

# ITEPS Thesis

## *Supporting Transitions in International Education*



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# Abstract

This research studied how one international primary school in a major Western European city supports its pupils going through a vertical transition.

Data was collected over a ten week period through interviews of several staff members, surveys of parents and teachers, and through the study of school documents.

Transitions were found to affect children either positive or negative, leading to development, growth and resilience, or to feelings of vulnerability and anxiety, respectively. The research revealed that the school employs several different strategies to make the outcome of the transitions positive for its pupils.

The collected data showed the school primarily focuses on supporting its pupils socio-emotionally, through its curriculum, support staff, peers, and teaching pedagogy. Teachers were said to be effective at assessing individual needs of pupils due to their own experience with vertical transitions in international education.

Horizontal transitions were also supported, which is believed to add to the overall support of vertical transitions, building on ecological transitions theories such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979).

A recurringly mentioned way of supporting the pupil's vertical transitions is by working together closely with all stakeholders in the child's life, crossing ecological borders to improve continuity and help the pupil experience a smooth transition at the school.

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# Introduction

Life in the twenty-first century is fast-paced and dynamic, requiring those who live in it to be adaptable to change (Scott, 2015). This holds especially true for those who move around a lot, such as children in international education who move because of their parents' professions, as they encounter change of a multitude of environmental factors more frequently than most of us do.

The first time I did a teaching placement at an international school, I was baffled by the flexibility, resilience and adaptability I observed in the pupils I encountered. Seeing children come in with no English language skills, surrounded by people they had never seen before, having to learn new routines and skills, while being submerged in a different culture; not to mention the recent experience of having said goodbye to their friends, their home, possibly to their extended family. Yet, I saw these children blossom within weeks, speaking their first English words, growing in confidence as they master the language and the routines, making friends, smiling.

This has not been a one-off observation, as I have encountered numerous children going through the transition of starting at a new school in a new country throughout my experiences as a student teacher. Upon closer inspection, the children do not just go through a transitional process as they start at a new school; this process seems to begin as they leave the school to go to another as well.

It made me wonder, to what extent, but more prominently, *how*, teachers like myself (and the wider school community) can make this process go as smoothly as possible. In our aim to create a warm learning climate for our pupils to thrive in, what can we learn from a school currently supporting their transitioning pupils?

## Significance of the study

In education, *transitions* generally refer to the three major transitional points in Western education: moving from a pre-school setting to primary school, from primary school to secondary education, and from secondary school to college or university (Vogler et al., 2008).

Bridges (2009) asserts that there is a clear difference between *change* and *transitions*; change being situational, whereas a transition is a process during which individuals make adjustments over time and come to accept change.

Although pupils also go through daily transitions when they move from home to school and back, or from lesson to lesson, and yearly transitions into a new grade level, the main focus has been on the three major transitions, because the latter make pupils "experience significant academic, social, emotional, physical, or developmental changes that may

adversely affect their educational performance.” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013)  
When going through these transitions, pupils may be exposed to different surroundings, teachers, classmates, routines, and even culture or language specific to the new setting. This can “increase the likelihood they will feel overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated, or insecure.” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013)

With high student mobility in international education, these transitions can arguably be even more invasive for pupils than they would ordinarily be in a national school setting where the child would have lived in the same place all their life, considering moving to a new environment can increase insecurity. (O'Connor, 2013)

Transitions are often considered to be either vertical or horizontal. Vertical transitions are the markings of clear change, often seen as ‘rites of passage’, such as the transition from primary to secondary school. Smaller changes in environment are referred to as horizontal transitions. These happen in a shorter time span, on a day-to-day basis, and could refer to the change from home to school on a weekday (Weedon & Riddell, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979), however, emphasises the role of the environment in which the child functions. According to this seminal model, a child’s development cannot be understood without taking into consideration the different ecological systems in which the child operates (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Bronfenbrenner’s model (1979) recognises four different systems: a person’s microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (see fig. 1), as well as a fifth encompassing system that will be elaborated on in the literature review. The child switches from one system to the next multiple times per day. The bigger transitions, according to Bronfenbrenner, occur “whenever a person’s position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both” (1979, p. 26), emphasising the impact of environmental factors on both vertical and horizontal transitions. Pianta (2004) and Woodhead and Moss (2007) also support this view by stressing the interrelatedness of environment and child in the transitional process.

If environmental factors affect the pupils’ transitions, the assumption can be made that schools can play a role in supporting the transitions pupils experience there. Despite the fact much has been researched and published on transitions in primary education, there seems to be a lack of research focused specifically on transitions children in international primary education go through.

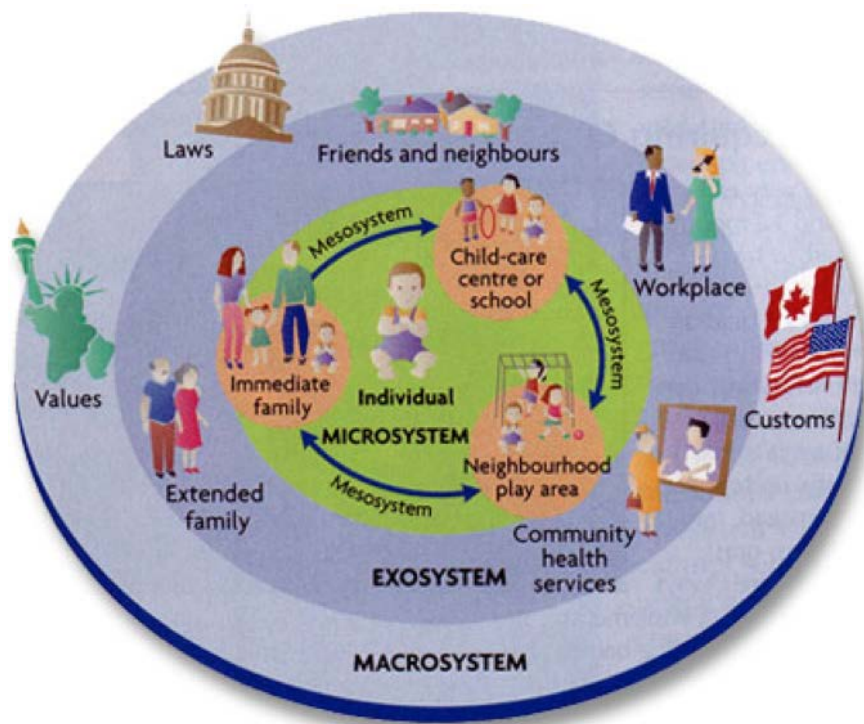


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Berk & Roberts, 2009, as pictured in Best Start Resource Centre, n.d., p.14)

As a change in environment, which international primary school children often experience, can significantly impact a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Elliot et al., 2015), the challenge is to find out the way in which the schools can contribute to smooth transitions for these pupils, in order for these children to experience favourable conditions in which they have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Although references may be made to the link between vertical and horizontal transitions, due to the scope of this research, the main research focus lies on the two vertical transitions: into the school, when pupils first start there, and on the transition out of school, when children move on to another school; being either a state school, a school in another country, or secondary school.

