

Preschool educators' communication with schools: What the *Communication Experience Technique* can reveal about the nature of communication, motivations and relationships*Kathryn Hopps, Charles Sturt University, khopps@csu.edu.au**Sue Dockett, Charles Sturt University, sdockett@csu.edu.au***Abstract**

Communication between educators in schools and preschools is a widely promoted transition to school practice. Researchers, policy makers and educators have all recommended the exchange of information between educators in different settings as children make the transition to primary school. To a large extent this is based on current understandings of children's educational transitions within an ecological framework which, in turn, promotes inter-setting communication as one form of social connection that influences children's transition to school.

While the practice of sharing information across settings is promoted, the realities of preschool-school communication have received very little attention in the research literature. This paper explores the nature, purpose and extent of educators' communication practices through interrogation of preliminary data from a study investigating preschool-school communication. Using a measure most often employed to explore inter-organisational communication, the 'Communication Experience Technique' (CET), we examine the experiences of 42 New South Wales (NSW) preschool educators as they communicate with schools around issues of transition. Data generated through the CET provided specific examples of communication and the effectiveness of these, from the perspectives of preschool educators. The topic, purpose and outcome of the communications were identified through content analysis. In addition, the study demonstrates the applicability of the CET in studies of communication at the preschool-school transition.

Introduction

Beginning primary school denotes a significant period of change in the lives of young children and their families. Adult support for children is important, as the transition to school can be both challenging and exciting (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). The effects of early school experiences on children's academic and social success at school can persist beyond the initial transition period and on this basis, a positive start to school is important for all children.

Transition as the intersecting of contexts: Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) considers children's learning and development within the context of systems of relationships. Part of the importance of ecological systems theory for early childhood education is that it offers opportunities to consider not only the child, but also other people and places, as well as the environments, in which interactions take place and relationships occur. Bronfenbrenner has described children's contexts as a series of layers that include the home, education and neighbourhood as well as broader social and cultural settings. Starting from the child and moving out, the microsystem incorporates the immediate environment, including settings such as the home, preschool or school. The next layer, the mesosystem, includes the connections and interactions between these settings. Outer layers include contexts that have less direct influences on children, such as the parental workplace or

neighbourhood (exosystem), and prevalent social and cultural views as reflected in government policies or social values (macrosystem). In addition, Bronfenbrenner described a temporal element (chronosystem) to emphasise the changing nature of interactions and relationships across time.

Communication and transition

Connections between and across contexts become particularly important at times of transition. When children start school there is the potential for many connections among children, families and educators¹. Of relevance for this paper is inter-setting communication, defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 210) as 'messages transmitted from one setting to the other with the express intent of providing specific information to persons in the other setting'. Communication between settings (particularly preschool and school) has been promoted in a number of models of transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2002; Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999), with an emphasis on the sharing of information that is valid and relevant (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Communication between preschool and school educators has the potential to promote continuity in children's learning and development as well as continuity of curriculum and pedagogy (Dockett & Perry, 2007; National Education Goals Panel [NEGP], 1998; Niesel & Griebel, 2007). Communication across settings can build compatible role demands for children and goal consensus between educators (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It can also facilitate children's transfer of learning, generating opportunities for children and educators to recognise prior learning and existing expertise and the application of this in the new setting (McNaughton, 2002).

Communication between preschools and schools has become an important focus of transition policy and practice within Australia. The need for professionals to work closely together at times of transition has been included in early childhood reform documents (Council of Australian Governments, 2009), noted in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009) and incorporated into draft documents of the National Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2010). These documents note the potentially positive consequence of communication. However, the mere presence of communication does not mean that all communication is positive, effective or relevant. Communication research within educational settings has highlighted the potential for difficulties and tensions as well as productive information exchange between communicators, including educators and parents. One of the major factors contributing to these tensions is knowledge-power relations. In their review of the literature on parent participation in early childhood education, Hughes and MacNaughton (2000) identified politics of knowledge and hierarchies of expertise between staff and parents. These tensions focused on whose knowledge was regarded as expert (Elliott, 2005).

