

Chapter 14

Borderlands, Bridges and Rites of Passage

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This chapter examines transitions by looking closely at the border or threshold to be crossed between different educational contexts. We explore research findings related to borderlands and bridges between the early childhood and school sectors, the ways in which these might be conceptualised in policy and the implications for practice for the professionals involved. The chapter also considers the child's pathway or learning journey traversing these borders, borderlands or bridges and discusses the place of rites of passage in this process.

14.1 Introduction

Exploring the pedagogy of educational transitions offers the opportunity to reflect on the nature of the transitions being navigated as children progress through the education system. This chapter considers some of the wealth of research in this area and draws specifically on work that explores the possibilities of borderlands and bridges when 'trajectories', 'pathways' or 'passages' through the life course (Hörschelmann 2011) encounter borders to be traversed between different educational settings. Such pathways are not necessarily linear, and the transition points may offer both crisis and opportunity in lives that are 'always in a process of becoming' (Hörschelmann 2011, p. 379). We pay particular attention to the transition from early childhood education to school and include our own research findings

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from both Sweden and New Zealand to discuss pedagogical contributions that aim to enhance children's learning journeys and address inequities.

There are many ways of theorising transition experiences. One approach that is relevant in relation to crossing borders draws on the anthropological work of van Gennep (1977) to consider ideas of rites of passage, of liminality and of being on the threshold (or wavering) between two worlds. We are interested in the inner changes that accompany the physical move between settings (in, e.g. identity or learning), which may occur on a threshold and in becoming a full participant in the culture of the new place. Related to this is van Gennep's (1977) discussion of rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation and the particular acts and ceremonies that may be involved. The relevance of these for educational transitions is explored in detail, while also recognising that the individual's experience is situated within wider social and cultural settings and influenced by the interaction and interdependence of individual and social processes (Crafter and Maunder 2012).

14.2 Borders

Van Gennep (1977) discussed territorial borders and the ways in which these are drawn clearly on maps but may be less well defined in practice. For example, boundaries can be denoted by natural features such as rocks or a river or by constructed markers that have been installed to indicate the division, rather than continuous lines as on a map. Inhabitants and neighbours learn the limits of these territories. This idea of borders and boundaries and the related ideas of borderlands and border crossings are also employed in a metaphoric sense so that they do not inevitably refer to material spaces:

Boundaries, by definition, constitute lines of separation or contact. This may occur in real or virtual space, horizontally between territories, or vertically between groups and/or individuals. The point of contact or separation usually creates an 'us' and an 'Other' identity. (Newman and Paasi 1998, p. 191)

Borders therefore impact on identities, which can be both shaped by existing borders and help to create and maintain those borders (Ackesjö 2013), as people define themselves in relation to their social groups and in contrast to 'others'. For example, Wenger (1998) described borders that are socially constructed between communities of practice. These borders help to define the communities, each with their own knowledge, rituals and practices that may be specialised and different from those in other communities.

In many countries, it can be argued that early childhood education and school are divided by both kinds of borders described above: a change of physical setting (often marked by fences and gates) and borders between different communities of practices that are 'negotiated and maintained by individuals' (Ackesjö 2014, p. 5). Despite the different curriculum approaches and different ages of school entry across the world (see Taguma et al. 2013 for some examples), these borders between

sectors seem to be evident in many countries. This is perhaps because of the differences in history, philosophy, curriculum, policy, pedagogy and practice that help to shape the culture of the communities of practice in early childhood education and at the beginning level of school. Kagan and Neville (1996) provided a detailed discussion of these differences in the US context, much of which would still be relevant today even though, in many countries, there have been some shifts towards more similarities between the two sectors. The 'us' and 'other' identities (Newman and Paasi 1998) can often be seen in the ways teachers describe their own work and the pedagogy of the other sector.

