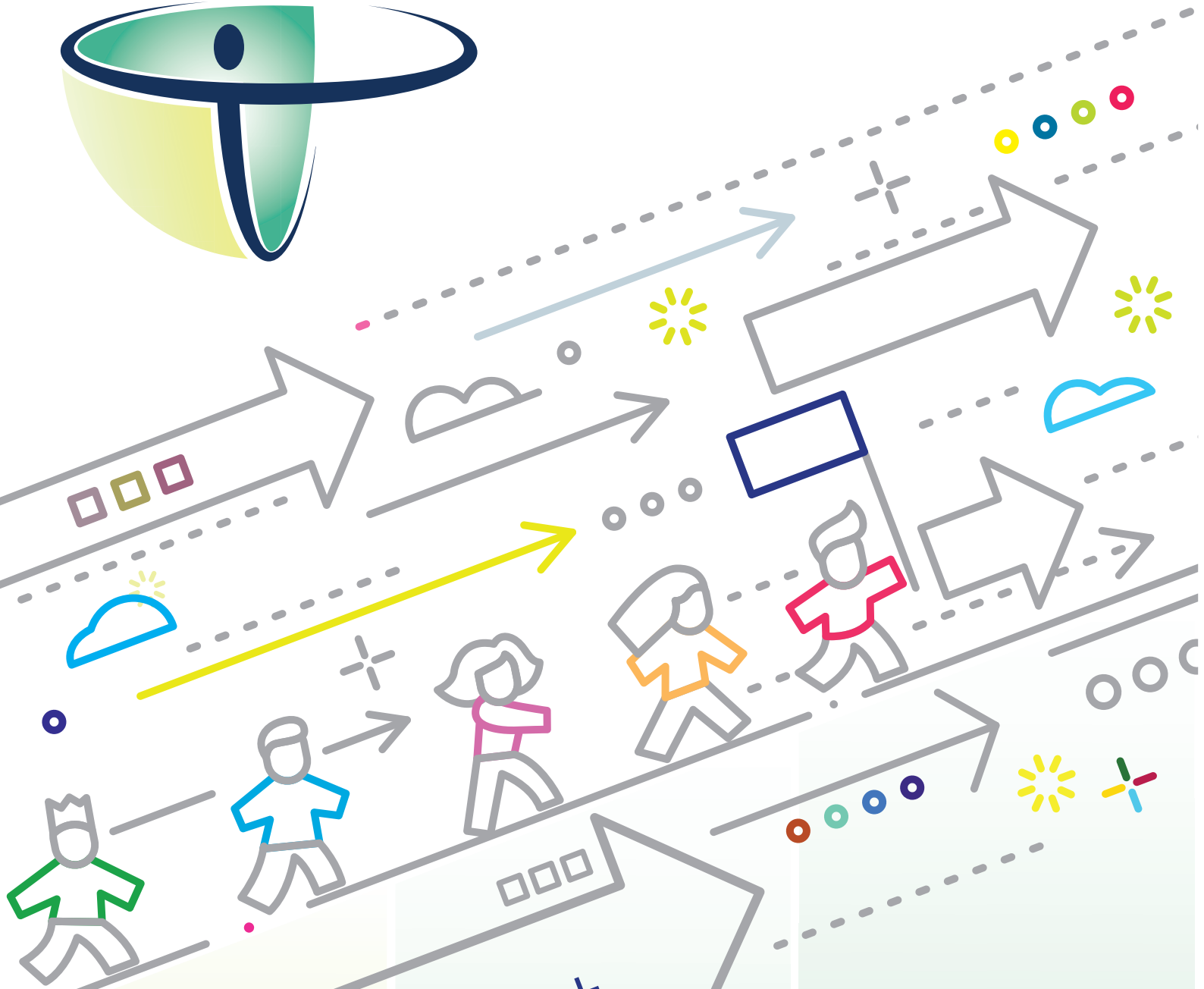


Enhancing Transition Practices in Early Childhood Education

TRAINING MANUAL



Who founded?