¹ In keeping with national trends, the term educator refers to 'early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5).

Studies in school settings have also reflected similar tensions where parents report that teachers do not value their input, or regard their knowledge as expertise.

Knowledge-power relations between educators, and the potential for tension around these, are also reported in educational contexts. In one example Musanti and Pence (2010) describe collaborations among educators which involved observing other's practice and required participants to 'open the doors of their classrooms to the thinking of others' (p.79). Part of this experience involved shifting the positions of educators from expert to learners, generating challenges to educator's identities. Contributing to these challenges was the educational culture of teachers working in isolation from each other. In this context working together often means disrupting what educators know (Musanti & Pence, 2010). The same challenges can exist when teachers from different contexts are expected to work together and learn from each other.

Preschool-school communication

Communication between preschools and schools has been promoted as an effective practice to support a positive transition to school. Specific communication strategies have been suggested, including developing complementary curriculum, sharing resources, devising transition programs collaboratively (Dockett & Perry, 2009), the transfer of written records of children's development from preschool to school, discussions about children and involvement in transition networks (Margetts, 2002b). While many possible strategies for communication exist, the nature, extent and purpose of communications vary considerably. While a range of studies indicate that educators generally consider cross-sector communication to be a good idea, these same studies note the many limitations and constraints identified by educators (Brostrom, 2002; Einarsdottir, Perry, & Dockett, 2008; Hopps, 2004; O'Kane & Hayes, 2006; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999). The constraints include professional misunderstandings across sectors, for example, where educators in schools and preschools tend to be unaware of the contexts in which their colleagues work, as well as their roles, expertise and expectations (Ashton et al., 2008; Brostrom, 2002; Cassidy, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2007; Hopps, 2004). Other constraints include preschool educators' resistance to the push-down curriculum (Wesley & Buysse, 2003), the legal necessity of gaining written consent from parents before exchanging information about children (Hopps, 2004) and the increasing accountability and complexity of educator's work. Where preschool-school communication occurs, less formal practices, such as conversations between educators, are favoured over more formal practices, such as the transfer of children's records and curriculum collaboration (Einarsdottir et al., 2008). It is quite likely that this reflects regulatory frameworks as well as personal and professional expectations.

A further challenge to preschool-school communication is the limited research evidence base indicating that such communication has a positive impact on children's educational outcomes.

While it would seem intuitive that communication between those who know a child well, and those who are in a position of getting to know the child, would promote positive outcomes, few empirical investigations have addressed this topic (Ahtola et al., 2011; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008).

Communication climate – the overall feeling between communicators (Wood, 1999) – plays an important role in supporting or hindering effective communication. Positive communication climates are generated when communicators feel valued by those with whom they communicate (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2010). A sense of value is conveyed when communications are affirmed and positive feedback is provided. In a preschool-school context, value could be conveyed when information from preschool educators is acknowledged and used as the basis for interacting with children about to start school. The same respect could be shown by preschool educators when they engage with school educators about the nature of school environments and the ways in which preschool children can be invited to participate in those environments. Confirmation, or disconfirmation, of communication impacts on relationships and influences future communication (Ellis, 2004).

Purpose of the study

Preschool-school communication is an advocated practice, based in an ecological model of transition. Research to date indicates that communication across preschool-school sector varies considerably and may contribute to tensions, rather than facilitate collegial working relationships between educators. There is little evidence about the actual preschool-school communication practices used by educators, the reasons for communication, topics of communication and the outcomes of communication. This paper addresses these issues through analysis of data generated in the responses of 42 NSW preschool educators to the following research questions:

1. Why do preschool and school educators communicate with each other?
2. What is the topic of communication?
3. What characterises the communication climate between preschools and schools?
4. What are the results of preschool-school communication?

Method

The data reported in this paper are drawn from an ongoing doctoral study investigating preschool-school communication. One of the features of this study is the use of communication audit tools to explore the nature, extent and purpose of preschool-school communication. This paper focuses on the use of a specific tool – the Communication Experience Technique (CET) – in both the pilot and the preliminary phases of the research.

