Valued and performed or not? Teachers’ ratings of transition activities for young children with learning disability

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ABSTRACT
Stakeholder collaboration has been identified as a facilitator for positive transition outcomes for all children, and especially for children in need of special support. However, the type and extent of stakeholder collaboration have shown to be related to teachers’ view of their transition practices. Thus, this study set out to examine the transition activities reported by 253 teachers in Compulsory School for Students with Learning Disabilities in Sweden. The purpose was to study the type of transition activities performed and how important teachers regarded these activities to be. The results show that overall teachers are engaged in transition activities that can be described as mainly traditional, as they do not differ from transition activities carried out in other educational settings. The results also show that untraditional transition activities, such as home visits and joint parent meetings with preschools, are viewed as important, but rarely executed. The results are discussed from an ecological systems perspective, emphasising the interconnectedness of individuals and their environment. Focus is given to individualised transition processes and developmentally appropriate transition activities for young children with learning disability.

During the past decades, transition research has emphasised a holistic view of children’s educational transitions, with a strong focus on stakeholder collaboration. Stakeholder collaboration has been identified as a facilitator for positive transition outcomes for all children, and especially for children in need of special support due to a physical or learning disability (McIntyre, Blacher, and Baker 2006; Walker et al. 2012). The level of collaboration, the transition activities performed and stakeholder views of transition have been conceptualised by Niesel and Griebel (2005) as the transition competence of the whole system encompassing the educational transition of a child. This paper sets out to discuss the transition competence in terms of transition activities performed and valued by teachers in Compulsory School for Students with Learning Disabilities (CSSLD) in Sweden.
The Swedish context – from preschool to CSSLD

In Sweden, young children with learning disabilities (LD) are enrolled in inclusive preschool settings together with other children in need of additional support as well as typically developing children. From the age of six, the majority of children make the transition to preschool class which is a voluntary school form with content both from preschool and primary school, before entering compulsory primary school at the age of seven.

Children with LD can follow the same educational path to compulsory primary school as their peers, but often with additional resource allocation. There exists however a parallel school form in Sweden called CSSLD. This school form is aimed to offer educational practices based on the need of individual children diagnosed with LD who are not anticipated to be able to reach the educational goals of compulsory school (SFS 2010). Approximately 1% ($n = 9,656$) of all children aged 7–15 were enrolled in CSSLD in the academic year 2012–2013 divided among 667 CSSLDs in 280 Swedish municipalities (National Agency of Education 2014). When comparing to the 1,275 children with LD who are enrolled in inclusive settings, it becomes evident that children in CSSLD make up a fairly large number of children with LD.

Before placement in CSSLD is offered, a social, pedagogical, medical and psychological investigation is performed in order to establish that the child has LD and to rule out other explanations to why the child is anticipated not to reach the educational goals in compulsory school. The final decision on enrolment in CSSLD is always made by the parents, who generally have discussed the implication of enrolment in CSSLD with the principal of CSSLD and CSSLD coordinator, a resource provided in larger cities. Prior to making the decision, parents often also make visits to a CSSLD.

Adopting an ecological perspective to the concept of transition competence

As the research of educational transitions has expanded, the terminology has mirrored the changed views of educational transitions. The views have shifted from describing the outcomes of educational transitions as primarily dependent upon an innate state of readiness within the child successfully adapting to the new setting to a more holistic view of the transition as a process including the whole family (Griebel and Niesel 2013). The holistic view recognises the importance of a collective responsibility of everyone involved in the educational transition. This view incorporates well with the ecological perspective (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta 2000) recognising the importance of all stakeholders and aiming to narrow the distance between the different microenvironments of the child, as well as providing a theoretical framework to understand transition process occurring on multiple layers. Niesel and Griebel (2005) conceptualised the transition process through the concept of transition competence, understood as the competence of the whole system encompassing the educational transition of a child. They describe the concept from three different levels: the individual, the interactive and the contextual levels, and argue that in order for a transition to be positive, these levels need to interact and strive towards a common goal.

