


 UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG	COURSE DESCRIPTION	  Education and Culture DG Lifelong Learning Programme
Name of the course: <i>EASE - Transition from Playschool to Primary School</i>		Institutions: University of Iceland – School of Education
Authors: Professor Johanna Einarsdottir	Contact hours: Two semesters. 10 ECTS units	

Training - Implications

Course description in the study programme:

The transition from early childhood services to primary school marks a significant change in the lives of children and their families. The goal of the course is to reinforce transition and continuity in children's educational experiences.

Aims:

The aim of the course is to create a strong and equal partnership between playschool and primary school and to promote educational continuity and flexibility in early childhood education. To this end, playschool teachers and primary school teachers will be enabled to develop a unified approach and a common understanding of education that could be adopted within both educational levels.

An action research inquiry will be conducted in three playschools and three primary schools in Reykjavík. The purpose of this action research in schools is to develop and improve practice. Teachers who participate in action research focus on changing and improving their own practices. New methods that are developed in part by the teachers themselves are tested. Records are made of the actions that are taken, and data is gathered and analyzed throughout the study period. In this project, playschool and primary school teachers participate by collaboratively developing a common ideology and pedagogical practice.

Participants

The course and an action research project are connected. Teachers from three playschools and three primary schools in the city of Reykjavík participate. The playschools and the primary schools were chosen using purposeful sampling. The following guidelines were used:

- Teachers and directors of the schools were interested in participating
- The ideology and pedagogical practices of the participating schools were not the same;
- A majority of the teachers in the schools were educated and trained in teaching;
- The playschools and the primary schools were chosen in pairs due to their close proximity to one another; and
- Each school pair was located in a unique part of the city as compared to the other pairs.

Two to three teachers from each school participate. The participating schools and the teachers involved are as follows:

- Vesturbæjarskóli: 2 primary school teachers and the assistant principal,
- Dvergasteinn: 2 playschool teachers and the principal,
- Selásskóli: 2 primary school teachers and the assistant principal,
- Rauðaborg: 1 playschool teacher, 1 primary school teacher, and the principal,
- Norðlingaskóli: 2 primary school teachers and the principal and assistant principal,
- Rauðhóll: 3 playschool teachers and the principal and assistant principal.

Other participants in the project included: (a) Three research assistants from the university, each acting as a contact person from each of the school pairs, (b) Seven specialists from the university (i.e., assistant and associate professors), (c) Consultants at the Playschool and Primary School Office for Reykjavík acted as collaborative partners in this project and assisted with identifying schools to participate, and (d) The project leader, i.e., Johanna Einarsdottir.

First Phase

The course and the project started in the spring of 2009 with meetings and workshops for the participating playschool and primary school teachers. During this time, the teachers decided on the themes that they wanted to work on. After the schools were selected, the participants were given information about the purpose of the project and introduced to the concept of action research. A booklet introducing aims, characteristics, and the action research process was distributed to each participant, and a short presentation was given to the group. The participants were then asked to come to the next meeting with some ideas about what they would like to emphasize in their cooperation with the other school level. Some of the school pairs decided to meet prior to the next organized gathering to discuss their ideas. At the next meeting, the school pairs discussed and developed possible projects, which resulted in the following projects:

- Pair I: Early literacy, play and outdoor teaching,
- Pair II: Early literacy and play, and
- Pair III: Early numeracy (i.e., mathematics) and play.

The next step for the project leader was to inform the specialists from the university about the teachers' decisions. Due to their prior introduction to the project, the specialists were ready to work with the teachers.

At the next meeting, the groups worked independently and discussed their project. Table 1 shows the members of the groups. In addition, consultants from the Reykjavík City office attended some of the meetings with the teachers.

Table 1 – The groups and their members

Pair I	Pair II	Pair III
Two playschool teachers	One playschool teacher	Two playschool teachers
	One primary school teacher employed in the playschool	
Two primary school teachers	Two primary school teachers	Two primary school teachers
Playschool principal	Playschool principal	Playschool principal
Primary school principal	Primary school principal	Primary school principal
Specialist in early literacy	Specialist in early literacy	Specialist in early mathematics
Specialist in play	Specialist in play	Specialist in play
Specialist in outdoor teaching		
Research assistant	Research assistant	Research assistant
Project leader	Project leader	Project leader

At the next meeting, the teachers listened to a presentation on the transition from playschool to primary school and continuity between playschool and primary school. Then they were given the opportunity to discuss these topics within their groups. Additionally, they were given material to read on their own. The groups decided to each meet separately in the participating schools between the larger meetings. The fourth common meeting of the group took place in the middle of May. This meeting started with a presentation from a guest lecturer, i.e., Liz Brooker from the Institute of Education at the University of London. She talked about the transition between school levels and play. Following the presentation, the participants had the opportunity to discuss this information within their small groups.

