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**Trends and tensions: Australian and international research about starting school.**

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## **Trends and tensions: Australian and international research about starting school**

### **Abstract**

This paper details and compares the discernable trends observed in a wide-ranging review of the recent starting school literature in Australia and beyond. More than half of the research reviewed considers children's readiness for school. This research is critiqued through a three-way view of readiness: child readiness; school readiness; and support available through the family. Distinctions between transition to school and school readiness are made and the consequences of these are investigated for all key participants in the transition process: children, educators and families. The paper concludes with a critical consideration of tensions in the research around starting school.

## Trends and tensions: Australian and international research about starting school

### Introduction

The significance of the early childhood years for later development and the importance of investing in high quality early childhood education has promoted a great deal of interest in transition to school. The impact of this interest can be seen in Australia across policy, practice and research in both government and non-government organisations.

At the level of national policy, the Australian Government has committed to an early years reform agenda, incorporating the *National Quality Framework* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), (2011), and the first national curriculum framework for early childhood education (DEEWR, 2009). Accompanying these frameworks have been commitments to improving educational provision and outcomes for Indigenous children, promoting universal access to early childhood education in the year before school and strengthening the early childhood workforce. At the same time, the first national school curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2010) is being developed and will soon be implemented nation-wide.

Across these agendas, the transition to school has assumed educational significance as a potential connection between the two new curricula approaches, and social significance as a means of promoting ongoing, positive engagement with school. For example, a positive start to school education, leading to greater and ongoing connection with school, has been identified as a factor in disrupting cycles of social and economic disadvantage (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009; Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards, & Hayes, 2008).

The national implementation of programs targeting children's school readiness, such as the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPO) (Dean & Leung, 2010), and the funding of a population measure of children's readiness through the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) (Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) & Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2009), are further evidence of political interest. Underlying these policy approaches is the assumption that "improved transition to school" leads to "improved educational, employment, health and wellbeing outcomes" and that this, in turn, is linked to reducing "inequalities in outcomes between groups of children" (COAG, 2009, p. 4).

At the state and territory government level, school systems and early childhood organisations interpret Australian Government policies in different ways. All Australian states and territories promote the importance of a positive transition to school but adopt different strategies to accomplish such transitions. An example is the Victorian initiative, *Transition: A Positive Start to School* (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria, 2012), which incorporates elements of research, policy and practice. In addition, state-based early childhood organisations provide a range of information and guidance for early childhood educators. At local levels, many schools and early childhood organisations have developed transition to school programs. These vary considerably, in terms of participants, program, location, length of time and outcomes.

Transition to school has also featured as a priority in the work of several other Australian organisations. Recent initiatives include linking a positive transition to school with children's mental

health and wellbeing (Hirst, Jervis, Visagie, Sojo, & Cavanagh, 2011); discussion papers and policy briefs exploring transition and school readiness (CCCH, 2008; Farrar, Goldfeld, & Moore, 2007), some with a particular focus on Indigenous children and families (Dockett, Perry, & Kearney, 2010; McTurk, Lea, Nutton, & Carpetis, 20011); and the provision of a range of information for families in order to support a positive start to school.

The current focus on transition to school as a critical element of children's future school engagement and outcomes has emerged in Australia over the past two decades, informed by a range of Australian and international research. Starting around the 1990s, Australian researchers noted local interest in the age of school entry (Gifford, 1992), as well as international attention to children's ability to "settle in" to school (David, 1990). This discussion also was informed by the National Education Goals Panel (1991) in the US, and their focus on children starting school ready to learn. Since this time, there has been a steady increase in research investigating both the transition to school and school readiness. The influence of international issues and research has continued, with increasing interest in developing evidence, policy and practice that both reflects Australian contexts and positions Australia within international education debates.

In the remainder of this paper, we review recent research and identify a number of tensions emerging from the concerted focus on readiness and transition to school. We build on the review of trends in the conceptualisation of transition the school undertaken by Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Tayler (2005), considering publications since this date. We draw only on English language publications, and note that this provides a limited view of worldwide research. However, this is the research that is most accessible within Australia.

