

**A STUDY OF TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL
AND HOME CONTEXTS TO GRADE 1
IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY**

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A STUDY OF TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL AND HOME CONTEXTS TO GRADE 1 IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

by

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DECLARATION

I, N.C. Phatudi (Student number 23315718), declare that:

“A study of transition from preschool and home contexts to Grade 1 in a developing country”

Is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This thesis was not previously submitted by me for any degree at another university.

Nkidi Caroline Phatudi

Date

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL OR HOME CONTEXTS TO GRADE 1 IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

The introduction of Grade R (Reception Year) and its curriculum in early childhood education has been a key policy initiative, but despite the importance of this level of education the demands of the transition from Grade R to Grade 1 are not explicitly discussed. Official documents note the likely difficulties and challenges inherent in the transition of children from preschool and home into the primary school environment but they do not explicitly say how these difficulties can be dealt with.

This study investigated the implementation of transition policy and existing practices for children transiting from preschool or the home into Grade 1 in South Africa's schools. A case study of two purposively selected schools, from two different provinces, explored the impact of transition on both children's adjustment to their new environment and the school itself. Key policy documents were initially analysed, and key informants in government and non governmental organisations (NGOs) were interviewed in relation to aspects of the policy guidelines and practices for transition to school. Participating principals, teachers, parents and children as subjects were interviewed to identify their perspectives about transition and how they deal with it.

The social, behavioural and academic adjustment of 6 children from each of the two schools was investigated using the Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS). The results show that although some differences in the adjustment of children between the two case study schools were noted, it appeared that preschooled children were more likely to make better adjustments than non-preschooled (home) children. The study also revealed that schools' strategies for dealing with transitions are not informed by the government's transition policies and guidelines. Instead, the two schools devised their own in-house strategies to deal with transitions and these differed from one school to another.

The study also highlights that teachers are not familiar with policies governing their working lives. The schools studied also lamented the lack of continuity in the curricula and the way of life between the school and preschool despite policies enacted to deal with this disjuncture. Whilst the findings show a disparity between the adjustments of preschooled children and their home counterparts a longitudinal study involving more case schools would provide greater insight into preschool grade 1 transition in a developing South Africa.

The educational and policy implications of the study are discussed with regard to important processes and structures put in place for the transition process of children entering into primary schools.

While case study findings cannot be generalised the results can be beneficial in informing other similar contexts grappling with transitions. The study highlights important processes undertaken in the adjustment of children into primary schools, however it also revealed some shortcomings which have serious implications for policy and practice. “Policy literacy” should be embarked upon to familiarise teachers as end users with what policy entails. Every school should have a transition programme that would help orientate and settle in the new entrants into the school environment.

Key Words: Transition, preschools, primary schools, policy position, social skills, adaptive behaviours, NGOs, disadvantaged contexts, developed world, home.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2	RATIONALE.....	1
1.3	THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR ECD AND THE TRANSITION TO GRADE 1	4
1.4	THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THIS STUDY	8
	1.4.1 Transitions as influenced by variables in environment.....	9
1.5	TRANSITION EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS.....	11
	1.5.1 Research of transitions to primary schools.....	11
	1.5.2 Children’s experiences of transitions.....	11
	1.5.3 Children’s adjustment to school	13
	1.5.4 Teachers’ views.....	14
	1.5.5 Parental experiences of transitions.....	16
1.6	KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	17
1.7	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	18
1.8	SAMPLING	19
1.9	CONTEXT OF STUDY	20
1.10	DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES	21
1.11	DATA ANALYSIS.....	22
1.12	LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY	22
	1.12.1 Limitations	22
	1.12.2 Assumptions	23
1.13	OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS IN STUDY.....	23
1.14	CONCLUSION.....	25

