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# Comment

Each article in this special issue of *Early Childhood Folio* is underpinned by a desire to enhance the transition experiences of young children moving between home, early childhood, and primary school settings. A range of research perspectives is offered, including insights from educators, observations of particular settings, and reflective appraisals. While the perspectives and contexts of these authors are diverse, these articles highlight that commonalities may be greater than differences in the exploration of transitional experiences around the world.

The aim of this special edition is to recognise national and international interest in transitions and share some of the work of an international research collaboration focused on Pedagogies of Educational Transitions [POET]. Funded by Marie Curie in Europe and the Royal Society in New Zealand, POET is a 4-year (2013–2016) five-country international research staff exchange scheme (IRSES) project which provides a platform for the sharing of research expertise between researchers from University of Waikato in New Zealand, Mälardalen University in Sweden, Scotland's University of Strathclyde, the University of Iceland, and Australia's Charles Sturt University. Each country's team involves both early stage and experienced researchers.

The University of Waikato hosted a POET work package earlier this year, where 15 researchers from Sweden, Scotland, Iceland, and Australia worked intensively with the New Zealand research team. Over a hundred educators from around New Zealand participated in a research symposium

with the POET teams, and the presenters, participants and wider POET team members have contributed to this edition of *Early Childhood Folio*. Readers are invited to look out for further POET events in 2015. These will be advertised on the University of Waikato's Early Years Research Centre's website.

A key theme emerging in the work of POET is the importance of relationships, and several articles in this issue share this overarching theme. Carol Harley, Pat Rogers, Jemma Smith, and Daniel Lovatt draw on findings from their ongoing research exploring the use of transition portfolios for children moving on to primary school. This team of teachers from Mangere Bridge Kindergarten have actively responded to Ministry of Education (2002, 2013) documents encouraging the implementation of effective transition strategies. Their trialling of the use of specific transition portfolios addresses the call in these documents to develop coherency and continuity in children's experiences, and better understanding between teachers in both settings.

The second article, from Australian researcher Kathryn Hopps, focuses on communication as an element that can support positive relationships between early childhood and primary school settings. The article reports on the perceptions of both early childhood and primary school educators about the strengths and weaknesses in communications from the other setting. Hopps concludes that communication is not just about the transfer of information between early childhood and school settings, but also the promotion of a "two-way flow" of communication

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and feedback to forge strong and ongoing relationships.

The transition of children into formal school settings occurs in different ways around the globe, and Gunilla Sandberg, Tina Hellblom-Thibblin, and Anders Garpelin provide insight into the Swedish experience. In this context, children generally start formal schooling at the age of seven after spending a year in “preschool-class”, designed to act as a “bridge” between preschool and school. These researchers describe the interaction between the child and the physical environments as a “metaphorical weave”, drawing on ecological perspectives to explore the dynamic and complex transition experience. With a particular emphasis on reading, writing and mathematical activities, this study raises interesting questions about the link between pedagogical practices that enhance learning as well as support for the social wellbeing of children as they transition into what the authors describe as a “new culture”.

The connections between early childhood centres and families are integral to the way in which a child transitions, and Linda Mitchell reports on the views and experiences of priority families in the New Zealand context. This research is underpinned by the idea of cultural

capital, and the resources and strengths that families and children bring with them to early childhood settings. Once again, the importance of relationships is emphasised as families participating in this study highlight that a sense of belonging and connectedness makes a difference to the decisions they make about where to send their children. Practical elements, such as cost and communication are also discussed as influencing these decisions.

Sonja Arndt shifts the focus slightly in her article about the transition of immigrant teachers into early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Written in a uniquely narrative style, this article reminds readers about the complexities associated with a sense of belonging. Arndt describes the transition of immigrant teachers as a physical and emotional, personal, and professional “entanglement”, often characterised by periods of disconnectedness and vulnerability. After reading this article, one cannot help but think of the parallels between “outsider” adults transitioning into new careers in an unfamiliar country and the experiences of children moving from early childhood contexts into equally unfamiliar school territories.

Australian researchers, Sue Dockett and Bob Perry, explore mapping as a research strategy

in the penultimate article in this issue. These authors argue that a critical appraisal of “maps” is required to advance transitions research and, in turn, to inform professional practice. This article comes with a caution that maps should not be readily accepted as representations of reality, or as being the complete or only “story”. There are more to maps than meet the eye, and Dockett and Perry urge educators to consider why particular maps are generated, how they are constructed, and how they should or could be applied to specific educational contexts.

In the final article Sarah Boyd presents reports on interviews she conducted with researchers from Iceland and New Zealand who presented at the POET symposium in April, and the leader of the Scottish team provides an overview of the POET work in Scotland. Together these interviews and the articles in this edition of *Folio* give a flavour of some of the many projects within the five-country POET collaborations and invite readers to consider the breadth and complexity of transition issues in early years education.

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