

School Readiness and Transition to Primary School: A Study of Teachers, Parents and Educational Policy makers' Perspectives and Practices in the Capital City of Indonesia

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Declaration

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“Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is acquainted with what you do”

[Qur'an, 58:11].

Dedication

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Publications Based on the Research

The following are publications based on the research.

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Fridani, L., & Agbenyega, J. (2013). Rethinking School Readiness and Transition Policy and Practice in Early Childhood Education (ECE): A Whole Schooling Framework. *Handbook of International Culture of Education Policy*. Strasbourg, France: Analytrics.

Fridani, L. (2013). Rethinking School Readiness and Transition to Primary School: Voices of Teachers for Indonesian Children's Outcomes. *Asia Pacific Regional Network for Early childhood. Annual Publication (7)*, 19-20.

Fridani, L. (2012). Kesiapan Sekolah di Indonesia: Refleksi Teori dan Praktek. Dalam *Bunga Rampai Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Universitas Negeri Jakarta Publisher.

Fridani, L., & Agbenyega, J. (2011). School readiness and transition to primary school: A whole schooling approach (*3rd Paris International Conference on Education, Economy, and Society. Conference Proceeding*). Paris : France.

Abstract

This research explains the perspectives and practices of teachers, parents and education policy makers on school readiness and transition to primary schools in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. Specifically, it investigates stakeholders' conceptions and practices of school readiness and considers why different stakeholders in Indonesia prioritize different aspects of school readiness, which impact on their practices. The research specifically aimed to (i) contribute to directions on school readiness and transition policy development; (ii) feed the results into developing teachers' capacity to support children's learning, development and transition to school; (iii) add to the body of literature on school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia; and (iv) develop strategies that can lead to more participation of parents in school transition programs.

The study was conducted using a mixed method approach and designed as a QUAN-qual model, where the researcher collected quantitative data first followed by qualitative data. The first phase of the study involved 315 teachers in Jakarta altogether of whom 200 teachers worked in the last semester of kindergarten and 115 teachers worked in the first grade of primary school. They were asked to fill a questionnaire on school readiness and primary school. In the second phase, 105 participants across Jakarta took part in focus group discussion. Coming from three types of settings (30 primary school teachers, 40 kindergarten teachers and 35 parents), these participants were divided into 15 groups across Jakarta's regions (Centre, East, West, South, and North). The teacher participants on the later phase were selected from those who were involved in the first phase. Individual interviews were also conducted with two education policy makers who were selected through purposeful sampling.

The results showed that national education policy, teachers and school factors, parents' expectation were key variables that informed school readiness and transition practices. The findings of this study have demonstrated that it is crucial to rethink school readiness concepts and transition practices in light of Bioecological theory for Indonesia. This means, the conceptualization of school readiness and transition practice should be grounded in values and beliefs about the nature of children's development, and should not merely focus on a child's academic skills with the aim of making them accepted in a 'better standard' primary school. The findings from this study might be used to influence policy and practice related to some issues on school readiness and transition considering the context of Indonesia and as suggested by international literature. By examining and discussing stakeholders' perspectives and practices, the researcher advanced arguments for a Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Framework for school readiness and transition to primary schools in Indonesia. This thesis concluded with directions for greater collaboration between home, kindergarten, primary schools settings, and education policy makers when developing school readiness and transition programs for children.

Chapter One

Introduction

Background of the Research

The purpose of this research is to analyze the perspectives on, and practices of school readiness and transition to primary school in Jakarta the capital city of Indonesia. The study considers how different stakeholders in Indonesia prioritize different aspects of school readiness and implement these in practice. The place of school readiness in transition to primary school programs has been gaining increasing attention among stakeholders such as parents, teachers, researchers and education policy makers worldwide (Bohan-Baker & Little, 2004; Brooker, 2002; Cassidy, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2005; Dunlop & Fabian, 2003; Margetts, 2005; Peters, 2000). These researchers have pointed out the importance for educators to understand the complexities of school readiness in order to adequately support children entering primary school. Although the significance of school readiness is noted as the foundation for children's educational success, this concept and how it is implemented to improve the learning and development of all children, remains to be fully investigated in terms of the quality of schools and the participation of families and communities (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Boethel, 2004; Rosier & McDonald, 2011; The United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2012).

It should be remarked that much of the research and literature on school readiness and transition are mostly western in nature. Therefore, they are primarily based on developed school systems in countries with high resources. Research conducted in Australia, England, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States on children's readiness for school covered dimensions beyond literacy and numeracy and included physical health, social and emotional adjustment, children's approach to learning, as well as their level of

language, cognition and general knowledge (Fauth & Thompson, 2009). In addition, the meaning of school readiness also recognized the task of preparing children for school as being not only a family responsibility but also a community one (Boethel, 2004). Furthermore, school readiness is used to assess the degree to which early childhood policies, programs and parental support have been successful at community and societal levels (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Janus & Offord, 2000; Rosier & McDonald, 2011).

Generally, school readiness is gaining currency as a possible strategy to close the learning gap and improve equity in achieving lifelong learning and full developmental potential among young children. However, little is currently known about the perspectives and practices of school readiness in developing countries with a different socioeconomics, cultural contexts, and complex education and policy systems. Due to cultural, economic and school policy disparities, different countries have tended to apply diverse concepts, approaches and practices of school readiness and transition to school (Graue, 2006; Janus & Offord, 2000; Petriwskyj, Thorpe, & Tayler, 2005; Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008). In some Asian countries like Singapore, China, India and Indonesia, interest in school readiness and transition is still centred on academic readiness of reading and writing (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, Merali, 2007; Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008).

In the case of Indonesia, educational development is focused on developing Indonesia's citizens to their full potential, which includes affective domain, cognitive capacities, and psychomotor abilities. The country's Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC/former MoNE) has a long term vision to enable all Indonesia's children to have equal access to quality education at all levels irrespective of their economic status, gender, geography, ethnicity or physical conditions (UNICEF, 2007). In addition to this, the MoEC has a long term mission to ensure high standards of education and training, in addition to

involving parents, students and other stakeholders to take advantage of these opportunities and share responsibilities. In view of the importance accorded to school readiness and transition to school, Indonesia initiated a project on Early Childhood Development (ECD) from 1998 to 2004 for poor communities to enhance the readiness of the nation's children in terms of their cognitive, motor, and psychosocial skills to enable them experience smooth transition to school. The project built and equipped new Early Childhood Development centers, while refurbishing existing ones within the target provinces, and also trained teachers (World Bank, 2003). Since then, in 2009 - 2013 Indonesia conducted an evaluation program on community-based early childhood education and development to increase access to early childhood services and improve school readiness (Pradhan, Brinkman, Beatty, Maika, Satriawan, De Ree, Hasan, 2013).

A baseline survey conducted in 2009 measured Indonesian children's development on such domains as gross and fine motor skills, cognitive development, social competence, emotional maturity, communication and literacy skills, and these skills level to be very low. It is believed that possessing those skills upon school entry will determine how a child performs in school and beyond (Lloyd, 2009). The survey showed relationships between parental education, nutrition, stimulating learning environments and child developmental outcomes as being crucial to preparing children for school. However, there has been very little information about the perspectives on and the practices of teachers, parents and education policy makers regarding readiness and transition to primary schools in the country. It is therefore essential to gather information from these stakeholders on their perspectives regarding their role and experience in preparing children for school and transition in Indonesia. It is believed that these stakeholders play a crucial role in explaining school readiness in which their perspectives and practices may contribute to children's development and learning.

Fridani and Lestari (2008) published a collection of case studies on teachers' practice in primary schools in a few regions around Jakarta. These case studies documented that the teachers tend to have high expectations of their students, set firm discipline, and pressure their students to study and perform highly on academic subjects. In addition, the teachers tended to express concerns when children do not meet the expected standards in their primary classes. Furthermore, some primary schools especially those labelled as 'better standard' or 'favourite', prefer children to attain an 'IQ test' or 'certificate of readiness' which are mostly based on academic skills before they are considered eligible to start school. Another scoping study by Fridani and Lestari (2009) regarding young children's learning found that many parents and kindergarten teachers in Indonesia pressure their children to know how to read and write as part of the transition process to primary school. The pressure on these children manifests itself in terms of rote learning and memorization. Regarding this condition, the researcher is particularly concerned by the situation that current school practices in Indonesia suggest that the concept of school readiness has not been fully understood or integrated into the Indonesian education goals which are aimed at providing a positive environment and comprehensive support for young children's education.

Arguably, a current conceptual view on school readiness is located in an ecological paradigm (Boethel, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Doucet, 2000; Emig & Scarupa, 2001; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Mathur & Parameswaran, 2012; Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008). The paradigm has recognized four interrelated components: children's readiness for school, school's readiness for children, and the capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for their young children. Grounded in the bioecological model of starting school (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), which emphasizes the need to understand transition in the context of home, school and

community, this research analyzes the perspectives on, and practices of school readiness and transition to primary school in Jakarta. This study also considers how different stakeholders in Indonesia prioritize different aspects of school readiness and implement them in practice. In addition, the researcher also identified some concerns of the stakeholders involved regarding Indonesian current education policy and the practice of school readiness and transition to primary school.

Personal Motivation for the Research

The motivation for this research is the result of the researcher's previous experience working for the Indonesian government as a National Ad Hoc Team member in Early Childhood Policy Development (2007/2008), and as an assistant consultant in the baseline pilot study of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Project in 2009. As a National Ad Hoc team member, she worked with the Board of National Education Standards (BSNP), designing the Early Childhood Education Standard for Indonesia. While working as an assistant consultant on the baseline pilot survey of the ECED Project, she collaborated with the Indonesian government to evaluate the impact the ECED project had on child development outcomes, including children's readiness for entering primary school.

The researcher's experiences in interviewing and observing teachers' practices in many kindergartens and primary schools in different parts of Indonesia, inspired her to do research specifically on how they prepare kindergarten children to enter primary school. Moreover, motivation was also derived from her discussion with colleagues that the preparation of children to enter primary school was problematic because of education policy inconsistencies in the country. In addition, her reading of international literature on school readiness and transition also gave impetus to this research.

Particular Location of the Research

The context of this study is Jakarta, the aforementioned capital of Indonesia, whose official name is the 'Special Capital City District of Jakarta'. It is the most crowded city in Southeast Asia, and the twelfth largest city in the world. Jakarta which is located in the northwest coast of Java, has an area of 661 square kilometres (255 sq mi) and a population of 9,607,787,000. As a Special Capital Territory, Jakarta is the country's economic, cultural and political center. It is divided into five cities (formerly municipalities), and one regency. Each city is supervised by a mayor and the regency is headed by a regent. The cities/municipalities of Jakarta are Central, West, South, East and North Jakarta. The only regency of Jakarta is Thousand Islands, which consists of 105 small islands located in the Java Sea off the coast of Jakarta (Cybriwsky, & Ford, 2001).

Preschool children's participation (5 - 6 years) in Jakarta is 35.33 %; whereas participation in formal education is 97.88% (Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific, 2013). The Human Development Index is 78, 33%. Jakarta has the highest percentage of qualified primary school teachers (71.11%) compared to other provinces in the academic year 2000/2001 (UNESCO, 2006). Below is the number of headmasters and teachers in kindergarten and primary school in Jakarta as of 2010.

Table 1

Numbers of Headmasters and Teachers in Kindergarten and Primary School in Jakarta

Level of Qualification	Headmasters Kindergarten Teachers	and Headmasters and Primary school Teachers
Teacher training school	2,440	2,827
Teacher training college diploma one	2,441	6,800
Teacher training college diploma two	2,090	12,413
Teacher training college diploma three	4,390	1,925
Teacher training college graduate program	2,381	18,116
Post graduate	4,900	1,0200
Total	18,840	42, 101

Data Source: Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan (Balitbang) / Research and

Development Centre of National Education Indonesia 2009/2010

The Social Fabric of Indonesia

In order to understand school readiness and transition to primary school in Indonesia, explanations are needed to take into account the social fabrics of Indonesia, since school readiness takes place within a social context. A brief description of Indonesian social fabric will highlight on some factors that underpin school practices and lay some foundation for this research.

Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country, as well as Southeast Asia's largest and is spread across an archipelago of thousands of islands between Asia and Australia and is inhabited by 246.9 million people (World Bank, 2012). Indonesia as a nation-state derives its identity from both homogeneity and heterogeneity on various terms: economic condition, geography, religions, (sub) cultures and ethnic groups. It consists of 33 provinces with more than 300 ethnically distinct groups and 583 local languages and dialects. About 60% of the population is concentrated on Java and Bali, yet these islands constitute only 7% of Indonesia's land area (Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia, 2010/2011).

The population of young children (ages 0-6) is over 31,8 million or about 13.26% of the total. Of these, over 15 million (48.36%) live in urban areas and 16 million (51.64%) live in rural areas (The Asia Pasific Statistical Year Book, 2011).

Indonesia ranks as a lower-middle income country with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$ 878 billion in 2011 (World Bank, 2012). The occupations of its people range from rural hunter-gatherers to a modern urban elite. Over the past three decades, Indonesia has moved from being an agriculture-based society to an industry-based economy. The poverty rate in Indonesia is 13 % with over 27 million people living below the national poverty line (The Asia Pasific Statistical Year Book, 2011). In 2013, the economic growth rate was 5.78%, and the per capita income was US \$3,563 (World Bank, 2012).

Indonesia with its diversity, is clearly a large and complex nation with a complicated education system. This complexity makes a significant amount of demands on the government to ensure equitable provision of quality education at all levels and for all citizens across the whole country. Attempts to address educational issues have become more challenging considering that Indonesia has been confronted with many crises in recent years, including the Asian financial crisis, independence demands from provinces, religious conflict and an overwhelming Tsunami in 2004. These entire man-made and natural crises have also had devastating effect on education policy financing.

Indonesia's position in Human Development Index for education is 119 out of 187 countries. In Asia Pacific, however it ranks 12 out of 24 countries (World Bank, 2012). Its total public expenditure on education as a percentage of the GDP is extremely low. For example, in 2004, public expenditure on education was only 2.7 percent of the GDP, compared with an average of 3.5 percent by other lower middle-income countries. Indonesia's national budget for education in 2012 reached 20.2% of the total development

budget, but only 1.08% was allocated for ECCE (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2012 - 2013).