CHAPTER 2

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE ON CHILDREN'S TRANSITIONS

2.1	INTRODUCTION	26
2.2	STATE OF RESEARCH ON TRANSITIONS TO PRIMARY SCHOOL.....	27
	2.2.1 Children's adjustment to school	31
	2.2.2 Teachers' views	33
	2.2.3 Parental views on transition	36
2.3	GENERAL LIMITATIONS OF TRANSITION RESEARCH.....	39
	2.3.1 First World contexts of transition studies.....	39
	2.3.2 Cohesion among participants in transitions.....	40
	2.3.3 Importance of school-family relationship	43
	2.3.4 The developmental theory bias of transition studies.....	45
	2.3.5 The universal construction of childhood	46
	2.3.6 The silencing of children's voices in implementation plans	47
	2.3.7 The age-of-entry problem in transition studies	49
	2.3.8 Cognitive development and socio-emotional development	51
	2.3.9 Preschool to primary school bias in transition research.....	52
2.4	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH ON TRANSITIONS FOR MY STUDY.....	54
2.5	CONCLUSION.....	55

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – VARIABLES SHAPING THE TRANSITION PROCESS

3.1	INTRODUCTION	57
3.2	CONCEPTIONS OF TRANSITION	57
3.3	BRONFENBRENNER’S ECOLOGICAL THEORY	59
3.3.1	Ecological model for transition.....	60
3.3.2	The significance of relationships.....	63
3.3.3	Transition and the structural and cultural context.....	65
3.3.4	Transition and socio-emotional development	66
3.4	CONCLUSION.....	68

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1	INTRODUCTION	70
4.2	RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	71
4.3	CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	74
4.4	PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLE SELECTION	75
4.5	DATA COLLECTION	76
4.5.1	Phase 1: A survey of national policy position on transition.....	77
4.5.2	Phase 2: Case studies of two schools and twelve children in Provinces A and B.....	77
4.5.3	Survey of national policy position on transitions.....	79
4.5.4	Understandings and practices of transitions at school and home level.....	82
4.5.5	Understandings of transition as lived by children	84
4.6	PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED	95
4.6.1	Home variables.....	96
4.6.2	School variables	97
4.7	DATA ANALYSIS	97
4.8	DEALING WITH VALIDITY	99

4.9 DEALING WITH ETHICAL CONCERNS.....	101
4.9.1 Redressing the imbalance: researcher-child relationship	102
4.10 CONCLUSION.....	103

**CHAPTER 5
STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF TRANSITIONS**

5.1 INTRODUCTION	105
5.2 EMERGENT FINDINGS	105
5.3 POLICY ANALYSIS ON PROVISION FOR TRANSITIONS	106
5.3.1 The extent to which policies address transitions.....	108
5.3.2 Policies and practice: knowledge, understanding and application of policies by users	114
5.3.3 Ensuring the implementation of policies	117
5.4 GRADE R: CONTINUITY OR DUPLICATION OF GRADE 1?	126
5.5 TRANSITION STRATEGIES OF SCHOOLS	128
5.5.1 School in-house transition strategies	128
5.5.2 Teachers and transition strategies	130
5.6 PRESCHOOL/HOME IMPACTS ON GRADE 1 ADJUSTMENT AND LEARNING	134
5.6.1 Academic skills	135
5.6.2 Socio-emotional skills.....	136
5.7 PARENTAL ROLE IN CHILDREN’S TRANSITIONS.....	137
5.7.1 Parental understanding of transitions.....	138
5.7.2 Characteristics important for successful learning	140
5.7.3 Parental strategies for transitions	140
5.7.4 Parental role from the teachers’ perspective	142
5.8 CHILDREN’S VOICES IN THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL.....	143
5.8.1 Children’s conception of school	144
5.9 CONCLUSION.....	146
5.9.1 Interrelationship of roles of principal players in children’s transitions.	146

CHAPTER 6
CHILDREN'S ADJUSTMENT CAPABILITY AS MEASURED BY THE SOCIAL
SKILLS RATING SYSTEM (SSRS)

