

International Perspectives on
Early Childhood Education and Development 16

Nadine Ballam
Bob Perry
Anders Garpelin *Editors*

Pedagogies of Educational Transitions

European and Antipodean Research

 Springer

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 16

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Editors

Pedagogies of Educational Transitions

European and Antipodean Research

 Springer

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Contributors

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Amanda Bateman is a Senior Lecturer in early childhood education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. She has led various research projects where she uses conversation analysis to explore peer-peer relationships and teacher-child interactions and is currently working on a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative-funded project investigating children's storytelling in early childhood through primary school. Amanda has several publications from her projects, including her recent book *Conversation Analysis and Early Childhood Education: The Co-Production of Knowledge and Relationships*, and is the lead author for an edited book *Children and Knowledge-in-Interaction* that will be published in September 2016.

Jessamy Davies is currently completing her doctoral studies at Charles Sturt University (CSU), Albury-Wodonga, Australia. Jessamy's doctoral research focuses on pedagogies of educational transitions in rural areas. The study explores transition to school as the point at which different contexts, curricula, policies and approaches meet, and opportunities are provided for educators to generate new pedagogies of transitions as they negotiate these intersections. The impact of Australia's policy reforms, specifically the two new curriculum documents for the prior-to-school and school sectors, as well as the impact of rurality is considered. Jessamy previously completed her Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) (Honours) at Charles Sturt University. She lives in Wodonga with her son Rory.

Lysa Dealtry has a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education with Honours from Charles Sturt University (CSU). She is currently in the final stages of her doctoral candidacy at CSU. Lysa's research explores a positive start to school from the perspectives of Aboriginal children, their families and educators, living in an urban community. Lysa has been a casual academic at CSU since 2009. Her current teaching areas and interests include transitions in the early years, social justice pedagogies, Indigenous education studies and play and learning. Prior to joining the team at CSU, Lysa was an early-year classroom teacher. Lysa lives in Albury-Wodonga, Australia, with her partner Chris and children Kristian and Joanna and surrounded by wonderful extended family and friends.

Sue Dockett is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at Charles Sturt University, Albury, Australia. Sue has researched in the area of educational transitions for many years. She continues this focus with current projects exploring pedagogies of educational transition, continuity and change at times of educational transition, curriculum connections and strategies to support positive transitions. Other areas of research interest include children's play and mathematics.

Aline-Wendy Dunlop, MBE is an Emeritus Professor in the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland. In this role, Aline-Wendy has chosen to focus her current research, conference, networking and writing interests on educational transitions across the lifespan, autism, family engagement in education, the very youngest children, practitioner beliefs and practices and arts-related childhood experiences. She is the Scottish Project Coordinator for the POET (Pedagogies of Educational Transitions) International Research Staff Exchange Scheme. She chaired the Autism Network Scotland, and for many years, she worked in the field of autism and continues to work with the Asperger Forum: a group of writers on the autism spectrum. Her work-life balance allows for family time, travel and much-loved hobbies of pottery, the arts, walking, film and reading widely. She believes passionately in the importance of the Early Years in Scotland.

Johanna Einarsdóttir is a Professor of Early Childhood Education and the Dean of the School of Education, University of Iceland. She has been involved in several international research projects as a researcher and a consultant in her areas of expertise and published together with international colleagues. Professor Einarsdóttir is an editor of several books published in Icelandic and English. She has presented numerous papers and research results on early childhood education and educational transitions to professional and community groups nationally as well as internationally. Recently, she has been conducting research on children's views on their pre-school education and transition and continuity in early childhood education.

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Bryndís Garðarsdóttir works as a Lecturer and researcher at the School of Education, University of Iceland. She completed her master's degree in ECE from Queen Maud University College and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her current research interests include teachers' roles in supporting children's well-being and learning, continuity in children's learning across school levels, learning stories in preschools and professionalism. Currently, she is taking part in projects and research involving documentation and assessment in preschools and transition from preschool to primary school.

Anders Garpelin is a Professor of Education/Special Needs Education and the principal scientific officer of Educational Sciences at Mälardalen University, Västerås, Sweden. His research concerns the meaning of educational transitions, also from a life perspective, for children and young people, with their diverse abilities and experiences. His current research deals with transitions that young children encounter between three school forms – preschool, preschool class and school – with a special focus on learning and participation. Anders and his wife Merja live in a family where different cultural perspectives meet daily. The mother-tongues, Finnish, Hungarian and Swedish, are present almost daily with their children and grandchildren.

Robyn Gerrity is the Senior Teacher/Centre Director at the Carol White Family Centre based on the Selwyn College in Kohimarama, Auckland, New Zealand. Robyn has been based in this centre for the past 12 years and was previously at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre. She has a total of 18 years working alongside refugee families in New Zealand and around 30 years teaching and being involved in diverse aspects of New Zealand early childhood education. Robyn has a strong interest in centre hospitality, social justice and family-centred education. Robyn and husband John live in Auckland and have three children residing, respectively, in Auckland, London and Tokyo and three grandchildren in Tokyo.