Education Structure in Indonesia

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia mentions that the development of human resources is one of the most strategic aspects in realizing the welfare of Indonesian people. Based on the constitution, Indonesia's children must undertake nine years of compulsory education, which consists of six years at elementary level and three years in junior high school. Children are required to go to school six or five days a week (depending on the institution) from 7 am until mid-afternoon. Students can choose between public, private or semi-private religious (usually Islamic) schools where the official language of instruction is Bahasa Indonesia. Senior secondary education consists of three years and is divided into vocational and general streams. Pre-primary education or kindergarten level is known as Kindergarten (TK) or Early Childhood Education (PAUD) which is not compulsory. The constitution recognizes both formal and non-formal education. According to the Law in National Education System, Indonesia's formal education refers to structured and tiered education, whereas non formal education refers to any form of structured and systematic education outside the formal system. Formal education is divided into three levels, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Education in Indonesia is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). Public schools are the responsibility of the MoEC, while Islamic schools are the responsibility of the MoRA.

The recent legal framework in Indonesia for the development of education is the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No.20/2003, in which the government has implemented several reforms to change education practices at school level and to provide quality education in Indonesia. The reforms include, among other things, the implementation of

school based management, a school-level curriculum, school-based teacher professional development, teacher certification, international benchmarking, and national examinations (Firman & Tola, 2008). Under the Education Law 20/2003 on National Education System, Indonesia's Education System is organised as follows: (a) Early Childhood Education, consisting of day care centers, playgroups and kindergartens, (b) Primary Education, consisting of formal and non-formal education, (c) Junior Secondary Education, consisting of formal and non-formal education, (d) Senior Secondary Education, consisting of formal (general or vocational) and non-formal (apprenticeships) education; and (e) Higher Education, including the professional education of managers and teachers.

Table 2
Structure of the Education System in Indonesia

Age	Formal School Education				Out – off - School Education	
					Nonformal	Informal
>22	Higher Education / Islamic HE Post Graduate					
19 – 22	Higher Education / Islamic HE Graduate / Diploma					
16 – 18	Senior Secondary School				Apprenticeship	Courses
	General		Vocational			
	Islamic General	General	Islamic Vocational	Vocational		
	Packet C					Family Education
13 – 15	Islamic Junior Secondary School		Junior Secondary School		Packet B	
7–12	Islamic Primary School		Primary School		Packet A	
4–6	Islamic Kindergarten		Kindergaten		Play Group	
0–3					Day Care Centre	

Data Source: UNESCO, 2005

Education Policy in Indonesia

The Indonesian government realizes that education is the most important component in enhancing all areas of national development. Therefore, educational development is one of the first areas of priority throughout the national development programs. The Indonesian government also has a basic principle to provide education for all its citizens. In particular, early childhood development and primary education programs are essential for further quality improvement of human resources in Indonesia.

Early childhood education policy. The Indonesian government has established early childhood education and development as a priority in the National Program for Indonesian Children (Program Nasional Bagi Anak Indonesia [PNBAI]) and the Education for All (EFA) National Plan of Action. The PNBAI is a reference program for all government agencies involved in the welfare of children, which is aimed at extending early childhood education services to poor children, enhancing the quality of the information system, and improving the quality of ECED services for a fifteen-year period. The EFA National Plan of Action's goal is to decrease the child mortality rate and increase child development potentials including encouraging parents to recognize the importance of child development (World Health Organization [WHO], 2012).

The government is fully committed to providing ECED services, a commitment which is underscored by several strategic government documents. These are as follows: the National Education System Act 20/2003; the National Plan of Action (Indonesia's Education for All plan); Presidential Regulation 7/2004 on National Medium-Term Planning for 2004 – 2009; and Government Regulation 19/2005 on National Standards of Education (including the National Early Childhood Education Standard which comprise the Children Developmental Milestones Standard, Early Childhood Teachers Standard; Early Childhood Program Standard; and Management Standard. These documents

reinforce the important role played by the education sector in promoting early childhood services. The ECED programs not only prepare young children for primary school but also contribute to the government's national development vision of a peaceful, just, and democratic Indonesia. Early childhood education and development programs are designed to generate a synergy of good health, good nutrition, and appropriate cognitive stimulation for healthy development in the early years, which in turn is vital for achieving high levels of education and human capital formation later in life (Sardjunani & Suryadi, 2005).

The National Education System Act 20 of 2003 outlines three possible approaches to delivering early education services: formal, non-formal, and informal. The law provides the basis for the expansion of early childhood services in Indonesia and recognizes early childhood education and development as a stage preceding basic education, which is not compulsory. The law explains that ECED services can be formal, non-formal, or informal (article 28). Formal services are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), and non-formal services are the responsibility of Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). Other services are under the supervision and coverage of the Ministry of Home Affairs with the Ministry of Health Staff, and National Family Planning Board. Below are early childhood education services which are provided in different formats by different ministries (World Bank, 2012).

Table 3
ECED Services Provided in Different Formats by Different Ministries

	Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC)	Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA)	Ministry of Home Affairs with Ministry of Health Staff	National Family Planning Board
	Kindergartens	Islamic Kindergartens		
Formal	Playgroups ECED Posts	Islamic Kindergartens	Integrated Health Service Units	Toddler Groups
Non Formal	Childcare centers Other early childhood units			

Data Source: World Bank, 2012

In the last ten years, the government has implemented policies and programs that prioritize the early years. The first important step was the establishment of a new directorate dedicated to early childhood within the Ministry of Education and Culture. The second crucial step was the inclusion of early childhood education in a succession of key policy documents such as the National Education System Law No. 20 in 2003, and the Ministry of Education and Culture's Medium Term Planning in 2004 (World Bank, 2012).

Indonesia has a range of ECED services which include care, nutrition, health, and education, all of which are currently being implemented. Several basic services are provided to children from birth up to the age of six. According to Law No.20/2003, early childhood education is considered as a step to prepare children to enter primary education and is thus excluded from formal education system. However, early childhood can be organized formally, non-formally, or informally. Formal early childhood education consists of two forms: *Taman Kanak-Kanak (TK)/ kindergarten* and *Raudlatul Athfal (RA)/Islamic Kindergarten*. Non-formal early childhood education consists of *kelompok bermain (KB) /play group*, *Taman Penitipan Anak (TPA)/childcare center*, and *Satuan Paud Sejenis (SPS)/other forms of play group*. Informal Early childhood is any form of early childhood

education provided by family and/or community. Besides these three, Indonesia has also integrated service posts usually called as *pos pelayanan terpadu (posyandu)* and a young mothers' program called *Bina Keluarga Balita (BKB)* (UNESCO, 2005). Both of these combine health services for young children and parenting education. The distinction of each form of early childhood can be seen in the following tables:

Table 4
Early Childhood Education Forms in Indonesia

	Kindergarten	Play group	Childcare/ Daycare
Child Age	4-6 years old	2-4 years old	3 month old-6 years old
Focus	Pre-primary education Child development and school readiness	Child development	Care service for children of working parents; supplemented with child development
Opening hours	5-6 days/week 150-180 minute/day	Minimum 2 days/week 150-180 minute/day	5-6 days/week 8-10 hours/day
Responsible government agencies	Ministry of Education and Culture - for TK Ministry of Religious Affairs - for RA	Ministry of Education and Culture - policy and guideline development	Ministry of Social Welfare - care and social service component, supervision Ministry of Education and Culture - policy and guideline development

Data source: UNESCO, 2005

Table 5
Other Forms of Early Childhood Services in Indonesia

	Other Form of Playgroup (SPS)	Integrated Service (Posyandu)	Post Program for Family with Young Children (BKB)
Child Age (year old)	2-4 years old	0-6 years old	0-5 years old
Target	Child	Child and Mother	Mother
Focus	Child development; supplemented with additional program	Health care service combined with parenting education	Parenting education, combined with child development activities during meeting
Opening hours	Minimum 2 days/ week	2 days/ Month ; 2 hours/day	2 days/month ; 2 hours/day
Responsible government agencies	Ministry of Education and Culture - Policy and guideline development	Ministry of Health - technical support, supervision Ministry of Home Affairs works together with Family Welfare and Empowerment Movement	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection - policy National Population and Family Planning Board

Data sources: UNESCO, 2005

Kindergarten is a form of early childhood education for children aged between 4 - 6 years old in formal stream. The objective of kindergarten, which children attend for two years is to establish the growth and development of basic attitude, behaviour, knowledge and skills as well as encouraging creativity within children. By entering kindergarten, children are expected to be prepared for primary education. Most kindergartens grade the classes by age- grade A (4 - 5 years) and grade B (5 - 6 years). Children are eligible to commence kindergarten at the middle of the year in which they turn four. Generally, there is only one intake of children each year, but some kindergartens are more flexible with their intake.

There is also a form of kindergarten in non-formal stream, called Kindergarten-Early Childhood Education (TK PAUD) which is for children aged between 2 - 6 years.

Most of the children who enter TK PAUD are from families with low economic status. Raudhatul Athfal (RA) is similar to a kindergarten from the informal stream of education. It has an Islamic religious atmosphere where Islamic values become the essence of the overall teaching and learning process.

The government realizes the importance in considering ECED services holistically across sectors and developmental domains recognized through the government's issuance of an ambitious policy strategy in 2008. The development of national standards for ECED by the Board of National Education Standards (BSNP) in 2009 placed early childhood education as the first level of the country's education system. In 2009, the MoEC established a national standard on ECEC through Ministerial Decree No. 58/2009. The decree regulates ECCE standard of: (1) child development; (2) qualification level of teacher and management; (3) content, learning process, and assessment; (4) infrastructure, facilities, management, and budgeting (KEMENDIKNAS, 2009). This policy momentum has led to the inclusion of an ambitious set of targets in the Ministry of Education and Culture's (MoEC) "Grand Design" for ECED 2011-2025. Motivated by international research on the short- and longer-term benefits of ECED, the government aims to: (1) Expand ECED services to ensure access for all young children; (2) Focus on providing a holistic, integrated service delivery; (3) Formulate a key role for families and family-focused interventions and parent education and support, in promoting positive outcomes for children; (4) Increase the qualifications and competencies of ECED teachers (World Bank, 2012).

More recently in 2010, early childhood directorates were merged into one unit with responsibility for all ECED activities within the Ministry of Education and Culture and the previously separate 'formal' and 'non-formal service provision was removed. Later in 2011, the government created directorate general of ECCE, Non Formal, and Informal

Education called as *Directorate General Early Childhood Education, Non Formal, Informal (PAUDNI)* to manage both formal and non-formal ECCE. Therefore, these are now both in one coordination board (MoNE, 2011).

Primary education policy. Primary education is another form of EFA program implemented in both the formal and non-formal school education system. The formal school system called basic education, consists of six-year primary school (SD) and three-year lower secondary school (SLTP). This has been developed at both qualitative and quantitative levels, and even more so since early 1990's in the context of the universalization of nine year basic education. The non-formal education is conducted through learning groups of Packet A programs and Packet B program equivalent to primary and lower secondary education respectively. In addition, there are also some Islamic formal basic education schools, which are supported by communities and government (The EFA Assessment, 2000).

The government has a general policy to promote basic education by improving access and expanding learning opportunities for all school aged children. Based on the constitutional policy to provide education for all Indonesian citizens, the government has kept increasing the participation rate of primary school children. They have tried hard to prevent students from dropping-out by providing equivalent programs and scholarships for children from poor families through out-of-school educational programs. The objectives are to specifically increase the quality and relevance of basic education so that all graduates have the basic competencies required for continuing to higher level of education; to increase the efficiency of education resources management and to enable all basic education institutions to carry out their functions efficiently and effectively; to implement efforts in increasing access to basic education together with the improvement of basic education quality (The EFA Assessment, 2000).

Although it is recognized that the expansion policy has succeeded in providing education to almost all primary school-age children, it has not automatically fulfilled the demands of basic learning needs as mentioned in the World Declaration on Education for All in March, 1990, or even the educational demands of Indonesia to make the education system function effectively. This is due to the government's limited budget for supporting the provision of basic educational facilities and learning materials as well as that of basic salaries for the educational personnel, including teachers. For this very reason Indonesia has tried to develop various programs to make Education for All more meaningful for learners and society in its development process (The EFA Assessment, 2000).

Primary schools in Indonesia are run privately or by the government. The majority of these (93%) are public schools managed by the government. The school year is divided into two semesters. The first commences in July and ends in December while the second commences in January and ends in June. Indonesia has several kinds of public primary schools which include Regular Public Schools, Model Primary Schools, National Standard Public Primary Schools, and Madrasah Islamic Schools (Suryadharma, Suryahadi, Sumarto, & Rogers, 2006). In primary education the majority of the schools are public schools. Since 2010, the government has not allowed public primary schools in any regions to conduct academic tests for children entering regular public primary school. In this case, the government provides the requirement for children entering a regular public primary school which is based only on age (7 years old), where older children have a higher chance of being accepted. The only opportunity for younger children to get registered is if they have a recommendation from a counselor or a psychologist (Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Indonesia / DIKDASMEN, 2009). However, other kinds of public schools which are recognized as 'favourite schools' or 'better standard schools' have a policy to conduct a range of tests for children as a process of determining eligible children

for admission. Regarding private schools, it is acknowledged that these schools provide the places for students who cannot fulfill the public school entry test requirements and cannot afford the public school tuition fees. On the other hand, there is religious school system which is regarded as a second class. Frequently, many student end up to choose Islamic private schools as they fail to pass standard minimum tests that are required by the better-quality, public schools. However, there are few private schools which refer to themselves as ‘national plus school’ suggesting that they go beyond the minimum government requirements especially in relation to the use of English as medium of instruction or having an international curriculum instead of the national one (Fahmi, 2009; Parker, 2008).

Teacher education policy. According to Education Law No 20/ 2003, article 42, verse (2) stated “Educators for formal education, for early childhood education, basic education, secondary education, and higher education should have graduated from accredited higher education” (Act of the Republic Indonesia, 2003, p. 24). In line with this law, the central government has therefore regulated the minimum qualification for teachers. For primary teachers this is Diploma II (two years post-secondary/DII), DiplomaIII (three years post-secondary /DIII) and Bachelor (four years tertiary level/undergraduate S1). However, with a large teaching workforce of more than three million teachers, the government has to deal with the minimum qualifications required by the MoEC (UNESCO, 2006).