### **Research trends**

The aim of the review is to map current trends in research related to transition to school, including readiness. The primary search strategy drew on PsychInfo and ERIC journal databases for the period 2005-2012. A range of key terms was used in the search, including transition, school, kindergarten, readiness, elementary school, early childhood, Australia, and various combinations of these. This search was complemented by reference to commissioned reports, literature reviews, policy briefs and other documents featuring Australian research. The review identified 300 papers published in peer-reviewed journals; 56 of which used Australian data. The remaining articles were primarily North American (n=198), though 46 articles reported research in Asia (11), Europe (13), Scandinavia (8), the UK (7), New Zealand (6) and Africa (1).

Up to three major foci were identified for each relevant paper. In practice, most papers were able to be allocated to one category. Twenty-five and ten papers respectively, were categorised as contributing to two or three foci. Frequency counts were the basis of categorisation according to the foci in Table 1.

Focus	International (n= 300)	Australia (n=56)
Readiness –assessment with EDI/AEDI	59	11
Readiness – assessment, other	9	2
Readiness of children with special needs	30	5
Readiness of children living in disadvantage	13	3
Readiness of children with culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD)	12	0
Readiness of Aboriginal/Indigenous children	6	4
Readiness of other children	3	1
Preschool and readiness	7	0
Readiness as a predictor of later school success	6	0
Programs to develop readiness	4	0
Child factors in readiness	23	7
Ready schools	5	0
Curriculum areas and readiness	15	0
Educators' perspectives of readiness	13	1
Evaluation of readiness/transition programs	23	0
Transition to school – practices and policies	25	6
Perceptions/expectations of parents/educators at transition	24	4
Children's perspectives of transition	10	5
Parent/family practices to support transition/readiness	16	0
Programs for parents	4	4
Parent/family issues	3	0
Community/neighbourhood	7	1
Other	20	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>60</b>

Table 1. Main foci of research articles exploring starting school, 2005-2012.

### *Readiness*

Readiness predominated in the research articles considered, with over 60% (182) of articles addressing some aspect of readiness. This compares with 22% (65) addressing transition. The same predominance is evident in Australian research, with 33 articles (55%) exploring readiness in some way. A substantial number of the articles about readiness have detailed the development, validation and implementation of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), with Australian research reporting the subsequent development and use of the Australian adaptation of the EDI, the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), and comparison of data from Australia with other countries using the EDI. Special issues of the journals *Social Indicators Research* (Guhn, Zumbo, Janus, & Hertzman, 2011) and *Early Education and Development* (Guhn, Janus, & Hertzman, 2007), have featured this research. Relatively few articles have critiqued the EDI/AEDI (Agbenyega, 2009; Li, D'Angiulli, & Kendall, 2007) and these have questioned the developmental focus and its relevance for culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Such criticism has been rebutted and further research exploring the EDI in diverse contexts, with diverse populations, has been undertaken (Muhajarine, Puchala, & Janus, 2011). Several other approaches to assessing readiness have promoted specific child measures (de Lemos, 2008; Duncan & Rafter, 2005), while others have considered the role of relationships in promoting readiness (Pelletier & Corter, 2005).

The readiness status of specific groups of children also features heavily in the research reviewed. Groups identified in the international literature included children with special needs (30 articles), children living in disadvantage (13), children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (12) and Indigenous children (6). In many cases, children within these groups were considered to be 'less ready' for school than their counterparts from non-marginalised groups. They were deemed to face specific difficulties and/or challenges as they started school and, as a consequence, were described as requiring extra assistance or intervention in order to facilitate a positive start to school (Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010; Daley, Munk, & Carlson, 2011; Qunitero & McIntyre, 2011; Smart et al., 2008). In contrast, several Australian studies identified particular concerns related to inconsistent service provision (Dockett, Perry, & Kearney, 2011) and the nature of inclusive pedagogy and practice as children started school (Petriwskyj, 2010), or questioned current policy and practice agendas and the impact of these for specific groups of children (Taylor, 2011). Most of the articles addressing the readiness of Indigenous children were Australian. While all of these acknowledged the relatively limited levels of educational engagement and outcomes from Aboriginal children nationally, a common theme across this research was the questioning of methods for assessing the readiness of Aboriginal children and the implications of using inappropriate measures for such assessment (Dockett, Mason, & Perry, 2006; McTurk et al., 2011).