14.3 Crossing Borders

When children attend early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, they, their families and their ECEC teachers are part of the ECEC community of practice. When policy dictates that it is time for the move to school, children and their families encounter the new community of practice across the border at school, and their established ECEC identity has to change to include the identity of the new group. Fabian (2002) and Garpelin (2014) drew attention to the idea of a transition across a border as being on the threshold (*limen*) between one known context/status/position and a new context/status/position. When a person is on the threshold, in the liminal phase, he/she is 'being, without belonging to any room (status/position/stage)' (Garpelin 2014, p. 119). Similarly, Ackesjö (2014, citing the work of Bridges 2013) described three phases in transition: emancipation, a neutral phase and then a new beginning where one finds new meaning and control. The neutral phase sits between what was and what is to come as 'a nowhere between two somewheres' (p. 5), a place that can be disorienting and confusing, but also a time of possibilities. Children starting school clearly make the move to the 'somewhere' of a physical location, but it may take some time until they are incorporated into the new role, and hence, until this incorporation is achieved, they can be thought of as liminal or in the 'nowhere' of the neutral phase. Ackesjö (2013, p. 393) explained the passage through the phases as a move from 'being to becoming' and then to a new 'being'. In terms of identity, this may mean a period of 'unbeing' of the previous role, in preparation for incorporation into the new one. Although the notion of *limen* implies a threshold, given the time taken for incorporation, it can also be thought of as a corridor (Garpelin 2014; Peters 2014; Turner 1977) in which full incorporation into the new community and role can take some time.

Crossing borders therefore often involves meeting difference and unfamiliar territory (Ackesjö 2013). This difference in itself is not necessarily problematic. Mullholland and Wallace (2003) have argued that all fields of human endeavour may be considered subcultural spaces, each with its own habitus, 'into which all learners must cross by way of borders' (p. 7). Crossing from ECEC to school is just one of these transitions. Some discontinuity can be a basis for learning (Peters 2004), and research with children suggests that they expect, and may look forward

to, some changes and challenges when they get to school (Brooker 2008; Einarsdóttir 2007). However, difficulties arise when the challenges are so disorienting that they prevent incorporation into the new setting. An extensive review of research literature indicated that ‘almost any child is at risk of making a poor or less successful transition if their individual characteristics are incompatible with features of the environment they encounter’ (Peters 2010a, p. 2). This confirms the previous argument that:

... children do not require homogeneity, or protection from the potentially difficult situations that they encounter in the process of becoming school pupils. However, when the challenges are too great for them to negotiate alone, a focus on support that is empowering is important. (Peters 2004, p. 437)

Key tasks for teachers in the pedagogy of educational transitions are to understand what is happening for the learner and to offer support in ways that address these challenges. In their work on learning science, Mulholland and Wallace (2003) noted, ‘if borders were not acknowledged and hazards unidentified, then students had no real access to education’ (p. 19).

In Mulholland and Wallace’s (2003) study, teachers tried to understand what the hazards were from the learner’s point of view rather than their own. In the process, they become border crossers too, and rather than being ‘tour guides to the new space’, they became ‘tourists’ in the learner’s subculture (p. 20). This is an important point, because it asks teachers to focus on what is of concern to the learners rather than just showing the learners what the teachers would like them to know. As discussed in the next section, borderland spaces may provide possibilities for this kind of engagement.

14.4 Borderlands and Boundary Spaces

Instead of accepting that transition requires border crossing over a sharp divide between two sectors or cultures, there is a possibility for thinking of a borderland space between them. Returning to the notion of physical territories, van Gennep (1977) explained that while many countries now touch each other, in earlier times some countries were surrounded by a strip of neutral ground, divided into sections or marches. Permits called a ‘letter of marque’ (perhaps coming from the German word ‘mark’ – borderland) could be given ‘to pass from one territory to another through the neutral zone’ (van Gennep 1977, p. 18). Applied to conceptual spaces, neutral zones or borderlands are ‘those spaces that exist around borders’ that do ‘not have a sharp divide line where one leaves one way of making sense for an-other’ (Clandinin and Rosiek 2007, p. 59).