Another aspect of positive transitions that has been identified in previous research is that they are characterised by balance regarding continuity and aspects of change (Broström 2002; Arnold et al. 2007; Peters 2010). Change is an inevitable part of transition: Dockett (2014) defined transition as ‘a time of individual and social change, influenced by
communities and contexts and, within these, the relationships, identities, agencies and power of all involved’ (192). Thus, the process of educational transition creates changes on multiple levels. Adopting the levels presented by Niesel and Griebel (2005) from an ecological perspective, the transition process can generate change on an individual level, for example by the experiences of children of increased academic demands and changed behavioural expectations and roles connected to the new status of being a schoolboy/girl, as well as the change parents experience of being a parent to a schoolchild. On an interactive level, a change might be how, during the preschool years, parents have traditionally contact with preschool teachers when leaving and picking up the children from preschools. In schools, however, this often changes as children might travel to school with taxi or school bus and stay at leisure time centres prior and after the school day. Thus, the day-to-day contact that parents are used to have from preschool changes to transition of information through other channels, such as contact-book or email (Wilder and Lillvist 2016). Changes on a contextual level can be understood as the meso-environment, the interconnection of all the micro-environments that encompass the life of each person, such as home, work and school. Consequently, these connections between different layers of the bio-ecological model are dependent upon interaction and collaboration. How transition is conceptualised in the curriculum and policy documents of preschool and CSSLD affects children via an indirect circuit by how, for example, teachers interpret and implement transition activities in accordance with policy documents and different guidelines. In autumn 2015, The Swedish National Agency for Education proposed an amendment to all school curriculums, including the curriculum for preschool and CSSLD, emphasising coherence, continuity and progression in children’s learning and development by strengthening the collaboration of stakeholders across educational settings. In the long run, this aims for a greater equivalence in the quality of transitions. This proposed amendment can be understood as a sign of increased importance now given to educational transitions, from a macro-system perspective and can thus affect both the type and number of transition activities offered to children and families by teachers in CSSLD.

Positive transitions are a result of co-construction (Niesel and Griebel 2005; Ahtola et al. 2012). Parent satisfaction over the transition process has been identified as a factor related to child adjustment (Rosenkoetter et al. 2009; McIntyre et al. 2010), and in reviewing the current research on family–professional partnerships, Keen (2007) concludes that honesty and trust, as well as planning and deciding upon shared goals are important factors for an effective partnership between parents and professionals. However, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) state that there is a ‘rhetoric-reality gap’ (s.37) of parental involvement, i.e. that the collective notion of parental involvement in education is seen as an important factor for the educational outcome of children, but research shows that there are actually many barriers to parental involvement. Although the field of educational transitions is becoming well-researched, there is still scarce knowledge of how families and stakeholders from educational establishments interact in times of transition (O’Toole, Hayes, and Mhathúna 2014).

**Transition competence and transition activities**

An educational transition is more than just the transition moment stepping out from a well-known context into something new. Educational transitions generally encompass preparations and arrangements prior to the transition as well as adaptations and adjustments during
and after the transition. Thus, the length of the actual transition can differ, depending on the experiences of the child and all stakeholders involved. For example, a child might easily adjust to the new context and gain a feeling of belonging, while the parents might have a longer period of transition due to the changes it brings along in terms of loss of relationships, new routines and feelings of insecurity. Dockett, Perry, and Kearney (2011) argue that an educational transition does not end ‘until the child and family feels comfortable at school’ (46). Further, Bulkeley and Fabian (2006) discuss the importance of the educational transition to land in a sense of belonging, accomplished only by bridging the past and the future of the child.

The importance of transition practices and activities is a growing research topic. For example, LoCasale-Crouch et al. (2008) examined pre-kindergarten teachers’ use of transition practices and how these were connected to children’s adjustment to kindergarten. The results showed that both the number and type of transition activities performed were positively related to the children’s adjustment as perceived by the teachers. A multitude of activities and especially activities in which the children themselves took active part in seemed to foster social-emotional adjustment. In the study of Ahtola et al. (2012), transition practices of entrance to formal school were researched from a bio-ecological perspective in a Finnish context. Their results showed that local guidelines on municipality level and teacher reports on the importance of transition activities were the only variables connected to the actual implementation of the transition practises between elementary schools and partner preschools. Commitment from individual teachers can, according to Ahtola et al. (2012), serve as a motor for innovative and versatile transition practises, and seem to be of great importance to the actual implementation of transition practises. This indicates the importance of not only investigating the type and number of transition activities performed, but also teachers’ perceived value of them. The results also showed that school-level factors, such as the size of the school and number of preschool partners, did not significantly predict the number of performed transition activities (Ahtola et al. 2012). Teachers reported challenges for conducting transition activities to be lack of time and administrational obstacles. The authors call for greater alignment and coordination among all system levels that transitions, or the handling of transitions, are embedded in. They conclude that an alignment between policy, national, local, school and individual levels enables effective teaching processes and positive child outcomes.

