

# Reframing transitions to school as continuity practices: the role of practice architectures

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**Abstract** This paper makes a case for conceptualising transitions from the before school sector to the compulsory years of schooling as continuity practices. It begins by presenting an overview and critique of constructions of transitions to school that contribute to contemporary discourses and agendas (e.g. the conflation of transitions and readiness). Then recent international trends in understanding transitions as continuity are analysed and synthesised into three broad categories: structural, developmental and contextual continuities. These categories are subsequently used to develop a conceptual model for reframing transitions. The model is then used to first, examine a snapshot of familiar Australian transitions practices; second, highlight the interdependence of the practices and the sites in which they are enacted; and third, support the argument to reframe transitions as continuity practices. Finally, contributions the paper makes to transitions to school theory, research and practice are explicated.

**Keywords** Transitions to school · Continuity · Practice architectures

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## Introduction

The importance of making a positive start to school has been acknowledged in international research, policy and practice (Dunlop and Fabian 2007; Dockett et al. 2014), yet the conditions that constitute a positive start and a definitive understanding of the term ‘transition/s to school’ remain elusive. Shifting policy discourses in what constitutes a positive start to school add to the complexity. For example, in 2010, one Australian state regulatory authority indicated that:

Transition to school should be understood as a process, not a point in time. It is an individual experience for everyone involved. While there are core elements to most children’s transitions, there are important considerations that need to be thought about and planned to ensure that each child has a successful start to school. (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) 2010, p. 2:1)

Later, the same authority, now known as the Department of Education and Training (DET), described starting school as “a major life transition for both children and their families. Both challenging and exciting, it is a time of change in which children, families and educators adjust to new roles, identities, expectations, interactions and relationships” (DET 2016, p. 25). The juxtaposition of these two statements reveals a shift in thinking about transitions from a process of individual consideration to a collective challenge of adjusting to new roles.

The examples from DEECD (2010) and DET (2016) emphasise complex and confusing shifts in understandings of transitions that give rise to unclear and reductive discourses. The examples illustrate what Dockett and Perry (2014a) have called the conflation of transitions and readiness. For instance, the statement from DEECD (2010) talks about ensuring that each child has a successful experience of starting school despite saying that it is a process and not a point in time. Readiness for school is often construed as key to a successful start and includes meeting set standards prior to school entry (Moss 2013). In contrast, the DET (2016) excerpt points to a collective experience of many dimensions of change for those involved, suggesting that transitions are about processes. Considering the importance of making a positive start to school (Margetts 2014) and warnings that “almost any child is at risk of making a poor or less successful transition if their individual characteristics are incompatible with the features of the environment they encounter” (Peters 2010a, p. 2), we make a case for reframing transitions to school as continuity practices.

The paper opens by presenting an overview of constructions of transitions to school as detailed in Table 1. The constructions, identified as key themes within

**Table 1** Constructions of transitions

Events	A point in time, short-term, hierarchical, homogenous, starting school
Processes	Adapting to change, longer-term, collaborative, multi-layered, proximal
Continuity	Building on prior experiences, ongoing, iterative, contextual
Practices	Lived experiences, negotiated, site-specific, ecologies

transitions to school literature, present a synthesis of significant theoretical perspectives about the topic. The overview highlights the contribution each construction makes to research, policies and practices. Then, informed by recent literature framing transitions as continuities (see Table 2), the paper presents a conceptual model (Fig. 1) for reframing transitions as continuity practices.