Britt and Sumsion (2003, p. 133) explored this possibility of a shared space, a borderland with ‘connections and intersections between two different places – points of negotiation, of cohabitation, meshing, transforming, combining ... a space not only of existence, but of coexistence’, in their investigation of early childhood

teachers working in primary schools in Australia. Ackesjö (2013) added to this idea, discussing trans-boundary experiences, which can combine or merge territories and blur the boundaries between spaces. An example of this was the way, after children experienced the new context, initial understandings were deconstructed and the borders redefined.

Continuity of learning has been a focus of recent research in New Zealand with three recent reports focusing on continuity of learning from ECEC to school (Carr et al. 2015; Education Review Office 2015; Mitchell et al. 2015). The notion of a borderland seems to offer great potential for developing this continuity through shared understandings of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (Peters 2010b). Several studies have looked at ways in which teachers have worked together to develop borderlands between ECEC and school with the aim of supporting continuity of learning and enhancing children's transition between the two sectors.

In New Zealand, a project on learning journeys (Peters et al. 2015) explored a series of action research projects in which teachers from ECEC and school worked together to create borderlands instead of sharp divides. Teachers in the project examined each other's curricula, spent time observing in the other sector and discussed these observations with each other to gain an understanding of what had been seen. Based on these understandings, they explored ways of sharing information and planning. Regular meetings included discussions that highlighted the constraints within each sector, as well as the similarities in personal teacher philosophies about learning and their goals for the children. Where before there had been some tensions regarding different approaches in the other sector, new understandings were developed about why these existed, and the teachers focused on supporting the children's learning journeys collaboratively. A further small-scale study in New Zealand (Hohepa 2014; also see Chap. 7) is currently examining whether something similar is possible between a Māori medium preschool (*kōhanga reo*) and a Māori medium school (*kura*). Schielack and Seeley (2010) made some similar recommendations for developing shared understandings for teachers in elementary and middle schools in the USA.

A concept that can be compared to borderland is that of boundary space, described as the space where 'the resources from different practices are brought together to expand interpretations of multifaceted tasks, and not as barriers between the knowledge and motives that characterise specialist practices' and 'the learning that occurs in these spaces is not a matter of learning how to do the work of others, but involves gaining sufficient insight into purposes and practices of others to enable collaboration' (Edwards 2011, p. 34).

In a Finnish project, Karila and Rantavuori (2014) used the theory of boundary spaces when exploring the way teachers from ECEC and primary school cooperated in their work with developing joint lessons for the children from the two school forms. This study focused on the boundaries where professional zones and cultural scripts meet. Three discursive frames were identified in the teachers' talk: an initiative frame (where professionals suggest, ask and propose and are willing to take the others' ideas into consideration), a consensus frame (clarifying the purpose of the

work and checking for understanding) and a collaboration frame (a common and shared perspective where new practices are developed together). The 'initiative frame' and 'consensus frame' were used during the entire school year. The 'collaboration frame' was only heard later in the year and reflected 'the will and intention to collaborate in a democratic way, giving space for various professionals' (p. 389). The findings indicated that sufficient time was important for deepening shared activity and also that for boundary spaces to be productive, they need to be managed and attention paid to addressing the power imbalance between the participants.

The concept of boundary space was also highlighted in another Finnish study, which noted that in the Finnish language, the phrase 'transition period' is expressed more as 'co-operation of the transition period' (Athola et al. 2011, p. 296). This broad conceptualisation of transition may provide a frame for reciprocal exploration of this boundary space between sectors. Athola et al. (2011) explored whether or not the special activities organised by teachers to facilitate the transition between kindergarten and Grade 1 were of importance for children's learning processes in literacy and numeracy. One of the activities that appeared to have the strongest impact on children's learning in Grade 1 was that teachers from the two school forms cooperated on curricula and thus counteracted a 'break' in the learning processes of children. The cooperation involved teachers meeting and discussing their conceptions and aims regarding the children's learning, sharing written information about children's learning and planning for continuity.