Rous and Hallam (2006) have developed a transition theory based on an ecological perspective and assumptions from organisation theory providing three stages of outcomes important for transitions. One of the stages includes interagency agreement, and they (2006) outline three components that all stakeholders need to agree on. These are: description of the responsibilities, roles and action of each stakeholder, clarification of economic resources, and lastly the timeframe for the transition and agreement between stakeholders. It is possible that these aspects are even more important when the transitions concern children with special needs.

**Positive transitions of children with special needs**

At a general level, seeing positive transitions as the balance between change and continuity and stakeholder collaboration is applicable also in understanding the educational transitions of young children with special needs. However, it is an even more complex
picture that emerges when the focus is on children with special needs. McIntyre, Blacher, and Baker (2006) compared the adaptation to school for young children with and without learning disabilities (ID) and found that children with ID had less positive experiences than their typically developing peers, in terms of more difficulties related to social and regulatory behaviours, impacting overall adaptation to school. The authors stress the importance of developmentally appropriate school activities and how building equal partnership with parents could be one way of establishing a more positive transition. Thus, when children have learning disabilities and might not be able to communicate by themselves, the collaborative task of teachers and parents becomes even more important (Lovett and Haring 2003). However, findings from research on parent involvement have shown that generally parents are given little agency in the transition process (Villeneuve et al. 2013). For example, in a qualitative study undertaken by Dockett, Perry, and Kearney (2011), the families expressed that the individual transition was subsumed under a ready system for educational transitions of children with special needs. Thus, the families had to adapt to the system, rather than the opposite. Another challenge reported by Janus et al. (2008) is the discrepancy between the policy level, stating the access to support in the transition, and the executive level, the actual support given to the families. Families felt uninformed and planning for transition was left with periods of waiting for decisions to be made by the school boards. Villeneuve et al. (2013) conclude from a Canadian context that all parents should be supported by a key facilitator in the school context throughout their child’s first year of school. Based on previous research pointing on the importance of transition practices and activities in the educational transitions of young children in need of special support, it is interesting to explore the transition practices adopted by teachers in CSSIDs in Sweden, in terms of what teachers say they do and how they value the transition activities.

**Aim and research questions**

The aim of this study is to examine the transition activities reported on by 253 teachers in CSSLD in Sweden. The purpose was to study the type of transition activities performed and how important teachers regarded these activities to be.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants in the study were teachers \((n = 253)\) who worked in CSSLD and had experiences of receiving 6–7-year-old children with learning disabilities to their classes. Approximately 70% were in the age range of 40–60, and close to 50% reported having multiple diplomas, such as a preschool teacher education, a special needs teacher diploma and an elementary school teacher education. The participants work experience: 24% reported working less than five years as teachers in CSSLD, and close to 60% had been working between 5–15 years in the field. Only a few (7%) had a long career stretching over 20 years as teachers in CSSLD. The majority (94%) were women teaching grades 1–3, in which children aged 6–9 years are enrolled in or grades 1–6, teaching children up to age 12. The classes in CSSLD are organised as mixed age groups in the same classroom. For example, a teacher might have one student
aged 7 enrolled in the first grad of CSSLD and the rest of the students in grade two or three. Teachers teaching grades 1–6 can thus have a mixed group aged 6–12 years in the class. Forty-three per cent of the participants reported that the children in CSSLD had a combination of several of medical conditions in addition to learning disability such as for example communicative difficulties and/or motor disability.