## Transitions as events

Traditional perspectives informed by developmental theories view commencing school as a one-off change event or point in time—a universal hierarchical milestone (Vogler et al. 2008). When conceptualised as an event, a positive start to school relies on an individual child's capacity to conform to the conditions of the new environment (Margetts 2014). This construction is based on the understanding that children progress through a series of natural, universal and immutable stages that become “crucial reference points for discussing optimal transitions” (Vogler et al. 2008, p. 5). Readiness assessments typically employ normative benchmarks to determine an individual child's preparedness to commence formal schooling, yet their application to cultural groups such as Australian Indigenous children is highly contested (Taylor 2011). Sometimes readiness is termed readiness to learn and is defined in behavioural terms and framed by expectations of the school system (Serry et al. 2014). The problematic ready/unready binary established by maturational constructions of readiness has been critiqued for its oversimplification of complex issues (Clark 2017). The lack of clarity in what the term means (Ackerman and Barnett 2005), the homogenising effect of age-based standards (Dockett 2014) and the potential to mistake variability in development as a deficit (Petriwskyj and Grieshaber 2011) continue to challenge early years professionals.

The association of normative readiness agendas with school and long-term success (Datar 2006; Margetts 2014) works in tandem with an emphasis on school expectations framed by statutory assessment pressures. Together, these factors may be major contributors to heightened anxiety about school entry amongst parents (Mergler and Walker 2017) and claims of excessive pressure on young children (Clark 2017). Maturational factors related to chronological age, gender, social-emotional and academic preparedness are key concerns associated with delayed school entry (Mergler and Walker 2017). Holding children back in order to provide an additional year in preschool is a common practice for concerned parents (Graue 2006). However, there is a risk that doing so may also exacerbate demands for the schoolification of the preschool programme (Moss 2013; OECD 2006). Not all families can afford ‘the gift of time’ (Edwards, Taylor and Fiorini 2011) and time alone does not advance learning and wellbeing (Graue and Reineke 2014). Conceptualising individual children as ready (or not) for the event of starting school is problematic, particularly for children from marginalised or non-dominant groups, because it fails to account for cultural, relational and contextual interactions and capacities (Clark 2017; Taylor 2011; Vogler et al. 2008). Constructions of transitions as an event (e.g. starting school) and associated assessments of individual preparedness for that event are often conflated with understandings of transitions as

processes and continuity (Dockett and Perry 2014b) (see Table 1 for explanations of events, processes and continuity).

## Transitions as processes

Maturation constructions of academic preparedness or readiness as an event have been superseded theoretically and practically by more recent ecological, sociocultural and critical perspectives that consider transitions to school as an iterative, complex, lengthy and multi-layered process involving many stakeholders (Ackesjö 2013; Chan 2012; Peters 2014). These perspectives challenge the notion of readiness (Moss 2016) and the predictive power of norm-referenced assessments that typically identify children from minority groups as ‘at risk’ (Taylor 2011). They also advocate participatory strength-based transitions practices and policies that engage a range of actors respectfully (Lillejord et al. 2017). From this standpoint, a positive start is reliant on considering a range of contexts, perspectives and rights (Educational Transitions and Change Research Group [ETC] 2011). Community-level interventions based on early developmental assessments (Janus 2011) are intended to redirect the responsibility for being ready from the individual child or family to the wider community. The Australian Early Development Census [AEDC] (Commonwealth of Australia 2016) is a population-based psychological instrument that measures development across five domains—physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and general knowledge. Data, aggregated against postcodes, are used to identify developmentally vulnerable communities (DET 2017), inform subsequent interventions and to support the expansion of policies such as the Universal Access Preschool Program, which ensures vulnerable children receive the correct “dosage of high-quality early education” prior to commencing school (Fox and Geddes 2016, p. 10). However, criticism has been levelled against universal approaches to measuring vulnerable children against “western-centric norms of child development” (Agbenyega 2009, p. 33) and for assigning deficit-orientated labels to difference (Ryan and Grieshaber 2005). They also devalue family insights into children’s strengths (Taylor 2011) and fail to recognise that capacity is culturally and contextually constructed (Grieshaber 2017). This perspective of transitions as processes is in tune with current policies of inclusion (Petriwskyj 2014), contextual rather than universal approaches, and international trends towards conceptualising transitions as continuity (Dockett and Perry 2014b; Peters 2010b).