Tina Hellblom-Thibblin works as a Senior Lecturer at the School of Education, Culture and Communication at Mälardalen University in Västerås. Tina's current research interests include transitions from preschool and preschool class to school, children's diversity in different school settings and implications for children with diverse qualifications and experiences in school. Her focus is also on conceptualisation and how concepts are used in educational settings, especially regarding pupils with special needs and also the relationship between the concepts used and educational settings. Educational challenges regarding mathematics in compulsory school and school for intellectually disabled are also of interest.

Margie Hohepa affiliates to Te Māhurehure, Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu and Te Ātiawa in the North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand. She is an Associate Professor and Associate Dean Māori in Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato. Primary trained, Margie has taught in English medium and Māori medium settings. Her research focuses on Māori medium education. Her three children are graduates of kohanga reo and attended kura kaupapa Māori. One now teaches in a kura, and four of her grandchildren have begun their Māori medium education journeys.

Pernilla Kallberg is a Lecturer in Early Childhood Teacher Education and a doctoral student in the Department of Education, Culture and Communication at Mälardalen University, Västerås, Sweden. Her doctoral work and research interests are around teachers' professional work with social relationships in the transitions between and within school forms in early years. Her research has a particular focus on issues that relate to teachers' representations of social relationships and transitions to compulsory school in a Swedish context. She is enjoying life with her family, where her sons Elliot and Alvin are a great inspiration, and she finds sport activities like floorball a big energy boost.

Kristín Karlsdóttir works as a Lecturer and researcher at the School of Education, University of Iceland. In 2001, she completed her M.Ed. degree in Education from the Teacher University and currently is working on the final steps in her doctoral thesis. The thesis gives detailed description of children's learning processes in their daily lives and explores the multiple factors affecting young children's learning while participating in two different early childhood curricular contexts. Her teaching and research touch upon preschool teachers' reflections and professional development, children's participation in play and learning and children's perspectives, well-being and learning dispositions. Currently, she is taking part in projects and research involving documentation and assessment in preschool education and transition from pre- to primary school.

Anne Lillvist works as a Senior Lecturer in Education at the School of Education, Culture and Communication at Mälardalen University in Västerås, Sweden. Her research interests include quality in preschool education and participation and social interaction of preschool children in need of special support. She is currently involved in a research project on the educational transitions of young children with intellectual disabilities with a specific focus on stakeholder collaboration and learning journeys.

Leonie McIntosh is a proud Wiradjuri woman living on Wiradjuri country. She is an Indigenous Academic Fellow at Charles Sturt University, Albury, and is working on her PhD which is looking at transitions for Indigenous children moving from preschool to formal education, with particular emphasis on how the child, the family and the community move together into the next stage of education. Leonie has two children – a teenager and a preschooler – and is currently having a little bit of a break from work but, hopefully, will be back there soon.

Helen Marwick is a Developmental Psychologist and Senior Lecturer, who lectures on child development and autism, and has researched extensively on social interactions, communicative development and interpersonal understanding. She is currently involved in research on intersubjectivity, conceptual development and relational identity, for both typically developing children and children with autism spectrum disorders, and has developed the Joint-Play Intersubjectivity Assessment Method (JPIAM), also known as ‘playboxes’, which promotes and assesses active interpersonal engagement and communication and which is being used widely in school settings. Helen is a member of international research groups investigating neurodevelopmental disorders and social communication.

Linda Mitchell is an Associate Professor and Director of the Early Years Research Centre at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Linda’s current research focuses on early childhood education policy, teaching and learning in culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood settings, assessment practices and relationships with parents, whānau and community. She is interested in democratic policies and practices in early childhood education and is critical of the market approach to early childhood provision. Linda has three children and four grandchildren, one of whom lives in London and the others in New Zealand.

Htwe Htwe Myint is from Burma and her home language is Burmese. She came to New Zealand from Burma in 1992. She is a fluent speaker and writer of Burmese and English and has completed a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry at Mandalay University, Burma. After she gained her Science degree, she worked as an intermediate schoolteacher in Burma. In New Zealand, she worked at primary school as a language support teacher for a year and 5–6 years in an ECE centre. After finishing her Bachelor of Teaching (ECE), she became supervisor of the Carol White Family Centre. She works as a bilingual teacher, cultural broker, trusted interpreter and community representative and uses her knowledge, experience and skills to support children and families of all communities. Htwe Htwe believes that home language is very important and that any time is the right time to use it as a communication tool for fostering cultures and mediating identity and learning.

Sara Margrét Ólafsdóttir is a doctoral student at the University of Iceland, School of Education. In her doctoral study, she is researching with children, exploring their perspectives on play and learning in preschools. In addition, the study aims to gain a better understanding of how children see the role of adults in their play. Other research interests include children’s well-being and transitions in early education. In her spare time, Sara likes running and hiking and, of course, spending time with her family, her husband and their three children.