During the preparation stage, the researchers from the university interviewed the participating teachers and parents individually. The interview schedule that was developed by the EASE partners was used together with some additional questions. Parents of children who were approaching the end of playschool were also interviewed in focus groups. They were asked about their experiences related to their child's playschool education and their expectations for primary school. Between the meetings with the group, the university participants meet to discuss and reflect upon the interaction within the larger gatherings.

Table 2 – Schedule for the first phase

Date	Activities
February 24 th , 2009	Introduction to the project. Participants work in groups and discuss possible projects.
March 19 th , 2009	Presentation on action research. Jóhanna Einarisdóttir Teachers work in groups and decide on common projects.
April 21 st , 2009	Presentation on transition and continuity. Jóhanna Einarisdóttir Participants work in groups that include teachers, specialists, and teacher assistants.
April through May of 2009	Groups meet independently to plan and discuss
May 20 th , 2009	Presentation on transition and play. Liz Brooker, University of London Discussion.
May 2009	Interviews with participating playschool and primary school teachers.
May 2009	Group interviews with the parents of playschool children.

Second Phase

In the second phase of the study, the projects will be put into practice in the playschools and the primary schools. Simultaneously, meetings which the teachers will report and reflect on their work will be held for the entire group.

The following data will be generated and collected in order to evaluate the project:

- a. The implementation of the practice in the classroom will be observed;
- b. The teachers will keep a journal related to the implementation of the new method;
- c. Teachers will be interviewed;
- d. Parents will be interviewed; and
- e. Children will be interviewed.

The data will be analyzed during the project period and also at the end.

Table 3 – Schedule for the second phase

August 19 th , 2009	Meeting of the whole group.
September 14 th 2009	Sustainable development and transition from playschool to primary school Ros and Mike Littledyke from University of South Australia
September - October 2009	Groups meet independently to plan and discuss.
October 1 st 2009	Meeting. Presentation on Observations and recording (Learning stories) Jóhanna Einarisdóttir Discussion
October 8 th 2009	Presentation on play and learning. Guðrún Bjarnadóttir, University of Iceland Discussion.
October 19 th 2009	Emerging literacy. Steinunn Torfadóttir and Helga Sigurmundsdóttir, University of Iceland
November 10 th 2009	Meeting
November - December	Groups meet independently to plan and discuss.

December 7th	Meeting
--------------	---------

Meetings for the spring semester have not been dated at this point. But the participants will meet each month for presentations and discussions.

Third Phase

During the third phase, study reports will be written, and the project will be presented to practitioners in the field. Policy formulation will be developed based on the results of the project. The final product will be used as a curriculum framework for continuous early childhood education.

Certification

The course is offered on graduate level in the training institutions e.g. University of Iceland, School of Education. The participants will receive 10 ECTS if they successfully participate in the course.

Dissemination - Sustainability:

Representatives from Reykjavik Playschool and Primary School Office, heads of the primary schools, heads of playschools will be informed at regular intervals about the progress of the project. The course and the action research project will inform policy and practice in Iceland. Reports and articles will be written and the results presented at conferences and meetings.

Bibliography:

Main texts:

Jóhanna Einarsdóttir (2007). *Lítill börn með skólatöskur: Tengsl leikskóla og grunnskóla*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan og Rannsóknarstofa í menntunarfræðum ungra barna.

Koshy, V. (2005). *Action research for improving practice: A practical guide*. London/Los Angeles: Sage.

Carr, M. (2001). *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings. Learning stories*, London: Paul Chapman.

Additional Readings:

Brooker, L. (2008) *Supporting Transitions in the Early Years*. Berkshire: McGrawHill

Broström, S. (2002) Communication and continuity in the transition from kindergarten to school. In: Fabian, H. & Dunlop, A.-W. (Eds.) (2002) *Transitions in the early years*. 52-63. London: Routledge Falmer.

Broström, S. (2002) Problems and Barriers in Children's Learning When They Transit from Kindergarten to Kindergarten Class in School, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, Themed Monograph No. 1*, "Transitions", 51-66.

5

Broström, S. (2003) Transition from kindergarten to school in Denmark: Building bridges. In: Broström, S. & Wagner, J. (Eds.) *Early Childhood Education in Five Nordic Countries. Perspectives on the transition from preschool to school*. 39-74. Aarhus, DK: systime.

Carr, M. (2007) *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings. Learning Stories*, London: SAGE.

Dockett, S. & Perry B. (1999), Starting School: What Do the Children Say, *Early Child Development and Care*, 159, 107-119.

