



We are ready!

**POLICY ACTIONS FOR
SMOOTH TRANSITIONS
AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

**between Early Childhood
and Primary Education**

in East Asia and the Pacific region



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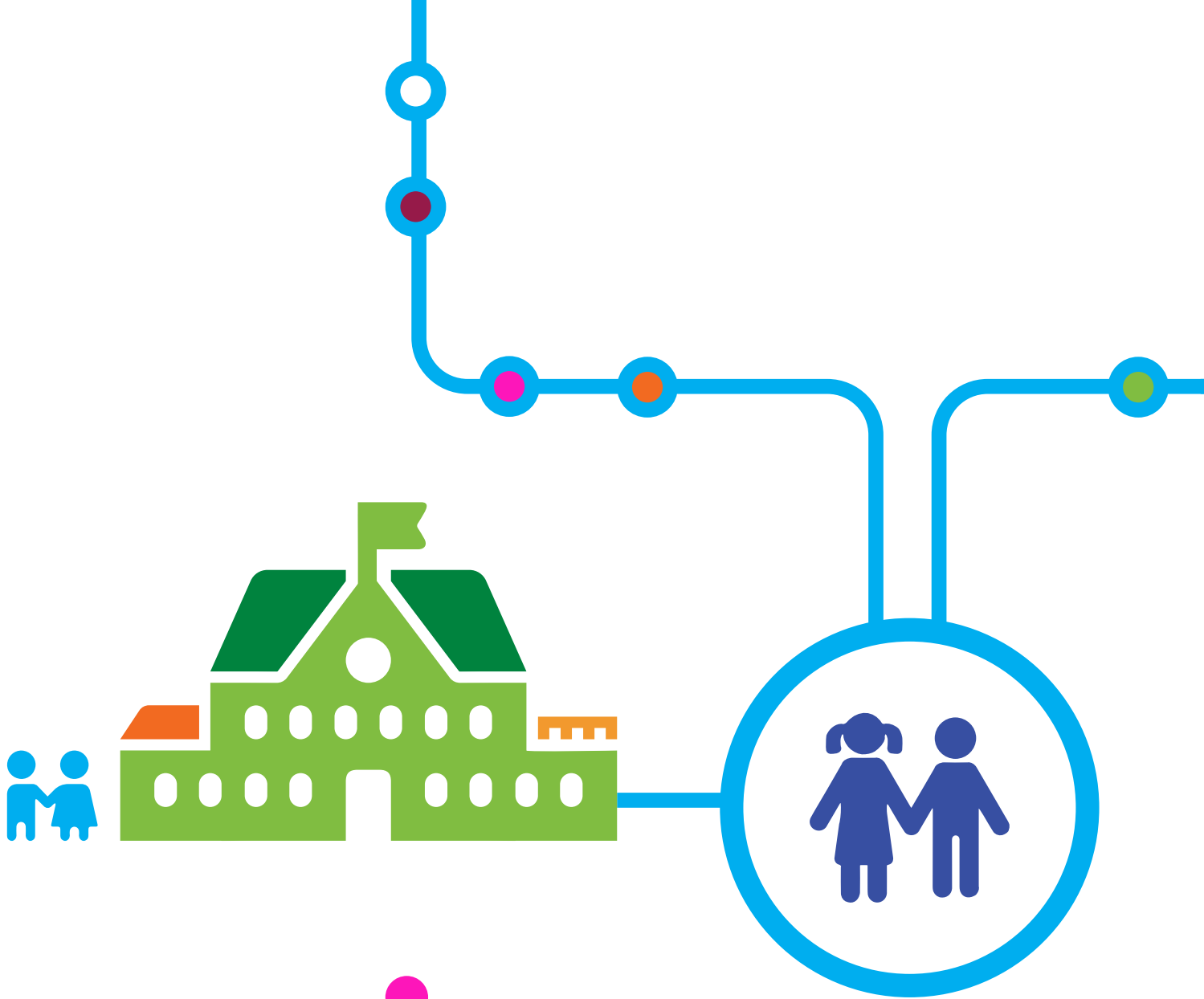
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This paper highlights the importance of children's early transitions in the education setting, particularly the transition defining primary school entry. It recommends four evidence-based policy actions to support these key moments of children's school trajectory and the coordination of early childhood care and education (ECCE) with primary education in the East Asia and the Pacific region. These measures aim to provide a quality **coherent and continuous educational experience**, particularly benefiting the most vulnerable children who tend to face disruptions during early school transitions.

Smooth transitions to primary school lead to a positive cycle of achievements that preserves the long-term benefits of ECCE while enhancing equity in education. Smooth transitions cultivate in children a sense of belonging with the school and help them to establish strong relationships with teachers and peers, preparing them with skills for academic and social success (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; OECD, 2017).

The four essential policy actions to support children's smooth transition from ECCE to primary school are outlined below. Please note that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and any of these policy actions should be adapted to the country context and features of their education systems.

A

Support timely and quality transitions

Schools and families support the timely transition of children into primary school by familiarizing them with upcoming changes and welcoming them according to their individual needs and characteristics.

A1

Promote collaborative practices and exchanges between teachers across preschools and primary schools

A2

Implement pedagogical strategies to support children and families throughout all phases of transition: before (familiarization), during (welcoming) and after (follow-up)

A3

Facilitate family and community participation in defined strategies to support timely transitions at all phases

B

Align curricula and pedagogies

Education systems ensure pedagogical continuity and curriculum alignment between ECCE and Grade 1, incorporating age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate teaching practices, materials and environments.