Erasmus+

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ENHANCING
TRANSITION PRACTICES
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

TRAINING MANUAL



Erasmus+

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Introduction

The importance of a positive transition to school has been emphasised in research around the world. It is well established that a successful start to school is linked to later positive educational and social outcomes. During the transition to school, teachers/educators have opportunities to build relationships with children, families and communities that provide the basis for effective learning and teaching interactions. Educators (preschool teachers, primary teachers, etc.) have opportunities to share their own expertise, while recognising the expertise of others, as they communicate and make connections with children, other educators, families and communities.

These three learning modules:

1. "UNDERSTANDING QUALITY TRANSITIONS",
2. "A CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH TO TRANSITIONS",
3. "BUILDING SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS"



are created as specific opportunity for preschool and school teachers/educators, and the systems in which they are employed, to work together and to use transitions' skills for successful job.

BEFORE WE START

Dear researchers and practitioners, welcome.

This learning module about children's transitions within education system is designed to provide you with valuable and useful information for your practice as teachers. For those starting their work experience in the education, as well as for those who want to upgrade it, these modules will serve to understand the transitions and what they represent, how important they are and how we can use them. The implications of well done preschool transitions are far reached and recognized at different levels of education system. Together, through this module of practical examples connected with founded theoretical framework, and reflective questions we will promote children's' wellbeing and betterment of your personal practice.

Well, let's get started.



MODULE 1

“UNDERSTANDING QUALITY TRANSITIONS”

ISLAND

Understanding quality transitions is a main issue of this module and it refers to three subtopic elements. It regards to our understanding of values and culture, continuity and changes, recognition and support within transitions.

1.1. Subtopic “Understanding Values and Culture”

The subtopic "Understanding Values and Culture" includes consideration of the intangible dimensions of culture and values, as different for preschool and primary school.

Given the diversity of educational levels, contexts and approaches in which education takes place, this module allows us to identify primarily the context of the transitions, period of transforming identities, and what teachers think about them.

This subtopic presents three everyday examples/activities from Iceland that illustrate how teachers at two levels of education can work together to understand their different cultural and historical values and cultures, but also where they see the diversity of both curriculums.

Through examples of practice we get to know “transition status” in educational context of Iceland. The example of preschool and primary school teachers tells us that they have the opportunity to stop and talk together about how they understood children’s learning at different levels and what are their focuses. They also use the "autumn school" so that the oldest children of preschool age can visit primary school, and the children of the first grade go to preschool and work on certain projects. Everyone notices that playing and a freer environment in preschool are more in line with children's developmental wellbeing, while in primary school the working methods and school structure in which there is insufficient play and relaxation are dominant.

Teachers' statements of their opinions and observations on noticeable differences, children's ways of learning, and reflection question are an integral part of this learning module.

1.2. "Continuity and Changes"

The subtopic "Continuity and changes" includes consideration of the duality of transitions because they represent both continuity and change. This part of module raises our awareness of importance and sensitivity of this period for several reasons. Children experience changes in their identity, status and role while at the same time need help to "stay their own" and "show who they are". Good examples from practice have been observed and presented.

Through the three presented examples/ practical activities, which can clearly serve any practitioner, the benefits that well-designed transitional activities have on the child are determined.

These examples come from conversations conducted with teachers of pre and primary schools: "Looking at the school bag" "Developing a play" and "Visit to primary school".

They illustrate how teachers supported children to adapt to the new environment when they go from preschool to primary school.

"Looking in a school bag" is an example from which preschoolers have the opportunity to ask about things they are not sure about and that interest them. One of the elemental features of the transition process is to provide timely information about the change that is coming, which children need to know in order to feel relaxed and safe. Getting to know different materials and using their own skills, thus

demonstrating the common elements used by both school levels, provides an example of the continuity of children's experience, competencies and development. By participating in various joint activities, both preschool and school children are given a sense of self-confidence and gaining capital of their own worth.

Teachers' opinions and observations on the mutually inclusive and complementary activities carried out with reflective questions are an integral part of this learning module.

1.3. "Recognition and Support"

The subtopic "Recognition and Support" includes considerations on the relationships of all participants in transition. Identifying interconnected roles, each with its own activities, is measurable by well-created conditions for a successful transition.

This module also provides additional information on attitudes of the international education scientific profession in a large number of countries through the Position Statement document, Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group (2011), which participate in creating theoretical and practical settings to promote children's interests and wellbeing through transitions.