## Context

This research is conducted during a 10-week teaching practice placement at an international school in a major Western European city, from here on out referred to as *School X*, due to the school opting not to be openly referred to.<sup>1</sup>

School X is a private international school that offers an inclusive setting for children aged 3 to 18 (School X, 2014), hosting between 120 and 130 pupils. "Children with a variety of linguistic, cultural, emotional and mild, moderate and intensive learning differences" are

<sup>1</sup> The school is known by name by both the researcher and the educational institution

welcomed at School X (School X, n.d.a). A large portion of the pupils are foreign nationals living in a major Western European city, and most speak English as an additional language (Ofsted, 2015). The parents' professional mobility causes for a higher student flow than in most mainstream state schools.

The school works with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Curriculum, offering the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), as well as the Diploma Programme.

Because of the relatively high number of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) for specific learning difficulties, the teacher-student ratio is high and the wider team "includes an educational psychologist, as well as, occupational, speech and language, and literacy and numeracy therapists" (School X, n.d.b).

Due to the school's inclusive nature, the school team seems to have a heightened awareness of children's diverse needs, and it was found that they make use of strategies to help children settle into the school environment. It is for this reason that a study of the way this school supports its pupils going through a vertical transition may offer valuable insights into possible strategies or techniques that can be adopted by other schools and teachers to help their pupils go through a smooth vertical transition.

Time-restrictions for this bachelor thesis are reason to limit the scope to the study of only one international primary school.

## Research question

***"How does an international primary school in a major Western European city support smooth vertical transitions of its pupils?"***

This question focuses on the role of the international primary school and its teachers as entities that are able to aid their pupils with the big transitions they will go through during their time at the school. An assumption is made that international primary schools can, in point of fact, influence pupils' transitions.

### Sub questions

- 1. What transitions can be identified at School X?***
- 2. How do the identified transitions affect pupils?***
- 3. How are the transitions supported in practice at School X?***

## Goal

The research project's goal is to gain more insight into the effect of vertical transitions on pupils in international primary schools, and more specifically, the way in which teachers can support pupils in this.

International primary school teachers get to deal with children going through transitions on a regular basis. In order to create a warm learning climate for pupils to thrive in, it may be



considered beneficial to be aware of these transitions and have tools to deal with them to the best of one's ability.

This research project is meant to contribute towards the cultivation of knowledge regarding transitions in international primary education, which is of personal significance to the researcher as an aspiring international primary school teacher.

The research is based on the desire to gain a deeper understanding of the changes pupils go through during their time coming into and leaving the school, and to gain tips or tools for teachers and schools to make use of in order to make a positive contribution to the transitions their pupils may go through.

## Objective and product

The objective of the research is to find strategies that schools and teachers could apply, as well as to spread awareness on the topic of (vertical) transitions in international primary education.

Based on desk research, interviews, and questionnaires, this research aims to study policies and strategies applied by schools and teachers regarding vertical transitions, in order to learn what challenges the pupils, teachers and schools face and what strategies School X implements to deal with those challenges. Ultimately, the research intends to find out how international primary schools can support smooth vertical transitions of its pupils, which is relevant to any teacher or school that recognises the challenges that (vertical) transitions pose to pupils.

Besides gaining knowledge of the effect of transitions on pupils in international primary schools, this research aims to spread more awareness on the topic, by addressing it through interviews and questionnaires, as well as by sharing the results of this research with educators and schools in the world of (international) primary education.

# Theoretical framework

## What schools of thought exist on (vertical) transitions?

Van Gennep (as mentioned in Vogler et al., 2008) referred to vertical transitions as *rites of passage*, which constitutes of “the cultural markings of once-for-all life course transitions” (p.20). Prominent in Van Gennep’s work, are phases or stages a child naturally transitions through, similar to Bridges (1968; 2009), who also identified three overlapping phases throughout the transition process. The first phase’s main feature, as described by Bridges, is emancipation, which is followed by a neutral phase of disorientation, ending in the last phase marked by a new beginning, where one finds new meaning and experiences control again (Ackesjö, 2014). The neutral phase, at the core of the transition, is what is likely to cause confusion (Bridges, 2009), as “the individual is placed in between what was, and what is to come” (Ackesjö, 2014, p.5).

Van Gennep’s rites of passage theory also links to identity formation, with children constantly de- and reconstructing parts of their identity as they move through different phases and contexts that require different things from them (Rogoff, 1996; 2003). Schumacher and Meleis (1994) argue that the way children interpret context and make meaning plays a fundamental role in the forming of their identity, which highlights a potential reciprocal relationship between transitions and children, where “children both shape transitions, and are shaped by the transitions” (Ackesjö, 2014, p.6).

Cognitive anthropologist Wenger (1998) underlines the influence of the environment when constructing identity in a new group. He considers social participation to be imperative to learning, which he claims to be at the heart of identity construction. He asserts it is the community in which a person operates that provides an incentive for learning, as well as a base for the construction of meaning and shared identity within that community. Wenger, however, does not explain how different environments interconnect.

Several other researchers, contrarily, have taken an ecological approach, among which Epstein (2002), Waddock (1995), and Bronfenbrenner (1979). Epstein’s model depicts a three-circle venn diagram, to explain how school, families, and the wider community interact and affect children’s development (Epstein et al., 2002). Waddock (1995) developed a model connecting the school to six variables or stakeholding agencies: educational policy makers, government agencies, social service institutions, teacher organisations and universities, the business community, and media and ‘value-shapers’ (p.59). These two models, however, place their focus on the school, rather than the pupil, whereas Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, mentioned earlier, places the child at the centre, while stressing the importance of recognising the different environmental dimensions of an individual. When either one of the environments, or the person’s role in it changes, is when the bigger transitions take place (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

One of the five systems mentioned in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), is the chronosystem: the dimension of time. Bronfenbrenner explains that the moment in time at which transitions take place, affect the transition and the child experiencing it. This can refer to the child's age, where parents divorcing might impact a child differently at age 4, 9 or 18; or it could refer to a historical timeframe, where somebody who has grown up during the Second World War might experience certain events differently than somebody who was born after. "Either consistency or change within the surrounding environment across time could create unique interactions that significantly affect development." (Elliot et al., 2015, p.3)

Ackesjö (2014) marries several of the mentioned theories on (vertical) transitions, by arguing that the different schools of thought on transitions actually have a commonality in that they all focus on membership; "during transitions children end their membership in one community and cross a border into another community, where they also reconstruct their identities." (p.7) In this, it seems reciprocity in the relationship between individual and environment is a shaping factor, where pupils are active participants in their own transitions.

## How can (vertical) transitions affect pupils?

### Emotional distress

Several aspects of children's lives change when they go through a vertical transition, among which can be the children's house, country, language, culture, school, friends, teacher, etc. Moving from one environment to another calls for children to reorient (Ackesjö, 2014). Based on the different findings that children de- and reconstruct their identity during transitions, it can be assumed this process of identity formation is challenging when transitioning between contexts. "Identity shifts may comprise changes in role, dress and behaviour, as well as activities and ways of communicating." (Vogler et al., 2008, p.20). The uncertainty that these changes bring about can make some children worry and experience confusion and anxiety (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Elliot et al., 2015; O'Connor, 2013; Shields, 2009).