B1

Develop a coherent and interconnected curriculum to ensure pedagogical continuity across systems and during the transition period, incorporating developmental goals, pedagogical approaches and assessment methods.

C

Strengthen coordination and capacity-building

Education systems strengthen institutional governance to support transitions, by enhancing financing, information sharing and capacity-building among system actors, especially teachers.

C1

Facilitate coordination among government levels, with a particular focus on engaging local authorities and principals

C2

Strengthen the role of ECCE teachers and integrate them into the national policy or strategy for teacher quality and well-being

C3

Develop tools for monitoring transitions and facilitate the exchange of information between ECCE and primary levels to support transitions and school retention

D

Build intersectoral and holistic transition and retention strategies

Child development policies include school transitions across sectors, establishing comprehensive and structured retention strategies that prioritize the well-being of children and families.

D1

Forge agreements with other sectors to prioritize transitions within their interventions and programmes, thereby addressing structural roadblocks

D2

Formulate distinct strategies and provide support to facilitate the transition of children from vulnerable or at-risk communities

Education systems should develop clear policy guidelines that include some of these crucial practices for supporting smooth early transitions in the education setting. It is imperative to initiate a technical alignment process for early childhood and primary education instruments, especially those with pedagogical and teacher quality and wellbeing implications. Additionally, it is essential to integrate the concept of smooth transitions into core system-sectoral and intersectoral policies, particularly those related to information management, access and retention.

Governments are encouraged to use this guide as a reference during prioritization and programming exercises, to help them identify key actions for inclusion in their national plans and priorities.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE



This paper addresses the importance of supporting children's early transitions in the education setting, especially children's entry into Grade 1 in primary school. The aim is to outline a set of recommended, evidence-based policy actions in this crucial area, which countries in the East Asia and Pacific region can include in education policy agendas. The recommended actions address the transitions and alignment between early childhood care and education (ECCE) and primary education.

These policy actions are expected to enable coordination between ECCE and primary education in the region, to provide a quality coherent and continuous education experience for young children. This, in turn, will lead to holistic development and positive learning outcomes, particularly benefiting the most vulnerable groups who tend to experience discontinuities during educational transitions.

Coherent education involves the logical and seamless progression of educational content and experiences throughout children's educational trajectory. It emphasizes the alignment and integration of key components of education by making them relevant to children's age and developmental processes and by minimizing gaps in children's learning. These components include curriculum, teaching methods and assessments. **Continuous** education provides ongoing and uninterrupted support to children, ensuring timely, sustained educational opportunities throughout their educational trajectory. These components include: teachers quality and well being, education system governance and capacities, and education system intersectorial coordination.

This paper is intended for policymakers and country offices responsible for developing and implementing education policies. It is divided into four sections:

The first section discusses the importance of transitions and explains how smooth transitions lead to a positive cycle of achievements. These include preserving the long-term benefits of ECCE, enhancing equity in education (OECD, 2017), cultivating in children a sense of belonging with the education setting, helping children establish strong relationships with teachers and peers, and preparing children with skills for academic and social success (according to Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

The second section identifies key technical approaches to promote smooth transitions.

The third section presents four key policy actions to include smooth transitions and strategic alignment as integral components of early education and child development policies. These actions include definitions and suggested interventions for their implementation within the country's context.

The fourth section provides overall conclusions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSITIONS



ECCE is crucial because it enables the development of essential learning skills such as curiosity, self-direction, persistence and motivation to learn and cooperate (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). High-quality ECCE – also known as preschool – is linked to improved educational and social outcomes, and later success in school.¹ It is widely recognized that ECCE is a powerful tool for promoting equity right from the beginning of children’s lives and offers every child an equal opportunity to thrive (Richter et al., 2021; UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020).

In the context of setting the stage for future success, the transition period from preschool to primary education marks a significant milestone in a child’s educational journey.

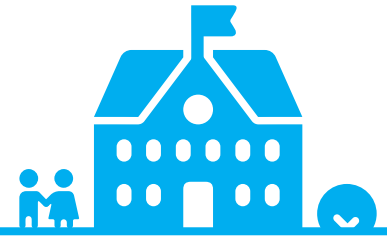
Transition to primary school often involves children experiencing changes in school settings (sometimes far from home), school culture, curricula, language of instruction, expectations, resources, relationships and roles (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; OECD, 2020). Transition experiences can either enhance or negatively affect children’s learning and development, with children from disadvantaged communities or those with disabilities being more likely to experience a negative transition, especially when their home language and culture differ from that of the school (Pianta & Cox, 1999; Rous et al., 2010).

Initial success in school, facilitated by a supported transition, leads to a positive cycle of achievement (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). A smooth transition allows children to fully engage with their new environment and capitalize on opportunities to enhance their cognitive, social and emotional development. This positive experience enables children to feel a sense of belonging, establish strong relationships with teachers and peers, and acquire the skills for academic and social success (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

On the other hand, when children encounter discontinuities and instabilities during the transition, it undermines the positive outcomes achieved during preschool, thereby compromising the quality of their following years in school (OECD, 2017). A study conducted in the United States (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000) revealed that about 16 per cent of children experienced serious problems at the start of primary school, as reported by teachers. This situation is particularly concerning for children with disabilities, indigenous children, children from migrant communities, and children who are dual-language learners. These children are also less likely to be enrolled in ECCE, a lack that exacerbates the detrimental impact of a disrupted transition (OECD, 2017; Pianta & Cox, 1999).