Also in this section, two examples of good research practice are presented, which describe the support of teachers and parents in the transition from preschool to primary school.

The participation of children of both levels in the sports area near the school is perhaps the most natural children's environment that through play allows the socialization of their life experiences, and is an integral part of the practice of this module. An example of practice is the use of appropriate "spring visits" by preschool children and their parents for the purpose of visiting primary school in order to obtain useful information that would make the transition from preschool to primary school as positive an experience for children and parents.

e-link: Professor Sue Dockett, Charles Stuart University, Australia - discusses the need for networking, learning community and importance of professional conversations between preschool and primary school staff.

Teachers' opinions and observations on the activities of recognizing and support carried out with reflective questions are an integral part of this learning module.

MODULE 2

“A CHILD CENTRED APPROACH TO TRANSITIONS”

CROATIA

Understanding a child centred approach to transitions is a main issue of this module and it refers to three subtopic elements. It regards to ensuring children’s rights, children’s competencies and dispositions, and children’s centred learning within transitions.

2.1. Subtopic "Ensuring Children's Rights"

The subtopic „Ensuring children’s rights“include and discuss the meaning of fundamental children’s rights and how they relate to the transition process. This problematizes the provision of children’s rights to education, and consequently to the transition processes itself. Also, it raises awareness of the connection between the basic principles of UNCRC, without whose practical implementation and understanding of continuity between preschool and primary school there is no transition process.

In the context of Croatia, the issue of transitions is closely linked to children's rights and educational policies, and the practice of transitions is viewed from this



perspective. In countries whose national curricula only sporadically or remotely mention transitions or do not recognize them at all, they have the opportunity to recognize themselves in this part of the module and use the previous experience of this partner country.

Ensuring continuity through "4 As" - Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Adaptability can be considered a right approach to understand the educational environment should focus on to create a support to children's existing knowledge and experiences as they transition into new settings. This subtopic gives a basic pragmatic theory for enriching anyone's perspective on transitions.

Reflective questions on the implementation of children's rights, children's participation within transitions are an integral part of this module.

2.2. Subtopic “Competencies and Dispositions”

The subtopic “Competencies and Dispositions”, examines terms that we refer to and focuses on understanding children’s competencies and dispositions for successful educational transitions, and also analyses existing transition practices.

In this part of the module we deal with the uniqueness of ECE settings for the long-term well-being of the child and, what we need to know to connect roles of the concepts of child centeredness and *schoolification* with transition process.

With showed data, it is possible to understand why transition process is important, what are the benefits of positively arranged and provided transitions, and what repercussions the supportive environment have on child’s competencies and dispositions.

Children who have been actively involved in well-designed transitions and experiential learning are supported to: be cognitively engaged and motivated for research and learning, understand and manage personal learning processes, have experience of communicative interaction (conversations, discussions, exchange of opinions, argumentation of statements) as a form of learning, confidence in personal abilities, developed self-esteem and self-confidence, self-help skills and be assertive.

Three short videos in an ECE setting – which encourage thinking, can we recognized children’s competencies and possible dispositions. What we actually see on presented pictures, children’s play or “working on dispositions”.

Reflexive questions are an integral part of this learning module.

2.3. Subtopic “Child Centred Learning”

The subtopic „Child Centred Learning“ includes and discusses the transitions in relation to facilitating long lasting values of child-centred learning. What do we consider by child-centred learning and how definition of play and playing can differ depending on perspective, in this part of module is becoming relevant?

If we believe children are capable and competent, then we also see them as active participants and decision-makers in their everyday life, capable of sharing their perspectives, their true needs and worries. We therefore recognise the need for a child-centred approach to transitions – with a focus on learning through play and exploration, which recognises the need for continuity as children move from and through educational settings.

This subtopic includes a short video from Maeve O’Connor a preschool teacher, discusses the supportive environment that is facilitated in her setting. The video shows children playing independently outside – involved in risky play and demonstrates child-centred learning.

Giving the benefits and possible challenges for all the child-centred learning principles discussed, they need to support children’s voices and rely on a teachers’ knowledge, competencies, values, attitudes, beliefs e.g., which calls for teachers’ continuous professional development.