When there is more discontinuity regarding the curriculum and teaching in the old and new environment, transitions can be more stressful for children, "particularly if there is insufficient collaboration between the two" (O'Connor, 2013, p.xii). The pupil might encounter "for the first time the challenges of adaptation to organised programs with all sorts of other children and new rules and expectations for engagement and cooperation" (McDermott et al., 2013, p.98), especially taking in mind that not all countries start formal education at the same time, indicating that some children may have never experienced formal education before.

### Academic distress

Not only can transitions affect the children's emotional wellbeing, Dunlop and Fabian (2007) claim that the guidance through a transition can have significant implications for children's future school performance. Hattie (2009) found that changing schools had a negative impact on reading and mathematics performance, whereas Galton et al. (2000) found that "around 40% of pupils experience a hiatus in progress during school transfer" (p.341). This is largely attributed to discontinuity in pedagogy and curriculum (Galton et al, 2000).

### Vulnerable groups

Vulnerable groups of children, such as children of a low socio-economic background, those with learning difficulties, or English language learners, can be impacted even more strongly by changes when transitioning (Carlson et al., 2009; O'Connor, 2013).

Although likely not the case in (private) international primary schools, children who live in socio-economic deprivation are likely to struggle more with transitions, possibly due to poor socialising opportunities and emotion regulation (Carlson et al., 2009).

Children with special education needs are children who have a learning difficulty or disability which prevents them from doing the same things as their peers, and for which they need special educational help (DfES, 2015). Although these children have similar needs as their peers for going through a smooth transition, they have an increased risk of going through an

unsuccessful transition, because they generally tend to struggle more with self-esteem and behaviour issues, as well as social and learning difficulties (Symonds, 2015).

Children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) can also be seen as a vulnerable group when it comes to transitioning. As they tend to come from countries where they have not yet encountered English, they might experience difficulties adjusting to social and behavioural contexts and expectations, which are likely to be vastly different, too, besides the language (Rosenthal, 1992). Research has shown that it can take up to seven years to become fluent in academic English (Collier and Thomas, 1989). This means that most EAL pupils will not be able to reach a similar fluency to some of their peers by the time they transition to secondary education. This language barrier can impact their ability to progress academically as well as socially, providing additional difficulty to transition.

### Positive effects

Yet, the opposite effect can also be true: “a successful start to school is linked to future positive school outcomes, both academically and socially” (as cited in Department of Education, 2009, p.2:3). Not all children are affected negatively by going through a vertical transition (Ackesjö, 2014), and for some transitions are a common factor of life (Dobson, 2000). Kingston and Price (2012) even claim transitions can enhance the pupil’s cognitive growth and support their development of resilience. Dockett and Perry (2007) suggest children’s perception of themselves as learners is clearly determined by their school experiences, therefore a positive transition could potentially empower pupils to become successful learners.

Ultimately, however, no one individual child is the same, and each child brings a different set of experiences, values and expectations with them. This makes them predisposed to respond in different ways, leading similar transitions to affect each child in a unique way (Rogoff et al., 2005).

## What factors influence (vertical) transitions?

Most research on transitions mentions the effects of transitions on children, but few researches have addressed what factors were responsible for any decline in functioning. (Barber and Olsen, 2004). As previously discussed, change is at the core of transitions. There are several aspects of children's lives that may change during the time of a vertical transition, which can influence the transition and the child going through it.

### Culture

Culture is comprised of shared patterns of behaviour and interaction, comprising of values, symbols, interpretations and perspectives (Banks and McGee Banks, 1989). Each setting is comprised of its own culture, which requires an adjustment between settings, such as from school to home, in addition to the major changes the children adjust to (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The bigger the cultural difference, the more difficult it may be to find common ground with peers in the new environment, and gradually master the cultural tools within the new setting, and therefore the transition may be a more extensive process (Rogoff et al., 2005).

### Curriculum

Earlier it was mentioned that discontinuity in pedagogy and curriculum have been found to negatively impact transition (Galton et al., 2000; O'Connor, 2013). International educational curricula, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) and the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), are applied worldwide, which increases the possibility of children being able to continue using the same curriculum after relocating.

These curricula aim to allow children to become *resilient*, *adaptable* (International Primary Curriculum Learning Goals., n.d.) and *balanced* (IB learner profile, 2013), suggesting these characteristics, which appear to link to the ability to deal with change, are important for children in international primary education, and can be developed through the use of specific curricula.

### Child as an active agent

A transition is an active process, which involves the child, rather than it being done *to the child* (Schumacher and Meleis, 1994; Ackesjö, 2014). Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1978) have also described children as active agents in their own environment. Piaget, however, underlines the effect of the developmental phase the child is in on the transition, much like Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem. Whereas Vygotsky emphasises the role of social interaction in children's development, an aspect Wenger (1998) also stresses is crucial in the construction of a new identity when transitioning.

### Social interaction

"The support of friends and friendship groups helps protect children from the impact of transition" (as cited in O'Connor, 2013). When this support system (partially) disappears due to a move to another city or country, as is often the case in international education, a child may therefore experience a stronger impact from a transition.

Galton et al. (2000) postulate that a friendship network is part of a child's identity, and that it helps them "evaluate themselves against others" (p.350), arguing that making friends is a crucial aspect in making a smooth transition into a new environment.

Maslow's famous Hierarchy of Needs is illustrated below in figure 2. Maslow argued that only when the basic needs (found at the basis of the pyramid) are met, will a person naturally strive to fulfill higher-order needs (Arends, 2012). Arends explains the classroom implications by stating that children that come to school hungry, so whose basic needs are not fulfilled, are less likely to spend energy on higher-level thinking and understanding. Likewise, children that don't feel a sense of belonging at home or in school are most likely to focus more on fitting in and finding friends than they will be to attempt to fathom a mathematics problem, implying this can affect both children's emotional as well as their academic well being when transitioning.

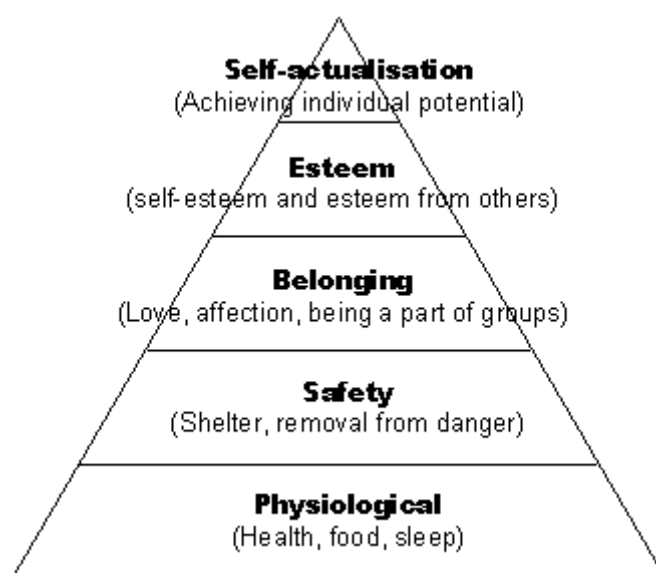


Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy. (n.d.). Retrieved May 11, from <http://changingminds.org/explanations/needs/maslow.htm>

Yet not only friendship is considered part of social interaction; the relationship with the teacher strongly affects the transition, as well as later success in school. With the pupil-teacher relationship likely not being as strong as the relationship with the teacher in the previous setting, the child may experience a loss of emotional support (Symonds, 2015).