Efficiently managed transitions support children’s well-being, preserve the enduring benefits of ECCE, prepare children for school and life, and improve equity in education (OECD, 2017).

¹ This paper uses two terms – ECCE and preschool – interchangeably to describe the education provided to children aged 0–5 years.



To facilitate smooth transitions, policymakers need to consider creating linkages between two traditionally separate systems, ECCE and the first years of primary school. Good connections enable them to effectively function as coordinated systems. Three key technical approaches are recommended to ensure this coordination, and are described in more detail below:

A CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

which means effectively responding to children's characteristics within the education setting, including removing barriers due to sex, gender, ethnicity or disability.

A SYSTEMS INTEGRATION APPROACH

which involves fostering strategic alignment to ensure coordination, collaboration, coherence and continuity between ECCE and primary education

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS APPROACH

which means working comprehensively and intersectorally to overcome structural barriers that prevent children's access to and retention in the education system.

CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

Schools should place children's needs and characteristics at the centre of their approach to transition. This involves a range of practices to support the actual moment when children transition, creating an enabling environment across the three dimensions of school readiness: children's readiness for school, schools' readiness for children, and families' and communities' readiness to support learning at home and in organized settings. Readiness and transitions go hand in hand (UNICEF, 2012; UNICEF EAPRO, 2022).

Although children are expected to be ready and have certain skills at the time of transition, both the preschool and primary school levels must support this process and integrate children into the school's dynamics (Arnold et al., 2007; Pianta & Cox, 1999). In the transition process, the actions of education systems are more important than the age or characteristics of the child (Pianta & Cox, 1999). A literature review revealed that a child's risk of having an unsuccessful transition is related to the incompatibility of their individual characteristics with the characteristics of the new education setting (Peters & Roberts, 2015). This finding suggests that settings are only prepared for children with certain abilities and needs, and that a successful transition depends on how well education settings respond to children's unique characteristics.

It is essential to plan differentiated transition strategies. Policymakers need to develop strategies that cater to individual differences by recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of children during the transition, and providing additional support for children with special learning needs, dual-language learners, and children from marginalized backgrounds. To ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed in Grade 1, it is essential to provide customized transition programmes and individualized support.

SYSTEMS INTEGRATION APPROACH

Education systems should be integrated by strengthening horizontal and vertical alignment. Vertical alignment ensures a seamless progression of learning from preschool to the early years of primary education. It involves aligning the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices between preschool and Grades 1–3, enabling children to build on their prior knowledge and skills during the transition. This approach allows children to benefit from play-based learning and developmentally appropriate pedagogy at any stage of their early years of education. Vertical alignment minimizes learning gaps, creating a continuous and coherent educational experience for children.

Horizontal alignment, on the other hand, ensures coordinated governance between ECCE and primary levels by strengthening cooperation and collaboration among the diverse stakeholders and institutions involved in the transition process (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022). It involves establishing effective collaborations and partnerships between preschools and primary schools, as well as engaging families, community and relevant government agencies (Rous et al., 2010). Horizontal alignment facilitates the exchange of information, resources and practices to support a successful transition. It also promotes collaboration on addressing individual needs, promoting inclusive practices, and providing consistent support for children as they move from preschool to Grade 1.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS APPROACH