Therefore, in recent years, huge reforms have been undertaken to improve the ‘quality, welfare and performance’ of teachers. In particular, the teacher education policy is stated in Law number 14 year 2005, and government rule number 19 instituted in 2005 about National Standard of Education (teacher's competency). The Teachers’ Law is designed “to provide a much-needed incentive for teachers to improve their qualifications

and professional skills” (Jalal, Samani, Chang, Stevenson, Ragatz, & Negara, p. 17). The law determines minimum qualifications for teachers and outlines a new teacher certification process. Teachers need to have a minimum academic qualification of at least four years of post-secondary education and to have obtained practical experience as a classroom teacher. Teachers also have to pass an examination that will test their skills in four competency domains before becoming a certified teacher. There are four categories of competencies: personal, professional, pedagogic, and social. Personal competencies include the ability to behave positively according to child developmental needs, religious and cultural values, and be seen as a role model. Professional competencies include comprehension of child developmental stages and principles, how to provide educational and developmental stimulus and care, and how to protect and empower children. Pedagogic competencies include planning skills, how to implement and evaluate the learning process and how to assess the developmental progress of children. Lastly, social competencies include adaptive and communication skills (UNESCO - International Bureau of Education [IBE], 2011).

The law describes a teacher as a professional educator with the primary task of educating, teaching, guiding, training, and evaluating children’s development. Chapter I article 8 states that the obligation of a teacher is to have a relevant academic qualification, competency and educational certificate, and to be fit physically and mentally. In the government rule number 19 of 2005, teacher's competency is explained more specifically which include competency in pedagogic, professional practice, personality, and social behaviors. The policy refers to the teacher’s competency of understanding children’s development and to conduct teaching at a professional level.

The implementation of the law on teacher competency in various institutions, including schools is one of the biggest challenges in Indonesia. It is related to a limited

percentage of teachers who have appropriate qualifications. Only 28% of pre-tertiary Indonesian teachers have diploma/graduate level qualifications. Furthermore, only about 6% of ECE educators currently serving children have a diploma qualification, and fewer than 50% of teachers have ECE professional training. Besides this, only a few universities currently offer early childhood training program in Indonesia (World Bank, 2006).

Based on MoEC Ministerial Decree No. 16/2007 about Academic and Competencies Standard of Teachers, ECCE teachers must have a minimum 4 years university degree on ECCE or psychology from an accredited studies programs (MoNe, 2007). Those who do not have a degree, but finished high school and hold an ECCE training certificate are eligible to be teaching assistant. Lastly, caregivers in daycare centers have to be at least high school graduates (MoNe, 2009).

Prior Research

Available literature on children's readiness is complicated, debatable, and still developing with different countries applying diverse concepts, approaches and practices (Graue, 2006; Janus & Offord, 2000). La Paro, Pianta and Cox (2000) have pointed out that "readiness is nearly always defined in terms of children's skills or characteristics" (p. 444). Until relatively recently, children's readiness was typically considered a matter of reaching a certain age or of progressing through specific stages of development that were influenced almost entirely by chronological growth and children's inherent characteristics. Examples from developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Scotland show that children's readiness for school has been examined within a broader sociocultural context (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Dunlop & Fabian, 2003; Peters, 2000, 2010). In these countries, many school systems appear to be preparing children for school not only in terms of some specific pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills, but also in terms of physical health, social and emotional adjustment, the child's approach to learning and their level of language,

cognition and general knowledge (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Dunlop & Fabian, 2003; Margetts, 2005). In some Asian countries such as China, India, Indonesia and Singapore, the preparation of kindergarten children to enter primary school is still centered on academic readiness. Little research has been conducted in China on teachers and parents' perceptions regarding school readiness which attached great importance to factors such as health, attention, parenting style, confidence and learning interest (Zhang, Sun, & Gai, 2008).

Even though, there has been no agreement upon the definition of school readiness (Saluja, Scott-Little, & Clifford, 2000), there is a great deal of literature on school readiness and transition derived from developed countries such as Australia, Canada, England and the United States. In current publications, school readiness is seen as having four interrelated components which are children's readiness for school, school's readiness for children, and the capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for their young children (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Merali, 2007; Emig & Scarupa, 2001). This means that school readiness is not just a child or family issue but a community issue as well. Therefore, not only do children need to be ready for schools but schools and communities also need to be ready to accommodate the diverse needs and experiences of children and their families (Murphey & Burns, 2002; Rosier & McDonald, 2011).

Arguably, 'readiness for school' is starting to be used as a benchmark to assess the degree to which early childhood policies, programs and parental support for children have been effective at a community, as well as a societal level (Janus & Offord, 2000). Furthermore, put into practice, some programs and strategies to make children's transition to school a positive and successful experience, have been developed by some industrialized countries such as Australia, Denmark and the United States of America (Broström, 2000).

For example, guidelines have been developed through the Starting School Research Project in Australia which describes the most important issues for children, parents and educators about children entering school. The project outcomes provide examples of effective strategies on school readiness and transition to school programs (Clyde, 2001; Docket & Perry, 2001, 2002, 2006; Petriwskyj, Thorpe, & Tayler, 2005).

In the Indonesian context, specifically in Jakarta, debates on the concept and practice of school readiness and transition have just begun. The issue of school readiness is receiving increasing attention from stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and education policy makers. The complexity of this issue becomes apparent when viewed through different expectations and practices between teachers and parents regarding which skills are important for children to be accepted into primary school. Since transition to primary schools in Jakarta has not been a priority area, the educational climate has experienced discontinuity for children entering formal schooling. However, many primary schools in Jakarta are conducting orientation days for children as recommended by the government. This shows that little research has been done previously to explore the perspective on and the practices of stakeholders in preparing kindergarten children entering primary school in Indonesia. Therefore taking into consideration this issue, the researcher would like to fill this gap with this study.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the concerns mentioned above, the researcher came to appreciate and understand the complexity of the concept and practice of school readiness and transition to primary school in Indonesia. In order to frame the problem for this investigation the researcher raised the following questions:

- Why do kindergarten and primary schools in Indonesia demand that children adjust and fit to school cultures and practices instead of the schools adjusting to meet their needs?
- Why do parents in Indonesia pressure their children to enter specific primary schools?
- What issues and values underline the universal testing of preschool children in order to determine their suitability or readiness for primary schools?
- In trying to fit the children into existing practices, what support services are rendered to make starting school an enjoyable and positive experience?

Notably, school readiness and transition to school programs for children living in Indonesia lay significantly behind those of more ‘advanced’ countries. As children enter school unready differences in academic performance will become even greater as children progress through school (Vinson, Rawsthorne, & Cooper, 2007). Without the suite of emerging developmental potentials that prepare children for active engagement in school, employment and community life, children who are not well prepared and supported to have positive transition to school are at greater risk of disengagement from school and lasting social, economic and health disadvantage (Bennett, 2006; Grieshaber, Shield, Luke, & Macdonald, 2012; OECD, 2013). In fact, children living in poor households may experience greater problems when it comes to terms with school readiness and transition to school. Whilst it has been clearly acknowledged that young children’s readiness and transition to school is whole community responsibility and not for schools alone to date, there has been little, if any, formal investigation into ways in which teachers, policy makers and parents understand work together to support children’s school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia.

In order to be able to understand the complexities of sustained, meaningful school readiness and transition to school support for children in Indonesia, it is important that a mixed method quantitative and qualitative study be conducted to determine how the education stakeholders (policy makers, parents, teachers) conceptualize school readiness and transition to school, their priority areas and current issues in relation to this topic so as to determine strategies to support children, families and teachers in Indonesia to enhance their practices of school readiness and children's positive transition to school.

The researcher argues that the kindergarten teachers, policy makers and parents play critical roles in children's development therefore, obtaining their views is important in ensuring and supporting children's holistic readiness to enter primary school. It is on the same premise that it is essential to review Indonesian national education policy and accountability measures as well as teachers' professional knowledge and parents' expectations which may form part of the practices children experience as preschool education. The researcher also believes that understanding how these variables shape how school readiness concept and transition are currently practiced in Indonesia, is an important first step to informing future school readiness and transition policy and practices that are equitable and fair to all children and families.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this mixed quantitative and qualitative study is to investigate how school readiness and transition is understood and practiced by teachers, parents and education policy makers in Indonesia. It attempts to review policies, school practices, parents' perspectives, and concerns regarding school readiness and transition to primary schools in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. This purpose is based on the premise of numerous studies which have shown that investing in early childhood education and for that matter school readiness and effective transition to school support programs is a cost-

effective strategy that can mitigate childhood disadvantage, producing higher rates of economic return for the individual person, community, and country (Agbenyega, 2013; Bennett, 2006; Grieshaber et al., 2012; OECD, 2013). Quality “early childhood education leads to cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and moral developmental gains that carry over into later stages of development” (Agbenyega, 2013, p. 1). The research information reinforces the impetus and purpose of this research and that Indonesia needs to pay particular attention to early childhood education in terms of practical and sustainable policies, and programs that support school readiness and transition to school in holistic rather than in piecemeal fashion. Thus a key purpose of this research is to yield research evidence that can assist the understanding and development of effective programs and collaborative practices that have the potential to mitigate current practices that favour some children and render others unfit for school before they even attempt. The promotion of quality early childhood education in Indonesia, particularly for children who are vulnerable, faces many complex cultural, political, and economic challenges such as negative experiences, tribal and cultural attitudes and poor quality of teachers, and this study is seen as a stepping stone towards gleaning research information that can be used in enhancing practices of school readiness and children’s positive transition to school.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research:

- (i) What conceptions of school readiness and transition are held by stakeholders (teachers, parents, and education policy makers) in Indonesia?
- (ii) How do the stakeholders’ understandings influence policies and practices?
- (iii) What aspects of school readiness do the different stakeholders prioritize?
- (iv) How did they implement these aspects in school readiness and transition practices?

- (v) What are the concerns of the stakeholders involved regarding the practice of school readiness and transition to primary school in Indonesia?

Significance of the Research

The research can contribute in three important domains such as theory, policy, and practice.

Theory. Theoretical insights of this study come from demonstrating how the lack of consideration for any of the ecological system aspects can significantly alter our comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of school readiness and transition to school. This means there is need to conceptualize school readiness and transition practices by carefully attending to inside and outside forces that play crucial role in children's learning and development as explained by the ecological systems theory in this research.

Policy. This study has demonstrated that the Indonesian government needs to accelerate policy in the area of school readiness and transition to school that is fair to all children and better manage its reform process in early childhood education so as to overcome fundamental weaknesses in its early childhood education. The quality of school readiness and transition depends on effective policies and appropriate programs, and policy transformation can bring about effective practices as suggested by international literature.

Practice. The findings of this study opened up opportunity for professional development of teachers to better deal with issues of readiness and transition to school. In addition it pointed out areas to concentrate when educating teachers and parents on current practices in preparing children for school. Finally, the study can contribute knowledge about how to address concerns expressed by teachers and parents such as effective collaboration and communication in preparing children for school.

Operational Definition of Terms

1. BKB/Bina Keluarga Balita : Program for Family with Young Children
2. BSNP/Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan: Board of National Education Standards
3. ECD: Early Childhood Development
4. ECE : Early Childhood Education
5. ECCE : Early Childhood Care and Education
6. ECED: Early Childhood Education and Development
7. EFA: Education for All
8. GDP : Gross Domestic Product
9. HDI : Human Development Index, a composite index produced by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) based on three key indicators of well-being.
10. KB/Kelompok Bermain: Play group
11. MoEC: Ministry of Education and Culture (of Indonesia)
12. MoNE: Ministry of National Education (of Indonesia)
13. MoRA: Ministry of Religious Affairs
14. PAUD/Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini: Early Childhood Education
15. PNBAI/ Program Nasional Bagi Anak Indonesia : National Program for Indonesian children
16. Posyandu/Pos Pelayanan Terpadu: Integrated Service Post
17. RA/Raudhatul Anfal: Islamic Kindergarten
18. School readiness: in the context of this study, school readiness means how children are prepared in holistic way before they enter primary school
19. SD/Sekolah Dasar: Primary School

20. SLTP/Sekolah Lanjutan Tingkat Pertama: Lower Secondary School
21. SPS/Satuan Paud Sejenis: Other forms of playgroup
22. TK/Taman Kanak-kanak: Kindergarten
23. TK PAUD/Taman Kanak-kanak Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini: Kindergarten
Early Childhood Education
24. TPA/Taman Pendidikan Anak: Childcare Centre
25. Transition: in the context of this study, transition means the movement of
children from kindergarten to primary school

Structure of the Thesis

This study is organized into eight chapters which are as follows. Chapter One covers the introductory part of the thesis, research context, problem statement, purpose and significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews the related literature on school readiness and transition. Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework that guides this research. Chapter Four discusses the methodology of the research. Chapter Five provides details of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Chapter Six captures the results of the study. Chapter Seven is a discussion of the study findings and implications for practice. Chapter Eight presents an overview of the research and summarizes the findings and their implications. This chapter also offers recommendations and suggestions for further research, contribution to knowledge, acknowledges the limitations of the research, personal reflections as well as the conclusion of the study.

Chapter Summary

In this first chapter, the researcher has presented the introduction of the research in relation to its background, personal motivation for the research and education policy context in Indonesia. It also covered prior research, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, research questions, the significance of the research, the operational definition of terms and the structure of the thesis. In the next chapter, the researcher will present the related literature review of the research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review - Part I

Introduction

The literature review of this thesis addresses the concepts of school readiness and transition to school, and factors that facilitate or hinder school readiness and transition to school programs. This is followed by a review of the theoretical framework in which the study is grounded.

Conceptualizing School Readiness

Concepts are the basic elements in our thinking process and play crucial roles in the ways we think, practice and make innovations. Continuous learning is a catalyst to the formation of new concepts which may lead to new practices. It is therefore important to begin this review with varied conceptualizations of school readiness and transition to school. Historically, there are various time zones describing the multifaceted concepts of readiness (Boethel, 2004; UNICEF, 2012). According to May and Campbell (as cited in Kagan & Rigby, 2003) the readiness concept was accepted and given serious attention by the International Kindergarten Union in the United States in the 1920s, even though it had been discussed by Pestalozzi in 1898. Since 1920s, research related to readiness has filled the literature and debate on the meaning of readiness started to gather momentum within the educational community.