Reflexive questions are an integral part of this learning module.



MODULE 3

„BUILDING SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS“

SWEDEN

How to build sustainable transitions is a main issue of this module and it refers to two subtopic elements and practise examples. It regards to essential importance of communication, its effectiveness among different kinds of relations, and activities within transitions.

3.1. Subtopic "Communication"

The subtopic includes and considers the role and importance of communication between all actors, and communication competence among adult actors of the transition process.

Naming the most important actors, this subtopic highlights the children's role and the dialogue that is necessary to lead in order to achieve the primary task, to hear and help children in the transition period. Given the diversity of educational levels, contexts and approaches in which education takes place, this module draws our attention to the priority of children's perspectives in the transition process and why it is important to listen to what children have to say about transitions. Communication

must take place in dialogue between children, parents and teachers in different school systems.

This subtopic presents a case study from Sweden, as well as different directions of possible dialogues within different perspectives that can provide valuable information.

The Swedish context of transition in its practice supports many examples of good practice, and is similar to the context of transition in Ireland. From the case study we can see that the departures of children from preschool to primary school are characteristic of their education system. During these meetings, children are informed about the upcoming changes, get acquainted with the school building and its surroundings, and other children, they are free to ask and ask answers to their questions. Together with their parents, they are able to gain their own experience from their own perspective. Parents, children and staff at both levels are networking so that by establishing quality communication, the transitions go smoothly.

Presented practice contains:

- Examples of children's thinking about school from the conducted interview;
- What are children's thoughts during the first day of school;
- Know what is good to know about oneself.

Reflexive questions and links are integral part of this learning module.

To relate, an example of good practice from the Irish NCCA National Curriculum and Assessment Council with developed practice and forms called Mo Sceal (These templates are an excellent means of communication with the primary school, and also with the parents and the child) - are also provided.

3.2. Subtopic "Relationship effectiveness"

The subtopic includes and discusses the theory of interpersonal relationships, which encompasses the way an individual communicates, how he regulates the degree of closeness and distance in relationships, and how he deals with feelings.

The importance of this part of the module is to raise awareness that “managing” relational competence is essential to the effectiveness and efficiency of relationships, and that it can be learned. Relational competence between teachers is important when it comes to learning about children's experiences and taking shared responsibility for choosing a model of the transition process. All actors need support, which is confirmed by this module with its practical examples.

This subtopic presents:

- A documented video case study from Sweden, which shows good example opportunities to create quality relationships among children from different settings through playing and learning.
- 6 points within transition process, certainly useful and good examples from practice.

Can we talk about how much we work on creating conditions in which quality relationships and interactions of children take place during the transition from preschool to primary school. An example is given.

In this part of module there are two **e-interviews** with Professor Sue Dockett, Charles Stuart University in Australia about:

- Transition Activities; discuss different relationship activities and how they can be used.
- Building relationships; discusses the important link between transitions from preschool to primary school and interactions within.

Reflexive questions and links are integral part of this learning module.

3.3. Transition Activities

In our final part – “Transition Activities” to this module programme in the Enhancing Transition Practices in Early Childhood Education we encourage researchers and practitioners to spend time organising activities and environment by giving them examples and useful areas which they can consider implanting in their own settings.

Areas to consider:

- All sorts of play activities for making children more prepared and familiar with next setting,
- Activities with children from different school settings
- Teacher planning preparatory activities

In this section you can also find:

- video from Sweden - showing an example of how teachers from different schools reflect on their practice, so that transitions can be safer for the children
- video from Sweden - implication of booklet from the primary school setting
- Examples of how to develop practice of transitions between different school settings
- Transition Activities Video from (the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide) - interview with Irish preschool teacher discusses a transition activity centred on the

school uniform and introducing this concept to children with the use of a preschool child sized doll and different uniforms.

Self evaluation, reflexive questions and links are integral part of this learning module. Thank you for attending our learning modules.

Modules are available at

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgmqrQzfvXlkLTqPY0BHTt--](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgmqrQzfvXlkLTqPY0BHTt--QjSSMxi90)

[QjSSMxi90](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgmqrQzfvXlkLTqPY0BHTt--QjSSMxi90)

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