In the international literature, a number of child factors were related to readiness. These included children's cognitive skills and motivation (Berhenke, Miller, Brown, Seifer, & Dickstein, 2011), and behaviour (Eivers, Brendgen, & Borge, 2010). Several Australian studies examined the knowledge and skills children possessed at the time of starting school (King & Boardman, 2006; Wildy & Styles, 2008). Connections between children's age and readiness have featured in some research, particularly around the issue of delayed kindergarten entry or redshirting (Frey, 2005). This research identifies initial performance gaps between older and younger children, but also notes that these level off at middle school (Oshima & Domaleski, 2006). While age of school entry has been a consistent issue in policy discussions around starting school (Gifford, 1992), there has been relatively little Australian research investigating the role of children's age and readiness. From these few studies, and in keeping with international research, recent Australian studies have identified increasing trends for the practice of delayed school entry among some families (Edwards, Taylor, & Fiorini, 2011) and suggested that delayed school entry has little long term effect (Martin, 2009).

Absent from the Australian research reviewed were reports of readiness that considered the role of preschool education in promoting children's readiness. Four of the seven international studies that reported the generally positive effect of preschool attendance on children's readiness were from the US (for example, Howes et al., 2008). The remaining three articles reported research in Turkey, Slovenia and China, indicating that focus on readiness is not confined to the English-speaking world.

Both Canadian and US research were reported in studies exploring connections between children's readiness and later academic and/or social outcomes (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). North American research also featured in the description and/or evaluation of programs designed to promote children's readiness. Several of the programs reported were US state-based initiatives (Gormley & Gayer, 2005), or evaluation studies (Clark & Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2008). The notion of ready schools that was highlighted by the National Education Goals Panel (1997) has also been discussed (Curtis & Simons, 2008).

The contribution of literacy and numeracy to readiness was highlighted internationally (Fuchs et al. 2010; Yangin, 2009), as was the reciprocal relationship between readiness and Australian children's early literacy and numeracy achievement (Murray & Harrison, 2011). The role of arts and music curricula in boosting children's readiness for school was also explored (Phillips, Gorton, Pinciotti, & Sachdev, 2010).

Studies of teacher beliefs or perceptions (Gill, Winters, & Friedman, 2006), particularly about what constituted children's school readiness or the experiences most likely to prepare children for school (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes, & Karoly, 2009) were coded into the category of educators' perspectives. In several studies, these beliefs or perceptions were compared with those of parents, school administrators or, on rare occasions, children. The only Australian study explored the readiness perspectives of first-year-of-school teachers in one school, concluding that these teachers demonstrated a broad definition of readiness, incorporating child, family, community and school factors (Noel, 2010).

Readiness assumed a great deal of importance in the Australian and international literature. The focus on assessing children's readiness has resulted in the development of a range of measures – including individual child and population measures – and these have been the subject of validation, application and evaluation. Some of these measures generate extensive data bases (such as the EDI/AEDI). Others draw on existing data, such as the US studies using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K), or Head Start program data. Apart from the studies reporting the AEDI, much of the Australian research has involved smaller scale, often qualitative research. Considerable attention has been directed towards the readiness of children described as marginalised. Indeed, in their review of research, Rosier and McDonald (2011, p.1) conclude that “in Australia, the transition to school is likely to be more challenging for children from financially disadvantaged families, Indigenous families, families with children who have a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families”, largely because of their levels of readiness. While there is some argument for a model of readiness based on relationships (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006) that considers child, family, school and community factors (Dockett & Perry, 2009), there remains a strong focus on the preparedness of individual children to start school.