**Procedure**

According to statistics from the Swedish National Agency of Education (2014), there were 4204 teachers employed in the 667 CSSLDs in Sweden academic year 2012–2013 teaching students aged 7–15. The ambition was to cover approximately 400 or 10% of the total number of teachers in CSSLD in our sample. In order to meet this criteria, a procedure of convenience sampling was undertaken from autumn 2013 until spring 2015. Information about the study and a call for interest were posted on Internet networks for teachers working in CSSLD. Contact was established with CSSLD coordinators, a resource provided in larger cities where there are multiple CSSLDs. The coordinators provided contact information to a total of 64 CSSLD within the municipalities they were working in. The questionnaires were sent by post to the CSSLD principals who then distributed them along with stamped envelopes to the teachers. Reminders were emailed to the principals after approximately three weeks. Furthermore, nine Swedish universities that hosted CSSLD teacher programmes, where teachers working in CSSLD can study a postgraduate programme to receive formal competence as CSSLD teachers, were visited and engaged in recruitment of participants. Questionnaires were taken to the classes and students were given time to complete them at the site.

Through the described convenience sampling, a total of 685 questionnaires have been distributed and 253 have been returned as complete, thus resulting in a smaller sample than anticipated. An additional nine questionnaires were returned but excluded due to no full completion. The attrition rate (37.0%) can be explained by difficulty of locating those teachers that had experience of receiving children aged 6–7 to CSSLD. According to statistics from the National Agency of Education (2014), most students are enrolled in CSSLD after a few years in regular compulsory school, and relatively few children transition to CSSLD from preschool or preschool class. Consequently, many teachers did not have experiences of receiving children aged 6–7 to their classes and did not complete the questionnaire. Information about how many teachers had experience of receiving children from preschool or preschool class could not obtained before data collection.

**Instruments**

A questionnaire was developed by the authors with parts of the questionnaire inspired by a Norwegian questionnaire about collaboration between preschool and regular school (Hogsnes and Moser 2014). Earlier research about special needs of children with learning disabilities, and the collaboration between school and home was used as a framework for including important themes. A preliminary version was tested in a pilot study with 22 CSSLD teacher students, and the final version of the survey included two parts. The first part consisted of background questions about the teachers’ gender, age, current working place,
teacher education and characteristics of the children with learning disabilities that they received to their school, including questions about additional diagnosis of the children, for example how many children had motor disabilities, communicative difficulties or other medical conditions in addition to learning disability. A total of 43% of the participants reported children to have a combination of several of the above-mentioned conditions, and 22% reported that children in their class had communicative difficulties in addition to learning disability. The second core part of the survey was structured and focused on pre- and post-transition organisation, transition activities and teacher attitudes. Transition activities were rated both in terms of how often they were performed and how important teachers perceived these activities to be. This core questionnaire included 51 items concerning routines pre/during transitions, collaborative activities in receiving children, type of information passed on between stakeholders, teacher attitudes and knowledge about policies and practice, other micro-environments and time management, most of which were rated on a five-point Likert scale. In this study, questions related to the type of transition activities and teacher attitudes about policies and practice are analysed in correspondence with the aim of this paper. All questions focused on the general practice regarding transitions and were not related to experiences with the transition experiences of a specific child.

**Data analysis**

Data were analysed in the statistical package SPSS 18.0, calculating descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations and t-tests. Analyses were performed on item level.

**Results**

The type and frequency of transition activities performed were analysed with 10 variables asking teachers to specify the occurrence of specific transition activities, such as parent meetings and visits to preschool before children start school, on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – never to 5 – always. The results showed that the transition activities that teachers most often engage in were: to visit the child in preschool before school start, to meet with preschool teachers to talk about CSSLD teacher and preschool teacher meet to talk about what the child has learnt and experienced in preschool and to have individual meeting with the parents, with or without the children, before school start (see Table 1).

In Table 1, the mean values and standard deviation of each transition activity are displayed. The results are divided in how often they were performed and how important they were rated by the teachers. As can be seen, the mean values are generally high for several of the activities, indicating that they are performed often. The standard deviation, however, shows that there is some variability in the ratings.