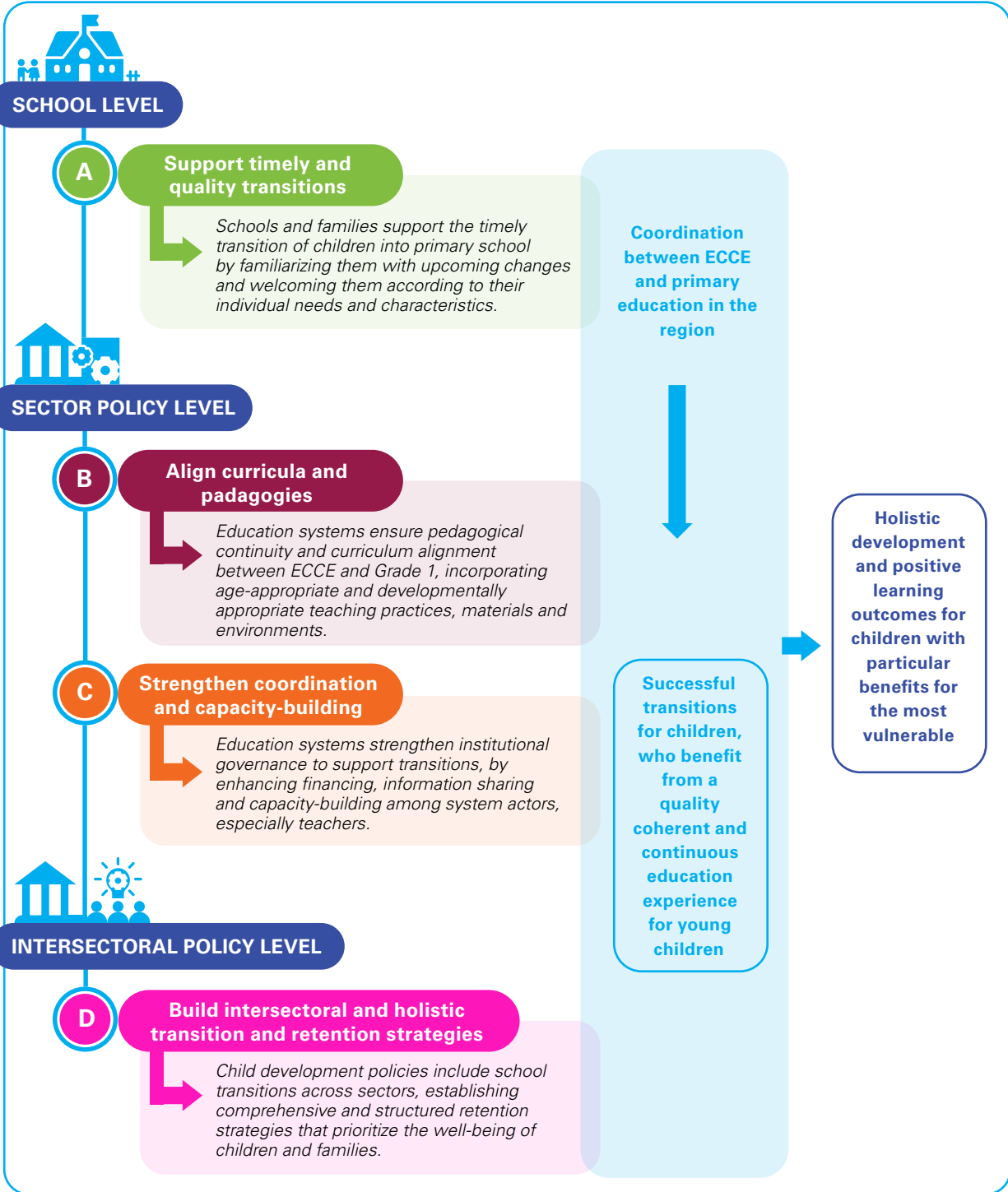
It is crucial to acknowledge that effective transitions require overcoming structural barriers linked with children's access to and retention in education systems. Education systems need to recognize how poverty, cultural and linguistic diversity, geography and other factors influence transitions (OECD, 2020). Education systems can address these issues in a number of ways, including intersectoral agreements to promote universal access to services, and risk-monitoring using early-warning alerts to prevent and mitigate dropouts. Any approach to socio-economic barriers entails defining a set of interventions that are context-sensitive and support children to be developmentally on track and enrolled as expected during their educational trajectory.

Based on the above, a series of four policy actions are proposed to promote systems coordination and therefore smooth transitions from ECCE to primary school.

Although education systems in the East Asia and Pacific region are diverse, a common goal can still be set: to move towards integrated systems that promote coordination between ECCE and primary school to ensure coherence and continuity in children’s early schooling, and therefore strong learning and development outcomes.

While there may not be a one-size-fits-all approach, Figure 1 lists four key policy actions – and associated outputs and outcomes – to support children’s effective and smooth transition from ECCE to primary school. Each action is discussed in further detail below Figure 1, along with suggested interventions to guide policy and school practices.

Figure 1. Key policy actions, outputs and outcomes when supporting children’s transition from ECCE to primary school





SCHOOL LEVEL

A

Support timely and quality transitions

Schools and families support the timely transition of children into primary school by familiarizing them with upcoming changes and welcoming them according to their individual needs and characteristics.

Teachers and families can implement practices and strategies at the school level before, during and after a child transitions from one setting to another. One key part of this process is ensuring a **timely transition**, which means that children transition from one setting to another at the moment that corresponds to their age and the expected progress in their education.

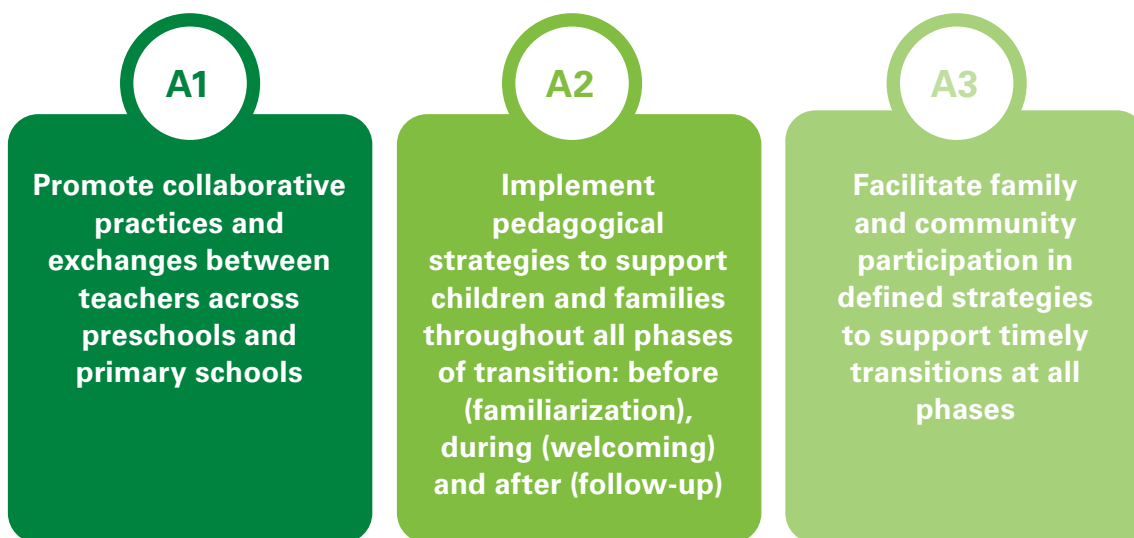
It is possible to **identify and work on three simple phases** during the transition: Before refers to preparatory actions, including familiarizing children with the new dynamics, actors and spaces. During refers to welcoming and integrating children with new routines, people and pedagogical proposals according to their individual needs and characteristics. After refers to systematic strategies to monitor children's integration and participation after a few weeks. Docket and Perry (2022) define that transition only conclude when all involves feel a sense of belonging within the new school context.