Although cooperation in a borderland appears to be a benign and positive possibility, perspectives from literature remind us that borderlands can be oppressive and potentially violent spaces (De Roover 2012). Dictionary definitions of van Gennep's 'letter of marque' describe them as licences given to private citizens to seize the property of another nation, thus linking them with reprisal and privateers, rather than just as permits to travel through the borderland. Although these examples are extreme compared to the borderland between ECEC and school, they draw attention to the work involved in creating and navigating borderlands. It is important not to underestimate the challenges involved in seeking new ways of working that open up these shared conceptual spaces. Even in the successful Finnish example described above, Athola et al. (2011) found that although cooperation on curricula and related activities was the most successful approach (in terms of predicting children's skills), these were the least commonly used practices. To create borderlands for children, teachers are asked to destabilise practices that are being protected by a boundary (Edwards 2011), a boundary that may have helped to shape their professional identity. De Roover (2012) commented that imposing socially constructed boundaries disrupts the individual's sense of identity, just as a physical boundary disrupts the natural landscape. It seems timely to focus more research in this area to explore the experiences of ECEC and school teachers when they try to create new borderland approaches and the impact for children when teachers are able to engage in this way.

14.5 Bridges

While borderlands involve creating new conceptual spaces and new ways of working, the metaphor of bridges accepts the status quo of the cultures on either side of the border and aims to create a connection leading from one pedagogical setting to another. Anzaldúa (2012, p. 1) described bridges as ‘thresholds to other realities’ and ‘pathways, conduits, connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders and changing perspectives’. She also reminded us that bridging moves us to unfamiliarity and we are not guaranteed safe passage in the process. The illustration on the *Transition to School: Position Statement* (Educational Transitions and Change [ETC] Research Group 2011) captured the variety of ways that such metaphorical bridges may be experienced, from secure structures to those that appear more risky (see Fig. 14.1). It also includes a reminder that some children will fly across without needing a bridge at all.

In New Zealand, Peters et al. (2015) explored bridges as well as borderlands in their study of learning pathways across sectors. Successful bridge building required communication from both sides and a sense of shared purpose. In a previous study, Hartley et al. (2012) looked at many ways to build bridges between sectors. Of particular interest was the initiation of the bridgework; in the beginning, the ECEC setting initiated most of the projects, but over time, the school, families and children began to make suggestions. Ideas for approaches that were mutually interesting were more likely to offer stronger bridges, because support came from both sides. Bridge building may not be limited to teachers. A small-scale study by Noel (2011) described the work of school administrators to provide support for children and families in the transition to school, and a recent Australian resource (Dockett and Perry 2014) is rich with suggestions for building bridges to support transitions to school and school-age care.

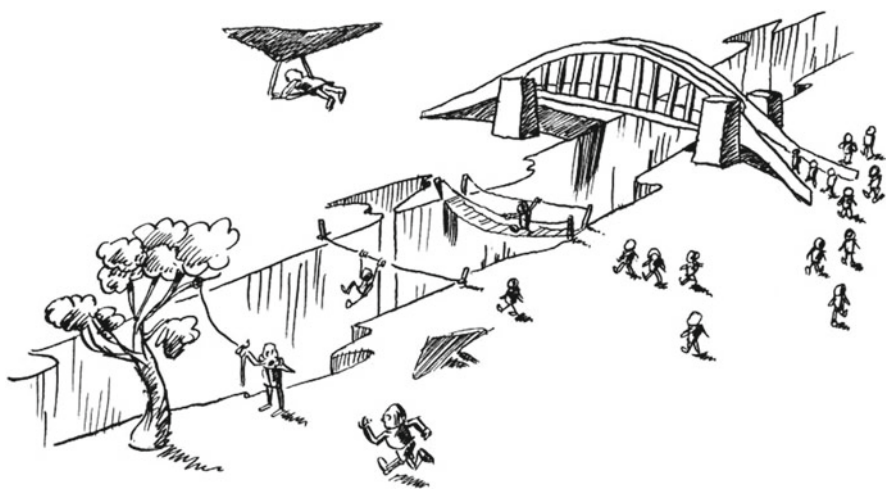


Fig. 14.1 Transition to School: Position Statement illustration (Reprinted with permission)