As a next step, the correlations between how often the transition activities were performed and how important they were rated were investigated. The results, presented in Table 2, show significant positive correlations for all activities, indicating that if activities were performed, they were also rated as important to a greater deal. The correlations ranged from moderate to high, with the strongest correlation for the activity ‘CSSLD organize parent meetings before children start school’ loading on .685 on a 0.001 significance level.
Along with correlational statistics, Table 2 also displays the distribution of ratings to four categories for each transition activity. These categories were labelled as performed and important, performed but not important, important but not performed and neither performed nor important. Ratings were assigned to categories based on their scores on the Likert scale for each transition activity. Each transition activity was rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating that the activity was never or rarely performed, and 5 that the activity was always performed. The importance of each transition activity was rated correspondingly. Thus, high ratings on both performance and importance were categorised as performed and important, as opposed to low values on performance and importance which yielded the category neither performed nor important. The remaining two categories were made up by ratings where performance was rated high and importance low, and the opposite.

The results show that most transition activities were performed and valued as important. The activity that was most often performed and seen as important was the individual meetings that teachers have with parents and their children before school start. This activity was rated as often occurring and seen as very important by 187 teachers. The same patterns were shown for the following activities: CSSLD teacher and preschool teacher meet to talk about what the child has learnt and experienced in preschool, and CSSLD teachers have individual meetings with parents before school start. These activities were reported as often occurring and seen as important by 178 and 175 teachers, respectively. Only a few (3–9) teachers reported activities as often performed but not seen as important. A larger proportion of teachers valued activities as very important but reported them to be performed never or rarely. The activity that most teachers valued as important but rarely performed was for CSSLD and preschool to have joint parent meetings followed by meetings with preschool to talk about what children will learn in CSSLD and home visits. Although home visits were identified as important by 99 teachers, 121 did not see it as an important transition activity. A similar pattern was found for joint parent meetings.

Table 2 presents the distribution of ratings among the activities, showing which transition activities were performed and valued as important, and which were valued and performed to a lesser degree. But in order to investigate the profile of each teacher, a total score was
created of the 10 ratings. Activities rated as both performed and important generated four points, activities seen as important but not performed generated three and two points were given if activities were performed but not valued as important. One point was given for activities neither valued nor performed. Thus, the 10 activities rated generated a maximum score of 40 points for each teacher, with a higher score representing transition activities both performed and valued as important, and low values indicating the opposite. Missing value imputation was used for those who had four missing values or less (7.5% of the data), using the nearest neighbour method (Chen and Shao 2000). In Table 3, the total scores are presented.

The teacher scores ranged from 16 to 39, with 65% of 254 teachers scoring between 32 and 40. Comparing the teacher scores with the frequencies reported in Table 2, it becomes evident that the low scores were distributed evenly across teachers, meaning the majority

| Table 2. Number of matching ratings between performance and importance of transition activities. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corr. | Performed and important | Performed but not important | Not performed but important | Not performed not important | Missing |
| CSSLD organise parent meetings before children start school | 0.685** | 124 | 2 | 66 | 35 | 26 |
| The principal holds individual meetings with parents about their children before school start | 0.632** | 147 | 2 | 65 | 14 | 25 |
| The principal holds individual meetings with parents and their children before school start | 0.628** | 128 | 6 | 63 | 29 | 27 |
| CSSLD teachers have individual meetings with parents before school start | 0.534** | 175 | 8 | 46 | 19 | 14 |
| CSSLD teachers have individual meetings with parents and their children before school start | 0.634** | 187 | 2 | 37 | 9 | 20 |
| CSSLD and preschool have joint parent meetings | 0.472** | 38 | 9 | 112 | 76 | 18 |
| CSSLD teachers and preschool meet to talk about what the child has learnt and experienced in preschool | 0.550** | 178 | 6 | 45 | 7 | 17 |
| CSSLD teachers and preschool meet to talk about what the child will learn in CSSLD | 0.633** | 103 | 7 | 99 | 29 | 15 |
| CSSLD teacher visit the child at preschool | 0.605** | 172 | 7 | 51 | 9 | 14 |
| CSSLD teacher visit the child at home | 559** | 16 | 3 | 99 | 121 | 14 |

Notes: The ratings always and often were categorised as performed, and the ratings never and seldom were categorised as not performed.  
**Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
of teachers had both high and low ratings in their total score, but with a clear overweight on high ratings. As seen in table three, no one was assigned to group 1 and only one person was assigned to group 2 and were thus excluded from further analysis.