Communication audit tools which have been designed to study the effectiveness of organisational communication in a wide range of contexts (Gray & Laidlaw, 2009; Hogard, Ellis,

Ellis, & Barker, 2005) form the basis of this study. Data are generated through communication audits by employing a range of techniques including established survey instruments. One such instrument, the International Communications Association (ICA) *Communication Audit Survey*, designed to be customised to suit the particular context in which it is to be used, was modified to produce the *Preschool-school Communication Survey*. Using Hargie and Tourish's (2009) published adaptation of the original ICA survey, this template was modified further by adjusting each section of the survey to suit this particular context and intended respondents. In the particular section from which data are reported in this paper, wording was changed to encourage respondents to think specifically about communication experiences with schools.

Communication Experience Technique (CET)

The *Preschool-school Communication Survey* consists of 76 questions, divided into 10 sections. The survey seeks both quantitative and qualitative responses from participants about preschool-school communication. The results from the final section only of this questionnaire are reported in this paper. This part of the questionnaire involved the collection of qualitative data in response to a questioning strategy known as the Communication Experience Technique (CET). This measure is a revision of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) and asks participants to describe a specific interaction, the actions of people involved and the outcomes of the interaction (Mallak, Lyth, Olson, Ulshafer, & Sardone, 2003).

The purpose of the CET is to invite participants to focus on their perceptions of successful or unsuccessful communications as well as the reasons for the success or otherwise of the interaction. The CET was used in this study to facilitate the sharing of specific communication experiences by asking the following:

Please describe one specific communication experience you have had with a primary school. Please answer the below question and give a brief summary of the experience.

Was the communication (circle one):

1. Effective
2. Ineffective

Describe the experience, what led up to it, what the other persons involved did that made this an ineffective or effective communication, and the consequences of the communication experience for you/for others. Please do not use the real names of persons or schools.

Participants

Participants were drawn from two regions of NSW and from a range of prior-to-school early childhood settings. These included preschools, long day care and occasional child care centres, family day care (FDC) coordination units, mobile children's services and multi-project children's services. Collectively these settings are referred to as 'preschools' in this paper. Participants

included educators working directly with children and/or in management roles such as Directors and FDC coordination unit staff.

Of the 42 participants all except one were female, 62% (n=26) held at least a bachelors degree in early childhood education and the majority of educators (n=31) had more than 10 years experience in the early childhood field.

Data collection

Data was generated through responses to paper-based questionnaires (pilot study) or an online version created through Survey Monkey (preliminary phase). Participants in both phases of the research were contacted by phone at their workplace and invited complete a questionnaire. In the pilot, the survey was then posted to the participant and in the preliminary phase the survey link was emailed to each participant.

The data presented in this paper includes 14 communication experiences from the pilot study and 28 from the preliminary stages of the main phase of the study (n=42). The pilot data were collected in term 4 of the 2010 school year. The response rate to the questionnaire was 62%. Of the 18 surveys returned, 14 participants completed the CET section. In the main phase of the study, data were collected in term 1 of the 2011 school year. Distribution and completion of the online survey occurred over March to May. The link to the online survey was emailed to participants and, as of 5 May 2011, those returned represented a response rate of 75%. Within these 42 completed questionnaires, 28 communication experiences were recorded. The data collection times of the pilot and main phase represent two different periods in children’s transitions to school: term 4 being just prior to children formally starting primary school and term 1 being when the children have just begun their primary school education.

Data analysis

Content analysis of the reports of communication experiences, using QSR NVivo software, was conducted using pre-existing categories as well as emergent themes (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), analysis began with some general themes drawn from the study’s conceptual framework and the research questions. The four broad categories for the content analysis related directly to the four research questions. These pre-ordinate categories were further sub-divided and coded into themes emerging from the 42 communication experiences. Coding units (Weber, 1990) consisted of phrases and sentences. Themes were categorised as per Table 1.

