EDITORIAL

Kay Margetts

It is with great pleasure that I welcome all who are interested in childhood transitions, to this first issue of the *International Journal of Transitions in Childhood*. This journal aims to explore and advance thinking about childhood and the variety of transitions by publishing work that describes, extends and inspires sensitive, and evidence-based approaches to the theory and practices of childhood transitions. The journal emerges from the work of a special interest group comprising researchers from Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The group met for the first time at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference in London 2000. Grounded in a shared interest in transition, the group has met together regularly, collaborated on a number of publications, including the Transitions in Early Childhood website, and increased in number and diversity.

I am delighted that colleagues who were present at the first meeting in 2000 have agreed to be members of the Editorial Board.

This first issue offers different perspectives and approaches for understanding the complexity of transitions. Some papers have reviewed the literature to examine the complexity of transitions, not just from the perspective of children but also from the perspective of families and teachers. Other papers present finding from small-scale research projects undertaken in Australia. A feature of this journal is the inclusion of practitioner articles to demonstrate the application of research and theory in practice. The importance of relationships and interdependencies in transitions is a common theme in this first edition.

Renate Niesel and Wilfried Griebel from Germany consider the interplay of transition and resiliency. They remind us that transitions are time of heightened vulnerability during which coping and development are a key focus. These authors identify interdependencies within and among different elements of the social systems in which transitions are imbedded. They identify a need for research that considers the relationships and interdependencies in transitions, coping and future resilient behaviour. Niesel and Griebel note that starting school may simultaneously involve multiple other transitions, particularly within families, and that teachers of young children may also need to make their own transitions.

Reesa Sorin from Queensland, Australia challenges those working with young children to consider their images of children and childhood and how these views impact their own expectations and practices. Sorin identifies transitions in these images by describing ten historical and sociological constructs of ‘the child’ and the practical implications. This article notes that in supporting children through times of transition, educators may also need to make transitions of their own including the reconceptualising of their practice.

The theme of relationships, connections and interdependencies underpins the paper by Sue Dockett and Bob Perry from New South Wales, Australia. An innovative project involving teacher education students and Year 5 school students in a ‘buddy program’ with new children starting school is reported. This co-construction of transition involving a mentoring approach, provided benefits not only to the beginning children but also enabled participants to use and share their experiences and skills and develop leadership skills. Benefits for families and the wider school community were also identified.

It is widely recognised that the transitions associated with significant life events have the power to impact on children’s well-being and sense of self. The ability to identify behaviours that may indicate children at risk of adjustment difficulties or school progress should support
educators to minimise reactions and long term difficulties. Kay Margetts from Victoria, Australia reports the identification of particular behaviours associated with the broader constructs of hyperactivity, externalising and internalising behaviours that are indicative of adjustment difficulties, and provides some recommendations for practice.

The practitioner article brings together the key themes of this edition and describes one school’s multi-faceted approach to transition. Jenny Mayo from Victoria, Australia describes the co-construction of transition from home to kindergarten to school. She describes the involvement and roles of more experienced, confident or older children as active participants in different facets of the transition and induction program, and identifies the foundational beliefs and approaches that she believes underpin the success of this program.

The reconceptualising of childhood and children’s transition to school; transitions in children’s development, coping and well-being; transitions in families and the wider school community; the importance of recognising and responding to children’s competencies and needs have emerged through this edition. These highlight the complexity of transition and the social systems in which they are embedded. A number of issues have been raised for further consideration.