Vanessa Paki affiliates to Ngāti Mahuta and Te Atiawa in the North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and is a Lecturer at the University of Waikato, Te Oranga School of Human Development and Movement Studies. Vanessa is early childhood trained, and her primary research interests focus around kaupapa Māori issues and

perspectives in early childhood, research and ethics, transitional pedagogies and human development over the lifespan.

Guðbjörg Pálsdóttir works in the University of Iceland, School of Education. She started her career as a compulsory schoolteacher in mathematics and social science but over the last 20 years has been involved in teacher education and curriculum development in mathematics. Her research interests include preschool mathematics, teacher education and curriculum resources.

Bob Perry recently retired from Charles Sturt University, Albury-Wodonga, Australia, after 45 years in tertiary education. He is currently the director of a small educational consultancy. Bob's research interests include powerful mathematics ideas in preschool and the first years of school; ethical tensions in researching with children; transition to school, with particular emphasis on starting school within families with complex support needs; preschool education in remote Indigenous communities; and evaluation of educational programmes. Bob shares a happy and fulfilling life with his partner, Sue Dockett, and their son, Will.

Sally Peters is an Associate Professor and Head of Te Oranga School of Human Development and Movement Studies at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. She is also an Associate Director of the University of Waikato's Early Years Research Centre. Sally's current research interests include many aspects of transition experiences as well as understanding more about young children's thinking, working theories and social development. Before joining the university, Sally was an early childhood teacher. Many of her projects now involve working in partnership with teachers in schools and early childhood settings to look at ways to enhance and support learning over time.

Gunilla Sandberg works as a Senior Lecturer in special needs education at the School of Education, Culture and Communication, Mälardalen University, Sweden. Her research has a focus on children's transitions to Grade 1 of primary school, with a particular interest directed towards children's reading and writing processes and inclusive education. This interest is based on a long experience of working as a primary school teacher and as a special needs educator. Gunilla lives in the countryside outside Uppsala with her husband Per. Her three children and their families live nearby.

Jenny Wilder is an Associate Professor in special needs education at Mälardalen University, Västerås, Sweden. Jenny's research interests include communication, interaction and participation of children with severe disabilities and the support system for children and families of children with disabilities. Her current research project deals with collaboration and learning in transitions from preschool into forms of special schools for children with intellectual disabilities.

Chapter 1

International Perspectives on the Pedagogies of Educational Transitions

Nadine Ballam, Bob Perry, and Anders Garpelin

There has been a great deal written recently about children starting school, particularly primary school. All of the stakeholders in these transitions to school have been considered, along with matters of readiness – for the child, family, educators, schools and communities; adjustment and adaptation; continuity and change in curricula and learning; and the opportunities, aspirations, expectations and entitlements encompassed in the transformation of roles involved. As the children move from their prior-to-school experiences – preschool, child care, home, other out-of-home care – to school, they experience many changes. One of these is often a change from a primarily play-based pedagogical approach in the prior-to-school setting to perhaps a more structured, even formal pedagogy in school. But what about the pedagogies of the transitions themselves? Children do not stop learning and teachers do not stop teaching as children are in the process of transition to school. There are pedagogies of transition employed. This book explores these pedagogies through the work of an international alliance of transitions to school researchers from five countries – Iceland, Scotland and Sweden (European) and Australia and New Zealand (Antipodean). This alliance is named Pedagogies of Educational Transitions – POET.

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1.1 Introduction

The transition to school has increasingly become a focus of attention for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, parents and others with an interest in children's lives. This focus has developed, in part, out of a growing recognition of the importance of early experiences and their influence on positive outcomes in later years (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015; Dockett and Perry 2007; Dockett et al. 2014; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2012; Perry et al. 2015; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] 2012).

Increased interest in any field tends to stimulate provocative discussion and debate and the area of educational transitions has not escaped this. Transition itself is a contested phenomenon that has no universally accepted definition (Dockett et al. 2014); what is considered a successful transition might well differ between stakeholders in diverse contexts and cultures and across time. However, there is general agreement that a child's sense of belonging in the new setting marks an optimal transition to school (Brooker 2008; Bulkeley and Fabian 2006; Dockett and Perry 2004). While there is less agreement about how a sense of belonging or a positive transition might be achieved or measured, the discussion and debate exposes the many ways in which it might be conceptualised.

The transition to school is experienced and understood in varied ways in different contexts, many of which are captured in this book. Many years of transitions research have presented ideas including readiness (Dockett and Perry 2009; Graue 2006; Graue and Reineke 2014), continuity (Brooker 2008; Einarsdóttir 2007), adjustment (Margetts 2014) and adaptation (Woodhead and Brooker 2008). All of these ideas are, and should be, continually questioned, challenged, teased out and reshaped into further notions about children's transitions to school.