Table 1. Content analysis framework

Research Question	Broad categories	Themes
Why do preschool and	Exchange of information	Children with additional support

school educators communicate with each other?		needs Child familiarisation with new school environment Information to school educators about children Informing parents child not ready
What is the topic of communication?	Children Information about school/preschool	Information about individual children Organisation of transition activities School Promotion Curriculum
What characterises the communication climate between preschools and schools?	Positive and negative communication climate	Confirming messages Disconfirming messages
What are the results of preschool-school communication?	Positive and negative consequences of communication	For educators For parents For children

Results

Why do preschool and school educators communicate with each other?

The GET responses were examined for reasons underpinning preschool-school communication around the transition to school. For each communication experience, more than one motive for communication may have been evident.

Communication about children with *additional needs*, including children with *developmental delays, behavioural problems, needing lots of help* or children deemed to be *not ready* for school, was the rationale for communication in 18 (42%) of the educators' responses. Parents were mentioned in several of these responses, with comments that communicating with the school assisted the preschool educator and the school to inform parents that their child was *not ready* to start primary school. For example:

We discuss working together as to children who we feel are not ready for school so that school teachers can back us on this.

Often in addition to this, general communication about children – including those not deemed to have additional needs – was noted by 8 (19%) educators who described providing written reports, observing children at preschool and meeting to discuss children starting school.

The second most cited reason (n=9, 21%) for communication with schools related to helping children become familiar with the new school environment through organising transition activities, such as site visits.

What is the topic of communication?

Children

Communication about children was included in 19 (45%) of the preschool educators' responses. The precise nature of this communication varied. For example, three educators wrote about talking to the child's school teacher about strategies:

A child left our service with behavioural problems that had been discussed with the parents. The school contacted us and as a result, [they were] able to set up some of the strategies we used successfully to deal with the behaviour.....

Educators' descriptions often used general terms to refer to the topic of communication: *spoke about our developmental records* and *discussed children*. Some responses contained a little more detail of what information was communicated, such as advice about grouping children into classes and the level of children's skills. Two educators mentioned communicating with their school counterparts about how children have settled in after they had started school.

Organisation

Seven educators wrote about communication with schools that involved the organisation of activities such as reciprocal site visits for children, transition program dates and parent information sessions.

School promotion

Three educators wrote that the topic of their communication with schools was promotional. One participant described this as the school *chasing for numbers*. Another participant described her annoyance at how the school's communication centred around promotion:

Last year I felt our preschool was caught in the middle of a battle between primary schools seeking new enrolments. They used our preschool to promote and advertise themselves. I felt the visits we attended were really a means of trying to reach parents.

Curriculum

Five educators (12%) noted that they communicated about preschool or school programs. Topics included finding out from the school what they expected of children, providing information about EYLF and the goals and objectives of the school's transition program.

What characterises the communication climate between preschools and schools?

For the examination of communication climate, responses were coded into those that reflected *confirming messages* and *disconfirming messages*. Confirming messages included those that conveyed value to the receiver including recognition, acknowledgement and endorsement (Adler et al., 2010). Disconfirming messages included those that communicated a lack of value of the receiver through ignoring a person's presence and their communications (DeVito, 2009).

Examples of confirming messages sent from schools to preschools included when school educators listened to the advice of the preschool, were willing to cooperate, engaged in dialogue, showed interest in what the preschool educator had to say and when they had thanked the preschool educator for information that had been provided. Examples of confirming messages also included when the preschool educator had influenced changes at the school. In relation to a school transition program, one educator wrote:

I was asked how the program was running and when I mentioned the colouring-in activities and that the children found them uninteresting they changed the way they offered the art/craft activity, they offered more open-ended activities. So I was pleased the information was taken on board.

Disconfirming communication examples included when phone calls from the school to the preschool were promised but not made or when calls made to the school had taken a long time to be returned. Other examples included when the preschool educator's advice was ignored or when educators perceived that their expertise was *so under-valued*:

When I spoke about our developmental records and sharing this I was told they weren't interested because they spend the first week of term testing the children. When it comes to school readiness the school principal has on several occasions told parents to start their child even after I have suggested they aren't ready.

What are the results of preschool-school communication?

Educators were asked to include in their responses the consequences of the communication experience for themselves and for others. Where this information was included in the survey responses, these were coded into three categories based on the stakeholders who were mentioned in the responses.