14.6 The Swedish Preschool Class: A Bridge Between ECEC and School?

In Sweden, local municipalities arrange three different school forms for children in early years: preschool for children from the age of 1–5 years; preschool classes for 6-year-olds; and when children turn 7, they start primary school, the first compulsory form of school. The preschool class, introduced in 1998, was intended as a bridge between preschool and school, in which children could experience both preschool and school approaches to learning and ‘encounter school at their own pace’ (Ackesjö 2013, p. 389). The intention for preschool classes was that they should integrate the approaches from both sectors and support the transition to school (Kaga 2007). Chapter 15 in this volume provides more detailed insights into this approach. Close examination of the concept of a preschool class implies that it could also be a potential borderland, with shared understandings developed to create new collaborative approaches to pedagogy. However, research conducted on the transition from the Swedish preschool class to primary school (Sandberg et al. 2014) reported a clear lack of the pedagogical cooperation addressed in the New Zealand and Finnish studies described earlier. In an interview study with primary school teachers (Sandberg et al. 2015), there was appreciation of the work undertaken in the preschool class, especially the activities aiming to make the children socially prepared and ready for learning. However, the pedagogical cooperation that might be expected to occur within a borderland of shared understanding between the teachers in preschool class and primary school was described as rather weak. While the institution of the preschool class is an example of a strong educational policy approach to creating a bridge or borderland between ECEC and school, without the external and social processes we noted in the introduction (Crafter and Maunder 2012), to support teachers in working together, Sandberg (2012) concluded that a picture of a ‘ditch’ might emerge. This idea of a ditch, with an associated dip in children’s learning, is explained further in the next section relating to literacy learning.

14.7 Bridges and Ditches in Literacy Learning

Research about the transition from preschool to school often highlights social aspects of the learners’ experiences. These include the value of relationships (O’Toole et al. 2014; Peters 2010a) and the development of a sense of security and well-being as a ground for future learning (Bulkeley and Fabian 2006). It is important to acknowledge the dynamic interaction between the social and the academic aspects as well. In a study from Finland, Halonen et al. (2006) showed there was a clear relation between children’s literacy development in preschool activities for 6-year-olds and their social well-being in Grade 1. Difficulties in the areas of literacy seem to be a risk factor for developing socio-emotional problems later on.

Similar findings were presented in a project in Sweden (Fischbein et al. 2006), where extra support was given to children in preschool class and Grade 1. After the period of intervention, the children showed better academic results than the control group, as well as a high degree of well-being.

In Sweden, where children start school at age 7, several studies have been interested in providing bridges to support continuity in children's literacy learning and development in transitions from one setting to another. For example, Fast (2007) used the theories of Bourdieu to explore the experiences and abilities children bring with them into preschool and school, concluding that the pedagogical settings did not particularly acknowledge the social and cultural capital of children. Further, she concluded that continuity related to activities and instructions for reading and writing was weak among the three pedagogical settings: preschool, preschool class and primary school. Sometimes, it appeared that children faced the same didactic content in the preschool class and in Grade 1, regardless of where they were in their learning process. In another study, Skoog (2012) explored literacy practices in the preschool class and Grade 1. The conclusions drawn were quite similar to those of Fast (2007), in that there seemed to be a flimsy connection between the preschool class and Grade 1 with regard to instructions and activities related to literacy and, hence, the continuity for children's learning journeys. As addressed by Sandberg (2012), this lack of connection could mean that children, although reading fluently from the age of 4 or 5 years, face introductory reading instructions first in the preschool class and then again in Grade 1. Vygotsky (1934/1986) argued that teaching and instruction ideally 'marches ahead of development and leads it' (p. 188). The implication of this is that the teachers have to find the zone of proximal development for every individual child and make it the starting point for didactic activities. As reported in the Swedish studies (Fast 2007; Sandberg 2012; Skoog 2012), the transitions between different school forms may cause a break or a pause in children's learning journeys, generating a ditch instead of a bridge.