1.2 Transition-to-School Theories

While '[M]ost researchers see theory as an important aspect of educational research' (Einarsdóttir 2014, p. 21), others point out that there are dangers in adhering too closely to a particular theory. While not always explicitly stated, all of the chapters in this book that report on particular research studies are based in a theory or, perhaps, some combination of theories. The major theories used are identified briefly in this section.

Just as there are many ways for children and other stakeholders to experience transition to school, there are many different theoretical underpinnings utilised in transition-to-school research (Dockett et al. 2014). Much of the work in this book utilises the work of Bronfenbrenner, either through his early conceptualisations of ecological transitions (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Dunlop 2014) or his later bioecological theory, particularly the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model

(Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006) with its emphasis on proximal processes. Dockett et al. (2014, p. 4) note that:

The PPCT model provides a great deal of flexibility in researching transition to school. When applied in full, it prompts attention to the relationships and interactions associated with starting school, the characteristics and resources each individual (be they a child, family member, or educator) brings with them to the transition, recognition of the various systems or contexts in which children and families are located, as well as attention to specific events, patterns of interactions and historical context. It provides potential to explore issues of continuity and change, in terms of the individuals, the nature of experiences and interactions they have, the people with whom they interact and the contexts in which they are located. It also recognises that social and cultural contexts are dynamic, affected by processes of continuity and change.

Building on Bronfenbrenner's theories and using other conceptualisations of transition to school is a feature of the book. For example, the conceptualisation of transitions to school using van Genneep's (1960) 'rites of passage' invokes a three-phase vision of transitions in terms of preliminal, liminal and postliminal times and spaces and the ambiguity that children and other stakeholders may find as they move through these phases. Notions of 'bridges' (Garpelin 2014; Huser et al. 2015), 'chasms' (Garpelin 2014) or 'borderlands' (Giroux 2005; Peters 2014) are all invoked from such a conceptualisation.

Elder's (1996) 'life course' theory, which emphasises human agency over time, can be utilised in conjunction with bioecological theory to place transition to school as part of a person's life history. This is particularly useful in studies that reflect on past transitions to school and in the development of the notion of 'transitions capital' (Dunlop 2014).

Many of the chapters in the book utilise a critical theoretical stance. Such a stance goes beyond the nested systems of ecological theory or the location of the child at the centre of the transition process to consider the social, economic and political contexts involved. Critical theory is particularly important in the chapters considering issues of diversity in children's transition to school. In particular, when researching the starting school experiences of Indigenous children, families and communities, both *Kaupapa Māori* research approaches (Pihama 2010) and critical Indigenous research methodology (CIRM) (Brayboy et al. 2011) are brought to bear as culturally appropriate, respectful protocols that are 'rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, [are] anticolonial and [are] distinctly focused on the needs of communities' (Brayboy et al. 2011, p. 423). The construct of 'cultural interface' (Nakata 2007) also allows a critical, anticolonial theoretical stance on researching children's transition to school that has not been used in previous transition-to-school research.

Underlying each study reported in this book, there is (or are) one or more theories about researching children's start to school. Some of the major ones have been outlined but others are also used. These are not always explicitly stated nor explicitly applied throughout the studies but are there guiding the studies and their reporting. Einarsdóttir (2014) explains her process, which has inspired many of the researchers who have reported their work in this book:

Theories are an important part of educational research. I use theory as a tool to develop research questions and to shed light on the generated data. Theory helps me see what is visible in a new light, notice novel things, and reveal new understandings. I also use it to help me understand the reality that I am investigating and explain what I see, why I see it, and what it means. However, I usually do not explicitly start a study with a specific theory; rather, I let the data help me decide which theory to use. I find that determining the theory beforehand could become restricting and could limit what I see, and how I analyze and interpret what I see. On the other hand, I am well aware that my implicit theories and beliefs about children, childhood, and education influence my decisions about what to study, the design of the study, what I see, and how I interpret it. In that way theory is also a foundation for the study design. (pp. 28–29)

1.3 Pedagogies of Educational Transitions

This book is about pedagogies of educational transitions, particularly those developed and used as children start school. Transition to school provides opportunities for the study of pedagogies as it incorporates spaces and times where (often) different approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning are invoked. It is critical that there is an understanding of the meaning that the editors and authors of this book are using for ‘pedagogies of educational transition’. This is a new term that must be defined in a way that is meaningful, but flexible enough to allow its application in many different national, personal, political and cultural contexts.

The working definition of pedagogy for the longitudinal studies undertaken by Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and their colleagues is:

... that set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and to the learning environment. (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002, p. 10)

In 2005, Learning and Teaching Scotland defined ‘pedagogy’ in the following way:

Pedagogy is about learning, teaching and development, influenced by the cultural, social and political values and principles we have for children in Scotland, and underpinned by a strong theoretical and practical base. (p. 9)

The equivalent statement in the Australian Early Years Learning Framework defines ‘pedagogy’ as:

... early childhood educators’ professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning. (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009, p. 9)

These definitions have influenced the authors in this book as they consider pedagogies in educational transitions.