Some scholars (Boethel, 2004; Graue, 2006; Kagan, 1990; Keating, 2007) claim that the concept of readiness is subjectively defined and frequently misinterpreted due to its complexity and varied practices. Kagan (1990) proposes *readiness to learn* as the developmental level at which an individual has the ability to learn particular material, and

readiness for school as the demonstration of a predetermined, identifiable set of cognitive, linguistic, social, and motor skills. Other scholars (Cushon, Vu, Janzen, & Muhajarine, 2011; Fauth & Thompson, 2009; Janus & Offord, 2007) also outline five areas of school readiness as pertaining to: physical well-being and appropriate motor development, emotional health and a positive approach to new experiences, age-appropriate social knowledge and competence, age - appropriate language skills, and age-appropriate general knowledge and cognitive skills. This is supported by some scholars (Centre for Community Child Health [CCCH], 2008b; Cowan, Ablow, Johnson, & Measelle, 2005) who argue that each area has an important impact on children's adjustment to school and short or long term school achievement.

Other scholars (Lewitt & Baker, 1995; Meisels, 1998b; Rosier & McDonald, 2011) assert that the concept of readiness is poorly defined and is interpreted differently in different contexts due to the lack of consensus on what constitutes readiness and how to measure it. Pivik (2012) describes readiness as falling into various conceptual categories such as readiness residing within the child which unfolds in stages until the child reaches maturation and readiness being supported or accomplished through environmental interventions. Wesley and Buysse (2003) describe readiness as taking into account both the child's characteristics and experiences in his or her environment and readiness representing a set of ideas or meanings constructed by communities and schools.

It is acknowledged that although the concept of school readiness has been debated for many years, there is no agreed consensus on the definition (Espinosa, Thornburg, & Matthews, 1997; Piotrowsky, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000; Saluja, Scott-Little, & Clifford, 2000; Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006). Graue (2006) and Keating (2007) argue that the concept of school readiness is complex and multidimensional with a range of definitions

encompassing different components. In this regard, even early childhood education professionals have not reached agreement on a single definition of school readiness.

It is also clear that to understand school readiness, the basic issue to consider is the conceptual manner in which school readiness is practiced. Woodhead (2006) argues that the manner in which readiness is defined is highly dependent upon the theoretical perspective or situation in which the concept is being discussed or utilized. As there are numerous theoretical perspectives on child development, the concept of school readiness also varies and so far there is no consensus about the meaning (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Meisels (1999) pointed to four theoretical approaches of looking at school readiness that include nativist/ maturationist, empiricist/ environmentalist, social constructivist and interactionist view. In addition, the transactional-ecological model is presented with the basic premise that children function within multiple contexts or ecologies, which influence each other and child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Cicchetti, Rogosch, Lynch, & Holt, 1993).

The nativist/maturationist view. The nativist or maturational perspective which is proposed by Gesell (as cited in Carlton & Winsler, 1999), conceptualizes readiness as ‘something inherent within the child’, with little or no recognition for the impact from environmental factors. Some scholars (Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Gredler, 1992) conceptualized school readiness with an emphasis on specific characteristics and capabilities in the child as a simple product of maturation or chronological aging. This implies that when the characteristics and capabilities are achieved, the child is believed to be ready for school. The maturational view also asserts that the rate at which maturation occurs varies greatly from one child to another, and develops according to the internal biological clock (Berk, 2006; Gredler, 1997; Lerner, 2002). This development occurs in predictable stages that are regulated by forces internal to the child and that environmental

inputs have little impact on this natural unfolding process (Halfon & Hockstein, 2001; Lerner, 2002). A belief in this perspective would mean that introducing children to school experiences before they are developmentally ready is counterproductive to their education (Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Gredler, 1992).

The maturationist perspective suggests that the primary contributor to child development and readiness is the genetic composition of the individual child. This view claims that it is the maturity level of the child that would allow for quiet, focused work as the primary indicator of school preparedness such as literacy and numeracy skills that align with a primary school curriculum (Graue, 1993). The understanding in this sense is that children's cognitive and physical maturation contribute to their proficiency in school (Halfon & Hockstein, 2001; Nixon & Aldwinckle, 2003). In addition, the maturationist model also constructs school readiness in terms of maturation and relevant skills that focus on remediation and child competencies at the time children begin school. Snow (2006) argues that children are ready to enter school when they have grown old enough and achieved a certain level of expected maturity which is related to cognitive, psychomotor, and emotional development.

However, the maturational perspective has a number of basic problems. For example, various children have been identified in studies as having difficulty with the kindergarten curriculum although they are chronologically mature which suggest that chronological age alone, is not sufficient in determining children's readiness (Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Kern & Friedman, 2009). This perspective is also limiting in terms of the support children would receive to prepare them for transition to school because external influences such as teacher practices, kinds of tests, family practices, economic circumstances and school policies which may have either a positive or negative effect on the child are completely neglected (Rankin & Vialle, 1996). Carlton and Winsler (1999)

suggest that this approach is problematic as it places ‘the burden of proof’ on children in which children are considered ready when they demonstrate a minimum set of abilities to learn and are ready for the school context. Agbenyega (2009) commenting on the Gesellian perspective of development argues that the true meaning of development does not reside solely in the ideal sphere of inner development, but rather, the phenomenal areas of external activity also contributes to development.

Similarly, Halfon and Hockstein (2001) note that conceptualizing school readiness in the Gesellian perspective would mean that all children need to follow the same learning processes and the same testing with differences in their rate of performance solely defined by reference to the particularity of their genetic make-up. Specifically to assessment or testing practice, readiness assessment based on this perspective would involve evaluating behaviors and tasks such as a child’s ability to engage in appropriate social interactions, to follow directions and to maintain attention when completing work (Meisels, 1998a). This approach may disadvantage some ready children whose learning styles do not align with the tests designed to measure their readiness. In addition, Winter and Kelley (2008) argue that this view of development suggests that school readiness deficits lie within children, rather than shifting the focus to preparing education settings to be ready for all children, regardless of their developmental status. In contrast, current research on school readiness is demonstrating the powerful effects that qualified teachers in well-designed education settings can have on child and family outcomes (Agbenyega, 2009; Agbenyega & Deku, 2011).

The empiricist/environmentalist view. The empiricist perspective is seen as having its roots in the work of Gagne (as cited in Gredler, 1997) which identifies a child’s school readiness by focusing on a predetermined set of skills and knowledge that are considered prerequisites for later success in school. The empiricist view is also known as

the environmentalist model which reflects an externally driven approach to development. In this regard, the child's development is assumed to be controlled almost totally by events and conditions that dominate his or her social and cultural world (Foss, 2009; Smith & Shepard, 1988). Kagan (1990) calls this approach *readiness for school* as contrasted to *readiness for learning*, which emphasizes specific skills or experiences that are valued as the precursors to successful school experience.

Belief in the empiricist view suggests that social interactions and scaffolding experiences lead children's development in which development is stimulated by learning and is not a prerequisite for it (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Laura & Munsch, 2014). Therefore educators play a role in providing children with appropriate social opportunities and scaffolding early experiences which are needed to develop significant skills needed for school entry (Carlton & Winsler, 1999; Pianta, Barnett, Justice, & Sheridan, 2012). As Meisels (1999) posits, readiness is something that lies outside the child (such as important skills and behaviors) and that can be acquired only through external guidance or teaching. Meisels (1999) asserts that readiness must be conceptualized as a broad construct that takes into account the setting, context, and conditions under which the child acquires skills and is encouraged to learn.

Some scholars (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002; Kagan & Rigby, 2003; Smith & Shepard, 1988; Snow, 2006; Wesley & Buysse, 2003) view school readiness within the broader and more dynamic sociocultural context. Dockett, Perry, and Kearney (2010), Rosier and McDonald (2011) as well as Smith and Shepard (1988), argue that social and cultural contexts can impact on how school readiness is defined within families, schools and communities. Other scholars (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002; Mathur & Parameswaran, 2012; Vogler, Crivello, Woodhead, 2008) focus on the role of culture as a powerful influence on the school readiness paradigm. Supporting this, Wesley and Buysse (2003)

emphasize readiness as culturally and contextually determined and refers to it as multidimensional process that recognizes the interaction of children's individual characteristics and the contexts in which they live and have lived as they grow and develop. According to some scholars (Kagan & Rigby, 2003; Woodhead, 2006) school readiness is embedded within social, cultural and historic influences, therefore a thorough understanding must be given to families, early childhood settings, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. In addition, Snow (2006) stresses the importance of contexts and focus on the sociocultural environment when supporting the development of a child's level of functioning.

Conceptualizing readiness based on the empiricist perspective suggest that readiness is an absolute construct in which children are viewed as either being ready or not ready for school (Halle et al., 2000). With this perspective in mind children are trained in certain related skills followed by universal testing on specific curriculum tasks or through universal standardized instruments which may be culturally biased to children. The empiricist view argues that when children cannot demonstrate certain important skills, they may require specific support or enrolment in extra-year programs. However, this perspective does not deliver what to do if children do not demonstrate the requisite skills after having had an extra year at school (Meisels, 1998a).

The social constructivist view. The constructivist perspective of readiness and development was advanced by some theorists such as Lewin in the 1930s, Vygotsky in the 1930s onward and Piaget in the 1960s who all believe that learning and development occur when young children interact actively with the environment and people around them (Wertsch & Bivens, 1992). Piaget however, highlights individual constructivism linked with cognitive development whereas Vygotsky promotes social constructivism (Billet, 1995; Ismat, 1998). The former aims at modifying beliefs and ideas of children by

presenting them appropriate tasks for knowledge construction whereas the latter attempts to change their behaviors and cognition in social settings (Dhindsa & Emran, 2006). For example, Vygotskian sociocultural developmental theory (Poehner, 2012; Rogoff, 2003; Wink & Putney, 2002) views development as a multifaceted, continuing, and dialectical process through which children's biology and sociocultural environment mutually interact with and affect one another to co-create development. When children internalize language and other cultural tools from their collaborative experiences, the cultural line of development reorganizes and transforms the natural biological developmental processes. It means learning leads development whereby children's experiences in interacting with others and with the environment significantly pull development forward (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Graue, 1993; Wise, 2013).

In the learning process, the constructivist approach stresses children's active roles in interacting with others to initiate most of the activities required for learning and development. In this case, constructivists consider children who can initiate interaction with the environment and people around them as ready for school (Tudge & Rogoff, (1999). This view believes that skills which are not present are not regarded as deficiencies, because children may still be ready for some aspects of the school experience (Graue, 2006). Thus, the Vygotskian perspective suggests that it is counterproductive to wait for children to mature sufficiently in order to do well in school because it may never happen. Instead, early childhood education should focus on providing young children with the social opportunities and scaffold the school experiences that they need to develop the abilities that we want to see in first and second grade and beyond (Carlton & Winsler, 1999).

Social constructivists suggest that there is no absolute definition of readiness as it is a set of ideas or meanings constructed by the people in communities, families and schools which shift the focus of assessment away from the child and towards the community (Scott-

Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006). Other scholars (Love, Kisker, Ross, Raikes, Constantine, & Boller, 2005; Zaslow, Calkins & Halle, 2000) define readiness with reference to how children's behaviour and development are supported and what the children should be ready for, which requires a community-level measurement strategy and includes a context. Andrews and Slate (2001) argue that the constructivist perspective views children's readiness to the degree that they can learn tasks through interactions with more knowledgeable peers or adults which therefore encourages the involvement of parents, teachers, and other adults. Accordingly, the social constructivist perspective considers the importance of the school system to be ready rather than seeing children's readiness as residing solely within the child (Brown, 2010; Carlton & Winsler, 1999).

In relation to children's assessment, social constructivists view assessment of children's abilities as only one of the components, which must be put into the context in which the child is reared and the setting in which the child is educated. This implies that the assessment is used to determine where the child is with respect to certain skills and abilities for the purposes of knowing how best to create scaffold learning experiences for the child to go to the next level rather than being used for determining time of school entry (Cicchetti, 2002; Meisels, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

The interactionist view. The interactionist view combines aspects of the maturationist, environmentalist, and the social constructivist views that consider readiness as a product of the interaction between children's prior experiences, genetic endowment, maturational status, and the whole range of environmental and cultural experiences that they encounter. This view is a bidirectional concept, which focuses on the children's current skills, knowledge and abilities and on the conditions in which the children are reared and taught. The interactionist perspective emphasizes how both the child and the school setting prepare for, and interact with each other to produce positive educational outcomes

for young children (Meisels, 1999). The emergence of a reciprocal relationship between school and child to help children become learners and achieve educational success is cited by Kagan (1990) as *readiness for learning* in contrast to *readiness for school* which is directed towards future possibilities, rather than past deficiencies.

The meaning of school readiness according to interactionist perspective consists of two elements; what the child brings to school and what the school brings to the child (Halle et al., 2000). School readiness is considered an interactive relationship between the child and the school environment in which the child influences various aspects of school environment and the school environment affects the child's performance and behaviour. This perspective views children's skills and abilities as a product of both innate ability and environmental experience (Graue, 2006; Meisel, 1999).

Furthermore interactionist perspective is comprehensive as it addresses both the child's contributions to schooling and the school's contribution to the child (Meisels, 1999). Janus and Offord (2000) explain that this perspective attends both to what children know and to the capacity of schools to adapt experiences for children who demonstrate different strengths and needs. In this view, the interaction relates to how the child's activity alters the expectations of the environment even as the environment modifies what the child is able to accomplish.

This perspective conceptualizes school readiness as falling along a continuum of established standards and also sees readiness as developing over time following exposure to the school environment (Meisels, 1998a). As a result, when evaluating readiness, children are assessed based upon this continuum of standards over time and within the educational context. Information obtained from this assessment is utilized to evaluate children's performance as well as to develop instructional plans (Halle et al., 2000).

The transactional ecological model. The transactional model of child development has much to offer for understanding school readiness. The major premise of this model is that children function within various contexts or ecologies that influence each other and child development (Bremner & Wachs, 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993). The model considers development beyond a simple interaction between the individual and the environment and that development is a series of bidirectional, interdependent relationships between individuals and the environment over time (Sameroff, 2009).