## Transitions as continuity

Recent international publications draw attention to the importance of *continuity* in children’s learning and wellbeing, and pay particular attention to transitions from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to school education (Ballam et al. 2017; OECD 2017; Lillejord et al. 2017). However, there is little consensus about characteristics of continuity. In this paper, continuity is understood as “experiences

**Table 2** Transitions continuities

Publications	Categories		
	Structural	Developmental	Contextual
OECD (2017)	Professional Curriculum and pedagogical Organisation and governance	Developmental	
Dockett and Einarsdottir (2017)	Philosophical Curriculum Administrative Organisational Physical	Developmental	
Boyle et al. (under review)	Policy		Relational Practical

and learning that build on what has gone before” (Dockett and Einarsdottir 2017, p. 133). The *Transition to School Position Statement* (ETC 2011) highlights the complex and multifaceted processes associated with transitioning to school and foregrounds a conceptual shift in thinking about transitions by describing them as a “dynamic process of continuity and change” (p. 1). Understanding continuity as a range of cumulative experiences encompasses the different constructions of the term identified in Table 2 and emphasises the inextricable link between transitions and change.

Conceptualising transitions as continuity, therefore, needs to take into account ways to address coherence in children’s experience and support for their negotiation of the inevitable change encountered as they enter school. It does not imply that preschools and schools offer mirror images or that transitions should be seamless (DEECD 2010), but that continuity revolves around certain stable and recognisable aspects (Lillejord et al. 2017), and that change is supported (Dockett et al. 2014). Transitions to school incorporate a range of change experiences including the move from home and community to school (Dockett et al. 2017), from before school settings such as ECEC centres or preschools to school (Peters 2010b), and for many children, transitions to school age care (Dockett and Perry 2016). Enhancing continuity by building on what has gone before demands deep contextual consideration for children whose home and community experience differs markedly from that of the school (Hartley et al. 2012; Hohepa and McIntosh 2017; Kaplun et al. 2017). This includes those who have not attended a prior-to-school programme (Dockett 2014), and those with refugee experience, complex family circumstances or diverse abilities (Dockett et al. 2011; Mitchell et al. 2017; Petriwskyj et al. 2014).

Table 2 considers three publications that extend and challenge conceptions of the way continuities have been understood in relation to transitions to school. The table indicates continuity categories highlighted in these publications. Dockett and Einarsdottir (2017) caution that “while each of these types of continuities is

important, attention to one aspect alone is unlikely to promote continuity of experiences or expectations for children, families and educators” (p. 142). Taking this into account, a comparative analysis of the continuities discussed in the three publications identified three complementary categories of transitions continuities: structural, developmental and contextual.

*Structural continuities* (Table 2) provide professional, curriculum, pedagogical, organisational, governance, philosophical, administrative, physical and policy frameworks to establish enabling conditions for transitions practices. The OECD (2017) *Starting Strong V* document highlights increased political and social attention to transitions and identifies a range of organisational and governance challenges affecting continuity (e.g. professionalism, curriculum and pedagogy). The influence these structural continuities have on transitions to school is discussed by Dockett and Einarsdottir (2017) who note additional elements such as physical spaces, and an historical philosophical schism between ECEC professionals in the before school and early years of school sectors. Policy, when defined as “both process and product” (Boyle et al. under review p. x), has also been identified as a structural element affecting continuity. As shown in Table 2, the majority of the forms of continuity identified across the three publications attend to the ways in which transitions to school are enabled and constrained by structural factors.