6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	148
6.2	HOME BACKGROUND OF CHILDREN	149
6.3	ANALYSIS OF THE SSRS SCORES.....	150
6.4	HOME AND SCHOOL VARIABLES.....	151
6.5	ANALYSIS OF RATINGS BY TEACHERS AND PARENTS FOR CHILDREN IN EACH OF THE TWO PROVINCES: SOCIAL SKILLS.....	151
6.5.1	Introduction	151
6.5.2	Analysis of ratings of social skills: Teacher and Parent: Province A.....	152
6.5.3	Analysis of ratings on the social skills: Teacher and Parent: Province B.....	153
6.5.4	Comparison of ratings of parents and teachers on the social skills across the provinces	155
6.6	ANALYSIS OF RATINGS ON THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR SKILLS BY TEACHERS AND PARENTS FOR CHILDREN IN EACH OF THE TWO PROVINCES.....	156
6.6.1	Introduction	156
6.6.2	Analysis of ratings on problem behaviours: Teacher and Parent: Province A	157
6.6.3	Analysis of ratings of problem behaviours: Teacher and Parent: Province B	158
6.6.4	Comparison of problem behaviours across provinces.....	159
6.7	TEACHER RATINGS OF ACADEMIC COMPETENCE	161
6.7.1	Introduction	161
6.7.2	Analysis of academic competence ratings: Province A	161
6.7.3	Analysis of academic competence ratings: Province B	163
6.7.4	Comparison of teacher-rated academic competence in both provinces.....	164
6.8	CONCLUSION.....	165

CHAPTER 7
SYNTHESIS AND SIGNIFICANCE IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, POLICY AND
FUTURE RESEARCH ON CHILD TRANSITIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION	167
7.2 POLICY PROVISION AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF TRANSITION POLICY AMONG STAKEHOLDERS: ALIGNMENT OR DISCREPANCY	168
7.3 TRANSITION STRATEGIES DEPLOYED BY SCHOOLS IN ADDRESSING TRANSITION AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GRADE R	171
7.4 PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN AND CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS TRANSITIONS.....	176
7.5 THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN.....	178
7.6 CHILDREN’S LEVEL OF ADJUSTMENT AS MEASURED BY THE SSRS.....	179
7.7 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY TO NEW KNOWLEDGE ON TRANSITIONS.....	182
7.8 THE THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY	184
7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE	185
7.10 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	188
7.11 CONCLUSION	190
POSTSCRIPT: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS.....	191
REFERENCES.....	194
ADDENDA	205

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Four levels of transition settings.....	61
Figure 3.2: Process of transition to school	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Case study groups.....	76
Table 4.2: Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). (Elementary level): Parent form subscale items.....	90
Table 4.3: Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). (Elementary level): Teacher form subscale items.....	91
Table 4.4: Problem Behaviour Domain Subscales: Parent Form	92
Table 4.5: Problem Behaviour Domain Subscales: Teacher Form.....	93
Table 4.6: The Academic Competence scale	94
Table 4.7: Ensuring the validity and reliability of the study	101
Table 5.1: Policy documents and key features	107
Table 5.2: Comparison of Grade R and Grade 1 on Mathematics/Numeracy ..	112
Table 5.3: Comparison of assessment standards for Grade R and Grade 1: Learning Area Life Orientation.....	113
Table 5.4: Assessment Standards: Learning Area Languages.....	114
Table 5.5: The effect and application of policies by users	115
Table 5.6: Primary School teachers' perspectives and understandings of transitions.....	132
Table 5.7: Parental understandings of transitions	143
Table 5.8: Comparison of children's preschool experience with primary school experiences	145
Table 6.1: Social Skills subscales scores: Province A.....	152
Table 6.2: Social Skills subscales scores: Province B.....	154
Table 6.3: Social Skills Subscale scores: Province A & B	155
Table 6.4: Problem Behaviour subscales scores: Province A	157

Table 6.5: Problem Behaviour subscales scores: Province B	158
Table 6.6: Problem Behaviour Subscale Scores across provinces ..	160
Table 6.7: Academic Competence Scale scores: Province A.....	162
Table 6.8: Academic Competence Scale scores: Province B.....	163
Table 6.9: Academic Competence Scores across provinces.....	164

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DOE	–	Department of Education (government)
ECD	–	Early Childhood Development
ECE	–	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	–	Early Childhood Education Centres
Grade 1	–	The first grade of formal schooling
Grade R	–	Reception year class before formal schooling
NAEYC	–	National Association for Education of Young Children
NEPI	–	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	–	Non-governmental organisation
NCS	–	National Curriculum Statement
RNCS	–	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SSRS	–	Social Skills Rating System
USA	–	United States of America
SA	–	South Africa