### *Transition*

Of the 65 articles primarily addressing transition, 38% (25) outlined transition practices and policies, reflecting a similar focus to that identified by Petriwskyj et al. (2005). Six Australian studies described specific transition programs or practices (for example, Binstadt, 2010; Margetts, 2007). While reports of local transition practices are also evident in the international literature (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008; Fisher, 2011), larger scale studies examining the use of transition practices and children's adjustment as well as academic outcomes also feature (Ahtola et al. 2011; Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005). Across these studies there is consensus that transition practices can have a positive impact on children's adjustment to school, with greater effect noted when children participate in more, rather than fewer, transition practices.

The expectations of those involved in transition to school were explored in 24 studies. Reports of parent (Sanavagarapu & Perry, 2005) and teacher expectations (Barblett, Barratt-Pugh, Kilgallon, & Maloney, 2011; Gill et al., 2006), and comparisons of these perspectives (Mirkhil, 2010; Petrakos, 2011), conclude that parents and teachers recognise the importance of working together to promote



a positive start to school, while also noting that this does not always happen. The importance of home-school communication is also highlighted in other research (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005).

Five Australian studies reported children's perspectives of transition. These investigations recognise that young children are capable and competent narrators of their experiences and that much can be gained from the perspectives of those most directly involved in the transition to school (Jackson & Cartmel, 2010; MacDonald, 2009). In some instances, recognition of children's perspectives has led to changes in transition practices (Perry & Dockett, 2011).

When compared with research on readiness, transition research was more likely to report small scale, qualitative studies, detailing transition practices or programs and/or considering the perspectives of a range of stakeholders. A number of these were descriptive or evaluative studies. The aim of many transition programs was described as 'easing' or 'smoothing' the transition process, suggesting that the start to school was inherently challenging, particularly for children who were considered disadvantaged.

#### *Parents, families and communities*

Research examining parent, family and community issues as children start school was reported in 30 articles (10%). Five of these used Australian data. Apart from parents' beliefs about transition, which were considered above, parent behaviours and/or practices constituted the most common feature of this research. The stability of relationships within families (Cooper, Osborne, Beck, & McLanahan, 2011), parenting style (Walker & McPhee, 2011), parental attitudes and beliefs (Joe & Davis, 2009), parents' own recollections and experiences of school (Miller, Dilworth-Bart, & Hane, 2011; Turunen, 2012), and their involvement in education (Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010), all contribute to children's experiences of starting school. The nature of the home learning environment (Melhuish et al., 2008) and preparation activities (Qunitero & McIntyre, 2011), also are influential. The importance of the family context – including the neighbourhood or community in which families are located – is also noted as a contributing factor to children's transition to school (Nettles, Caughy, & O'Campo, 2008).

Transition to school is also recognised as a time of potential stress for families (De Caro & Wortham, 2011; Griebel & Niesel, 2009). This is the impetus for Australian studies which report the development of parenting programs with specific elements supporting parents as they manage the transition to school. Three programs – the Pathways to Prevention program (Freiberg et al., 2005), Transition to Primary School Parent Program (Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews, & Kienhuis, 2010) and Triple P–Positive Parenting Program (Sanders et al., 2008) operate on the principle that supporting parents and enhancing their skills to manage interactions with their children, as well as schools, builds their capacity to support the children and promote a positive start to school.

The research trends identified in this review suggest that even when the terminology of transition is used, there remains an underlying focus on readiness, particularly children's readiness for school. A great deal of research attention has been directed towards the development and validation of measures to assess readiness, both at the individual and the population level. Less attention has been paid to measures examining the readiness of schools or educators. Recognition that specific groups of children may face significant challenges as they start school features strongly in the research. Australian research reflects these same trends. However, it also directs attention to the

perspectives of those involved in transition, including children, as well as the principle of strengthening parent support and parenting as children start school.

### **Research tensions**

The research reviewed also suggests a number of tensions. These are reported below as questions, with the aim of provoking discussion, rather than offering answers.

#### *What is the role of readiness in transition?*

The terms 'readiness' and 'transition' are often used together, yet can be interpreted to mean many different things. In the research reviewed, the term 'readiness' is often used to describe characteristics of individual children or populations. While broad definitions of readiness have been promoted (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005), there remains a focus on children's readiness, rather than on ready schools, families or communities.