In 2011, the Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group published the *Transition to School: Position Statement* following intensive work from

transitions to school researchers from many countries (Dockett and Perry 2014b). This statement characterised transition to school as a time of opportunities, aspirations, expectations and entitlements for all involved. These constructs, linked to previous definitions of pedagogies in early childhood education, have led Davies (2014) to define ‘pedagogies of educational transition’ as:

... the interactive processes and strategies that enable the development of opportunities, aspirations, expectations and entitlements for children, families, educators, communities and educational systems around transition to school, together with the theories, beliefs, policies and controversies that shape them. (p. 25)

It is this definition which implicitly underlies the chapters in this book and which is explicitly developed in Chap. 12.

1.4 POET International Alliance

This book is the first consolidated publication arising from the Pedagogies of Educational Transitions (POET) international alliance. It is planned to be the first of many such publications.

The POET international alliance was originally developed by six experienced transition-to-school researchers from the five countries involved: Sue Dockett (Charles Sturt University, Australia), Aline-Wendy Dunlop (University of Strathclyde, Scotland), Jóhanna Einarsdóttir (University of Iceland, Iceland), Anders Garpelin (Mälardalen University, Sweden), Bob Perry (Charles Sturt University, Australia) and Sally Peters (University of Waikato, New Zealand). Each of these researchers had many years of experience in the development and implementation of quality research in the area of educational transitions and had published widely. While they had not worked together extensively, they had met at a number of conferences such as those of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the European Educational Research Association (EERA) and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA), including some joint presentations. All were members of the EECERA Special Interest Group, which had been initially co-chaired by Aline-Wendy Dunlop and, since 2011, has been co-chaired by Sue Dockett. Over the last 4 years, between 2012 and 2016, these researchers along with a total of more than 100 of their colleagues have engaged in a series of biannual exchanges focused on educational transitions, as part of the European Union Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES). Further details about the genesis, vision, purpose, structure, activities and funding of POET are provided in an appendix to this book. For the time being, however, we focus on the product.

1.5 Structure of the Book

This book contains five sections, each of which reflects lenses through which the transition to school is conceptualised by current international scholars.

1.5.1 Diversity and Inclusion in Transition to School

Diversity and inclusion have increasingly become central to educational policy documents around the globe (OECD 2012; UNICEF 2012; Woodhead and Moss 2007), with an emphasis on groups of children who might be perceived to be at a disadvantage in many areas, including in their schooling. These groups are consistently reported to include children with learning difficulties or disabilities, children from low socio-economic households, children from ethnic minorities and increasingly, refugee children. Part I of the book considers the transition to school for children from many of these groups.

Hellblom-Thibblin and Marwick (Chap. 2) open this section with an overview of ideas about diversity and educational transitions, written with the background of the authors' own countries – Sweden and Scotland. The authors contend that the way diversity is conceptualised and inclusion is enacted directly influences the way children are perceived and received in educational contexts.

The following three chapters in Part I examine specific groups of children and their transitions into the school setting. Mitchell et al. (Chap. 3) outline a study undertaken with refugee families in New Zealand, exploring the transition from home into an early childhood setting. Their study indicated that an important transitional element for these families was not only bridging oral language but also aspirations, values and beliefs. The findings provide valuable considerations for families, educators and other professionals involved in the transition of refugee children from early childhood to school settings.

In their move from preschool to primary school, many Swedish children transition through preschool class, providing an important context for the study reported in Chap. 4. In this chapter, Hellblom-Thibblin et al. use an ecological model to consider the obstacles and challenges associated with these transitions for children who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Wilder and Lillvist (Chap. 5) also explore educational transitions for young children with special learning needs, presenting preliminary findings from an ongoing study undertaken with children transitioning from preschool to compulsory school for students with intellectual disabilities (CSSID). Aspects such as the transfer of knowledge, teacher attitudes and collaboration between home and school provide insights into the continuity of learning over the transition period for these children.

1.5.2 Transition to School for Indigenous Children

The theme of diversity and inclusion continues in Part II of this book, with a special focus on Indigenous children from Aotearoa New Zealand, and Australia. In Chap. 6, Hohepa and McIntosh, both Indigenous researchers from Aotearoa New Zealand, and Australia, respectively, provide an overview chapter that considers research related to the transition to school for Indigenous children in these two countries, Indigenous research approaches and the implications of these for educational transitions. The chapter adopts a critical post-colonial lens and demonstrates the importance of critical Indigenous research paradigms.

Hohepa and Paki (Chap. 7) follow with an outline of the history of educational provisions for Māori, the Indigenous people of Aotearoa, New Zealand. With an emphasis on the regeneration of language, cultural identity and values that are important to Māori communities, these authors outline elements that underpin effective transitions for Māori children into both Māori immersion and mainstream educational settings.