### Continuity

Many of the mentioned aspects affecting (vertical) transitions are due to change or discontinuity, making continuity desirable for smooth transitions (Galton et al., 2000; Bayley et al., 2009; Department of Education, 2009; O'Connor, 2009; Ackesjö, 2014). Galton (2000) argues, however, that a certain level of discontinuity is needed to progress through a successful transition; not all can remain the same in a process of change. Yet, continuity constitutes a minimum of change, and helps children "feel secure, confident and connected to people, places, events, routines and understandings" (Department of Education, 2009, p.2:3).





## What suggestions to support (vertical) transitions (in an international primary school context) are found in literature?

In many ways, the task faced by teachers is the same with regard to all new children. They have to make them feel welcome, provide support, encourage friendships, make sensitive assessments of their current levels of attainment and learning needs, and provide a curriculum that meets those needs.

National Union of Teachers, 2002, p.3

Although arguably a task carried by multiple stakeholders in a pupil's life, educators are generally mentioned as the main people to support children going through a (vertical) transition (Symonds, 2015).

### Pedagogy

When it comes to emotional needs, “many learning needs are not measurable, there are no national targets for pupils gaining high self-esteem, and teachers and practitioners may not agree what constitutes ‘diverse’ learning needs” (Hill and Cole, 2013, p.83). Yet some teaching strategies have been found to be effective in supporting children going through vertical transitions, among which are making use of children's prior knowledge, encouraging intercultural dialogue, and providing children with autonomy.

“Building on children's prior and current experiences helps them to feel secure, confident and connected to people, places, events, routines and understandings” (Department of Education, 2009, p.2:3).

Encouraging intercultural dialogue is a strategy the Council of Europe (2008) proposes creates understanding, builds bridges, and constitutes to the formation of “inclusive societies, which leave no one marginalised or defined as outsiders” (p.17).

Ackesjö (2014) asserts that children have a lot to bring to the table with their prior experiences. They can be seen as active agents in their own transition, and by engaging in conversation with them rather than simply making assumptions, teachers can find out what the transition entails for them, and how they could be supported.

Additionally, providing children with more autonomy and ownership, can enhance their engagement and lead to better learning (McCombs, 2014). “When autonomous, people are fully willing to do what they are doing, and they embrace the activity with a sense of interest and commitment. Their actions emanate from a true sense of self, so that they are being authentic” (Deci and Flaste, 1995, p.2).

Nonetheless, peers can also play an important role in the pupil's transition. Besides the considerable importance of friendship mentioned previously, culturally competent peers and adults can help children in their transition by modeling and guiding children to gain confidence in the routines and activities in the new setting (Rogoff et al., 2005).

Vygotsky's (1978) seminal work stipulates that children co-construct knowledge together within their zone of proximal development, emphasising the importance of social interactions in learning. It is “through the instruction from teachers, adults and more skilled peers that children learn and develop” (Vogler et al., 2009, p.8).

There are polarised views regarding setting goals for children in a vertical transition. On the one hand, claims are made of the effectiveness of simple, low-risk activities (Wenger, 1998), and how results should not be over promised in the neutral phase of a transition (Bridges, 2009). Bridges suggests setting short-term goals, celebrating small wins, so pupils feel a sense of achievement.

On the other hand, it is thought to be potentially harmful to children to set low expectations, as it may cause children's perception of themselves to be affected negatively, and consequently their emotional well being and work efforts, in line with self-fulfilling prophecy theories (Symonds, 2015).

### Supporting vulnerable children

In order for EAL pupils to not fall behind academically, Collier (1997) found that pupils should be encouraged to study material in their native language, as postponement of academic growth and development (because of language acquisition) is likely to cause academic failure.

When it comes to children with special educational needs, The Children and Families Act (2014) proposes a comprehensive healthcare and education plan to encourage smooth transitions through multidisciplinary work with different practitioners.

In general, vulnerable children are said to benefit from individual support to build resilience (Margetts, 2007). Although this may be true for children not considered to be vulnerable, more funding (and with that resources) tends to be available for those schools with a larger population of vulnerable children (Onderwijsraad, 2010; Council for Disabled Children, 2013), yet this could differ per country.

### Coherence ecological domains

Research has shown that one of the key elements to supporting a smooth transition is for different stakeholders in the child's life to interact: when educators and families work together, the pupil is more likely to achieve their learning potential, and their overall well being and health improves (Department of Education, 2009; Kingston and Price, 2012). Not only children transition, their parents often do too, which also includes establishing new relationships with the child's educators (Pianta, 2004; Department of Education, 2009). A positive interaction of different ecological domains can increase the child's sense of belonging and engagement, and increases the likelihood of a successful transition (Pianta, 2004; Vogler et al., 2008).

# Methodology

## Interviews

In order to find out in what way School X supports its pupils' transitions, semi-structured interviews were held with the primary school principal, the Primary Years Programme (PYP) coordinator, the school counsellor (SC) and the occupational therapist (OT), as they were mentioned to deal with transitions in response to exploratory research (constituting of asking questions to various School X staff members) on the topic.

The interviews aimed at retrieving information regarding the way School X deals with transitions within their school community. This includes discussion of what they consider transitions to entail, and which transitions they consider their pupils to go through. It also aims to find out what transition resources are in place, and how these are implemented in practice.

The objective of the interviews is to study how School X supports transitions, and which of the used strategies other schools and teachers could potentially apply. The interviews were transcribed and checked with the interviewees for accuracy.

An overview of the general questions asked are listed in appendix A.

## Surveys

Anonymous questionnaires were created on SurveyMonkey.com and sent out to all primary school teachers at School X, in order to learn what the teachers believe (vertical) transitions to entail, and what they consider to be their role in supporting the vertical transitions their pupils go through. The questionnaires also aimed to find out how teachers at School X support their pupils during these transitions, and whether they work together with other stakeholders in the child's life. A copy of the survey questions can be found in appendix B.

Parents of the year group taught by the researcher were also asked to fill out an anonymous survey, since they were familiar with the researcher, and the researcher had access to their contact details. The questionnaire aimed to find out what challenges their children have faced or are facing as they go through transitions, and how the parents feel they have been supported throughout the process. A copy of the questions is listed in appendix C.

## Desk research

School X policy documents containing the word 'transition' were studied for the purpose of finding out what regulations are in place to deal with transitions, as well as to find out what information on the topic is shared with staff and parents.

## Data analysis

Policies, interviews, and survey results were analysed to identify what (vertical) transitions the pupils go through according to the school policies, teachers, other professionals, and parents at School X, in what way these stakeholders believe the transitions affect the pupils, and to establish what strategies are employed by the school to support the children.