These practices and strategies follow a holistic approach that seeks to contribute to children's school readiness by working with schools (principals and teachers), families and children. The transition period is recognized as an opportunity (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022).

For **teachers**, the transition period provides an opportunity to build on specific skills children have already developed, emphasizing skills to cope with uncertainty, excitement, frustration and fear (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022). Research indicates that children's closeness with their teachers is associated with better learning outcomes, and practices to support transitions enable the development of this closeness in both the preschool and primary school settings (Zulfiqar et al., 2018). Results from Finland show that some of the least common practices in schools are some of the best predictors of children's skills – for example, cooperation between teachers over the curriculum and conducting a pedagogical handover (UNICEF EAPRO, 2022).

For **families**, it is an important time to support children's emotional and social well-being as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of starting primary school, and to strengthen their bond with the school setting (OECD, 2020). Research has identified that this transition represents children moving from 'child of the family' to 'pupil at school' and understanding how home and school values differ, making this an opportunity to strengthen both parenting processes at home and home-school communication (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

Interventions to support timely and quality transitions



Ideas and examples



Promote collaborative practices and exchanges between teachers across preschools and primary schools



A1.1

Institutionalize regular exchanges between ECCE and Grade 1 teachers, including joint meetings, for sharing material and planning experiences during the phases of familiarization, welcoming and follow-up. Strategies can focus on:

- pedagogical practices and approaches, and key requirements for pedagogical continuity
- skills and pedagogical experiences to foster during the transition period
- handovers between preschool and primary school teachers to support pedagogical planning and children's integration into the new setting, especially supporting at-risk children.

A1.2

Include transitions in training strategies and schemes. For example:

- shared professional development activities and training for ECCE and Grade 1 teachers, including joint strategies and coaching support
- transitions included as part of induction and mentoring for ECCE and Grade 1 teachers.

Implement pedagogical strategies to support children and families throughout all phases of transition: before (familiarization), during (welcoming) and after (follow-up)



A2.1

Before the transition, implement strategies to:

- familiarize children with new spaces and dynamics, for example through visits to primary schools, simulation of the first school day, and joint classes.

A2.2

During the transition, implement strategies to:

- adjust learning environments to welcome children and make them feel warm, comfortable and safe using a culturally appropriate perspective
- welcome children into the new setting, ensuring socio-emotional and communication support when needed.

For example:

- o create a transition routine and share it with children
- o welcome parents during the first days
- o plan a progressive entry for the children during the first week of school, working with them in small groups.

After the transition, implement strategies to:

- monitor children's progress after arrival, identifying how they have integrated into the new environment and its dynamics, recognizing problems and tensions early (for example during some routine times), and tailoring pedagogical practices in response.

Facilitate family and community participation in defined strategies to support timely transitions at all phases



A3.1

Reach agreements with families on activities that facilitate children's transition, such as making routine adjustments, including some games during their routines, having conversations about change and going into primary school, and building a 'welcoming package' together.

A3.2

Allow children and families to participate in defining and implementing any of these strategies.

A3.3

Foster the development of communication strategies to clearly and explicitly inform families and children about the transition.

This includes:

- actively engaging children, and informing them and their families about the school day's structure, the school environment, the activities they will participate in, some of the expected learning outcomes, how routines are organized, and how to seek adult assistance when needed
- promoting high expectations in families for their children's educational journey and emphasizing the significance of a successful educational trajectory, regardless of the path the child chooses in the future.





B

Align curricula and pedagogies

Education systems ensure pedagogical continuity and curriculum alignment between ECCE and Grade 1, incorporating age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate teaching practices, materials and environments.

Traditionally, ECCE and primary school have had differences, including in the pedagogical work, learning times, children's and teachers' roles, learning environments, norms, family relations and assessment methods. When children transition to primary school, these differences can cause conflicts and difficulties in their integration and learning. **How well curricula and developmental goals are aligned between ECCE and primary school affects the continuity children experience as they transition between settings (Kagan et al., 2006) and is a factor in learning and improving foundational skills (Ahtola et al., 2011).**

Pedagogical and curriculum alignment involves connecting the different levels of education systems from a pedagogical and developmental perspective. In some cases it means repairing systemic pedagogical gaps between ECCE and primary school, and in others it means strengthening coherence between systems (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022; Shuey et al., 2019). What is most important during this process is ensuring that both levels share a common understanding of children's learning and development, and that pedagogical practices are tailored to meet the needs, characteristics and interests of the children. This entails prioritizing factors such as individualized and cooperative learning, and creating opportunities for play-based learning that are aligned with the children's age and developmental stage.

