspective of being a municipal employee. Different models of supporting transitions are being tested in Denmark, such as one teacher accompanying the child throughout the transitions between different school forms. Christina (Austria) is focusing time management in transitions, particularly in relation to minority language groups and the ways in which children and families, as well as institutions, manage transitions. Angel (Mexico and UK) is studying transitions between school forms in the Latin region focusing how teachers promote happiness and wellbeing among the children and Lenina (Brazil) is focusing on transition from preschool to school from a political and global perspective. Angel, Sue, Bob and two other researchers are working on a book proposal to share Latin American research on transition with English-speaking audiences.

Sue and Bob (Australia) are reporting on a project conducted in remote areas of Queensland, Australia, where one option for delivering preschool is to offer a preschool program within the school. They have also recently completed a project focused on evaluating transition programs from multiple perspectives.

One recurring topic in the discussion was related to the assessment of children during transitions, or early in their school careers. Discussions canvassed how assessments are conducted before, after or during the transitions in different countries, what content and form of assessments occur in different countries, how these assessments are reported, and how the results are used (or not used) to support children's ongoing education – and why this might be. Some of the ongoing questions and discussions considered questions such as: What is this “assessment trend” a symptom of? What are the hidden agendas and assumptions and what national/global issues are assessments supposed to be an answer to? Does it end up with early interventions – trying to “fix children” – before or at school start? Are preschool and primary school preparing children for different things, focusing on different goals?

We are keen to gauge the interest of SIG members in following up this issue – please let us know if you think this is an issue we could pursue through SIG publications, ongoing discussions, or perhaps as a focus topic for the next EECERA conference.

Proposed initiatives

Discussions about virtual meetings and opportunities to share research are continuing.

Number of members

The Transitions SIG has an extensive mailing list and an active Facebook page, promoting interactions among over 100 transitions researchers around the world. Of these, approximately 20 participants are EECERA members.

How SIG activities fit with aims and ethos of EECERA

The aims of the Transitions SIG are to bring together international perspectives on transitions in early childhood to:

- promote the wellbeing of young children and their families,
- support, share and disseminate SIG members' research on transitions and related aspects,
- explore and debate emerging research, professional practices and theories in relation to transitions,
- contribute to debates about transitions in relation to the wellbeing of children and adults, and
- strengthen understanding of transitions for children and their families.

These aims are in keeping with the EECERA ethos of supporting the generation and development of original and innovative research in early childhood education. The SIG is an inclusive space that welcomes the sharing of work from new and experienced researchers. It provides an international forum for networking, which supports the development of innovative approaches as well as encouraging debate and critique.

Networking, future plans and links to other institutions

The Transitions SIG includes members from a wide range of countries, contexts and institutions. This will continue to be the case as research is shared on the Facebook page, in virtual meetings, as well as in person.

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