The interview recordings were re-listened to and transcribed. These were then systematically read for patterns and themes, categorising similar answers together. In order for the research sub questions to be answered using relevant information, the categorised answers were sorted under these sub questions. Information that did not answer any of the sub questions was not used. Possible illustrative quotes were highlighted so they would stand out for later illustrative or confirmative use in the description of the results.

Regarding the surveys, SurveyMonkey.com grouped all participants' answers into tables per survey question, which provided a clear overview of the answers per question. The tables were studied and then placed under the research sub question it provided information for. Under each of these sub questions, the systematic reading or labelling process, as used to analyse the interviews, was then repeated with the data obtained from both surveys.

For the first research sub question, the answers were exact, which made them suitable to quantify. This quantified data was gathered by grouping and tallying the answers from the interviews and surveys. The data was placed into a table and bar graph for clear comparison of views from different stakeholders. This process was not applied to the collected data for the other research sub questions, as those consisted of more qualitative data, which could not be contrasted clearly in tabular form.

Finally, the school policy documents and the theoretical framework were also systematically analysed for similar themes to the ones found in the collected survey and interview data, so links could be drawn to either confirm, contrast, or supplement each other.

Through triangulation, various perspectives have shone light on what kind of support is offered and experienced at School X, extending the range of collected data, while simultaneously adding to the reliability of the collected data.

## Quality

In order to increase reliability of the research outcomes, interviews are semi-structured as this type of interview allows for two-way communication and therefore clarification (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, due to the researcher being a participant within the researched setting, interviews may be subject to potential bias because of existing relationships between interviewer and interviewee (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Therefore all interviews will be transcribed and checked for accuracy with the interviewee.

Interviews were chosen to be semi-structured in order to leave space for any initiative or information from the side of the interviewee, yet sticking to a certain format in order to ensure research validity.

Through data source and methodology triangulation, multiple perspectives are obtained and contrasted, adding to the reliability of the obtained results.

The method to select policy documents to study may be flawed in that only the word 'transition' was searched for. Yet, through the study of other schools' policy documents, it was concluded that 'transition' is the commonly used terminology.

For both ethical and validity considerations, the decision has been made to not directly involve any of the pupils in the research. Due to the age group and percentage of children with special educational needs, they might have had trouble understanding what is asked from them, increasing the likelihood of unreliable results.

With permission from school management, parents of the year group taught by the researcher during the placement were contacted and presented with a questionnaire. As all children have transferred to the school at some point, it can be concluded they have, or are currently going through a vertical transition. The form of a questionnaire is chosen because with parents' busy schedules, a written questionnaire provides them with the opportunity to fill it out in their own time.

Notice should be taken that the parent surveys may not be representative, due to the limited availability of parents to interview, making this research method is flawed in that it will likely produce a one-sided perspective. Yet this perspective is still considered valuable, in that it provides a viewpoint from a stakeholder in the child's life that is not employed by the school. Additionally, only a small number of teachers completed the survey, which calls for the reader to bare in mind the negative impact this may have on the validity of the results.

## Ethics

To ensure an ethical approach, several actions were taken. The research is meant to aid all research stakeholders and intents to cause no harm to any of its participants.

The research purposes have been openly communicated to the stakeholders prior to their participation and the school name remains confidential as this has been the wish of school management. Any names have been abbreviated, and any participant were made aware that they have the right to withdraw from the research through written correspondence with the researcher, at any given time.

In regards to interviews, a voice record was taken for transcription purposes. The produced transcripts were made available for reviewing purposes, after which the voice record was disposed of. In discussion of the results, the position of the interviewees is not specifically disclosed, so as to not expose individual participants. Questionnaire results have been treated anonymously, and participants were made aware of this fact.

Additionally, concerning research into school policy documents, written consent from the head of department has been obtained in advance, and all information has been anonymised in order to ensure confidentiality.

Taking into consideration the vulnerability of the pupils, in view of their age and possible special educational needs, the decision has been made not to directly involve them. Instead, information is obtained through studying second hand sources like school policies, and questioning first hand sources like teachers, and parents, who are all considered more capable to make informed decisions on their own behalf.

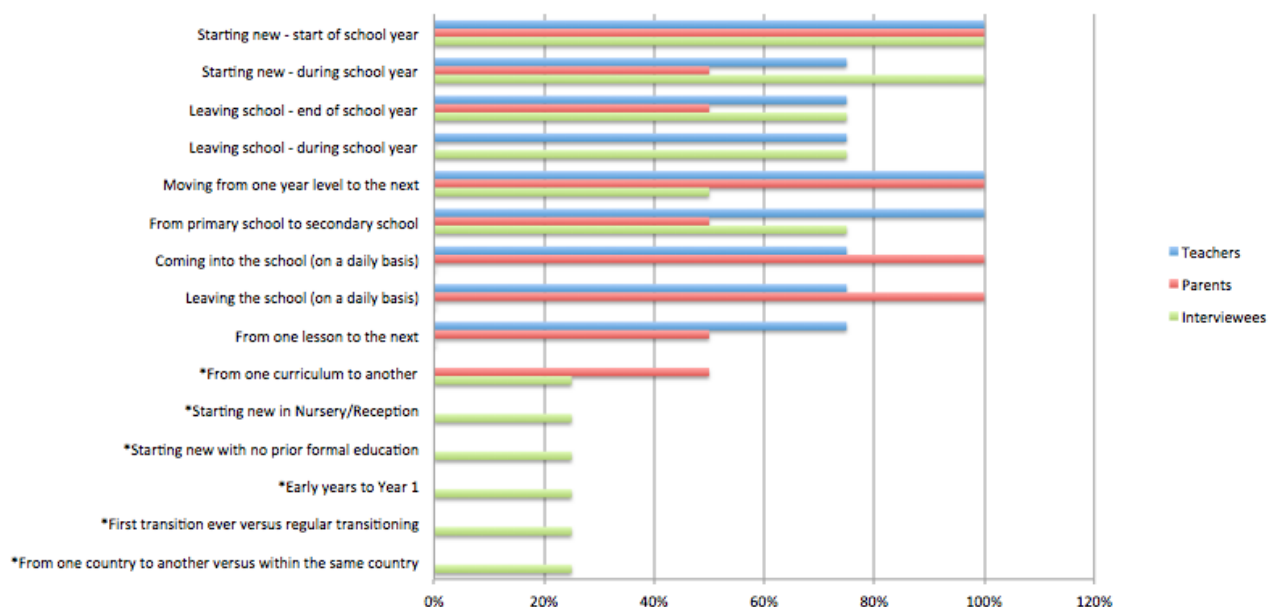
# Results

Due to the limited participation in surveys, with only two parents and four teachers willing to take part, the collected data through this methodology may not be representative of the larger group. The decision has been made to nevertheless use the collected data for this research, as it is deemed to illustrate different viewpoints of the studied subject.

## Transitions identified at School X

From interviews of the principal, PYP coordinator, SC, and OT, as well as surveys sent out to parents and teachers, a number of transitions are identified at School X, as illustrated in figure 3 below.