Lack of attention to structural continuities and/or an attention to them in isolation of others are reported in transitions to school literature as contributing to discontinuities. Separate governance, administrative and organisational structures described as “split” systems (Moss 2013, p. 4) contribute to “complex institutional divides” (Krieg and Whitehead 2015, p. 319) that affect continuity by constraining the facilitation of shared understandings of policies and philosophies informing pedagogy, curriculum and physical environments. Historical differences in philosophies, curricula and pedagogies between ECEC and school have also contributed to learning discontinuities and professional tensions (Dunlop 2007; Moss 2013; Peters and Sandberg 2017). However, attempts to offer curricular and pedagogical alignment have met with educator resistance primarily due to a lack of attention to contextual continuities required to establish mutual respect and dialogue, and to co-construct shared understandings (Moss 2008).

*Developmental continuities* (Table 2) attend broadly to children’s ongoing wellbeing, learning and development. Continuity is dependent on the provision of high-quality ECEC, a positive transition, and the collaboration of a range of stakeholders including children, parents, early childhood professionals and community services (OECD 2017). Developmental continuities should not be mistaken for or understood as ‘readiness’. Dockett and Einarsdottir (2017) draw on a Deweyian critique of preparation and the relationship between different levels of education and care to affirm their understanding of developmental continuity as building on previous experiences and the supportive role that educators across the sectors play in this process. Considering developmental continuity in isolation from complementary continuities risks overlooking children’s unrealised potential (Dockett and Einarsdottir 2017), which can refocus attention on the reductive binary of being ready or not (Petriwskyj and Grieshaber 2011) and contribute to an overly narrow focus on school adjustment or academic learning (Boyle et al. under

review). Nevertheless, when viewed in association with contextual considerations that attend to children's own perspectives, developmental continuities have the potential to contribute to ongoing confidence, and a sense of agency and wellbeing.

*Contextual continuities* (Table 2) attend to site-specific proximal practices associated with transitions to school. Despite not being specifically named as a category in *Starting Strong V* (OECD 2017) or in Dockett and Einarsdottir's (2017) chapter, contextual continuities are evident throughout both documents—a testament to the complementarity and significance of this category. The two forms of contextual continuities—relational and practical (Table 2)—identified by Boyle et al. (under review) are also reflected throughout the discussion of continuity by Lillejord et al. (2017). Relational continuity is variously identified as partnerships, networks, collaborations and relationships amongst a range of stakeholders including children, families, professionals and communities. Discourses in the transitions to school literature have been predominantly focussed on children, families, schools and communities, with attention to cross-sectorial professional relationships emerging recently (Boyle and Petriwskyj 2014; Hopps 2014; Peters and Sandberg 2017). In identifying this emerging concern, the publications listed in Table 2 pay particular attention to professional relationships, influenced by social, cultural and political contexts, as they set the scene for continuity during transitions to school. Practical continuity relates specifically to practices (e.g. pedagogy, programmes, sharing information) associated with transitions. It includes actions such as the provision of similarities in learning environments and discussions with children on their view of inevitable changes in environments (Dockett and Perry 2014b; Queensland Department of Education 2017). Ideally, such actions are guided by children and families and take into account input from both prior to school and school educators.

These contextual continuities address a core issue identified by Boyle et al. (under review) as “the distribution of power and its impact” (p. x), which is evidenced more broadly in transitions literature as ‘power over’ and ‘power to’. Addressing power differences can enhance reciprocity in communication and create enabling conditions for the negotiation of relational and practical continuity (Ebbeck et al. 2013; Hopps 2014; Peters 2014). Discrepancies between the status of ECEC and primary school teachers, an example of ‘power over’, present a significant challenge to achieving professional continuity (OECD 2017, p. 86). Conversely, collaborative dialogic approaches to transitions were identified by Dockett and Einarsdottir (2017) and Peters and Sandberg (2017) as empowering opportunities to establish shared understandings across a range of contexts. The way power is distributed and the effect it has on transitions practices is not homogenous, as it is also influenced by social, cultural and political contexts.

Understanding and/or changing practices require careful and constant consideration of the context in which they are enacted. Paying attention to and identifying the importance of contextual continuity guards against ‘one size fits all’ approaches that privilege “instrumental and narrow discourses about readiness for school” (OECD 2006, p. 219), and contribute to discontinuities associated with transitions to school.