With the prevalence of the focus on children's readiness, it is possible to consider children ready, or unready, for school. Coupled with the identification of specific groups as likely to experience challenges when starting school, there is the potential for children who have special needs, live in disadvantaged circumstances, are Indigenous, or have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, to be considered unready. This situation can be exacerbated by the ways in which readiness is assessed, and compounded by the nature of early school assessment.

The broader concept of 'transition' is usually applied to collections of practices or programs. Often the focus of these activities is to build both familiarity and relationships around school. Transition programs are usually contextually bound, though there are practices that are common to many programs. While the nature of transition programs varies considerably, they tend to extend over time, rather than focus on the first day of school, reflecting the "trend towards more complex understandings of transitions emphasising continuity of children's experiences, partnerships with stakeholders, and systems coherence, across extended time periods" (Petriwskyj et al., 2005, p. 1).

The role of readiness within transition programs remains unclear, as does the contribution of transition programs to perceptions of readiness. However, there is concern that focusing on narrow definitions of school readiness – typically involving academic skills – is contrary to the traditional holistic focus on early childhood programs and may result in the pushing down of academic curriculum into the early childhood years (Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, 2008).

#### *What counts as evidence to support evidence-based policy and practice?*

A feature of much the US research relating to readiness is the use of large scale data bases. As other countries embrace large-scale longitudinal studies, such as the Growing Up series of projects in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, and Ireland, and similar European studies, and as countries introduce population measures of readiness based on the EDI, the stage is set for even greater investigation of readiness in specific contexts, for specific groups and over time. In countries which operate regular national testing regimes, there is also the potential for data linkages. For example, in Australia, there is the potential for linkages between AEDI data, data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2012) and from the National

Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (ACARA, 2012). Analysis of these linked data sets can provide opportunities for sophisticated statistical analyses of quite specific research questions, and can contribute a range of evidence about specific populations. However, secondary data analysis also behoves questioning of the original sampling and purposes of data collection, recognising that existing data sets provide answers to some, but not all, research questions (Hussein, 2011).

Smaller scale, qualitative studies do not generate the explanatory power or generalisability of large scale studies. However, they do contribute a great deal to our understanding of the experiences and expectations of those involved in transition and serve to remind us all that individuals, communities and contexts make a difference in all human endeavours. They also serve to remind us that there are multiples transitions, as no two children experience transition to school in exactly the same way: for each child, the transition to school is unique.

*What is the connection between a positive start to school and educational outcomes?*

It is clear that starting school is an issue that extends well beyond the educational community. In addition to educational journals, research reviewed was reported in economic, social policy, medical, psychology and family fora. One consequence is that a positive start to school is promoted as having a number of potential benefits in multiple areas – somewhat akin to the argument for investing in early childhood education. The existing research evidence does indicate that there are long term implications from a positive start to school, across both academic and social outcomes (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998). However, positioning a positive school start as a potential inoculation against future challenges could mean that later events are ignored or not supported. For example, some children will have a less than ideal start to school, yet experience early school education that is supportive and challenging, and that promotes positive outcomes. Similarly, limited outcomes may be demonstrated by children who experience a positive transition to school, followed by a disengaging and non-supportive early school environment. In short, while the transition to school is important, so too is what happens once children are at school. Indeed, it is possible to argue that school readiness develops as children experience school and manage the various contexts and demands they encounter at school. This view posits that school and classroom practices, as well as the context of school, shape experiences of school (Peters, 2010).

*What is the role of early childhood education in the transition to school?*

Across much of the literature, there is support for the notion that participation in early childhood education settings facilitates a positive start to school. The reasons for this vary, but include opportunities afforded by these settings to engage in a range of preparatory social and academic activities and to experience new learning environments. While it is acknowledged that the quality of prior-to-school services is important in promoting a positive transition to school (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2007), there appears to be the belief that “attendance at early childhood education and care services is important for a successful transition to school” (Rosier & McDonald, 2011, p.3). This is particularly the case for children considered disadvantaged in some way. While the benefits of high quality early childhood education have been reported widely (Sylva et al., 2007), the assumption that a successful transition to school is linked to participation in early childhood education leads to the corollary – that those children who do not participate in early childhood education will have a problematic transition.

