

SIG Report

Special Interest Group

Transitions

SIG Convenors

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Number of SIG members

50

Activities undertaken by the SIG since establishment

The Transition SIG celebrated 20 years this year! The group formed at EECERA in London 2000. It is worth celebrating! We think it important to acknowledge the original members of the Transitions SIG and the contribution they have made (and continue to make) to transitions research. You will recognize many names – so please join with us in sending a cheer their way!

Aline Wendy Dunlop (co-convenor)

Hilary Fabian (co-convenor)

Wilfried Griebel

Renate Niesel

Kay Margetts

Anna Keinig

Inge Johansson

Johanna Einarsdottir

Carmen Dalli

Stig Brostrom

Christine Clarke

Sally Peters

Report on SIG Activities this past year

While we were disappointed we couldn't meet in Zagreb this year, we were excited to be able to gather together in a virtual SIG meeting. As well as those who were planning to attend the EECERA conference, we could also welcome those who would have been unable to travel to Zagreb, but who have valuable insights to share.

Given the current circumstances, we changed the format of this year's SIG meeting to focus on the topic of Transitions during the pandemic. Many of us are, or have been, deeply affected by the pandemic, and have been considering the ways in which transitions approaches and practices might be used to help children, families, educators, communities and systems manage the many changes and complexities they face.

First, Helena Ackesjö presented notes from Sweden about how the open preschools, schools and school-age educare centers have been especially important for children during the pandemic. It has been important to be served a nutritious free hot meal every day, to have a warm arm to crawl into and to be surrounded by safe adults who are able to and can answer their questions and take their concerns seriously. This offers a normality in everyday life and thus becomes important and a strong safety net for children when society is in crisis.

Second, Kathryn Hopps from Australia presented a study about the essential transition practices: Despite the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, or perhaps because of them, some transition practices have emerged as

essential for supporting children and families starting school. Although there were significant challenges posed by COVID-19 restrictions, these also provided an opportunity to consider new practices, reinvent existing ones and innovate to support a positive transition to school for all children and families. The study is now published: <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/kindergarten/research-insights/starting-school-essential-transition-practices?fbclid=IwAR37NnXnc19Lr8bGZajY4EsjDde-U6KuG6SVmAptK-kQMqGnX0tXKONfcY>

Third, Aline-Wendy Dunlop presented thoughts from Scotland about school transitions in the year of COVID-19. The presentation was based on a newly constructed model Transitions in Practice Framework: An integrative transitions model linking research, policy and practice discussing Transitions Networks, Transitions Readiness, Transitions Ease and Transitions Capital.

Transition during the pandemic is about considering what really matters for our youngest children. We may need to continue discussing transitions practices and issues from the year of COVID-19 and beyond for a long time. Will all transition practices considered important be erased – or strengthened – in the future? Will children start school without taking part in the rituals or routines children have participated in during “all times”? Maybe the transformation of transition practices is more important than ever?

In addition to the presentations above, a few more members presented important research about transitions during the year of COVID-19:

Petra (Germany) presented a study about the issues regarding the transition from preschool to school after the school closing and all preparatory activities were cancelled. The study will focus how it can be ensured that children, parents and professionals have a sense of secure attachment during transition in times of a pandemic.

Angel (UK) focused on wellbeing. What psychological implications does returning to school have for young children? Are they anxious, happy or scared after the lockdown? What do we need to know as parents/teachers? Angel discussed these matters with Emeritus Professor Edward Melhuish from the University of Oxford in an interview with via Sky News:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nbJlM3xgmU&fbclid=IwAR1YrYwlpVwn_PfYjUi_yub1Bsb_iCnZTwwsH15nFwegF7lhflg1yPhNnM

We know that many members of the Transitions SIG have been active in their transitions work during the pandemic. We are eager to hear your reports, ideas and suggestions via the Facebook page or, if you prefer, Helen and Sue can circulate information.

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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