To ensure pedagogical continuity throughout children's schooling, education systems need to:

- establish shared and specific objectives across levels, along with a common and coherent approach to an educational and pedagogical process that is age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate
- introduce common pedagogical orientations that are based on the particularities of each level, fostering an individualized learning approach, continuity of early learning standards, and play- and context-based learning.

These requirements involve **developing a comprehensive curriculum that explicitly includes these connections.** As Shuey and colleagues note, "Governments can achieve curricular continuity in various ways, ranging from a high-level alignment of goals across multiple curriculum documents to the full integration of the curriculum into a single document that covers both ECCE and primary school" (Shuey et al., 2019). This process should minimally include learning standards, pedagogical practices, and assessment methods that provide

commonalities (objectives, perspectives, themes) between the last year of early childhood education and the first year of primary school.

For example, when defining learning standards, there is a global trend to recognize the importance of twenty-first-century skills and incorporate them into curricula (Shuey et al., 2019). Some of the key skills during early childhood include i) developing curiosity, self-direction and persistence in learning situations, ii) being able to cooperate, show caring, and resolve conflicts with peers, and iii) having the ability to experience enhanced motivation associated with feeling competent and loved (Council et al., 2000). These same competencies are also integrated into curricula as twenty-first-century skills, encompassing curiosity, critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration and problem-solving (Shuey et al., 2019).

However, while aligning standards is important, it is even more crucial to align instructional and socio-emotional support practices across levels.

Aligning teaching practices involves explicitly defining key aspects of the early-years curriculum and pedagogy, such as the role of play, the most effective ways of interacting with young children, and the importance of cognition, metacognition and self-paced learning as practices that support learning. This becomes especially crucial as complexity increases in instruction and learning (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022; Council et al., 2000).

Intervention to align curricula and pedagogies

B1

Develop a coherent and interconnected curriculum to ensure pedagogical continuity across systems and during the transition period, incorporating developmental goals, pedagogical approaches and assessment methods.

Ideas and examples



B1.1

Align the objectives and purposes of each level by establishing shared and specific objectives across the ECCE and primary curricula while eliminating over-ambitious goals.

B1.2

Build common pedagogical orientations that prioritize core principles such as individualized, play-based and culturally appropriate and contextualized learning, giving precedent to cognitive, metacognitive and self-paced instruction as learning becomes progressively more complex grade by grade (OECD, 2017).



B1.3

Define progressions in foundational learning, allowing for the development of skills or knowledge at different moments rather than a single point. Also, include key ECCE skills – such as curiosity, self-direction, persistence and motivation towards learning – at the primary level.

B1.4

Continue to emphasize socio-emotional and foundational skills at all levels of schooling, with an increased focus on socio-emotional competencies in primary schools.

B1.5

Extend alignment to assessment methods, considering the level of developmental progress beyond the grade structure. Strengthen formative assessment practices and teacher-to-teacher feedback.

B1.6

Provide explicit guidance and examples on how to deliver the curriculum, assisting teachers and staff in adapting pedagogy to children's developmental levels and various levels of progress.





SECTOR POLICY LEVEL



Strengthen coordination and capacity-building

Education systems strengthen institutional governance to support transitions, by enhancing financing, information sharing and capacity-building among system actors, especially teachers.

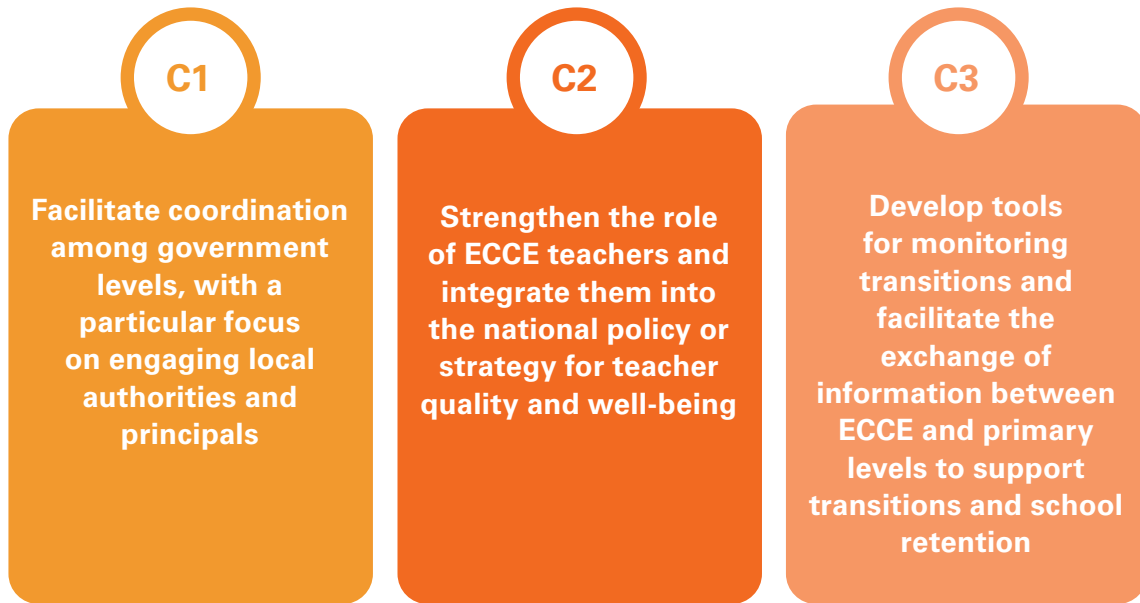
Coordination and capacity-building are practices and strategies to create structural conditions within the education sector to ensure smooth transitions for children, and therefore educational stability and continuity. They involve **implementing transition policies as a backbone of educational practices, increasing social awareness of their significance, and establishing better accountability policies** (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022; OECD, 2017).