### *Should we promote seamless and smooth transitions?*

The aim of many transition programs was described as ‘easing’ or ‘smoothing’ the transition process, sometimes with the aim of promoting continuity between settings such as home or early childhood education and school. One way to promote continuity would be to have common curricula in the prior-to-school and early school years. However, any such move would be contested strongly by both sectors (Petriwskyj et al., 2005). Recent discussions argue for recognition of the differences across settings, accompanied by the provision of appropriate support to enable all involved (children, parents and educators) to navigate the challenges (Peters, 2010).

There is consistent research evidence that children (and their families) encounter a number of changes as children start school. Marked discontinuities are reported between home, prior-to-school setting and school, notably across physical, social and philosophical dimensions (Fabian, 2001). Several studies highlight these differences and call for greater continuity, particularly across prior-to-school and school contexts. However, an alternative approach acknowledges the changes encountered during the transition to school and recognises the strengths of children, families and communities as they navigate change and discontinuity. Appropriate support remains important, but this approach challenges the assumptions that the transition to school is necessarily a time of challenge and problems for all, and that this is particularly the case for children (and their families) from marginalised groups. In promoting a seamless approach to transition, we run the risk of removing many of the challenges and changes that children expect to encounter when they start school. A different question might be “How do we promote both continuity and change as children start school?”, recognising that both elements are integral to successful and positive transitions.

### *Is the transition to school a linear process?*

There is considerable evidence that children have many different opportunities for learning, as well as access to different resources and experiences before school (Melhuish et al., 2008). Yet a number of transition programs and approaches to readiness imply that children have had similar experiences and opportunities and will build on these in particular ways, as they make the transition to school.

The diversity of children’s experiences is often not captured in programs or practices which regard transition as a series of specific, “discernable events, experienced in a linear sequence” (Ecclestone, 2009, p. 19) and with predictable patterns and normative expectations. Considering transition to school as a linear process can influence decisions about what constitutes a successful transition and who is likely to make this. Alternative approaches to transition emphasise the processes of transition, particularly related to relationship building, rather than the practices (Petriwskyj et al., 2005).

### **Conclusion**

Analysis of the wealth of research investigating children’s transition to school reveals a number of trends and tensions. While there seems to be a general commitment to promoting positive transitions to school for children, conceptualisations of transition - its nature, purpose and impact - differ. Far from being negative, this reflects the importance of varying contexts and approaches as well as multiple experiences of transition. However, one consequence of this is that the research evidence supporting particular approaches to transition is often descriptive or evaluative. This

contrasts with much of the readiness research. While readiness itself remains a contested term, the research corpus identifies a number of factors and, from this, generates a set of conditions under which children are likely to experience a positive start to school.

The contrasting approaches contribute to the tensions identified in this paper. A focus on readiness, particularly on the readiness attributes of children, has the potential to narrow the scope of transition programs, while focus on broad conceptualisations of readiness that incorporate child, family, school and community factors can, in turn, expand the focus of transition programs and practices.

Recognising the diversity of experiences and backgrounds of children and their families is an important element of promoting a positive start to school. This can be hard to achieve if most attention is directed towards assessing children's skills in literacy and numeracy. It can be particularly hard if it is accompanied by expectations that children from marginalised groups have neither the skills nor the experiences to make the most of educational opportunities.

The current levels of social, political and educational interest in transition to school provide opportunities to boost recognition of the importance of high quality early childhood experiences for all children. At the same time, this interest can also increase the pressure to identify 'what works'. Evidence from effective transition experiences suggest that there is no one best model. Rather, research emphasises the importance of contextually and culturally relevant approaches that focus on relationship building among all of those involved in the transition to school. At a time when we are becoming more aware of the complexity of transition, we need to be wary of attempts to simplify it by reducing it to a series of practices or actions.

In the past decade, a great deal of research has contributed to understandings of children's transition to school. In recognising this extensive range of work, we note consistencies and challenges, with the aim of providing guidance for future research and provoking discussion of its implications.

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