In the final chapter of Part II (Chap. 8), Dealtry et al. report on a study that draws from a larger multidisciplinary research project with an Aboriginal community in Australia. The smaller study reported in this chapter takes a social justice view of the way educators conceptualise and engage with Aboriginal children as they transition to school. The authors offer particular insights into the complexities of notions of diversity.

1.5.3 Continuity and Change as Children Start School

Part III of the book explores the notion of continuity, which has been widely debated in terms of its role in the transition to school (Dockett et al. 2014; Dunlop and Fabian 2002). The chapters in this section present continuity and change as being not only about academic learning but also about relationships, pedagogy and practice, curriculum, resources and support (Dockett and Perry 2014a).

Dockett and Einarsdóttir open Part III of this book with a comprehensive overview of research and literature related to continuity and change in educational transitions (Chap. 9). There is critical coverage of the debate around the role of these elements in transitions, and Dockett and Einarsdóttir urge readers to consider the opportunities that both continuity and change offer children, families and other stakeholders in the transition to school.

The other four chapters in this section each explore different aspects of continuity and change in educational transitions. Garðarsdóttir and Ólafsdóttir (Chap. 10) report on a study undertaken collaboratively with preschool educators in Iceland. This study focused on the implementation of the curriculum learning area, ‘health and well-being’, in the early childhood context and the way this might then be experienced by children when they transition into primary school settings. In Chap. 11,

also based on studies in Iceland, Karlsdóttir and Perry explore the role of play in the pedagogies of educational transitions as children move from preschool to primary school. In particular, these authors consider how children and their teachers can use children's participation repertoires (Carr 2001) to promote continuity across the transition.

Curriculum and pedagogy provide the focus for Chap. 12, in which Dockett et al. provide a preliminary analysis of the influence of two recent curriculum reforms in the Australian context. In this analysis, the continuity between curriculum documents for early childhood and school sectors is investigated, and the authors consider what this might mean for children's transitions between these settings. The final chapter of Part III (Chap. 13) describes a study undertaken in Iceland, which focused on mathematics and play. Garðarsdóttir et al. worked with educators in both a preschool and a primary school to establish pedagogical continuity in mathematics learning across the two settings. This study highlights some of the common and differing perspectives between educators in these settings and the way these influence children's transition experiences.

1.5.4 Borderlands, Bridges and Rites of Passage

Transition to school can be explored through the lens of 'crossing borders' (Brooker 2002; Garpelin 2011; Hartley et al. 2012; Peters 2004, 2014). Dockett et al. (2014) reflected that conceptualising the transition to school in this way raises a number of questions about both the border and the borderlands surrounding it and all those involved in ensuring safe passage for children through transition spaces. This section also draws on the work of van Gennep (1960), who conceptualised the transition to school as a 'rite of passage'.

In the opening chapter for Part IV (Chap. 14), Peters and Sandberg consider ways in which educational transitions have been theorised and conceptualised. These authors outline several studies that have used the concepts of traversing borders, crossing bridges and rites of passage to explore points of transition in various ways.

In Chap. 15, Sandberg et al. discuss the implications of pedagogy and practice in Sweden across preschool, preschool class and primary school for children's learning journeys. The authors draw on studies they have undertaken that focus on the activities in each of the three settings, as well as some of the associated challenges for children in their transition through the three school forms in their early years.

1.5.5 Into the Future

Part V explores future directions in educational transitions research. Dunlop (Chap. 16) introduces the idea of transitions as a tool for change, a perspective generated by the Scottish POET team through their ongoing projects. From this perspective, there is less focus on problematising transitions and more on demonstrating that successful transitions can result in positive, transformative changes for all stakeholders.

In Chap. 17, the POET project team leaders from each participating country bring the book to a close with a synthesis of themes emanating throughout the book and suggestions for future research in the field of educational transitions. Dockett et al. emphasise that commonalities from research undertaken in each of the five participating POET alliance countries have the potential to contribute significantly to addressing some of the challenges faced in this area.

1.6 Using This Book

The POET project has been one where some members have been able to sustain their involvement throughout the project's duration from 2012 to 2016, while others have visited the activities intermittently, as their circumstances allowed. In every case, each POET member has received some benefit from his or her involvement and engagement. To a large extent, readers of this book, which has emanated from the POET activities and underlying country projects, will be able to choose their level of engagement with the book – some will want to read it from cover to cover, while some will want to visit only certain sections or even single chapters. The editors and the authors have tried to ensure that these various levels of engagement are possible.

The editors believe that this book reflects the vision of the POET international alliance through collaborative writing and the wide scope of projects reported. While much of the book addresses educational transitions to primary school, there are considerations around educational transitions that are much broader than this. Hence, while the various chapters do consider important challenges and issues around transition to school, we hope that the agenda can be broadened substantially using the information in the book as a base.