As these analyses all present data on group level, the next step was to zoom in on those teachers who regarded many of the transition activities important but reported not performing them, and to compare this group with the rest of the participants. Based on previous research on factors that affect the implementation of transition practices, the following questions were identified for comparative analysis between the two groups: (a) does the CSSLD have guidelines for transition practices, (b) the extent to which teachers report receiving support from the school principal regarding the implementation of transition practices and (c) the extent to which teachers feel support from their colleagues regarding transition practices.

Whether the school had any guidelines for the transition activities was calculated as frequencies. Of the total number of 253 participants, 131 reported that the CSSLD had guidelines for transition activities. Additional 65 reported not having guidelines and 54 did not know whether guidelines existed at their school. The corresponding numbers for the valued but not performed group were 64, 26 and 20, thus following the same pattern as for the rest of the participants.

Independent t-test analysis was performed comparing the two groups on perceived support from the school principal. There was no significant difference in the scores for perceived support from the principal between the group that valued but did not perform transition activities (M = 3.23, SD = 1.15) and the rest of the participant (M = 4.03, SD = 4.09) conditions; t (229) = 1.72, p = 0.08. The results show overall high mean values, indicating that most participants are satisfied with the support they received from their school principal. However, the mean values are slightly higher for the rest of the participants, although the difference is not statistically significant. How teachers in the two groups perceived the support from their colleagues was also investigated with a t-test. The results show overall high mean values but no significant differences between teachers that value but do not perform transition activities (M = 3.89, SD = 1.09) and the rest of the participants (M = 4.00, SD = 1.03), t (227) = 0.47, p = 0.96. These results show that the difference between the groups in the extent to which they value and perform transition activities could not be related to whether the CSSLD had guidelines for transition activities, nor to which extent they perceived that the CSSLD principal or colleagues supported them in the implementation of transition practices.

Discussion

In this study, the transition activities reported on by teachers in CSSLD were investigated. The purpose was to study the type of transition activities performed and how important teachers regarded these activities to be.
The findings show that teachers are involved in different transition activities including parents, children and other professionals. Most of these activities focus on individual children and their families, for example visiting the child at preschool and meeting preschool teachers to get information about what the child has learnt in preschool. Another common transition activity that both teachers and school principals take part in is meetings with the parents, both with and without children. These activities are all performed prior to child entry to CSSLD, which indicated that focus is on preparing the transition. The data do not support a conclusion of whether the transition is looked upon as a process as suggested by research (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta 2000; Dockett, Perry, and Kearney 2011). However, that CSSLD teachers approach preschool teachers to talk about what children have learnt in preschool indicates a strive towards facilitating continuity in the process of transition. The balance between continuity and change has been identified as a key factor for successful transitions (Peters 2010; Broström 2002; Arnold et al. 2007), and in conjunction to this, children’s well-being and sense of belonging (Bulkeley and Fabian 2006)

Another interesting finding is that although the continuity in educational transitions seemed important for teachers, this did not necessarily mirror the type and degree of transition activities performed. The most commonly performed transition activities were to visit the child in preschool before school start, to meet with preschool teachers to talk about what the child has learnt in preschool and to have individual meeting with the parents, with or without the children, before school start. These activities constitute traditional transition activities, much similar to those performed in any school. The results show however a wish for more untraditional activities, such as home visits and joint parent meetings with the preschool. These were identified as activities of great importance, although they were rarely performed. Plausible explanations to why activities are not performed although they are viewed as important can be discussed in the light of the rhetoric-reality gap of parental involvement identified by Hornby and Lafaele (2011), as well as Villeneuve et al. (2013), who describe the discrepancy between what is stated in policy documents and what is actually executed to support the process of transition. However, Ahtola et al. (2012) found that guidelines and activities on municipality level as well as how teachers value the importance of the transition activities were decisive for implementation of transition activities. In our study, one group of 73 CSSLD teachers stood out in the sense that they scored high on valuing transition activities, but lower on the performance part. When comparing this group with the rest of the participants, no significant differences were found in the extent to which they felt support from the school principal or colleagues in implementing transition activities, nor the extent to which they reported having guidelines for transition activities. It is possible that although guidelines exist, they might not support teachers in developing and adapting transition activities of more untraditional nature. The adaptation of the transition process to the needs and wishes of families to children with special needs has been discussed by McIntyre, Blacher and Baker (2006) who stress the importance of developmentally appropriate transition activities. This can be understood as a necessity to think outside the box and agree upon more untraditional transition activities as well, if the families see a need for this. Similar thoughts are presented by LoCasale-Crouch et al. (2008) who criticise the ‘one-size-fit-all-approach’ of transition activities and conclude that a multitude of activities are preferable. In the study of Ahtola et al. (2012), teachers who valued the transition practices as important were also innovative and versatile in the implementation of the transition activities. Perhaps these teachers also have the ability to think outside the box and beyond the one-size-fits all. That
there is a need for versatility in the transition practices is pointed out by Dockett, Perry, and Kearney (2011) who report that families felt they had to adjust to already existing programmes, leaving few opportunities for them to influence the process of transition.