Educators

Class composition, understanding children's behaviour, adjusting programs and impacts on relationships were identified as the results of communication for educators. Comments about how ineffective communication experiences impacted adversely on the preschool educator's relationship with the school included: *Very disappointing experience and I am now reluctant to deal*

with school again next year. Responses that included detail of positive consequences of communication for relationships included being able to work as team around transition.

In some instances, descriptions of the communication experiences reflected ways in which preschool programs had changed as a result of these. For example:

I chatted to the Kindy teacher about her expectations and asked her to list things she wanted the preschool children to be able/competent at. I have been able to plan experiences to further develop these skills in the children preparing for school in 2011.

Parents

Educators reported that their communication with schools had been helpful in providing information to parents, particularly when consistent information was provided. Usually this related to a child's perceived readiness for school. Educators indicated that ineffective communication between themselves and school educators generated *problems* for the family.

Children

Several educators described the consequences of their communication in relation to the children starting school. In a few instances, it was reported that children were *sent back to preschool* as a result of the preschool-school communication. In other descriptions, the sharing of pedagogical strategies was reported to have resulted in some consistency for the child at the time of transition, resulting in *continuity of care*. In other instances benefits for children were described generally as helping *with smooth transition*.

Some of the negative consequences for children of ineffective communication with the school included:

..the family and child experienced problems as a result, which we felt could have been prevented if the teacher had been prepared to listen to our strategies in the first place.

Discussion

The importance of communication in relationships

Preschool educators' experiences of communicating with schools in this study have provided important information about relationships between schools and preschools. Examples of how certain communicative behaviours can build positive relationships, or impact negatively on relations have been illuminated by the data reported here. In instances of effective communication, preschool educators reported that their contributions were valued by school personnel, recognising their expertise as educators (DeVito, 2009). This was notable in examples of communication where the preschool educator had been able to affect decisions at the school. These are examples of

endorsement, the highest form of confirming message (Adler et al., 2010), whereby schools educators conveyed their value of the preschool educator's contribution to decision making.

Disconfirming messages from schools included ignoring information from the preschool and affected the relational climate which is so important at times of children's transitions to school. Preschool educators told of how this has made them reluctant to communicate with schools and affected their relationship adversely. As communication scholars write, 'it isn't *what* we communicate about that shapes a relational climate as much as *how* we speak and act toward one another' (Adler et al., 2010, p. 316).

The data presented here has relied upon only one side of the preschool-school communicative relationship. The experiences of school educators are needed to present a more complete picture. Perception is an important influence on communication and shapes how people understand each other and their communications (Adler et al., 2010; DeVito, 2009; Tyler, Kossen, & Ryan, 2005). Preschool educators' perceptions of their communication experiences with schools no doubt differ from what school educators would say about their communication in these same situations. 'We communicate with others according to how we perceive and define them' (Wood, 1999, p. 80) and it may be that how schools perceive preschool educators and their role in transition defines how schools communicate with them. The perception of preschool educators by schools is being investigated in the larger doctoral study.

Espoused versus actual communication practices

Margetts (2002a) and Dockett and Perry (2009) have identified the importance of continuity for children in the connections between preschool and school settings, and suggested that this can be facilitated through educators working together with the use of specific communication strategies such the transfer of children's learning and development records, developing complementary curriculum and membership of transition networks. The results from the preschool educators' communication experiences with schools in this research provide evidence of the use of some of these communication strategies. However, developing complementary curriculum, the practice that has been shown to have an impact on academic and social outcomes for children (Ahtola et al., 2011; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008) was reported in very limited ways by preschool educators such the use of strategies for individual children's behavioural challenges.

One of the pedagogical principles included in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) promotes 'continuity of learning and transitions'(p. 16). This includes suggestions that educators share information about children's knowledge and skills so learning programs can be built upon what children already know. In this study there is very little evidence of this type of information sharing occurring for all children and it is not known precisely what use is made of the information that is provided by preschool educators to schools. Where children's records were mentioned these were

not reported as always being welcomed by the school and the information communicated was described mostly in terms of children's needs. A closer investigation of what information is exchanged between educators and the utility of this information is needed to build upon and explain these findings.