When children's abilities are not identified as the starting point for learning, difficulties arise for those who are capable as well as those who experience learning challenges. The transition between two educational settings may mean that children who are at risk of encountering difficulties in their learning are not identified and given appropriate or timely support (Sandberg 2012). This approach may lead to experiences of failure for the individual child which, in turn, can have long-term impacts on learning and well-being (Adams 1990; Snow and Juel 2007). According to Stanovich (1986, 2000), learners who face difficulties increasingly avoid activities related to the subject with which they struggle and thus risk ending up in a negative spiral. With reference to the gospel of Matthew, he described the 'Matthew effect', where the rich become richer while the poor become poorer. Stanovich (1986, 2000) showed how the Matthew effect, which widens the gap between those who are doing well and those who are struggling, impacted within a few months after formal reading instruction began. New pedagogies of transition would hopefully reverse this trend and support the learning of all children. Ideally, this would become part of everyday practice, checking what the hazards are from the learner's

point of view (Mulholland and Wallace 2003) and offering support in ways that do not risk the learner being stigmatised by the attention and the additional support (Hagtvet et al. 2015).

14.8 Bridges Between Home and School

Although the focus of our discussion in this chapter so far has been on building bridges and borderlands between ECEC and school, it is important to acknowledge that children are also moving between home and school. While the move from ECEC to school is one way, once the transition phase is completed, children navigate daily crossings between home and school. Large-scale studies in the UK (Siraj and Mayo 2014) and the USA (Cooper et al. 2010) have focused on children from disadvantaged backgrounds and demonstrated the power of home learning environments and parental involvement in education to help children succeed in education. However, recent research in the USA by Miller (2015) found that many low-income families received little assistance to address concerns that they identified with their children's transition. Given the high proportion of children living in low-income families, Miller (2015, p. 220) highlighted how crucial it is to 'consider the views and experiences of families from lower-income backgrounds and explore the investments and needs of families in order to support a positive school start for all children'. Given the wealth of transition-to-school research, it is of concern that with the exception of some strong examples (e.g. Dockett et al. 2011), our own research in this area over time suggests that change has been slow to address the inequities for children in this process. Strategies that are put in place need to be mindful of the perspectives of the children and families involved. Ecclestone et al. (2010) noted that the blurring between children's home and school lives, which is generally deemed to be a positive way for schools to connect with and build on children's funds of knowledge from home, also opens up questions about the boundaries between public and private lives and children's right to keep aspects of their home and school lives separate. This finding reminds us that there are no straightforward answers in the pedagogy of educational transitions. While learning about children's home lives to better support the connections with school, teachers need to be respectful about what children and families want to share and to ensure that what is shared is utilised in ways that benefit the child.

14.9 Rites of Passage

Transitions can be seen as an intrinsic component of existence, with the life of an individual in any society including a series of passages 'from one age to another and from one occupation to another' (van Gennep 1977, p. 3). 'Rites of passage' are events during which the move from one age or occupation to the next is

accompanied by ‘special acts’ or ceremonies that enable an individual to move from one defined position to another (van Gennep 1977, p. 3). These can include ‘rites of separation’, ‘rites of transition’ and ‘rites of incorporation’ (van Gennep 1977).