The theoretical framework of this study has been grounded by an ecological perspective posed by Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) and the concept of transition competence initiated by Niesel and Griebel (2005). The ecological perspective argues that transitions need to be understood in terms of the interrelations of the multiple settings and environments that encompass children's everyday life, and how these settings set conditions for children's entrance to school. Viewing our results from the ecological perspective, the slight discrepancy between performed and valued transition activities can be discussed from all systems levels in the bio-ecological model. On a micro-level, the competence and beliefs of the teachers are important for implementation of transition activities carried out on the meso-level. The meso-level can be described as the activities bridging the past and the future of the child, for example by linking content in preschool to what children will learn in CSSLD. The other, more distal systems can be described in terms of the local and national guidelines and curriculum that frame the practices. The concept of transition competence as a competence of the social system (Niesel and Griebel 2005) is aligned with an ecological perspective, and the person–in-context interrelation. The results of this study indicate that the importance of continuity and meeting children and other persons important for the children in settings familiar to them is captured in the transition activities which special teachers report to perform and value. It can be interpreted as a holistic view of transition process (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta 2000; Griebel and Niesel 2013) being adopted by the CSSLD teachers.

The data collected in this study are based on information from 253 teachers spread across CSSLDs in Sweden. The data showed low variability, although the sample of participants was located in both urban and rural schools, varied in their level of education and experience from working as CSSLD teachers. A limitation of the questionnaire was that there were no room left for participants to add other transition activities to those listed. This means that possibly other transition activities might also be performed. Convenience sampling was conducted and participants were recruited with the help of CSSLD coordinators and principals, and by distributing the questionnaire to CSSLD teacher programmes at nine Swedish universities. Although a wide geographical distribution, the representativeness of the sample and generalisability of the results should be interpreted with caution. The contribution of this study is that it sheds light on the transition practices of CSSLD in Sweden. Although the research field of educational transitions is growing, little interest has so far been given to the practices and processes that frame the educational transitions of young children with LD who transition from preschool to CSSLD. Our study describes the type and nature of transition activities on a group level, capturing only general transaction practices of CSSLD. Thus, no conclusions can be drawn of how the transition practices are carried out for individual children and their families. This is a task for future research and when possible to involve the perspective of children in the process of transition. Also, future longitudinal research is needed to study the transition process of individual children and families.

**Conclusion**

The transition of children with ID from preschool to CSSLD is paved with different types of transition activities. The results show that overall teachers are engaged in transition
activities that can be described as mainly traditional, as they do not differ from transition activities carried out in other educational settings. In regard to the vast body of research promoting individualised transition processes based on family needs (Dockett, Perry, and Kearney 2011; Villeneuve et al., 2013) and developmentally appropriate transition activities (McIntyre, Blacher, and Baker 2006), we conclude that untraditional transition activities, such as for example home visits and joint parent meetings with preschool, might be a way to further individualise the transition process. The results also show that untraditional transition activities are viewed as important, but are rarely executed. These results have illuminated how the teachers in CSSLD view the transition activities as a part of the transitions process, but the results give no indication of the actual process of transition. To capture the process of transition, longitudinal research focusing on the co-construction of educational transitions through interrelated dynamic systems is needed. One way of reaching this is to examine the educational transition of young children with learning disabilities as co-constructed from the perspective of different stakeholders, such as teachers, parents and school principals.

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