A broader view of readiness that extends beyond the particular skills and abilities of children are based in the ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004) which recognizes the influence of the children themselves as well as families, schools, communities and the availability of appropriate services and support for children to be ready for school. Many scholars have created definitions of readiness based on the transactional ecological model which sees the readiness of children as a part of a larger picture that includes children, families, schools and community (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Emig & Scarupa, 2001; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Kagan, Moore, & Bradekamp, 1995; Maxwell & Clifford, 2004; Scott-Little & Maxwell, 2000; Snow, 2006).

Grounded in empirical research in early development and learning, the United States of National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), a bipartisan panel consisting of federal and state level government officials, created a framework to conceptualize readiness which helps to ensure equitable educational opportunities and high levels of educational achievement for all students (NEGP, 1998). This view of readiness articulates readiness as a multi-faceted construct that includes the capacity of families, early care and education programs, and the broader community to support children's early learning and development, and the capacity of schools to effectively educate children once they start

school, taking children's characteristics into context (Kagan, 1990; National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2002; Saluja, Scott-Little, & Clifford, 2000; Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow, 2006).

The NEGP (1998) help define, articulate and explain the domains of school readiness such as health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence, approaches to learning, communication skills, and cognition and general knowledge. It suggests that readiness is a construct composed of five dimensions such as physical and motor development, social and emotional development, language and communicative development, approaches to learning, and cognitive development or general knowledge (Kagan, Moore & Bredekamp, 1995; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; NAEYC, 1995). It is also noted that readiness can be highly influenced by socio and multi-cultural variables so readiness for school must be set within such contexts (Boethel, 2004; Kagan, Moore, & Bradekamp, 1995; Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Woodhead, 2006).

Based on the work of the NEGP, Scott-Little and Maxwell (2000) articulate the notion of school readiness not simply as the skills and abilities that are important for children, but as a multi-faceted construct that includes the capacity of families, early care and education programs, and the broader community to support children's early learning and development, and the capacity of schools to effectively educate children once they start school, as well as the characteristics of children. Emig and Scarupa (2001) provide interrelated components namely children's readiness for school, school's readiness for children, and the capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for their young children. Viewing readiness from diverse contexts, Dockett and Perry (2002) state that readiness means different things in different contexts. Maxwell and Clifford (2004) posit that children are not innately ready for school, but that school readiness encompasses the influence of families, early environments, schools, and

communities. Similarly, Snow (2006) and Shonkoff (2012) argues that the transactional ecological model focuses attention on the interaction of the child with the home, preschool, and community influences. The readiness of children is seen as a part of a larger picture involving the concept of 'ready schools'.

To summarise this section of the review it can be argued that a growing body of research is concentrating on expanding the scope of school readiness to include (1) schools that are ready for children; (2) multidirectional communications and connections among settings; and (3) recognition of sociocultural contexts as contributory factors (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005). Even though a universal definition of school readiness does not exist, the various perspectives and models on school readiness reject that readiness for school resides only in individual children and ignore the notion that some children could be considered 'unready' for school. Rather, it argues that children's readiness and later success at school is influenced not only by their own abilities, but also by readiness of schools, families and the communities in which children live (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Zaslow, Calkins & Halle, 2000).

Bingham and Whitebread (2012) argue that the sources of readiness are not only the child's emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and social abilities, but also the contexts in which children live and interact with adults, teachers and other community members. Other scholars associate readiness with other interrelated factors that include social, political, organizational, educational, and personal resources that support the child's success at school entry (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000).

Conceptualizing Transition to School

Wesley (2001) states that a critical dimension of readiness is the transition from preschool contexts to a more formal school setting. Transition has been the main focus in many countries leading to increasing research from various perspectives (Bohan-Baker &

Little, 2004; Brooker, 2002; Cassidy, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2005; Dunlop & Fabian, 2003; Margetts, 2005; Peters, 2000). During the last two decades interest in educational transitions has increased due to brain research which has explained that success during transition to school or transfer between phases of education, can contribute to successful learning both socially and academically in determining children's future progress and development (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2002; Einarsdottir, 2007; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Margetts, 2002).

The topic of children's transition from preschool to primary school has actually been an issue of educational practice, a subject of research and a question of educational policy for over one century (Brostrom, Vrinioti, Einarsdottir, & 2010). The basic issue of discontinuity and the existing gap in the transition has been discussed since Fröbel (as cited in Grossmann, 1987) submitted a detailed plan for the natural linking of preschool with primary school education. Later in 1960, the quest for a smooth transition was linked with a unified curriculum involving kindergarten, primary school, gymnasium or junior high school, and lyceum or senior high school (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). Subsequently, in the mid - 1990s the subject of transition between preschool and primary school institutions increased and became the centre of research (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Woodhead, 2006).

It is noted that earlier ideas on transition proposed by Kagan (1991) distinguished between vertical and horizontal transitions. *Vertical transition* deals with moves and changes for the child between educational settings such as pre-school or school or between home and pre-school when children start pre-school. Conversely *horizontal transition* involves children's transitions during their everyday lives between and between activities and programs, such as after school centers and primary schools. Kagan and Neuman (1998) define transition as ongoing efforts to create linkages between children's natural and

support environments and argue that smooth transition from preschool to primary school can provide "the continuity of experiences that children have between periods and between spheres of their lives" (p. 366).

Bridges (1991) defines transition as "the psychological attitude people go through to come to terms with a new situation" (p. 3), and proposes three phases for transition which includes (1) an ending of a surrendering of what is valued, familiar, and comfortable; (2) a neutral zone, which occurs when the old way is gone and the new way is not yet comfortable; (3) a new beginning, if they first have made an ending and have spent time in the neutral zone.

Cowan and Cowan (2003) view, transition as "extended periods of change and disequilibrium between periods of stability, balance, and relative quiescence" (p. 3), that includes some psychological discomfort or internal conflict within the transitional period. They argue that the transition occurs over a relatively long period of time rather than as a momentary event and involves a set of related processes that develop over time. For example, transition for a child may include a shift in perspective that may change the way in which that child thinks of himself. Specific to early childhood education, transition may involve the time between the first visit in the new educational context and the final setting (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Kagan & Neuman, 1998).

Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) provide models of transitions such as the *skills only model* (a child focus perspective that targets children's skills as the key influence on school adjustment), *the environmental input model* (in which children's skills at any given time are influenced by their experiences in a variety of social settings), *a linked environment model* (that builds on the others and recognizes the importance of connections across settings), and a *developmental model of transition* (which incorporates all of the components of the prior models and emphasizes connections and linkages across settings

over time). Researchers, policy makers, and educators have become aware of the limitations associated with the exclusive use of the child centred approach. As a result, they have broadened their lens to consider the influence of social networks in shaping children's behaviors.

More recently, many researchers' understanding of transition to school is framed in ecological terms which entail building relationships between all stakeholders such as children, families, educators and communities (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Dockett & Perry, 2001; Fabian & Dunlop, 2006; Sayers, Moore, Brinkman, & Goldfled, 2012). This ecological model of transition is more complex than the child centred perspective that considers the skills of the child to be the most important factor. In an ecological model a child's transition to school is understood in terms of the influence of contexts (for example, family, school, community) and the connections among these contexts at any given time and across time (Pianta, Taylor, & Early, 1999).

Building on Pianta and Walsh's (1996) Contextual Systems Model and Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (1998) Bioecological Model, the ecological and dynamic model posits that the transition to school takes place in an environment defined by the many changing interactions among child, school, classroom, family, and community factors. The Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition focus on transition to school in terms of the dynamic qualities of the transition ecology, the interconnectedness of relationships among child characteristics; and peer, family, school, and neighborhood contexts, and how these relationship improve and change. The quality of relationships within the transition ecology plays an important role in supporting the child during this period of increased demand and challenge. If these relationships are characterized by regular contact, agreed on goals, and emphasis on supporting the child and the child's development of skills, they then contribute to positive transition outcomes (Rosenkoetter, 1995).

Based on the bioecological model, it is recognised that more scholars view transition as a process and not as a point in time (Astbury, 2009; Brooker, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2007; Fabian & Dunlop, 2002; Fisher, 2008; Walker & Golly, 1999). Walker and Golly (1999) view transition as a process whereby a child is assisted by preschool and primary school educators to become part of the formal primary school system. Fabian and Dunlop (2002) view transition as a process of change that is experienced when children and their families move from one setting to another, “it includes the length of time it takes to make such a change; spanning the time between any pre-entry visits and settling in, to when the child is more fully established as a member of a new setting” (p. 148). Dunlop (2002) reiterates that transition deals with border crossing, a physical movement from one physical context to another, as “being the passage from one place, stage, state, style or subject to another over time” (p.148).

Dockett and Perry (2006) describe transition programs as providing a bridge from prior to school to school settings. Moreover Dockett and Perry (2007) argue that transition can occur over the long term, with many experiences, people and services contributing to the general well-being of children and their families in their preparedness for school. They argue that when children transition they move into and adjust to new learning environments and families must learn to work with the new sociocultural system in which education take place, and schools must make provisions for children to feel comfortable in their new settings. Brooker (2008) suggests that transition must be a process of involving everyone involved in the children’s lives such as family, peers and the community. Astbury (2009) restates that in order to make transition effective children must be supported to feel valued, comfortable and ready to learn. One important piece of knowledge that can be gleaned from the conceptualizations of transition is that transition is a process that needs planning over

time and the particular needs of all children should be taken into account with particular attention focused on respectful relationships between families and schools (Fisher, 2010).

Issues and Factors Related to School Readiness

Many scholars suggest that there are a number of factors that either facilitate or hinder school readiness which can be at the level of the individual, the family, early childhood services, schools and the community (Boethel, 2004; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Dockett, Perry, Kearney, Hampshire, Mason, Schmied, 2011; Feinstein & Bynner, 2004; Graue, 2006; Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995; Pence & Bame, 2008; Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006; Sylva, Melhuis, Sammons, Siraj-Baltchford, & Taggart, 2004).

Furthermore, some scholars agree that individual characteristics of the child, the child's family, the cultural and contextual variability in each child's early learning and development, and early childhood education programs, schools, and teachers' support have implications for their readiness (Boethel, 2004; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995). According to some researchers, the geographic location in the country and the relationship between schools, family and community (Graue, 2006; Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow, 2006) as well as social, cultural, economic, policy, and historical factors (Pence & Bame, 2008) influence how stakeholders interact to provide support for children.

The specific factors that facilitate or hinder school readiness are discussed in terms of policy, professional knowledge and belief, school community partnerships, parental and family characteristics, culture of neighborhood communities, child related factors and issues of mental health.

Policy issues. A country's education policy guides schools' decisions and actions including a particular set of educational problems and how to tackle them effectively (Haddad, 1995). Policy guides provisions for access and quality of programmes, standards, certification and training of staff, and resource allocation to education systems (OECD,

2006) and provides direct or indirect access for children, family and teachers (UNICEF, 2012).

Education systems as guided by sector policies have the most direct link to early child development and education (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2007). The role of policy makers or governments should be to develop an adequate early childhood policy that incorporates school readiness. To build an early childhood system that can help ensure this, policy makers need to be familiar with research evidence related to children's safety, family support, health, education, and social and emotional development (Bruner, Floyd, & Copeman, 2005).

Halliburton and Thornburg (2004) mention some major issues related to policy on funding to provide high quality early childhood programs such as wages and professional development; good services to children and families such as health care and nutrition; better pay, more respect, and higher status to teachers; schools collaboration with stakeholders such as health care providers, parents, and counsellors; multidisciplinary approaches to school readiness services; research to promote a shared agreement of what school readiness means; and to agree upon expectations for school readiness. Friendly (2010) suggests that in Canada, there is a growing discussion between policy makers, researchers and educators to improve the quality of children's programs and standardize and regulate qualifications, pay and status. Miller (2008) argues that "the early years workforce in England is under qualified, poorly paid, and predominantly female" (p. 20) which has been attributed to lack of effective and consistent policy qualifications and remuneration.

Policy factors also contribute to children's skills, knowledge and abilities (Graue, 1993; Meisels, 1999; Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Smith & Shepard, 1988) as well as to family and school communications (Safran, 1997). Moore and Fry (2011) and Tayler (2006) argue that there is a need for clearly defined and articulated policies that can support

family and school partnerships as well as professional development for teachers to enhance school readiness. Mitchell (2008) explains that the absence of a distinct policy may have consequences for parent and teacher relationships. For example, parents may feel unwelcomed at school and interpret the school culture as being non-inclusive. Unclear policy may also impact on the inherent complexity in family and school communication to prepare children for school (Safran, 1997; Woodhead, 2006).

One prevalent issue with regard to school readiness is ‘age-related policy’ in which age is used as the major criteria in determining ‘children readiness’ to enter formal school (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; De Lemos & Meller, 1994). With this policy, teachers are advised to offer specific forms of learning only when children are ‘ready’ (Crnic & Lamberty, 1994). Stipek (2001, 2006) found that children’s age is one of the indicators of school readiness as it signals maturity in the cognitive, social, and self-regulatory domains. However, some scholars (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Morrison, Griffith, & Alberts, 1997; Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Sharp, 2002) found that age of entry does not really matter for children’s academic progress and well-being. They highlight that younger children in the classroom make just as much progress academically and socially as their older classmates in the early grades. Other researchers reiterated that younger children make rapid progress in their first year of schooling and that older children at school entry do better academically in the short and longer term (Lin, Freeman, & Chu, 2009). Dockett, Perry and Kearney (2010) argue that there is no national agreement in Australia on what is important in terms of readiness for school and how to measure it. This condition brings consequence to provoke a variety of assessment approaches that often emphasize on levels of children’s achievement in specific areas as measured on a range of tests. Aron and Loprest (2012) discuss an assessment case in the USA where local districts in many states use standardized testing for young children. However, it has been confirmed that recently, most states have

moved away from readiness testing by developing policies against the use of such testing. Instead, they provide publications on appropriate assessment strategies in early childhood including the provision of professional development opportunities in early childhood assessment.

Wesley and Buysse (2003) propose the importance of regularly reviewing the local and national policies and programs to ensure school readiness programs are consistent with contemporary research and practices. Janus and Offord (2000) add that since the concept of school readiness has been extended to be used as a benchmark to measure the degree to which early childhood policy has been effective at a community level as well as a societal level continuous review of such policies are critical.

