

Importance of Transition – Theoretical Underpinning

- Transition work is led by current research and teaching across the UK
- At Moray House a 2yr Masters Transformative Teaching and Learning was created to address pressing local and global challenges, including the unacceptable attainment gap between pupils coming from the richest and poorest backgrounds in Scotland.
- UCL and Cardiff University have a specific research study - STARS which aimed to find out what helps children make a successful move to secondary school.
- The Scottish Government commissioned The University of Dundee to undertake a review to provide insight into the impact of transitions and the factors that support or hinder a successful transition from primary to secondary school. In the review, the transition from primary to secondary school is identified as a crucial and significant period and of high importance yet is a neglected area and terms of research. A “dip” and “regression” in attainment after transition to high school was identified, along with a decline in student motivation, engagement, attitudes to some subjects, and an increase in school absence. Poorer emotional health, depression and anxiety were also increased. The review identified 9 recommendations for Scottish Government to consider in the transition from primary to secondary and many of these would require a strategic approach to transition, which transition teachers would be able to facilitate.
 - Scholars have identified the significance of interesting curriculum and continuity to successful transition (Evangelou, M et al., 2008; Coffey, A. 2013; Thackeray, L., 2014).
- Studies show that pupils who already struggle with “poor attendance, lower grades, and behavioural problems” (Rice et al, 2011:244) in primary school are likely to have greater difficulty settling into high school.
- Typically, when considering transition, a teacher’s focus will be on **academic attainment, whilst that of a pupil is more concerned with social issues** such as friendships or bullying (Topping, 2011). Therefore, in order to fully support a child through transition, issues from both focuses must be addressed with equal importance.
- The principle causes of the fall in academic attainment between primary school and high school can be attributed to a **lack of correct additional support being in place** (Serbin et al, 2013), high school teachers underestimating the P7 pupils’ academic abilities (Evangelou et al, 2008), and **high levels of student stress and anxiety** (West et al, 2010).
- There is arguably a **greater need for collaboration beyond the phase that is traditionally regarded as the transition, to encompass how pupils are supported after transition has occurred.**
- Recent research (Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2020) has noted that **while secondary teachers spend some time in the primary school and are involved in primary-led transition activities, the reverse does not**

appear to be as common i.e primary teachers being invited to the secondary school.

- Several studies over the years have identified that there is a 'dip' in attainment at the time of primary– secondary transitions, with a lack of expected progress and sometimes regression, especially in literacy and numeracy (e.g. Galton et al., 1999).
- Various reasons have been given for this dip in academic attainment, including lack of curricular continuity between schools, differences in pedagogical approaches, difference in expectations of teachers in the two contexts, alongside lowering of self-esteem and lack of stage–environment fit (Eccles et al., 1993; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008).

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