Readiness

Whilst many of the communication experiences involved preschool educators providing information to schools to be ready for their new entrants, there is evidence that school readiness as an attribute of the child, still persists and effects the content of communication. Communication experiences included those in which children who started school were sent back to preschool and the disappointment of one educator when she advised that a child was not ready, but the school accepted the child anyway. The NEGP (1998) writes that 'ready schools accept all children on the basis of chronological age'(p. 25). The data has highlighted that this is not always the case, or accepted automatically by the educators involved and therefore that assessing children's readiness is still a discourse that persists around transition to school.

Limitations

The data presented in this study is limited because it is only from the perspective of preschool educators and collected only via questionnaires, however, the larger study is gathering data from school educators using a mirror image questionnaire. A more in-depth investigation of some of the issues raised in this paper will also be addressed through focus groups and case studies involving both preschool and school educators. Actual preschool-school communication needs to be captured, as the CET only collects self-report data. Written and verbal texts of the communication between preschools and schools will be collected in the main study. Reasons for communicating were not specifically asked for in the CET, but in another part of the questionnaire not reported here, educators are asked for the main reasons why they communicate. This will enhance the information gathered from the CET about motivations for communicating.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an initial and emerging picture of communication between educators in schools and preschools around children's transitions to school through the use of the Communication Experience Technique. This picture has identified the prevalence of readiness discourse in these interactions as well as several potential tensions around the recognition of knowledge and expertise as well as a range of consequences of communication. Across this limited sample, it is apparent that the rationale for communication, and the topics of communication, do not necessarily reflect those advocated in policy documents. This is particularly

the case around issues such as coordination of curricula and building teaching and learning programs around the information that is shared between schools and preschools.

How communication with schools is experienced and perceived by preschool educators has provided some evidence that communication can affect relationships, both positively and adversely. Relationships between the adults in children's lives are important throughout life, but particularly at times of transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), so further attention to how schools and preschools communicate with each other is warranted. Since perception is an important influence on communication, how preschool educators and indeed preschool settings are perceived by schools and perhaps the wider community, is something that needs to be addressed by educators themselves but first needs some more illumination through the research literature.

References

- Adler, R. B., Rosenfeld, L. B., & Proctor, R. F. (2010). *Interplay: The process of interpersonal communication* (11 ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ahtola, A., Silinskas, G., Poikonen, P.-L., Kontoniemi, M., Niema, P., & Nurmi, J.-E. (2011). Transition to formal schooling: Do transition practices matter for academic performance? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 26*, 295-302.
- Ashton, J., Woodrow, C., Johnston, C., Wangmann, J., Singh, L., & James, T. (2008). Partnerships in learning: Linking early childhood services, families and schools for optimal development. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 33*(2), 10-16.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brostrom, S. (2002). Communication and continuity in the transition to kindergarten. In H. Fabian & A.-W. Dunlop (Eds.), *Transitions in the early years: Debating continuity and progression for children in early education* (pp. 52-63). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Cassidy, M. (2005). "They do it anyway": A study of Primary 1 teachers' perceptions of children's transition into primary education. *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development, 25*(2), 143-153.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Council of Australian Governments. (2009). *Investing in the early years - A national early childhood development strategy*. Barton, ACT.: Author. Retrieved from http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/docs/national_ECD_strategy.pdf.
- Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*. Barton, ACT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Documents/Final%20EYLF%20Framework%20Report%20-%20WEB.pdf.
- Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. (2010). *Draft guide to the National Quality Standard - Education and care services: Centre based and family day care: Phase 2*. Retrieved from http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Pages/NationalQualityFrameworkAssessment.aspx.
- DeVito, J. A. (2009). *The interpersonal communication book* (12 ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2007). *Transitions to school: Perceptions, expectations, experiences*. Sydney: UNSW Press.
- Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2009). Readiness for school: A relational construct. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 34*(1), 20-26.