Professional knowledge and beliefs. The issue of teachers' professional knowledge has been of concern in education as it influences their practices (Borko & Putman, 1995). Meisels (1999) argues that schools have a vital role to play in contributing to children's readiness by supporting teachers to increase their professional knowledge through ongoing professional learning. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) choose the metaphor of a 'professional knowledge landscape' to illustrate that teachers' professionalism is multi-faceted, crucially incorporating the role and knowledge of the teacher as a practitioner and as an active professional at the cutting edge of teaching knowledge and possibly research. Bigge and Shermis (1999) argue that professional teachers are essentially eclectic and pragmatic and have the ability to gather the best from theory and practice to be applied as needed.

Early childhood teachers are at the centre of practice charged with the responsibility of ensuring that all children attain school readiness therefore, they should possess a wide range of qualifications - quality teachers are associated with quality programs (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, & Early 2005). Early, Bryant, Pianta, Clifford,

Burchinal, Ritchie, & Barbarin (2006) add that qualified teachers play an important role in the delivery of a quality curriculum and children's achievement including readiness in the early years. Positive teacher child relationships are noted as a key factor in children's school success which teachers can develop through training (; Early, Maxwell, Burchinal, Alva, Bender, Bryant, & Zill, 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). According to Rudasill, Rimm-Kaufman, Justice and Pence (2006), where teacher child relationships are bidirectional, children are encouraged to contribute to their own readiness (Britto & Limlingan, 2012).

Teachers' understanding of readiness within the context of school is crucial as it influences their priorities in teaching certain skills for children (Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Lewit & Baker, 1995). Some studies have shown that preschool teachers emphasized more on academic competencies and basic knowledge, such as letters of the alphabet, than kindergarten teachers (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; West, Jausken, & Collins, 1993). Other studies have found that teachers' perspectives of school readiness are primarily focused on social and emotional skills (Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003). Janus and Offord (2000) recommend the importance of teachers' knowledge to move beyond academic preparation and consider the importance of less structured aspects of early childhood learning on children's readiness for school such as social competence, physical health, emotional adjustment, language and cognitive skills, and general knowledge.

Teachers' beliefs about children and their development can have significant consequences for their decisions pertaining to a specific child or group of children. For example, some scholars (Heaviside & Farris, 1993; Shepard & Smith, 1986) find that traditionally, teachers identify children's age as one of the most frequent reasons to explain children's poor performance in school. This implies that children's age at entry to school is seen as a controller of children's performance. Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000)

mention that teachers who consider children as not ready for school by associating age with their limited academic skills have problems supporting children to develop social skills, follow directions, and participate in independent and group work.

Wesley and Buyssee (2003) suggest that school readiness programs must focus on health, social competence and the ability of children to communicate effectively and follow the teacher's directions. In addition, Rimm-Kaufman (2004) reiterates the need for teachers to emphasize readiness in social domains, as well as in adjustment to school routines (Dockett & Perry, 2004).

Other studies (Chen & Rovegno, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harslett, 2000) found that teachers' attitudes toward children affect their degree of commitment to their responsibilities, the way they teach and treat children, as well as how they perceive their professional growth. Coladarci (2002) points out that the effectiveness and commitment of teachers to teaching children derives from their knowledge and perception of children. According to Peters (2010) teachers with a deep understanding of child development are able to affirm the child's identity and culture, connect with and build on the children's funds of knowledge from early childhood education and home and hold positive expectations for success including seeing promise in new entrant learners rather than deficits. She adds that responsive, reciprocal, relationships between all concerned is a key feature of a successful transition that comes from teacher knowledge.

Other factors related to teachers' knowledge have been linked to teachers' blurred perspectives on what readiness really means in practice (Neuman, 2002). For example, in the Danish context, Brostrom (2002) indicates that teachers have unclear perceptions of what happens in preschool and see preschool as a place where children are cared for, but not as an educational culture analogous to 'real' school. Similarly, Dockett and Perry (2003) found in the Australian context that preschool teachers have vague ideas of what

happens at school. This gap between preschool and school practices creates confusion for children when they transit to primary schools.

School community partnership. Educational researchers advocate the benefits of partnerships between schools, families, and communities as a means for promoting children's achievement decades ago (Davies & Johnson, 1996; Epstein & Sanders, 1998). More recently, some researchers have also demonstrated that a lack of attention and support from the adults in children's lives, an absence of discipline, and not motivating children are considered the most important barriers to educational success by educators and children (Shapiro, Ginsberg, & Brown, 2002).

Specifically related to readiness, Wesley and Buysse (2003) state that the first step to identifying ways to promote readiness is to increase communication and collaboration among schools, families, and communities. They claim that such partnerships can be effective only when approached with the attitude that families, educators, and community members share responsibilities for children's success even though they may have separate roles in socializing and educating them. Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) believe that common goals are best developed in the context of articulating a shared mission that benefits all of the participants, and relationships among collaborators can then be developed with a sense of trust and mutual respect. Swick (2003) adds that empowering parents, teachers, families and school community relationships are best realized through the use of communication processes that consider trust as the foundation of all significant relationship building. Dockett and Perry (2006) confirm that having a collaborative and respectful relationship between families and educators does not mean parents and educators have to do the same thing or agree all the time, rather that there is a range of ways for communication and discussion where they recognize and respond appropriately to the concerns of others and are committed to providing the best possible educational context for

children and families. Other scholars found that early childhood programs that combine a focus on child educational experiences, and parent child relationship building, have demonstrated positive effects on children's readiness for school (Homel, Lamb, & Freiberg, 2006; Turner & Hagin, 2007; Yoshikawa, Weiland, Brooks-Gunn, Burchinal, Espinosa, 2013).

It is recognized that the involvement of communities is important because readiness for school successfulness is a community responsibility, not just the responsibility of parents and teachers. For example communities may provide quality health care and support services for families of young children and work to ensure that all families with young children have access to high-quality care and education (Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Peters, 2010).

Some studies show a lack of collaborative and respectful communication between prior to school settings such as school as a major barrier to continuity (Brostrom, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2003). Some scholars also found that the barrier is caused by a lack of cultural awareness, the unavailability of culturally relevant information for families (Aronson, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Dockett, Perry, mason, Simpson, Howard, & Whitton, 2008), feelings of disaffection with school (Dockett & Perry, 1999), and lack of knowledge to help their children (Dowling, 1995).

Parental and family characteristics. It is confirmed that families are the most powerful source for children's early learning through caring and support services (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Slaughter-Defoe, 2000) and are the best place for preparing children for school (Rouse et al., 2005). Landry, Smith, and Swank (2006) argue that the role of parents has been described as a cognitive agent in the child's learning. In this role, parents provide opportunities for learning with appropriate modelling of language and engagement with objects (Hart & Risley, 1995). Some of the more common educational

activities that many parents engage in with their children at home include assisting with homework and school-related projects, reading books with their children, visiting libraries museums and other cultural activities, ensuring that children are prepared for school, and school-related rules within the home (Pomerantz, Moorman & Litwack, 2007; Stone & McKay, 2000). Other studies show that parents who actively engage their children in certain social ethnic and cultural activities such as sports and art clubs have a significant influence on their children's readiness and academic performance (Beasley, 2002; Farkas & Hibel, 2008).

What is more, many scholars believe that a number of family background variables have been linked to children's early cognitive abilities (Fergus-Morrison, Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2003). Further, family income and related variables such as parental education have a serious impact on children's developmental outcomes (Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov & Duncan, 1996; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Mark 2010). Specifically, some scholars argue that the higher a family's level of socioeconomic resources, the more likely it is that a child will be ready for school (Barbarin, Early, Clifford, Bryant, Frome, Burchinal, Howes, & Pianta, 2008; Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; Magnuson, 2004). In general, high family Social Economic Status (SES) is linked with high achievement whereas low family SES and residential instability is linked with less favorable emotional and behavioral outcomes. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) linking family SES and school readiness argue that families with fewer available financial resources are less able to provide enriching experiences such as books, toys, games and outings to their children. Janus and Duku (2007) reiterate that children from lower SES families are often less ready for school than are children from higher SES families.

The nature of the home learning environment has a major impact on children's school entry skills (Melhuish, Sylva, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, & Phan, 2008;

Sayers, Moore, Brinkman, & Goldfeld, 2012) and is a strong predictor of educational and behavioural outcomes for children well into the primary years (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj - Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). There is a wide variation in the home learning environments of young children, and this translates into wide differences at the start of school, suggesting that the quality of the home environment is an important predictor of school readiness and later academic competence (Bradley, Corwyn, Burchinal, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001; Duncan, Claessens, & Engel, 2004; Kamerman, 2008; Landry, Smith, & Swank, 2006).

Some scholars stress a link between school readiness and specific favorable parental behaviors such as warmth, sensitivity and responsiveness (Hill, 2001; Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, Kupzyk, 2010). Other personal characteristics predictive of children's outcomes is parent's psychological well-being (self - esteem, depression) as the availability of sufficient psychological resources has a positive effect on parenting behaviour (McIntosh, Burke, Dour, & Gridley, 2009; McLoyd, 1998; Smith, 2004a). McGroder (2000) and Rosier and McDonald (2011) notes that the personal characteristic of parents such as beliefs regarding children's developmental needs and the parents' own child rearing history may also influence children's development. Laible (2004) found that when parents explicitly teach about emotions, their children display better regulation in their own emotions and understand more about the emotions of others. Other supports parents provide to assist children's development of emotional competence include acceptance of children's emotions, modelling of effective management of emotions and avoidance of frequent displays of highly negative emotions, particularly anger (Davis, Gilson, Carr, Stevenson, William, Reddihough, Water, Hermans, & Fisher, 2013; Denham, 1998). The role of parents also involves being an agent of socialization in which parent support their children's ability to regulate and inhibit their own behaviour (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Another critical role parents can play across early childhood in the promotion of school readiness is reading to their children on a regular basis in ways that model language and require children to think and provide information about the story (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Research examining parents' role in children's early literacy development documents the importance of children having access and experiences with books in their home, rich language input, as well as interactions that focus their attention on letters and sounds in words (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Some scholars provide evidence that family characteristics such as maternal education, parenting support, income, parental educational achievement and economic status impact on children's readiness trajectories (Copland, 2000; Henderson & Pehoski, 1995; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Vernon-Feagans, Pancsofar, Willoughby, Odom, Quade, & Cox, 2008) including the achievement gap among children (Currie, 2005; Grissmer, Flanagan & Williamson, 1998; Lee & Burkam, 2002; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Parents with higher education levels tend to provide more literacy opportunities and richer literacy environment for their children (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Dye & Johnson, 2007). Furthermore, parents with higher education levels tend to support views of reading as a pleasure activity compared to parents with lower education levels (Serpell, Sonnenschein, Baker, & Ganapathy, 2002). They also tend to view their children as more capable when assessing their abilities, especially on literacy-related tasks like writing (Raty, 2003).

Andrabi, Jishnu, Fair, and Asim (2009) argue that supportive parenting and stimulating home environments are among the strongest predictors of children's school performance. They also believe that parenting practices, attitudes and knowledge influence the understanding of children's readiness for school. The family has been described as the place where a range of social and economic problems that run counter to children's success

at school happen (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; McTaggart & Sanders, 2003). Some research associate school readiness to family income and maternal employment status (Brooks-Gunn, Han & Waldfogel, 2002; Dearing, McCartney & Taylor, 2001) while some scholars provide substantial evidence that low income families provide less intellectual stimulation to their young children compared with higher income families (Dickinson, 2001; Lee & Burkham, 2002). There is also evidence that children growing up in poverty, coupled with less quality of interactions between parents and children can have a negative impact on children's development, including their perceived readiness for school (Barnett 2008; Hair, Halle, Terry - Humen, Lavelle & Calkins, 2006; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Stoolmiller, 2008).

Meanwhile other scholars (Brooks-Gun, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002; Han, Waldfogel & Brooks-Gunn, 2001) found that the maternal employment status influence children's achievement. For instance, parents who work unpredictable and variable work schedules that do not match with school hours not only may have less time to spend with their children at home but may also be unlikely to be involved in school because of work schedules (Vernon-Feagans, et al., 2008). Connected with families social context, Evans, Maxwell and Hart (1999) argue that the number of people living together in crowded homes has significant effects on a parent's behaviour in which they are found to speak in less favourable ways. Furthermore, this type of residential density may result in parental societal withdrawal that impacts on a child's outcome (Reynolds, 1996).

Cultural and neighbourhood community. Recently, there has been a movement to go beyond a focus of primary caregiver to include a broader social context such as neighbourhood or community in understanding children's development including their readiness. Some studies examine the complexity of environmental influences on children's cognitive readiness. For example, access to children's books (Neuman & Celano, 2001), the quantity and quality of interactions between the neighbourhood schools and parents (Clapp, Nanda, & Ross, 2008; Reynolds, Mavrogens, Bezruczko, & Hageman, 1996) and racial socialization practices within families (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002).

Some scholars (Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002) view the role of culture as a powerful influence on the school readiness. Kraft-Sayre and Pianta (2000) note that when teachers and children have some common background, such as culture or language, teachers tend to view children positively leading to the establishing of a welcoming learning environment. Wesley (2003) argues that school readiness is a variable term and one that is culturally and contextually determined. Klingner, Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, Tate, Duran, & Riley (2005) add that children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds develop and experience their environments in different and unique ways. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) argue that racial or ethnic factors often interact with other factors making it difficult to assess how significant race or ethnicity may be linked to child outcomes.

Research on families in poor neighborhoods has found that "a range of significant others" assist parents in the care of their children (Jarrett, 2000). These include grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings, other relatives, and neighbors. Neuman and Celano (2001) found that there are major differences in access to print between neighbourhoods with different average incomes. They argue that families in low income

neighbourhoods had far fewer options for purchasing books, magazines or comic books of any quality than do families from middle income communities. Low income neighbourhoods are less likely to provide the resources, comfort, and ambience that support reading activity in public spaces. Local preschools in the low income neighbourhoods have fewer books for their children and accessible books are of lower qualities that are found in preschools in the middle income neighbourhoods.