Children's transitions are affected by the structure of the education system, including its organization, governance, distribution of responsibilities, and overarching educational goals. For instance, transitions can be challenging when various aspects of the education system fall under the jurisdiction of different government entities. Additionally, at the national level there may be a lack of local facilities or tools to support teachers' joint meetings, information sharing, and collective planning across ECCE and primary education. Building coordination and capacity involves sectoral actions that ensure essential school governance and organizational conditions, effectively supporting what leaders, primary school principals, staff and teachers need to facilitate children's transitions.

At this level, **financing, regulation, accountability and data collection are vital aspects of the education system, including the proper organization and allocation of responsibilities** (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022). Education systems should aim to establish an institutional architecture and governance framework where the roles and competencies of those supporting transitions are clearly defined, and these roles receive the necessary technical and financial support to ensure the high-quality execution of these functions.

Finally, **capacity-building also involves strengthening the most strategic actors in education systems, the teachers.** Crucial elements include: professional continuity for staff and teachers, standardized working conditions for both ECCE and primary teachers, and professional development to equip them with the skills and teaching strategies needed to ensure a quality transition to primary education for children (OECD, 2020).

Interventions to strengthen coordination and capacity-building



Ideas and examples



Facilitate coordination among government levels, with a particular focus on engaging local authorities and principals



C1.1

Develop national guidelines that outline the roles and competencies of all system actors during the transition period. Guidelines would include, for example:

- competencies, roles and responsibilities of the different actors, providing the required institutional resources and tools to facilitate actions concerning staffing, time and financial support
- ways to foster collaboration between local and national coordination efforts (e.g., coordination bodies at local and regional levels)
- strategies for ensuring effective transitions and retention
- social mobilization strategies to enhance public awareness of transitions and their significance in child development and educational outcomes.

C1.2

Discuss and address other structural aspects affecting transitions, including:

- the co-location of ECCE settings and primary schools, considering physical separation
- structural considerations such as: Is ECCE compulsory or mandatory? Which years should be compulsory? Should the number of ECCE hours increase? Should ECCE staff be involved for half a day or a full day?

C1.3

Promote the establishment of local government focal points or local working groups responsible for transition issues, including training, data management and administrative support. These local groups could, for example:

- manage administrative arrangements for sharing information about transitioning children
- maintain a list of children transitioning to facilitate enrolment and plan their transition locations
- support the enrolment process (if applicable) and the co-location of children based on facility proximity to their homes
- encourage joint meetings of schools, teachers and principals.

C1.4

Promote school-based transition teams that will:

- facilitate pre-entry visits, foster high-quality communication, and ensure close interaction, while being sensitive to individual, family and community needs
- advocate for a flexible admissions process (if applicable)
- guide families through the administrative process, as they may require additional information on enrolling children for the first time
- propose the development of pedagogical experiences, including curricular continuity and special training.

These teams may comprise teachers, coordinators, principals and social workers, depending on the structure and capacities of the schools and institutions.

Strengthen the role of ECCE teachers and integrate them into the national policy or strategy for teacher quality and well-being



C2.1

Support the stability and professional continuity of the early childhood workforce and primary teachers, primarily by aligning working conditions.

C2.2

Include transition as a core component of an integrated professional development and training programme. This programme should encompass collaborative strategies, coaching support, and participation in professional development activities and training opportunities.

C2.3

Involve principals in the training process and implement strategies tailored to their roles and competencies.

C2.4

Establish agreements with universities regarding initial teacher education and the importance of early smooth transitions. Include transition strategies in teachers' education, allowing for collaborative classes and teachers working together during their formative processes, even before they start working with children in the education setting.

C2.5

Implement teacher well-being strategies, such as incentives, public recognition and awards. These strategies aim to enhance teacher satisfaction and public acknowledgement of the importance of their work for the social and economic development of countries.

C2.6

Articulate key elements of early and primary teachers' education by creating a continuum for vocational training in the country. For instance, develop a common framework of teacher competencies.



Develop tools for monitoring transitions and facilitate the exchange of information between ECCE and primary levels to support transitions and school retention



C3.1

Strengthen systems for monitoring transitions and sharing information about children across educational settings. For example:

- enhance information and analysis by defining key indicators for monitoring transitions at both the national and local levels. Some suggested indicators:
 - Grade 1 dropout as a percentage of the overall primary dropout rate
 - Grade 1 repetition as a percentage of the overall primary repetition rate
 - children potentially transitioning versus children effectively enrolled
 - number of children transitioning from ECCE to primary and the number transitioning without prior ECCE experience
 - the learning poverty rate.
- incorporate data and analysis into national and local reports, including data on dropout rates, grade repetition, and overall dropout rates at the end of primary education
- differentiate data by building children's profiles using cultural background, disabilities and sex/gender variables.

C3.2

Establish systems for monitoring dropout risks and providing early warnings to develop support and retention strategies.