- Dunlop, A.-W., & Fabian, H. (2002). Conclusions: Debating transitions, continuity and progression in the early years. In A.-W. Dunlop & H. Fabian (Eds.), *Transitions in the early years: Debating continuity and progression for children in early education* (pp. 146-154). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Einarsdottir, J., Perry, B., & Dockett, S. (2008). Transition to school practices: Comparisons from Iceland and Australia. *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development*, 28(1), 47-60.
- Elliott, R. (2005). The communication accretion spiral: A communication process for promoting and sustaining meaningful partnerships between families and early childhood service staff. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 30(2), 49-58.
- Ellis, K. (2004). The impact of perceived teacher confirmation on receiver apprehension, motivation and learning. *Communication Education*, 53(1), 1-20.
- Gray, J. H., & Laidlaw, H. M. (2009). Auditing a major retail chain. In O. Hargie & D. Tourish (Eds.), *Auditing organizational communication: A handbook of research, theory and practice* (pp. 356-369). Hove, UK: Routledge.
- Hargie, O., & Tourish, D. (Eds.). (2009). *Auditing organizational communication: A handbook of research, theory and practice*. Hove, UK: Routledge.
- Hogard, E., Ellis, R., Ellis, J., & Barker, C. (2005). Using a communication audit to improve communication on clinical placement in pre-registration nursing. *Nurse Education Today*, 25(2), 119-125.
- Hopps, K. (2004). Teacher communication across the preschool-school boundary. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 29(1), 8-13.
- Hughes, P., & MacNaughton, G. (2000b). Consensus, dissensus or community: The politics of parent involvement in early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 1(3), 241-258.
- LoCasale-Crouch, J., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Pre-kindergarten teachers' use of transition practices and children's adjustment to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1), 124-139.
- Mallak, L. A., Lyth, D. M., Olson, S. D., Ulshafer, S. M., & Sardone, F. S. (2003). Diagnosing culture in healthcare organizations using critical incidents. *International Journal of Healthcare Quality Assurance*, 16(4), 180-190.
- Margetts, K. (2002a). Planning transition programs. In H. Fabian & A.-W. Dunlop (Eds.), *Transitions in the early years: debating continuity and progression for children in early education* (pp. 111-122). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Margetts, K. (2002b). Transition to school: Complexity and diversity. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 10(2), 103-114.
- McNaughton, S. (2002). *Meeting of minds*. Wellington: Learning Media Ltd.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Musanti, S. I., & Pence, L. (2010). Collaboration and teacher development: Unpacking resistance, constructing knowledge, and navigating identities. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 37(1), 73-89.
- National Education Goals Panel. (1998). *Ready schools*. Washington D.C.: National Educational Goals Panel. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED416582&site=ehost-live>.
- Niesel, R., & Griebel, W. (2007). Enhancing the competence of transition systems through co-construction. In A.-W. Dunlop & H. Fabian (Eds.), *Informing transitions in the early years: Research, policy and practice* (pp. 21-32). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- O'Kane, M., & Hayes, N. (2006). The transition to school in Ireland: Views of preschool and primary school teachers. *International Journal of Transitions in Childhood*, 2, 4-16.

- Pianta, R. C., Cox, M. J., Taylor, L., & Early, D. (1999). Kindergarten teachers' practices related to the transition to school: Results of a national survey. *Elementary School Journal, 100*(1), 71-86.
- Pianta, R. C., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Cox, M. J. (1999). Introduction: An ecological approach to kindergarten transition. In R. C. Pianta & M. J. Cox (Eds.), *The transition to kindergarten* (pp. 3-12). Baltimore, MD: Paul.H.Brookes.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Pianta, R. C., & Cox, M. J. (2000). Teachers' judgments of problems in the transition to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 15*(2), 147-166.
- Tyler, S., Kossen, C., & Ryan, C. (2005). *Communication: A foundation course*. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson.
- Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic content analysis* (2 ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wesley, P. W., & Buysse, V. (2003). Making meaning of school readiness in schools and communities. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 18*, 351-375.
- Wood, J. T. (1999). *Interpersonal communication: Everyday encounters*. London: Thomson.