A growing body of evidence suggests that the neighbourhoods and societal factors matter, especially although not exclusively within the context of poverty (Chase-Lansdale, Gordon, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997; Hertzman & Bertrand, 2007). There is consistent evidence that growing up in a cultural community with chronic poverty can have a negative impact on children's development, including their perceived readiness for school (Barnett, 2008; Hair et al., 2006; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Stoolmiller, 2008). This impact is reported to be the result of lack of resources and learning opportunities. Evans (2004) found that low income neighbourhoods are associated with aspects of physical environment that may negatively impact children's cognitive development. For example, children living in poverty are more likely to live in closer proximity to toxic waste dumps and to experience greater prevalence of poor indoor air quality, high levels of nitrogen dioxide, poor drinking water, and allergen exposure associated with asthma. Families living in poverty also eat less healthily.

Over the past decade much attention has been paid to cultural influences on parenting behaviors and children's outcomes. Recent research has suggested that the impact of specific types of parenting on child outcomes may vary depending upon the family's ethnic background (Deater-Deckard & Dodge, 1997). It is also acknowledged that the family culture provides the child with a sense of identity and a framework for interpreting the world (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000). With its varying

cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the family brings their unique experiences, values, and beliefs to being a family and raising young children. The family's cultural influence on health, growth and development, child-rearing, family relationships, and learning expectations can shape the readiness of all involved.

Previous studies have recognized the importance of schools embracing and reflecting students' cultural backgrounds (Frigo & Adams, 2002). Predictors of school readiness also point to the contribution of positive quality child care environments (Rimm-Kaufman, 2004). Some scholars emphasize the role of schools in providing environments which offer support and challenge for children's readiness (Hair et al., 2006; Rogoff, 2003), and that the school environment impacts on children's outcomes (Frigo, Corrigan, Adams, Hughes, Stephens, & Woods, 2004; Marcon, 2002). Dunlop (2002) advocates for narrowing the gap to make school entry smoother by preparing both children and their families for the differences they will encounter at school. In order to have a good transition to primary school, children need a positive learning environment that is quite different from traditional primary school classroom settings. This is important both for children's wellbeing and their cognitive achievements.

Some scholars argue that that neighbourhoods and communities can influence children's outcomes (Berliner, 2009; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2008). In this regard, neighbourhood communities are important exosystems in which many extra familial aspects of children's environment may exert an influence on their early literacy development and readiness for early schooling. For example, access to print in children's neighbourhood communities may be important in examining readiness (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2008).

Kagan and Rigby (2003) concluded that ready communities provide safe, supportive and nurturing environments for children and their families. Links between

neighbourhood environments and measures of children's school readiness (using the EDI in Canada and the AEDI in Australia) have noted the importance of neighbourhood culture, stability and heterogeneity in promoting preparedness for school (La Pointe, Laurie, & Bruno, 2007). As well as programs aimed at enhancing the physical safety of communities (Homel, Lamb, & Freiberg, 2006), those that enhance community connections can promote feelings of safety and confidence (Fasoli, Benbow, Deveraux, Falk, Hazzard, & James (2004).

Some studies suggest that the psychological, emotional and physical characteristics of communities may have both direct and indirect effects on families and children (Evans, 2004; Neuman & Celano, 2001). Effective communities are those that respect the values, self-determination, and priorities of families and translate their needs and desires into appropriate resources, supports, and services (Magrab, 1999). It is the community where these services strive to be culturally and linguistically competent that can be most responsive to each family and each child, offer continuity of care and support school readiness.

Child related factors. Extensive research has established the importance of child characteristics in predicting children's school adjustment. For example, children's economic status (Entwisle & Alexander, 1993; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Rosier & McDonald, 2011), cognitive readiness and intelligence (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998; Pianta & McCoy, 1997), language abilities (Sturner, Funk, & Green, 1996; Walker, Greenwood, Hart, & Carta, 1994), gender (Ellwein, Walsh, Eads, & Miller, 1991), ethnicity (Stone & Gridley, 1991), and temperament (Rimm-Kaufman, Rosenstock, & Arcus, 1996; Schoen & Nagle, 1994) have all been shown to play important roles in predicting school adjustment. Some studies suggested that boys tend to have more

adjustment difficulties than girls (Hausken & Rathbun, 2002; Monkeviciene, Mishara, & Dufour, 2006).

A number of studies have concluded that the most essential child qualities related to school readiness include good physical and mental health, effective communication skills, and an approach to learning characterized as enthusiastic and curious. Qualities related to academic readiness for example recognizing the alphabet, counting and knowing basic concepts have traditionally been viewed as less critical than those associated with being healthy and well-adjusted (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Johnson, Gallagher, Cook, & Wong, 1995).

Some scholars believe that genetically mediated child characteristics may also play a role in school readiness, which is the link to IQ (Butz, Pulsifier, Leppert, Rimrodt, & Belcher, 2003). Crnic and Lamberty (1994) assert that children's readiness for school is tied to their own biological timetable, which varies greatly from one child to another. According to Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox (2000), when children have academic difficulties, problems with social skills, trouble following directions, and difficulty with independent and group work teachers often consider them as not ready for school. Regarding children's skills assessment, there are debates on the appropriateness of assessing young children on high-stakes tests. While these may not be the high-stakes tests used in the United States, the same cautions about formal assessments for young children apply (Dockett & Perry, 2007). On the other hand, the use of universal psychometric tests in measuring the universality of children's development and readiness for school in Australia has been criticized (Agbenyega, 2009). The key argument is that children's development cannot be universally determined by using Eurocentric instruments that privilege some children (Agbenyega, 2009; Gonzalez-Mena, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008; Ryan, Grieshaber, Novinger, & Sweigman, 2005). A critical analysis of the literature on school

readiness and transition to school when juxtaposed with age-stages perspectives and universal testing of children (Fleer, Agbenyega, Blaise & Peers, 2008), which are used to determine school readiness, reveal serious gaps in their understanding of contemporary child development theories and practices. These scholars argue that the use of universal approaches to determine school readiness is influenced Piaget's and Gessell's concept of school readiness (Agbenyega, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008). It is explained that the use of such testing of children take little notice of the tacit cultural factors that compose individual identities and behaviours. Gathering information from multiple sources such as teachers, families and the child himself is useful in understanding children's skills across various settings (Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz, 1998).

In addition, how children act toward and are treated by their classmates, their dispositions and the types of behaviour they display (in terms of how active, passive, cooperative, argumentative, helpful, positive, negative, anxious, aggressive or demanding they are) all influence the development of children's relationships with their teachers and peers (Ladd, 2003). The quality of relationships with peers and teachers will continue to influence how children engage, participate and achieve at school, as social competency, secure relationships and a sense of belonging and connectedness are all protective factors for mental health (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2000). The impact of children's age on school readiness remains unclear, with further research needed. For instance, studies around children's age when starting school are inconsistent with some researchers highlighting that younger children make rapid progress in their first year of schooling (as cited in Dockett & Perry, 2009) and others demonstrating that older children at school entry do better academically in the short and longer term (Lin, Freeman, & Chu, 2009).

Issues of mental health. Previous research has found poor maternal and child health and adverse environmental circumstances to be related to difficulties in physical, behavioral, psychological, and educational development (Boyce, Smith, & Casto, 1999; Breslau, Johnson, & Lucia, 2001). The educational ramifications of poor health and adverse environmental circumstances are of particular concern to those serving children at the onset of schooling. Other authors (Dean, Ashton, & Elliott, 1994; Dockett, Perry, & Tracey, 2000) point to a well-coordinated and physically healthy environment as contributing factors for a child to be ‘ready for school’.

Results from preventive intervention studies have indicated that programs designed to improve school readiness in at - risk children are effective and can have substantial and long-lasting positive effects (Abbott-Shim, Lambert, & McCarty, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Reynolds, Temple & Ou, 2003). These effects are partly explained by their positive impact on the parent – child relationship and the home environment (Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, & Peay, 1999; Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010). Community based health initiatives, that encompass antenatal care through to programs supporting children of school age and their families, also have the potential to improve children’s school readiness and performance (Goldfeld & Oberklaid, 2005; Janus & Duku, 2007).

The problem lies in the fact that most educators lack training with regard to mental illness issues, and thus, when they are put in a position where they must deal with them on a day - today basis, what should be a fundamental role becomes a challenging one for them (Wilson, 2004). It is also pointed out that preparedness to deal with mental health issues in the classroom can prove to be quite daunting and overwhelming when faced with a room full of children (Albert Shanker Institute, 2009).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services studies have found that when mental health problems are present in children, normal development can be slowed and the achievement of critical skills and understandings can be inhibited as cited in Rishel, (2007). Other studies on mental health promotion argued that effective early mental health intervention can achieve positive outcomes for children including readiness (NSW Parenting Centre & Department of Community Services, 2003; Reid, Littlefield, & Hammond, 2008). It is also noted that where relationship problems become entrenched it can reduce children's capacity for endurance and lead to long-term mental health problems as well as the possibility of later labelling and stigmatization of children and families by others (Arnold et al., 2007; Reid, Littlefield, & Hammond, 2008).

Issue and Factors Relating to Transition to School

There is extensive literature that indicates the importance of children's successful transition to primary school which is associated with the acquisition of skills and achievements in the future (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Davis & Pratt, 1995; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). Margetts (1997) group the factors that promote transition under various categories such as learning in different setting as well as factors associated with the school, home, language and culture in addition to children's personal factors or characteristics.

In this study, the current factors on transition to school are focused around policy, professional knowledge and belief, school community partnership, parental and family characteristics, the neighborhood community culture, child related factors and issues of mental health.

Policy issues. It is noted that transition to school involves not only the children's readiness especially in terms of literacy, but also how families, preschools, and schools interact and cooperate to provide comprehensive support in the early years of school (Ramey & Ramey, 1994). Therefore the policy makers must facilitate the transition to

school program as the bridge between settings for children and family which provide diverse activities involving the child, family, educators, carers and wider community (Pianta et al., 1999). Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) state that formal policies and procedures are vital to ensure consistency and common expectations for transition to school planning. In the implementation of local policy, Dockett and Perry (2006) note that policies which support transition can be seen in philosophy statements for schools and prior to school settings.

Some concerns about children's experiences transferring from preschool to primary school have been expressed through government documentation and statistics in the countries where some researchers identified challenges to transition being posed by the move from a play - based approach to a more structured curriculum in their early learning (Fisher, 2008). When policy makers do not facilitate the needs of families and children, children cannot make the transition successfully and may feel insecure and nervous (Broström, 1999; Broström, 2000). It is known that some concerns exist between early childhood education researchers and policy makers in that they differ in the ways they gather and use information (Raban, 2001). In this regard, collaboration with educational researchers as well as other stakeholders is crucial to support a smooth transition for all involved. It is also important for governments to expand access and give funding for schools (Daily, Burkhauser, & Halle, 2010).

The existing nature of the education policy across countries influence the decision of starting school age. For example, children in OECD countries make the transition to formal education at the age of six and most OECD countries provide some form of free pre-primary education which children can attend with the aim of facilitating transition into formal schooling (Neuman, 2002). In Europe, the compulsory starting age for formal school varies. For example, in Britain and the Netherlands, the school starting age is five,

in Germany it is six and in Finland, Norway and Sweden, children often start school at seven (Grayson, Houghton, O'Donnell, & Sargent, 2014).

Professional knowledge and beliefs. It is clear that teachers knowledge, belief, expectation are important components that may impact on children's transition. Petriwskyj, Thorpe, and Tayler (2005) suggest that teachers' high expectations and discontinuities in teaching style are the factors that lead to difficulties in children's transitions. Some scholars argue that teacher perceptions, whether these be of children, families, communities or curriculum, have a major influence on what happens as children start school (Feeney, Grace, & Brandt, 2001; Peters, 2000). Jacobs (2001) adds that teachers' knowledge about children's development is significant because it helps to provide a framework for understanding what children may be capable of accomplishing at certain ages. It is noted that teachers with early childhood training who are equipped with information on how young children learn and develop, can help ease the transition of children and families to schools much more than teachers who lack this background (UNICEF, 2012).

Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox (2001) suggest that teachers' competency is crucial to face the challenges and obstacles in the process of children's transition to school including the knowledge to prepare transition activities and the skills to collaborate with other stakeholders. For example, teachers need preparation to conduct transition activities especially the ones before the beginning of the school year for example class lists must be generated, children's and families' phone numbers or addresses must be known and additional funds for teacher pay or unpaid time should be arranged. Regarding this competency, Peters, Hartley, Rogers, Smith, and Carr (2009) as well as Angus (2009) add that teachers play an important role in promoting family engagement and reaching out to families. Early et al. (2006) suggest that there is some evidence that teacher training in transition practices leads to increased use of transition practices of all types. Thus,

providing pre-service and in-service training in this area may help teachers create plans for children and families that aid in helping children succeed during this transition.

The teachers' ability in building relationships between stakeholders is another factor that may facilitate the process of transition such as in promoting children's growth, development and learning. In addition the teachers' skills in developing positive relationships with families may promote children's engagement with school (Department of Education Science and Training, 2005; Keyes, 2002). The teachers' ability to create partnerships with families may facilitate a positive start to school and promote children's achievement (Brown, 2009; Chan, 2010).

Peters (2010) states that teachers must have positive expectations for all their students. She reviewed current research and suggests some important aspects of transition such as helping the child develop a sense of belonging and well-being at school; acknowledging children's values, languages and cultural knowledge, getting children deeply engaged in learning that is suitably interesting and challenging, helping children establish a positive identity as a learner, and encouraging a positive disposition towards learning. Some scholars report that teachers have to cope with a number of barriers regarding the implementation of transition practices. The most common difficulties cited by teachers are implementing additional transition practices with the strain of large class sizes, class lists that are generated too late, practices involving summer work that is not supported by salary, and the lack of a transition plan in the district (Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, 2001).

Dockett and Perry (2006) make a distinction between 'orientation to school' and 'transition to school' programmes. Orientation programs are designed to help children and parents become familiar with the school setting that may involve a tour of the school, meeting relevant people in the school, and spending some time in a classroom. Transition

programs may include orientation time but tend to be longer term and more geared to the individual needs of children and families than orientation programs.