C3.3

Promote research related to transitions. It is suggested to include a comprehensive evaluation plan to support children's transitions in different levels and settings across the country.



INTERSECTORAL POLICY LEVEL

D

Build intersectoral and holistic transition and retention strategies

Child development policies include school transitions across sectors, establishing comprehensive and structured retention strategies that prioritize the well-being of children and families.

Holistic transition and retention strategies recognize that factors beyond the classroom and the education system – such as socio-economic conditions, family dynamics, geographical structure and the community – can affect children’s ability to succeed in school. Typically, these strategies require intersectoral agreements addressing the influence of socio-cultural and economic contexts on early transitions (OECD, 2017), and factors that may lead to attrition or dropout.

Education systems need to understand how transitions are influenced by factors such as poverty, cultural and linguistic diversity, and geography (OECD, 2020). **These strategies extend beyond academic aspects and consider the well-being and needs of children.** Measures to mitigate educational risks, such as ensuring safe transportation, conducting health assessments, providing support to children with disabilities, and assisting dual-language learners and their families, should be developed. The combination of these services with other policies designed to ensure smooth transitions strengthens a unified and comprehensive child development system.

The objective is to establish conditions that ensure children’s continued presence and enjoyment in educational settings, while ensuring that the specifics of the territory, individual family circumstances, and particular characteristics of education services do not become barriers to accessing the education system. Addressing these elements enhances conditions for children, increasing the likelihood that they will be engaged in their schools and continue their educational trajectory as expected.

Interventions to build intersectoral and holistic retention strategies

D1

Forge agreements with other sectors to prioritize transitions within their interventions and programmes, thereby addressing structural roadblocks

D2

Formulate distinct strategies and provide support to facilitate the transition of children from vulnerable or at-risk communities



Ideas and examples

Forge agreements with other sectors to prioritize transitions within their interventions and programmes, thereby addressing structural roadblocks



● D1.1

Include the topic of transitions in the policy agendas of relevant sectors and of the intersectoral bodies coordinating early childhood development policy.

● D1.2

Use information from early-dropout warning systems.

● D1.3

Establish agreements between different sectors to synchronize services during transitions. Develop strategies such as:

- eye exams or vision screenings during first grade
- family support through conditional cash transfers to improve children's enrolment and timely transition
- nutrition screening and nutrition support during ECCE and primary school
- socio-emotional support and guidance for families facing difficulties with positive behaviour interventions
- safe pathways to primary school with community and family participation.

● D1.4

Offer technical aids to ensure equal opportunities, including:

- school supplies and uniforms
- school transportation: bicycles, buses, trucks, or boats
- eyeglasses
- assistive devices for children with disabilities.

Formulate distinct strategies and provide support to facilitate the transition of children from vulnerable or at-risk communities



D2.1

Build enrolment and retention strategies to support children with disabilities, those living in rural areas, dual-language learners, indigenous children and migrant children, among others. For example:

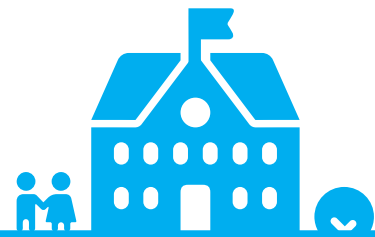
- provide language support, establish financial support programmes, prioritize the participation of target groups, and allocate additional finances for human resources
- create intersectoral national and local arrangements to ensure adequate access and transition, including access to health and social services for at-risk children
- incorporate transition support strategies into social support or parenting services
- plan enrolment campaigns that focus on children requiring more support, such as children with disabilities, indigenous children, and migrants.

D2.2

Develop retention strategies aimed at providing individualized support for at-risk children.



CONCLUSION



This document is a guide to improving the transition of children from early childhood care and education (ECCE) to primary school, with the goal of establishing a regional agenda.

To accomplish this aim, educational systems need to:



Establish explicit policy guidelines that outline essential practices to support transitions and continuities within the education setting



Facilitate a technical alignment process for early childhood and primary education policy instruments, particularly those with pedagogical and teacher quality and wellbeing implications



Integrate the concept of smooth transitions and strategic alignment into core sectoral and intersectoral policies, especially concerning information management, access and retention.

Countries will use this guide as a reference in prioritization exercises to identify key actions for inclusion in their national plans and priorities. In the medium term, the idea is to encourage national and regional initiatives, exchange experiences, and provide the region with guidelines and capacity-building strategies related to this subject. In this process, education systems should establish a monitoring and evaluation plan to assess the implemented actions and identify their impacts.

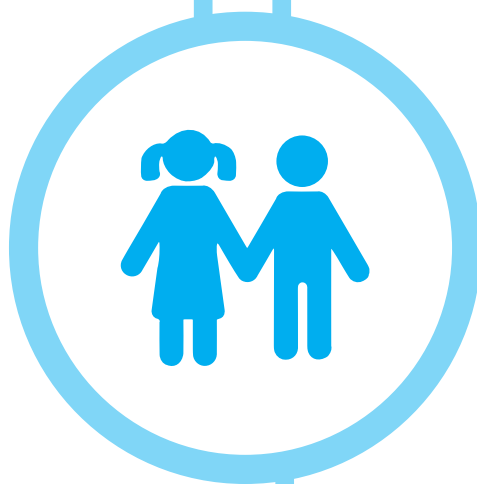


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