All participants in the research consider the children to experience a transition by starting new at the beginning of the school year, while fifty percent and over answered children transition when they start during the school year, when they leave the school at the end of the year, when moving between year levels, and when children transfer from primary to secondary education. Parents and teachers also deem the ecological move between contexts to count towards a transition, as they all indicate the daily process of coming into and leaving the school to be part of the transitions children experience.



**Figure 3. Transitions identified at School X by teachers, parents and interviewees**  
Starred answers were not offered as a suggestion, but were own-initiative answers from participants

In the interviews, and in some of the survey responses, several detailed distinctions were made regarding some of the earlier mentioned transitions. One interviewee, as well as one of the parents, regards a transition into the school to be different for pupils coming from

schools with the same curriculum than for pupils from schools with a vastly different curriculum, linking to continuity as a factor in transitioning. On a similar note, mention was made of a potential difference for children moving within the same country, and starting at a new school, versus children who move to another country in addition to the change of school.

Additionally, one of the interviewees made mention of the difference in experience for a pupil who has never transitioned, compared to a pupil who has moved (and experienced transitions) numerous times before. Finally, transitions were also said to be different for children who have not yet attended formal school, which could be the case when starting in Nursery/Reception, or due to different educational systems in the country they transition from.

## Effect of transitions on pupils at School X

Much like in the theoretical framework, most research participants mentioned transitions to cause anxiety in several pupils at School X, and the school's parent handbook describes "the experience of moving from one country to another can be extremely challenging and exciting" (School X, n.d.a, p.8). Mixed feelings of excitement and fear were also mentioned by parents, as well as fatigue and a change in behaviour, although the latter was not specified to be positive or negative.

In one interview, the interviewee identified a possible difference between the effect of a transition into the school compared to leaving the school: "I think coming into the school, it can be more exciting. It can also be a bit more intimidating and scary coming into a new classroom. But I think there is also that excitement being in a new city, meeting new friends.. whereas leaving, I think, can sometimes be harder for the students because that's the fear of the unknown *plus* saying goodbye to all of their friends." Friends were clearly mentioned as well by both parents and teachers as a cause for feelings of loss and sadness, and interviewees also recognised a possible effect on a pupil's level of happiness.

Several participants considered the change in physical environment to affect the children, explaining that "the logistics are going to be different in that building, therefore some of the procedures are going to be slightly different." This discontinuity was argued to "be quite disorientating for the children," especially for those with special needs, and in particularly autism. One interviewee stated the changes in the transition can "trigger and escalate behaviour," giving cause for more guidance and support throughout the transition process for those particular children.

Several participants considered a transition can affect each child differently. Similarly to Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem (1978), one of the interviewee's believes that transitions can affect children differently depending on when the transition takes place: during "critical periods where your friends are so much to you, (...), it's hard for your child, socially as well as academically."

Another point that was made was that starting new during the school year, rather than at the start of the year, can be even more confusing and make a child feel alone, as "some of the setting up of school routines and getting to know this, and deciding on that, as a kind of class community, that's all passed now. So you're coming in to it, whether you like it or not, as it is."

Yet, one interviewee argued that everybody at the school, pupils and staff members, has undergone a transition at one point, which can have positive outcomes as well. Most children will be able to relate to each other because of this, one of the parents claimed: "the transitions they have lived through this school year have shown them that there are many other children in the world experiencing similar life changes to them." The interviewee added that "they build up some resilience... they develop some skills because of this" and argued that a transition at the school can force somebody "to become open-minded, and have an inclusive outlook to the fact that we have connections with other people."



## Transition support at School X

All interviewees and teachers expressed that at School X, transitions are seen as a shared, whole school responsibility. Teachers indicated to work together with fellow teachers, the school counsellor, school management, and with parents. Yet, the pupils themselves were also considered by all parents and half of the teachers to be partly responsible for their own transition.

From the moment the admissions process starts, the school is in “constant communication” with the parents, shared one of the interviewees. Parents are also put in touch with the parent council, who offer families help to settle into their new environment. Multiple interviewees mentioned the school recognises that when a family moves and the children are new to the school, the whole family experiences a transition.

The school’s admission policy (School X, 2015) describes the school aims “to ensure that the admissions process is as straightforward as possible so that new students and their families experience a smooth transition” (p.4). Possible actions include arranging an optional visit to the school before the children start, and inviting pupils for a trial day (School X, 2015).

Should the children not have come in for a trial day or a tour of the school, the parents meet with the principal and the child’s teacher around the time the children start at the school. In both the teacher survey and in the interviews it was disclosed that, in case the children start at the beginning of the school year, the whole family is invited to the new student induction day. During that day children and parents get introduced to the teachers and to other new children. One participant explains that this is done to ease the transition on the first real day of school, because they have met the teacher, have seen the classroom, and “they have a friendly face they know” in the other children who are new. “Any students with additional anxieties or needs” are also welcome to attend this day before the first day of school, in order to ease their transition back into school after the summer, was added during one of the interviews.

According to one of the interviewees, other special provisions made for children who have been identified to have special educational needs can include speech and language therapy, learning support, school counselling and occupational therapy, and children who are in need of English language support can receive help too, mentioned one of the parents. Before children with special educational needs transfer to the new school, one interviewee said, families are encouraged to visit the school on several occasions, the SEN coordinator observes the pupil in the previous school if possible, and pictures of the new teachers and rooms may be sent to the families, along with descriptions of routines and other aspects of the new school. It was mentioned that it is considered very important for SEN pupils to be aware of the upcoming transition in advance, “so they have all the time to progress and digest the changes.” Several other interviewees found this to be true for all pupils transitioning, and one person attested that the admissions policy therefore asks parents to give the school at least three weeks notice before leaving the school.

On the first real day of school for the new children, the school obligates parents to bring their child to school themselves, even if the child will travel to and from school by school bus from then on, mentioned one of the interviewees. They explained that this is put in place to support children in that first transition, because they have the safety of their parent with them, and they are not placed on a bus on their own to be brought to an unfamiliar setting.

Two interviewees shared that the first weeks at the school are slightly different for pupils starting in Nursery; as they are still so young, the children only attend half days for approximately two weeks.

Both teachers and the other interviewed members of staff indicated the use of a buddy system in the first period after a child is new to the school “to help them settle into the classroom,” so they have “a peer who they can talk to and who helps them find their way around the school.” During one interview, it was argued that the transitioning child’s “primary interest probably is going to be more emotional and social and trying to fit in, and getting used to things, rather than achieving at school,” highlighting the importance of friendship. The interviewee elaborated on this by explaining this is why they often advise parents to arrange playdates with other children who attend the school, to help the children settle in. They argued that when the children have gotten to know each other better in a different environment, “when they go back to school, they are going to feel a lot more confident and comfortable.”

A lot of the support at School X seems to come down to the teacher's' pedagogy, too. “Members of our staff have often spent time living abroad or may be from overseas themselves” (School X, n.d.a, p.8). One of the interviewees asserted that because they have experienced similar transitions themselves, “they know what it’s like to start in a new workplace, make friends with new colleagues, set up new routines” and in their practice in international education, have gained experience working with children coming and going. The teacher’s experience of working abroad has also given them “an awareness of other educational systems around the world” (School X, n.d.a, p.8). This was said to make them more apt to assess what support children need.