## Transitions as practices

Up to this point, the constructions of transitions detailed above and in Table 1 have been informed by epistemological perspectives that focus on understanding (knowing about) transitions to school. In this section, as the initial part of reframing transitions as continuity practices, we apply an ontological theory to consider the contextualised realities (being) of transitioning to school as a lived experience. According to Schatzki (2002), “the character and transformation of social life are both intrinsically and decisively rooted in the site where it takes place” (p. xi). Schatzki also argues that the site of the social “is a mesh of practices and orders” (p. xii). To consider the realities (lived experiences) of transitions to school, we attend to the practices and orders (arrangements) found at or brought to the sites in which practices are enacted. In acknowledging the ambiguity of the term ‘practice’, we adopt the following definition:

A practice is a form of socially established cooperative human activity in which characteristic arrangements of actions and activities (doings) are comprehensible in terms of arrangements of relevant ideas in characteristic discourses (sayings), and when the people and objects involved are distributed in characteristic arrangements of relationships (relatings), and when this complex of sayings, doings and relatings “hang together” in a distinctive project. (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer and Bristol 2014 p. 31)

According to the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al. 2014), people engage in practices within intersubjective spaces that have three interdependent and inseparable dimensions: semantic space; physical-time space, and social space. The ways practices unfold within these spaces are preconfigured (but not predetermined) by the conditions (arrangements) found at or brought to the space. The meshing of practices associated with particular projects (e.g. transitions to school) shapes and re-shapes uniquely interdependent site-based “ecologies of practices” (p. 44).

The first dimension, semantic space, is encountered through the medium of language. It is enabled and/or constrained by the cultural–discursive arrangements found at or brought to the space. In the project of children transitioning to school, a constraining condition (arrangement) might be the absence of shared language and understandings of key developmental and structural elements (e.g. pedagogy and curriculum). The second dimension, physical-time space, is encountered through the medium of activity and work. In this space, practices are enabled and/or constrained by material-economic arrangements of the site. Applied to the project of children transitioning to school, the physical arrangement of co-located ECEC and school sites might enable continuity through sustained interactions and integrated systems. The third dimension, social space, is encountered through the medium of power and solidarity. In this space, relationships are enabled and/or constrained by social–political arrangements. During transitions to school, relationships can be constrained by an unequal distribution of power amongst stakeholders, resulting in discontinuities. Together, these three dimensions form the *practice architectures*



(Kemmis et al. 2014) that shape the way practices unfold in particular sites. Transforming practices (e.g. transitioning to school) therefore requires the transformation of the “existing arrangements in the intersubjective spaces that support practices” (p. 6).

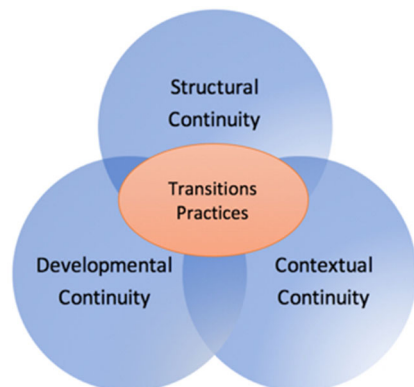
The theory of practice architectures has recently been applied to preschool contexts (Ronnerman et al. 2017; Salamon et al. 2014), suggesting its potential application in theorising and researching transitions to school. Reflection on this theory indicates that contextual continuities might include the use of a shared language by educators (for example, referring to transitions rather than readiness) to facilitate establishment of shared professional understandings across sectors (Boyle and Grieshaber 2013) and more coherent communication with children, families and communities (Ahtola et al. 2015).