From the individual projects reported in this book, the editors and authors know that their work is well received by others. This book is written for educational transitions researchers, policymakers, higher degree candidates and practitioners, in the hope that it will assist them in their own work, as we all strive for optimal educational transitions for all children, families, educators and other stakeholders.

As Dockett et al. highlight in Chap. 17, there is still much to be done and many new and interesting pathways to be explored through further quality research. Some of that will undoubtedly occur as a direct result of the POET international alliance

and will be undertaken by POET members. Much of this will be reported in other planned publications from the POET group. However, it is the editors and authors' hope that this book will inspire researchers, policymakers and practitioners beyond POET to choose their pathways and to assist all stakeholders in educational transitions to reach their optima.

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1.7 Collaboration Between Editors

A secret to sustainable and effective research activity in any field of work is for those more experienced to have a willingness to nurture those less experienced and then to put this into practice. At the heart of the POET alliance is the notion of mentoring less experienced colleagues. This notion is tangibly implemented within the context of POET through the promotion of collaboration between researchers at varying stages in their careers and consequently transmission of skills, knowledge and understanding.

In a number of ways, the editorship of this book exemplifies the underlying intention of the POET alliance to be a platform for mentoring. The first editor of this book, Nadine Ballam, is an early-career researcher. The willingness of more experienced researchers, Bob Perry and Anders Garpelin, to take on mentoring roles in this editorial team reflects, in action, precisely what was conceived in the initial planning of the POET collaboration. The existing partnership between these two experienced researchers has provided a safe, dependable foundation upon which someone less experienced can learn. This is significant and exemplifies that it is not only theoretical knowledge and understandings that are being transferred as part of the POET alliance but also the art of research and scholarship.

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Part I
Diversity and Inclusion in Transition to
School

Chapter 2

Diversity and Pedagogies in Educational Transitions

Tina Hellblom-Thibblin and Helen Marwick

This chapter presents issues regarding diversity and inclusion from different perspectives, involving various aspects of children and young people's learning and development related to educational transitions and practices. Several factors and conditions are highlighted as part of the explanation of how diversity can be understood and addressed pedagogically in different educational transitions. The chapter takes into account important issues on meeting diversity from an inclusive perspective with regard to the variety of cultural, socio-economic and individual conditions relating to young children's learning and development.

2.1 Introduction

All children have individual backgrounds, and, during their learning journeys from preschool to compulsory school, they can encounter different educational environments with new cultures, rules, norms and relationships (Corsaro and Molinari 2006; Flum and Kaplan 2012). These journeys may pose challenges and difficulties (Fabian and Dunlop 2006).

Peters (2014) emphasised the importance of recognising diversity within groups, with the focus being placed on observing different transitions and taking into account the complexity of children's learning journeys from early childhood to later school years. Diversity includes different cultures, social backgrounds, ethnic origins and languages. Other aspects of diversity include children's development in

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different pedagogical settings, socialisation and identity development (Flum and Kaplan 2012; Lago 2014). The competence of teachers appears to be of great value in order to be able to meet children's needs successfully (Dockett and Perry 2009). It is thus valuable to look at inclusive schools from the perspective of different pedagogical ideas and traditions (Göransson 2006).

An ecological approach to a child's development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006) makes it clear that children's individual experiences in different educational settings result from interactions between children and adults, requirements and expectations. Children, families and teachers may experience changes in relationships when entering the school context. For some children, entering school may present difficulty and even a feeling of anxiety (Dockett et al. 2011). Therefore, pedagogies are important for creating inclusive environments for all children's needs and requirements and are significant in educational transitions. This chapter introduces issues that are discussed in more detail in the following chapters in this section.

2.2 Diversity in Educational Settings

Diversity is an overarching concept, often used to describe the differences between children in educational settings. This term is also used when discussing the social backgrounds of individuals and their varying cultural, ethnic and language origins, as well as their learning and behaviour-related difficulties (Hjörne and Säljö 2014; Margetts 2002; Nusbaum 2013; Petriwskyj 2010). Other aspects of diversity include children's development in different pedagogical settings, socialisation and identity development (Flum and Kaplan 2012; Lago 2014). It is clear that the concept of diversity covers more than traditions and cultural expressions (Lunneblad 2006).

In recent years, diversity has been conceptualised as encompassing an increasing range of varied circumstances in relation to the needs and identities of individual children. Valuing these differences is central to promoting and achieving equality of opportunity and positive relations in the teaching and learning environment. The diversity of children in different educational activities can be perceived as either an asset or a challenge. Despite diversity often being associated with positive values, it is not an unproblematic concept (Hjörne and Säljö 2014). In other words, the term can be discussed from different points of departure and perspectives. One of the problems associated with discussions about diversity is the question of who decides or defines the differences and on what grounds (Lahdenperä 2011). The term can therefore be understood in different ways; it could be based on notions that are conceptualised in discussions about children in different educational environments, such as preschool and school (Markström 2005). The ways children are discussed and perceived influence how they are received (Hacking 1999; Harwood and Allen 2014; Mowat 2010).