Although there are critiques of van Gennep’s work (Watts 2013), aspects can be usefully applied to consider educational transitions. For example, Fabian (2002) considered the way preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition) and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation) applied to the transition to school. Other writers (Ackesjö 2013; Peters 2004) have also drawn on the work of van Gennep to consider the rites of passage as children make the move from ECEC to school. More recently, Garpelin (2014) provided an in-depth discussion of van Gennep’s work in relation to school transitions. Sandberg (2012) has also drawn from her work on literacy to consider whether children’s step into written language can be interpreted as a rite of passage, suggesting that children become members in a new kind of community and thus pass a threshold when they understand how the alphabetic system works and how to use it.

Utilising the theoretical framework of ‘rites of passage’ implies a rather different pedagogical approach to either borderlands or bridges, as it emphasises the move to something new. Rather than blurring the boundaries, the differences are marked and celebrated through particular acts and ceremonies accompanying life transitions. In some cultures, rites of passage in the liminal zone include demanding feats of endurance from those being initiated, implying that any transition is supposed to present some challenges. Rites of passage to school tend not to include these demands; however, activities such as buying uniforms and participating in entrance ceremonies may well constitute one form of rites (Fabian 2002). The notion of rites may be useful in understanding the way children see starting school. Educational transitions are not chosen by children, but are something that adults determine for them. If children see it as a rite of passage to a valued new identity and status, they may be more willing to persist with aspects that they find difficult than those for whom all their valued roles and identities are outside of school (Peters 2004).

Although rites of passage are mentioned in a number of transition-to-school studies, it is an area that could be explored further. Only a few studies document what some of these rites are and the role they play in separation, transition and incorporation. One study that looked at this directly was Ackesjö (2013). She felt that children may not have the same understanding as adults about what these rites might be and recommended greater transparency to make the intentions clear to the children involved.

14.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored ideas around educational borders and thresholds, with the aim of exploring what happens for both children and teachers at these transition points. Thinking about the moves between roles, identities and cultures that are incurred when borders are crossed led to discussions of borderlands, bridges and

rites of passage, all of them have implications for research, policy and pedagogies in educational transitions. Borderlands provide space for new, shared understandings. It seems that while building new shared meanings and approaches is potentially challenging for teachers, this can open new possibilities for transition and allow children's learning journeys to be viewed with empathy and understanding. This might also assist in seeing the situation from the learner's viewpoint and becoming 'tourists' in the learner's subculture (Mulholland and Wallace 2003, p. 20).

The metaphor of bridges also offers great potential for collaboration across sectors, to support children's learning as they move from the familiar to the unknown. However, the Swedish example of the preschool class has illustrated that structural changes need to be accompanied by pedagogical and curricular support. The Swedish preschool class offers unique possibilities as both a borderland and a bridge and yet, in practice, was considered a potential ditch (Fast 2007; Sandberg 2012; Skoog 2012) because the shared understandings and connections between the different sectors were not necessarily happening in practice.

The theoretical framework of rites of passage provides a different lens for exploring the experience of transition from the learner's point of view. It raises questions as to whether or not it might be helpful to mark the change in role and status through 'rites of separation', 'rites of transition' and 'rites of incorporation' (van Gennep 1977). More research is required to fully understand the potential of this approach as applied to early years transitions. For example, it would be interesting to consider whether more rites and rituals would assist the transition, and adults would need to look closely at what meaning and influence these had for children, given Ackesjö's (2013) finding that adults and children may assign different meanings to the rituals and ceremonies that mark separation, transition and incorporation rites.

The borderlands, bridges and rites of passage discussed in this chapter call for somewhat different pedagogies, but all have indicated the value of considering the learner's perspective. Athola et al. (2011) questioned whether transition practices themselves are effective for supporting learning or whether strong transition practices are characteristics of 'well-functioning schools and preschools, which have good leadership, high-quality teachers, and other good practices' (p. 301). Certainly, these contextual issues are important, as are the wider policy and societal factors that shape the work of teachers (Peters 2010a). Therefore, research, policy and practice should pay attention both to supporting transition initiatives and to the wider context in which these initiatives take place.

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