## Reframing transitions as continuity practices

Reframing is a strategy used to create desirable change by redefining and/or relabelling phenomena (Petriwskyj 2014). The desirable change advocated in this paper is to reframe transitions to school as continuity practices informed by a site ontological perspective based on the assumption that “the way a practice unfolds or happens is always shaped by the conditions that pertain to a particular site at a particular time” (Kemmis et al. 2014, p. 13). Reframing is presented as a way to shift the professional conversation in early education from transitions constructions framed by epistemological perspectives to practices (Table 1) framed by ontological perspectives. Applying this perspective to the transitions continuities identified in Table 2, a conceptual model for reframing transitions as continuity practices (Fig. 1) was developed.

The model presents a framework for thinking about transitions as continuity practices to understand better the way they unfold in particular sites and how/if the arrangements that prefigure them enable and/or constrain continuity. The model also draws attention to the ecological interdependence of continuity practices and highlights the fact that they rarely, if ever, unfold as universal actions across sites.

**Fig. 1** Conceptual model: transitions as continuity practices



To illustrate the potential for applying a site ontological perspective, two familiar Australian snapshots have been selected specifically to highlight the interdependence of practices and conditions (arrangements), and support the argument to reframe transitions as continuity practices. The snapshots align with two persistent challenges identified in *Starting Strong V* (OECD 2017): curricula alignment and professional collaboration, and highlight the contribution an ontological understanding of transitions might make to theory, practice and policy. The snapshots are purposively familiar to illustrate the conceptual point of reframing.

**Snapshot 1** Curricular alignment: “continuity in curricula and transition practices between early childhood education and care (ECEC) and primary school has a positive impact on children’s later academic and social success” (OECD 2017, p. 147). Following the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Curriculum Corporation 2008), policies aimed at achieving the aspiration “to provide every child with the opportunity for the best start in life” (p. 11) have led to significant changes supporting the education of children from birth to eight years of age. Organisational and governance (structural) continuities have been enhanced through integrating the administration of education and care in departments of education across all Australian states and territories. For the first time, Australia has national frameworks informing the education of children from birth until the time they leave school. The *Australian Curriculum* (Australian Assessment, Curriculum and Reporting Authority 2014) and *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* [EYLF] (Commonwealth of Australia [COA] 2009) recommend the alignment of learning across the prior to school and school sectors, yet neither has the authority to mandate the structural changes required to do so at a state level. Philosophical differences between these documents, evidenced as discontinuities in conceptualisations of curricula, pedagogies and outcomes, add to the complexity of negotiating transitions (Grieshaber and Shearer 2014; Krieg and Whitehead 2015). These differences have material effects on the arrangements enabling and constraining individual and collective practices across and within transitions sites.

In response to this anomaly, the state of Victoria developed *The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* [VEYLF] (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2009), a document for educators to use with all children from birth to the age of 8 years, and which provides “a common language to describe young children’s learning and common principles to guide practice” (p. 8). However, two recent reviews of transitions practices have suggested this attempt to enhance continuity through structural and developmental convergence has not been without its challenges (Semann et al. 2015), due to persistent and largely unattended philosophical differences and an absence of “shared understandings of the roles of the two sectors” (Victorian Auditor General’s Office (VAGO) 2015, p. 22). This snapshot identifies the impact of failing to attend to contextual continuities such as discrepancies between the status and perspectives of professionals across the sectors that are required to achieve curricular alignment (Boyle and Petriwskyj 2014). Applying an ontological site-based perspective to this challenge requires considering the ways specific site-based practice ecologies enable and constrain curricular alignment.

**Snapshot 2** Professional collaborations: “strong collaboration across ECEC settings or between ECEC centres and primary school can also help children and families better navigate the transition to school” (OECD 2017, p. 212). The importance of collaborating with a range of actors (including children) in transitions practices (Lillejord et al. 2017) is acknowledged in Quality Area 6 of the Australian National Quality Framework (ACECQA 2017), which focuses on collaborative partnerships with families and communities. As Standard 6.3.2 from the National Quality Standard states, “continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities” (ACECQA 2017, p. 157).