In the survey, teachers answered they employ several strategies to support pupils going through a transition at the school. They listed an orientation to new routines and expectations, community building activities at the beginning of the school year, student sessions (although not specified what these consist of), the use of visual timetables “to create less anxiety of knowing what lesson is next in the day”, and reminders of how much time is left before the next activity will be started.

Cooperation with other stakeholders in the children’s lives was also a theme throughout the teacher survey, as they claim to coordinate one-to-one sessions with the school counsellor, as well as communicate and meet with the parents.

In case of a child leaving the school, teachers said to communicate with new schools if requested by parents, discuss leaving with individual students and as a class, and create a going away booklet.

The process of working on a going away booklet, which was said to be supported by the school counsellor, is started three to four weeks before the child leaves the school, and is employed as a closing process and to get them excited for their new school. The booklet includes pictures of and messages from classmates and teachers. During the process, the

school counsellor sits with the child on regular occasions to discuss the child's favourite memories of their time at the school, as well as coping "strategies they can use if they are feeling anxious or sad." One interviewee mentioned that the school is also currently developing a welcome booklet, with pictures and relevant information for children to familiarise themselves with the school before they even set foot in it.

The school counsellor also meets with pupils individually within the first days that they start at the school, to introduce themselves and check in on how the pupils are doing. This arguably makes the counsellor more accessible for children if they feel the need to talk to somebody at any point in time, which a parent said to have helped their children in their transition. This also takes away from the idea that a transition is short-term or alike for all, argued an interviewee, "it might not be immediately after they arrived that they're having difficulties, settling in; it might be three months down the line." Additionally, the counsellor regularly "takes targeted groups for lunch to help set up friendships."

Another way the building of friendships (across the school) is supported at the school is during break time. An interviewee shared that children are encouraged to play together on the playground by scheduling two consecutive year groups to be on break at the same time.

School X also supports the children emotionally through the use of their socio-emotional curriculum, was told in one of the interviews, which opens up discussion about feelings, and teaches all children coping strategies.

A transition that seems to be considered separate from other transitions in interviews and questionnaires, is the transition from primary to secondary school, as the schools also supports this transition in its own way. As this school has a secondary department on another location in the same city, the school arguably has more insight into and influence on the transition process. "Students are taken on orientation days to the Secondary School. Parents are welcome to visit the secondary school at any point in the school year in order to gain a better understanding of the school's programmes" (School X, n.d.a, p.8) and a booklet with useful information about the secondary school is given to them to take home over the summer.

In one of the interviews, the interviewee expressed that in order to formalise the "organically developed" strategies that the school team employs to support pupils in their (vertical) transitions, the school is currently writing up a transition policy.

Although, it was argued in an interview, a large part of the support is also down to the school's inclusive approach, "being inclusive. (...) it helps with transitions." The inclusive nature of international schools, and this school in particular, with its high SEN population, was said to come across in the curriculum too, and it is in the little things: "all of these little pieces that we do... do foster easier transitions."

# Conclusion and discussion

## Conclusion

This research aimed to answer the following question:

*How does an international primary school in a major Western European city support smooth vertical transitions of its pupils?*

With the data collected from interviews of several staff members, a parent survey, and a teacher survey, it can be concluded that at School X, stakeholders in the pupils' lives work together to support the pupils in their vertical transitions at the school. Communication (between stakeholders) was often mentioned by participants in the research as a support strategy.

The role of the parents in the children's transition is considered very influential and the research indicated a high degree of communication between the school and the parents.

The school team recognises vertical transitions to be a long and gradual process, which can significantly affect the entire family. Several research participants, in particular parents and teachers, considered the daily (horizontal) transitions between contexts to affect the children as well, indicating a link between horizontal and vertical transitions, much like Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Teachers said to support pupils in these type of transitions with the use of visual timetables, and by giving pupils time reminders before moving on to a new activity. The effect of ecological transitions was also strongly recognised in the implementation of the mandatory drop-off by parents on the first real day of school.

The school offers support for transitions in their specific community, and relies on teachers to assess what support the pupils need. Special provisions are made for children with special educational needs, and individual differences between children seem to be taken into account in the pedagogical approach.

To support pupils coming new into the school, a buddy system is employed, making use of the help of peers. The peers that act as buddies help children familiarise the new pupils with new routines, which acknowledges the impact of a change in environment as mentioned by Bronfenbrenner (1979), Wenger (1998) and Rogoff (1996; 2003). The children are supported by peers, teachers, other professionals and their parents to find the tools to construct their new identity within the new setting. Several participants argued that this support is based on the idea that everybody at an international school is in the same boat, that they are all away from home and have gone through or are currently going through a transition, making for all stakeholders to be able to relate to each other.

Yet, as teachers and parents considered the pupils themselves to be partly responsible for their own transition, it is indicated children are considered active agents and, as the

transition can influence them, they can influence the transition. This overlaps with several views discussed in the theoretical framework, such as Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1978), Schumacher and Meleis (1994) and Ackesjö (2014), who all describe children as active agents in their own transition.

As several interviewees mentioned the difference for children who have already transitioned before, it may be concluded that some kind of resilience is developed through these experiences, indicating children can play a part in their own transition.

Other children who are assumed not to have much experience with transitions are children who start new in Nursery. Those pupils initially start with half days at School X, due to their young age.

Yet, arguably all children at such a young age may lack the experience and skills to deal with significant changes in a vertical transition. Children transitioning by leaving School X, are supported through one-to-one sessions with the SC, during which they work on coping strategies to build up resilience.

A going away booklet is a large part of obtaining closure, and when the pupil transfers to the secondary department, they get to visit the new school on several occasions.

In order to continue catering to the needs of their community, which likely changes often because of the transient nature of its population, School X is currently in the process of developing a welcome booklet for new pupils, and are formalising their actions by writing up a transition policy. This may increase consistency in support across the school, and make the transitioning at School X a more continuous and smooth process, as considered desirable in literature (Galton et al., 2000; Bayley et al., 2009; Department of Education, 2009; O'Connor, 2009; Ackesjö, 2014).

Both the theoretical framework and the interviews and surveys, showed that, although transitions can impact children negatively through increase of insecurity and anxiety, the effect is not always negative. The school employs numerous strategies to support smooth vertical transitions of its pupils in order to make the outcome positive, developing children's resilience and empowering them to become successful learners.

## Discussion, limitations and recommendations

School X seems to place a clear emphasis on socio-emotional support rather than academic support. The results of transitions on the children's academic well being does not appear to get much recognition at School X. Only one interviewee mentioned a transition can be hard for a child academically, and academics do not come across in the mentioned support strategies.

Taking into account Maslow's hierarchy of needs as mentioned in Arends (2012), it could be argued that the emotional well being of a child is a condition for academic functioning, therefore making the socio-emotional support effectively a tool to support the pupils academics too.