Dockett, S. & Perry B. (1999), Starting School: What Do the Children Say, *Early Child Development and Care*, 159, 107-119.

Dockett, S. & Perry B. (2001), Starting School: Effective Transitions, *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 3, 2. <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/dockett.html>

Dockett, S. & Perry B. (2007), Children's transitions to school: changing expectations In: Dunlop, A.-W. & Fabian, H. (Eds.), *Informing transitions in the early years*, London, Open University Press, 92-104.

Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2007) *Transitions to School. Perceptions, Expectations, Experiences*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.

Dunlop, A.-W. & Fabian, H. (2007) *Informing transitions in the early years*. Berkshire: Open University Press. Einarsdóttir, J. (2007) Children's voices on the transition from preschool to primary school. In: Dunlop, A.-W. & Fabian, H. (Eds.) *Informing transitions in the early years*. 74-91. London: Open University Press.

- Einarsdóttir, J. (2003) Charting a Smooth Course: Transition from Playschool to Primary School in Iceland. In: Broström, S. & Wagner, J. (Eds.) *Early Childhood Education in Five Nordic Countries. Perspectives on the Transition from Preschool to School*. 101-127. Aarhus, DK: systime.
- Einarsdóttir, J. (2003) When the bell rings we have to go inside: Preschool children's views on the elementary school, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, Themed Monograph No. 1, "Transitions"*, 35-49.
- Einarsdóttir, J. (2007) Children's voices on the transition from preschool to primary school. In: Dunlop, A.-W. & Fabian, H. (Eds.) *Informing transitions in the early years*. 74-91. London: Open University Press.
- Griebel, W. & Niesel, R. (2002) Co-constructing transition into kindergarten and school by children, parents and teachers. In: Fabian, H. & Dunlop, A.-W. (Eds.) *Transitions in the early years*. 64-75. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Griebel, W. & Niesel, R. (2004) *Transitionen*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Johansson, I. (2002) Parents' views of transition to school and their influence in this process. In: Fabian, H. & Dunlop, A.-W. (Eds.) (2002) *Transitions in the Early Years*. 76-86. London: New York, RoutledgeFalmer.
- Margetts, K. (2002) Planning transition programmes. In: Fabian, H. & Dunlop A.-W. (Eds.) *Transitions in the early years*. 111-122. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Margetts, K. (2002) Transition to School-Complexity and Diversity. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 10, 2, 103-114.
- Margetts, K. (2003) Children bring more to school than their backpacks: Starting school down under. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal Monograph No. 1, "Transitions"*, 5-14.
- Nevman, S. & Dickinson, D. (2003). *Handbook of early literacy*. New York: Guildford Press.
- OECD (2001) *Starting Strong. Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development.
- OECD (2006) *Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care* Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Paetzold, B. (1988) *Familie und Schulanfang*. Bad Heilbrunn/Obb: Julius Klinkhardt.
- Peters, S. (2000), Multiple perspectives on continuity in early learning and the transition to school, *Tenth European Early Childhood Research Association Conference*, London, 29 August - 1 September.
- Pianta, R. C./ Rimm-Kaufmann, S.E. & Cox, M.J. (1999). Introduction: An ecological approach to kindergarten transition. In: Pianta, R. C. & Cox, M.J. (Eds.) *The transition to kindergarten*. 3-12. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Pianta, R.C. et al. (2001) Collaboration in building partnerships between families and schools: The National Center for Early Development and Learning's Kindergarten Transition Intervention, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 16, 117-132.
- Pramling Samuelsson I. (2004) Demokratie: Leitprinzip des vorschulischen Bildungsplans in Schweden. In: Fthenakis, W. & Oberhuemer, P. (Eds.) *Frühpädagogik international*. 161-173. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I. (2006) Teaching and Learning in Preschool and the First Years of Elementary School in Sweden. In: Einarsdóttir, J. & Wagner, T. (Eds.) *Nordic Childhoods and Early Education*. 101-131. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I. (2009) Why do children involve teachers in their play and learning? *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 17, 1, 77-94.
- Ramey, C. T. & Ramey, S. L. (1998) The transition to school opportunities and challenges for children, families, educators, and communities. *The Elementary School Journal* 98, 4, 293-295.
- Rimm-Kaufmann, S.E & Pianta, R.C.(1999) Patterns of family involvement in preschool and kindergarten. *School Psychology Review*, 28, 3, 426-438.
- Roskos, K. & Christy, J. (2000) Play and literacy in early childhood. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Yeboah, D. A. (2002) Enhancing Transition from Early Childhood Phase to Primary Education: evidence from the research literature, *Early Years*, 22, 51-68.