In some Australian states (Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland), *Transition Statements* have been developed to share relevant information about children’s prior to school learning experiences with teachers in the first year of compulsory schooling. The transition statements are mapped against the five outcomes of the EYLF (COA 2009), educators, parents and children also contribute relevant information. At a systems policy (structural) level, transitions statements are promoted as an effective mode for transferring information and a useful resource for enhancing continuity of learning (DET 2016). However, a recent review of educational transitions (VAGO 2015) noted that whilst the statements represented a valuable resource to enable structural and developmental continuities, lack of attention to contextual continuities (professional relationships and shared understandings) limited the capacity of the statements to support transitions and continuity. Enhanced attention to relationship-building practices such as regular reciprocal classroom visits or discussion meetings may overcome the shortcomings of written-only professional communication, although ethical questions such as parental consent need to be resolved (Hopps-Wallis and Perry 2017). Establishing and maintaining professional collaborations across the sectors is a fundamental factor influencing transitions practices, yet as Dunlop (2017) argues “there is nothing automatic about successful communication and relational agency between different professional groups” (p. 267). Interdisciplinary cross-sectorial networks afford the time and space for key stakeholders to engage in conversations about and negotiate actions in response to site-specific complexities affecting continuity during transitions to school (Dockett and Perry 2014b; Peters and Sandberg 2017).

Both snapshots reflect epistemological policy perspectives that construct curricular alignment and professional collaborations as products and processes intended to have universal application. Hypothetically, the processes of curricular alignment and professional collaboration should be achievable, as the structural supports (policies) exist to facilitate greater developmental continuity (building on prior learning and experiences). Pragmatically, the practice of achieving either is challenging due to the lack of attention to contextual continuities including asymmetrical relationships and the absence of shared understandings of transitions. Applying an ontological perspective requires investigation of the site-specific arrangements that enable, constrain and connect practices to reach intersubjective agreement about and understandings of transitions, negotiate shared language about and principles of continuity, and establish mutually respectful relationships.

## Conclusion

To conclude, we make the case for reframing transitions to school as continuity practices that supersede discourses of readiness (events) and have the capacity to address prevailing challenges affecting transitions to school identified in the documents listed in Table 2. Using the conceptual model in Fig. 1 to reframe transitions as continuity practices foregrounds, or at least affords equal weighting to ontological considerations of the context (site) in which transitions practices take place. The model highlights the role of practice architectures when considering transitions to school. It enhances the visibility of contextual continuities and reiterates the imperative to consider the convergence of all three forms of continuities in order to reframe practices that apply homogenous universal approaches to transitions and do not account for site-based differences.

Reframing transitions as continuity practices contributes not only to theory, but also to transitions to school practice by providing a conceptual model to address persistent challenges. These include but are not limited to considering national concerns about problematic transitions for specific groups such as Indigenous children in more situated, nuanced and non-stigmatising ways (Dockett 2014; Perry 2014); moving beyond contested concepts of readiness to consider broader support provisions for all children (Taylor 2011); and addressing discontinuities in pedagogic approaches based in deep philosophical differences whilst respecting the aims of each sector (Dunlop 2007). Changing practices requires transformation of the arrangements that enable and constrain them. Negotiating site-relevant responses “requires the assent and commitment of the practitioners” (Kemmis et al. p. 8) rather than an over-reliance on top-down systemic policies and universal approaches (Boyle and Grieshaber 2017).

Finally, reframing transitions as continuity practices offers opportunities for a revised research agenda that highlights the key role of early years’ professionals as architects of transitions practices. Such research might consider how and if the practice ecologies of transitions projects are enabled and/or constrained by the arrangements (conditions) of the site. Once identified these conditions can be critiqued, shaped and re-shaped to create new arrangements to support equitable cross-sectorial professional relationships and negotiate shared understandings underpinning transitions framed as continuity practices.

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