Despite its potentially positive meaning, the term 'diversity' is often associated with problems and difficulties. There are different circumstances to be considered

when exploring this issue. The ways children's differences are viewed can be linked, during various periods, to society's actual ideals and attitudes towards deviation. During the course of history, different terms have been used to represent the concept of diversity. What was regarded at the beginning of the twentieth century as child-rearing problems or moral 'aberrations' are increasingly becoming seen as phenomena or conditions related to social factors or as states of ill health or syndromes (Hellblom-Thibblin 2004). The ideals that emerge during different periods can affect people's views and, thereby, understanding of differences and diversity.

Another concern is the way children's different preconditions for learning acquire significance in the transitions from preschool to the different levels of compulsory school. All children, with their individual backgrounds, need to be provided with opportunities in preschool and compulsory school to develop and feel the joy of learning and overcoming difficulties. Hellblom-Thibblin (2004) argued that knowledge and understanding about children's different abilities and experiences can contribute to a variety of educational measures on both an individual basis and at a more general organisational level.

2.3 Educational Transitions and Pedagogical Approaches

Teaching professionals, parents and children's perceptions of the transition period are of great importance, as are the clear gathering of information, effective communication, a responsive environment and inclusive pedagogy for all children entering into an educational setting (Dunlop et al. 2008). The term 'transition' can be understood as a phenomenon 'involving a range of interactions and processes over time, experienced in different ways by different people in different contexts' (Dockett et al. 2014, p. 3). The transitions from a home environment to a preschool environment and then to formal schooling are important events in a child's learning journey (Ainscow and Miles 2008; Garpelin 2014). Moving to the first year at school is also an important educational transition for children (Einarsdóttir 2006; Sandberg 2012) and can have consequences for future transitions in school (Dockett et al. 2011). Knowledge of the variation in children's needs is important for developing different pedagogies in educational transitions (Dockett and Perry 2009; Peters 2014).

Transitions to school can be complex. In school settings, children of various backgrounds come together. Peers and Fleer (2014) emphasised the value of understanding how group affiliations or the sense of belonging to a group can alter and vary for a child in relation to transitions from preschool and first grade in primary school.

Teachers' knowledge and pedagogical strategies are important for supporting successful transitions to school (Petriwskyj et al. 2014). The ways in which children with various conditions are received, and the opportunities created for their participation in different groups, are important in developing a sense of belonging (Ackesjö 2014). While transition can be a point of stress and vulnerability for children and

families, it can also be a potential tool or opportunity for change (Fabian 2007). Transitions can be related to specific events or substantial roles or identities in a society (Garpelin 2003). Several studies have highlighted the teacher's role in successful transitions and for learning (Dockett and Perry 2004), as well as educational leaders' views on how to work with children who need additional support in preschool and school (Lindqvist and Nilholm 2013).

Educational transitions between preschool and school can pay attention to relationships (Corsaro and Molinari 2008) or processes. Lago (2014) regarded identity, culture, status and role as parts of these processes, while Noel (2010) saw the relationship between the preschool and the primary school, as well as other stakeholders, as important in the transition to school. Thomas and Dykes (2011) called for new practical and relevant proposals to promote successful transitions for all pupils. The importance of a well-established plan for the transition from preschool to primary school has been highlighted in several studies (Margetts 2002; Rimm-Kaufman et al. 2000). A transition-to-school programme may include planned activities or processes in which a number of people collaborate to contribute to a successful transition. Teachers' knowledge is a key factor in educational transitions and hence for educational strategies (Peters 2014).

2.4 A Dynamic Ecological Approach to Transitions

In current research there is consensus that development occurs through the interaction of many different factors. A dynamic ecological approach notes the importance of early transitions for later school success (Dockett and Perry 2004). The ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006) provides a framework for understanding multiple levels of influence on children's learning and development, such as those in various educational transitions. According to transitions researchers, there are several interactive variables to consider, such as the interactions between individuals and the contexts in which relationships are created (Corsaro and Molinari 2006; Dockett et al. 2014; Peters 2014):

The combination of interactions, change and time sets up a dynamic model in which the transition to school can be explored by focusing on the overlapping or intersecting contexts of children's experience. (Dockett et al. 2014, p. 5)

Learning can be regarded as a social activity arising from interactions between individuals and the environment. Research shows that learning, inclusion and diversity interact with one another (Aalsvoort et al. 2012). Learning is a process in which identities are formed, and, during transitions from one school form to another, these identities can change and develop (Mowat 2014). To promote learning and development for all children, it is important to consider their different backgrounds in order to adapt successfully to their needs and hence provide opportunities to experience meaningfulness, comprehensibility and context in their educational lives (Antonovsky 1979; Krasny et al. 2010). In a study undertaken by Mowat (2014),