Additionally, although academic support is not found often in the research data, it does not necessarily imply the pupils at School X do not receive the academic support they need. EAL support is not given much emphasis, although parents have commented their child has received this support and benefitted from it. As several of the interviewees mentioned the transition support (which seems to consist largely of socio-emotional support) to be an organic process that largely results from the staff's experience, it could very well be that the same applies to academic support.

Perhaps the formalisation of strategies in the transition policy, helps to place more focus on academics and stakeholders will work on it more consciously. This may also help to support continuity, and take away part of the reliance currently placed on the teacher's professional judgement and their ability to support a variety of pupils going through a vertical transition. It will be up to the school leadership to determine how to communicate the policy to the teachers and check whether a schoolwide approach is then put into practice.

Although it may be open to question whether some of the offered transition support School X offers its pupils can only be implemented because of the larger support team (including SC, for instance), most of the strategies employed by School X are very practical. The transition strategies may be more effectively applied at international schools, as the school relies quite heavily on both teacher's and pupil's experiences. Yet, if the teacher population is a fair representation of the school's student population, there should be people who can relate to each other in the transition process specific to that school.

Sharing the knowledge and strategies in this research, but also within other schools, as well as creating awareness about the topic of transitions in international education could contribute to the overall support of children transitioning in international education.

## Limitations

This research has limitations due to several factors. Time constraint has led the scope of the research to be limited, and the ethical decision not to involve children (who arguably are the key in the transition process) may have produced a limited view. In order to still provide a multidimensional perspective, triangulation was used by involving teachers, parents and several other members of staff in the research.

Regarding the surveys, the responses that came back were very limited with only four teachers and two parents willing to participate. The data may therefore not be representative of the whole population.

Additionally, a survey doesn't allow for elaboration of an answer; there is no telling how a respondent will interpret a question. In hindsight, with the limited number of responses, (semi-structured) interviews could have been a more effective tool to obtain answers to all questions, also regarding the limited number of participants.

During interviews, however, there is always a risk of putting words into the mouths of respondents, which could also be the case for surveys, as questioning and multiple-choice answers can steer a participant in a certain direction. For validity purposes, all interviews were transcribed, and interview and survey questions were listed in the appendices.

Lastly, this research does not investigate the effectiveness of the support the school provides. As all settings are different in their own way, it depends on the setting whether any of the strategies deployed by School X would be effective in their environment. As addressed in the section above, however, several of the practical strategies should be transferable to other settings.

Therefore it could be beneficial to perform research how effective different strategies are in easing the transition for pupils. This could be done through either observations or by direct involvement of the pupils (using either questionnaires or interviews), although the ethical aspect of working with vulnerable children should be taken into account at all times. A comparative study between different schools could also contribute to the cultivation of knowledge on the subject.

## Professional development

This research project has been an extensive process for me, during which I believe to have worked on several competencies, and to have been able to develop myself as a researcher.

I set myself the goal to gain insight into the effect of vertical transitions on pupils in international primary schools, and to learn about ways to support children going through these transitions. Through reading a plethora of information on transitions and related topics, and by communicating with professionals and parents, I consider to have increased my subject knowledge and extended my pedagogical insight.

As a researcher, I have grown from having to go back and rethink major parts of the research, allowing me to go through the research cycle multiple times. Adversity ended up only strengthening my research, and myself as a researcher and person. In the process, receiving feedback from critical friends and tutor has been an incredibly valuable asset. They provided new insights and angles, sparking more curiosity and simultaneously making me critically study my own work from another perspective.

Not only do I regard the gathered knowledge and insights to make me a better equipped teacher, I think both the research outcomes and the research process have proven to me that teaching is not solitary. I have come to see time and again that it is a process involving cooperation and communication with several stakeholders who are interdependent, and the child is likely to develop better because of that.

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# Appendix A: Interview questions

According to you, what is a transition?

Which transitions do you believe pupils go through at this school?

Are there any policies that stipulate how to support children going through these transitions, that you are aware of?

If yes, who is involved in the implementation of these policies?

Who do you feel is responsible to support the pupils going through these transitions?

Are the children's parents also involved in the transition process?

Do you have any strategies or resources that you use specifically to help children move through a transition?

Are there any things you would think are beneficial in supporting pupils go through a smooth transition, but you think are not possible right now because of time or resource constraint?

## Appendix B: Teacher survey

1. According to you, what transitions do pupils go through at this school? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Starting new at the school at the start of the school year
- ☐ Starting new at the school during the school year
- ☐ Leaving the school at the end of the school year
- ☐ Leaving the school during the school year
- ☐ Moving from one year level to the next
- ☐ Moving from PYP to MYP
- ☐ Coming into the school (on a daily basis)
- ☐ Leaving the school to go home (on a daily basis)
- ☐ Moving from one lesson to the next
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the mentioned transitions do you offer support for to your pupils? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Starting new at the school at the start of the school year
- ☐ Starting new at the school during the school year
- ☐ Leaving the school at the end of the school year
- ☐ Leaving the school during the school year
- ☐ Moving from one year level to the next
- ☐ Moving from PYP to MYP
- ☐ Coming into the school (on a daily basis)
- ☐ Leaving the school to go home (on a daily basis)
- ☐ Moving from one lesson to the next
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you believe the transitions to affect your pupils? What kind of effects have you witnessed?

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4. Who do you believe to be responsible to support the pupils going through a transition? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ The classroom teacher
- ☐ School management
- ☐ The school counsellor
- ☐ The occupational therapist
- ☐ The parents
- ☐ The pupil him/herself
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you work together with other stakeholders in the pupil's life to support them in their transitions?

- ☐ Yes (go to question 6)
- ☐ No (go to question 7)

6. If you answered you work together with other stakeholders in the pupil's life to support them in their transitions, who do these consist of? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Fellow teachers
- ☐ School management
- ☐ The school counsellor
- ☐ The occupational therapist
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you answered you do not work together with other stakeholders in the pupil's life to support them in their transitions, could you elaborate on why you do not?

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8. What strategies would you say you apply to support pupils going through a transition at this school?

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9. Do you believe there to be a school wide consistent approach to support pupils going through transitions? Please elaborate on your answer in the comment field.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure

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10. Is there anything else you think I should know on the topic of transitions at this school?

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## Appendix C: Parent survey

1. According to you, what transitions have your child(ren) gone through? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Starting new at the school at the start of the school year
- ☐ Starting new at the school during the school year
- ☐ Leaving the school at the end of the school year
- ☐ Leaving the school during the school year
- ☐ Moving from one year level to the next
- ☐ Moving from PYP to MYP
- ☐ Coming into the school (on a daily basis)
- ☐ Leaving the school to go home (on a daily basis)
- ☐ Moving from one lesson to the next
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. In what way do you believe the transitions to affect/have affected your child(ren)?

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3. Who do you believe to be responsible to support the pupils going through a transition? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ The classroom teacher
- ☐ School management
- ☐ The school counsellor
- ☐ The occupational therapist
- ☐ The parents
- ☐ The pupil him/herself
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. How you feel your children have been supported at [School X] when going through transitions?

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5. Have you had any other experiences with transitions in other schools?

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6. Is there anything else you think I should know on the topic of transitions at this school?

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