Brostrom (2000) mentions concerns about accommodating children's needs and the disappearance of the coordination of curriculum and pedagogy between preschool and school. Dockett and Perry (2003) found that if schools neglect the emotional side of transition children tend to experience an unpleasant transition because entering primary school as a new environment, can be overwhelming for them. These problems may affect children's experiences in viewing the difficulty in transition and may affect their learning because of these transition related issues (Carr et al., 2009; Gallagher, 2005; Peters, 1997).

School community partnerships. Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) argue that successful transition is characterized by ongoing efforts to create linkages and continuity among all of the players in the child's environment namely parents, preschool and kindergarten teachers, community agencies to provide a continuum of care and support. They add that family school partnerships that promote family participation and collaboration and communication that facilitates successful team processes are major components that form the scaffold for successful transitions. Some examples of this collaboration is when parents attend school events, workshops, and academic conferences; volunteer for certain events or activities within the school, or participate in various school committees or boards (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2005).

The contribution of parents and teachers in transition are critical to effective transition. Transition involves not only the children's *readiness*, especially in terms of literacy, but also how families, preschools, and schools interact and collaborate to provide comprehensive support in the early years of school (Ramey & Ramey, 1994). Some scholars (Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Johansson, 2002) argue that the contribution of parents in terms of values, beliefs, and socio economic status in the process of transition will affect

the way the transition is experienced. When families and school personnel collaborate together, with the involvement of other community groups or agencies as appropriate, they can work together to promote children's wellbeing and educational attainment (Dockett & Perry, 2007).

A wide range of relationships has been connected with positive adjustment to school (Pianta, 1999). These include positive relationships between parents and teachers (Epstein, 1997); peer relationships including friendships (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996); and children's relationships with teachers (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In addition, positive relationships between families and teachers promote children's engagement with school (Department of Education Science and Training, 2005; Keyes, 2002). Partnerships between families and teachers facilitate a positive start to school and promote children's achievement (Brown, 2009; Chan, 2010).

Some research and theory on transition emphasize the importance of linkages, close coordination, and continuity between early childhood programs and primary schools (Arnold, Bartlet, Gowani, & Merali, 2007; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008). The lack of relationships and collaboration between all involved in transition to school may impact on the children's, families', communities' and teachers' engagement and expectation in the program. In addition, it would prevent children's opportunities to build upon their strengths of children, and obstruct the educators, families and communities towards promoting positive educational outcomes.

Collaboration includes communication which is the basis of successful transition activities. In this regard, channels of communication must be open during all phases of transition. Communication must be considered from the perspective of creating partnerships with families, using strategies to maintain effective communication, and setting specific means and timetables for contacts. Christenson (1999) asserted that the

goal of working with families is to create partnerships that define how families and professionals can work together with the best interest of the child as the focus. Early et al. (2001) mention that communication and coordination with preschool settings (a practice that would sustain on-going relationships and lessen discontinuities) is challenging because they require knowledge of the incoming class and their preschool settings, time and willingness on the part of the preschool programs, and coordination with many different programs.

Parental and family characteristics. A range of social and demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, parental employment and parenting practices are some of the factors that influence children's early adjustment to school that have been examined by some researchers (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Hausken & Rathbun, 2002; Margetts, 2007a; Monkeviciene, Mishara, & Dufour, 2006).

In addition to the impact of the aforementioned parental characteristics on children's readiness for school, parental attitudes towards school can also have a strong impact on the child's transition to school. If the parent is encouraging and positive the child is likely to enter school more confidently. If the parent is anxious or stressed, the child may pick up on these feelings and become anxious, temperamental or shy (Davies, 2011). Strong parent – school relationships may provide shared expectations and support for the child to do his or her best.

Transition to school and achieving school readiness has been found to be more challenging for children in lower socio - economic circumstances (Davies, 2011; Rosier & McDonald, 2011). However parenting style and parental characteristics such as maternal education and age, as well as the home environment appear to mediate the relationship between financial disadvantage and school readiness (Rosier & McDonald, 2011).

Some scholars (Barnett, Young, & Schweinhart, 1998; Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012) note that mothers' participation in the child's education, academic motivation, and personal behavior are all found to be powerful influences on achievement and educational attainment. A study by Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta and Howes (2002) conclude that family characteristics are the best predictors of children's outcomes. The study shows that "family characteristics such as maternal education and parents' caregiving practices and parenting attitudes were the strongest predictors of child outcomes, even among those children who experienced full-time non-parental child care" (p. 431).

Many scholars (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999; Rosier & McDonald, 2011) state that the transition from preschool to elementary school can be particularly difficult for children from low income families. Other scholars provide one of the factors influencing young children's adjustment which is namely living in poverty (Brooks-Gun, Klebanov, & Duncan, 1996; Moore, Redd, Mary, & Ashleigh, 2009; Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992). Beyond kindergarten, children from impoverished backgrounds remain at heightened risk of not doing well in school (Alexander & Entwistle, 1988; Jacob & Ludwig, 2009; Ramey & Ramey, 1992). Reese, Gallimore, and Goldenberg (1999) gave evidence that low income families provide opportunities and experiences which support children's skill development, but unfortunately the home environments of these families remain poorly understood and have been often viewed from a deficit perspective.

Cultural and neighbourhood community factors. Some scholars have noted that cultural, historical and institutional factors all influence views on what skills, knowledge and abilities are important for children's successful transition to school (Graue, 1993; Meisels, 1999; Pianta & Kraf-Sayre, 1999; Smith & Shepard, 1988). Fabian and Dunlop

(2005) suggested that some of the factors making transition more difficult are the different physical and emotional learning environments. Peters (2010) summarizes the successful transitions in relation to the features of a school environment that fosters children's wellbeing, belonging and positive engagement with learning (Peters, 2010). Some schools have programs that focus on the transition to school so they can help set a school climate that demonstrates respect for individual learners while fostering a sense of belonging for both children and families (Dockett et al., 2008; Margetts, 2007; Peters, 2010; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). It needs a range of people involved to ease children's transition to school.

On a larger scale, the nature of neighborhood communities has an important effect on children's school outcomes. Chase-Lansdale and Gordon (1996) argue that where communities lack resources such as play spaces and libraries this factors may influence key aspects of the early school transition ecology and contribute to negatively to children's meaning making, familiarity and continuity with their surroundings. Neighborhoods with quality play groups and available natural spaces for children to explore also facilitate children's social and school experiences in indirect ways (Beyers, Bates, Pettit, & Dodge, 2003; Chase-Lansdale & Gordon , 1996; Hertzman & Bertrand, 2007).

Many scholars (Beyers, Bates, Pettit, & Dodge, 2003; Chase-Lansdale & Gordon, 1996; Hertzman & Bertrand, 2007; Leventhal & Brooks-Gun, 2000) investigated associations between neighborhood characteristics at both regional and community context levels and the development of children and found strong neighborhood influences on children's cognitive and social outcomes. Thus, it is important that communities interested in their children's readiness for school spend money to build community rich education resources for them (Aber, Gephart, Brooks-Gunn, & Connell, 1997). It is pointed out that a good neighborhood gives an advantage to children who enter school because it provides

various kinds of support that children need to help them to adjust more easily to schools than children from disadvantaged families and neighborhoods without rich resources (Copland, 2000; Jacob & Ludwig, 2009; Rosier & McDonald, 2011).

Elder (2001) carried out transition studies which emphasise different contexts of the social structures, cultures, and populations that affect individuals over time and place. Other scholars conducted studies which focus on the setting, the nature of the cultural and psychosocial adjustments involved, and the role of the actors in shaping their transition (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006; Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008). All these scholars have concluded that neighborhood characteristics influence children's development through the construction of institutional and family connectedness (Cook, Herman, Phillips, & Settersten, 2002). For example, there is consensus that neighborhoods that are rich with resources, such as play spaces, parks and library resources draw families from different settings which leads to parental networking that facilitates child development. It is argued that the absence of institutional and family connectedness is prevalent in communities or neighborhoods with limited or no resources (Sampson, 1992). Social connectedness within neighborhoods which is mostly common where resources are provided may buffer children against negative outcomes (Dawe, Harnett, & Frye, 2008; Korbin & Coulton, 1997; Sampson, 1992). I would argue that similar factors may influence children's transition experiences depending on the extent to which neighbours provide parents and children with knowledge about the contexts in which the schools are situated, comfort and familiarity with the school, and direct assistance such as transportation or child care that links with community resources.

Child related factors. Some scholars (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011; Reid, 1993; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005) argue that, children typically make the transition to school and embark on trajectories that are characterized by little or no

externalizing behaviors. For children who exhibit steadily increasing trajectories transition to school may pose a particularly significant challenge. Reid (1993) explains that there are two subsets of children of particular interest. They are children who demonstrate externalizing behavior problems, for example coercive interaction patterns, oppositional or aggressive behaviors, and children with little or no prior evidence of risk for behavior problems for whom the transition to school and aspects of the classroom environment operate as catalysts for externalizing behaviors. Robins (1991) notes that a child characteristic that delineates risk for externalizing symptoms is child gender. Beginning around preschool, boys are consistently more likely to express higher levels of externalizing behaviors at any given point in time (Keenan & Shaw, 1997; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001). However, there has been less clarity about whether the developmental trajectories of externalizing behavior vary by gender (Broidy, Nagin, Trembley, Bates, Brame, Dodge, 2003; Cote, Zoccolillo, Tremblay, Nagin, & Vitaro, 2001; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001; Silverthorn, 2001).

Some researchers have highlighted the complex interplay between child characteristics and the multiple social contexts children inhabit (Boyce, Frank, Jensen, Kessler, Nelson, 1998; Ladd, 1996; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) as influencing children's transition to school. They argue that there are child and relational risks that take shape early such as child behaviour or negative parenting that may play a role in the development of sustained maladaptive trajectories. Furthermore, the relationships encountered later in development, for example with teachers, have an emotional significance that, together with previous child and family factors, serves to promote adaptive or maladaptive developmental trajectories.

Dockett and Perry (2009) also acknowledge that the complex interaction of the individual child and various contextual factors influence transition to school and lead

children towards healthy social, emotional, academic and school adjustment or to possible mental health difficulties. It is recognized that the phase of transition is a time of rapid change in the life of children where they may feel stressed in the process of adapting to a new environment because schools are frequently much larger than preschool settings, and they have teachers, and classmates (Fabian, 2000; Griebel & Niesel, 2000; Margetts, 1999).

Children who lack the social and academic skills to succeed in the early elementary grades are at risk for trajectories of increasing academic failure and behavior problems over their school years (Entwisle & Alexander, 1999). Researchers and policy makers often stress the necessity of social emotional competence including self-regulation and social competence skills for success in the transition to school and in the early school years because deficits in these processes are linked to poorer school performance (Raver, 2002).

Issues of mental health. Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000) note that some children experience adjustment difficulties and distress during the period of transition. For example, one US study found 16% of children had difficult entries marked by serious concerns or multiple problems as reported by teachers (Carter, Wagmiller, Gray, McCarthy, Horwitz, & Briggs-Gowan, 2010). Another US study found 15% of children exhibited two or more adjustment difficulties (such as pretending to be sick, complaining about school or a reluctance to go to school) while 13% showed one adjustment difficulty, as reported by their parents (Hausken & Rathbun, 2002). More recently, research in the US has suggested that approximately one in five children meet the criteria for a “psychiatric disorder with impairment” (p. 695) as they make the transition into formal schooling (Carter et al., 2010). These statistics highlight the vulnerability of children during this period and thus their need for support. Brostrom (2003) argues that preschool teachers that do not provide extra support for children may be contributing to a number of well-functioning preschool

children to lose competencies during their transition to school as a result of the requirements to adapt to new environments without a significant support.

Children's experiences in school transition also play an important role. It is argued that if children's first experience of school and their attitude to school is negative it can greatly affect their further learning outcomes, and their cognitive, social, emotional development (Berk, 2006). Griebel and Niesel (2003) reiterated that transition for some children may cause social and emotional turmoil as well as discontinuities in learning if not organized comprehensively with families. Assisting children to manage this potentially challenging transition period and make a positive start to school can help to maintain and foster a positive sense of self (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998) and therefore support their mental health and wellbeing.

Schools are ideally placed to assist parents and carers during this potentially stressful period through the provision of parenting support and education. Schools also play an important role in fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community for children, parents, and carers which not only supports children's adjustment during transition, but helps to promote mental health and wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Osterman, 2000).

Framing wellbeing as a fundamental principle of readiness and transition to school. It is important to consider school readiness and transition to school as a wellbeing issue. Wellbeing as a component of school readiness is considered a child variable in the context of this research. That is how the practices of teachers informed by policy and parental demands recognize children's rights, their need for holistic development devoid of excessive stress. Much like the concept of readiness that defies consensus definition, the concept of wellbeing is open to a range of definitions, conceptualizations and methodological approaches. According to Mashford-Scott, Church and Tayler (2012)

wellbeing can be explained in four broad, conflicting and at times overlapping perspectives in terms of social and economic; psychological and mental health; philosophical and educational. I have previously, in this chapter, reviewed literature pertaining to children's mental health as an important aspect for consideration when thinking about school readiness and transition. Several other studies have looked at wellbeing in terms of physical and emotional health (De Roiste, Kelly, Molcho, Gavin, & Gabhainn, 2012), belongingness (Osterman, 2000), resilience (Yeager & Dweck, 2012) and mental-health, particularly for adolescents (Tomyn & Cummins, 2011). According to Laevers (2005), emotional wellbeing is as a key factor in "the full realization of a person's potential" (Laevers, 2005, p. 1). In this way, wellbeing connects to the nature of children's experiences in preparation and transition to school. Often, readiness and transition programs that take children's overall wellbeing into consideration are found to be more effective than those that focus on academic potentials alone (Fattore, Mason, & Watson, 2007). Fattore, Mason, and Watson (2007) and Mashford-Scott, Church & Tayler (2012) argue that it will be difficult for any learner, an adult or a child, to make significant gains in education if they feel their wellbeing is threatened. Children who feel overwhelmed and stressed with school tasks may develop behaviour and withdrawal symptoms. In the same way teacher-child relationships that hierarchical in favour teachers, and in which the child's right diminishes may affect children's overall wellbeing (Laevers, 2005). Thus, it is important that teachers' school readiness and transition practices are analysed in terms of how these programs support or not support children's wellbeing.

Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed the empirical literature pertaining to school readiness and transition to school. It covered various conceptualizations of school readiness and transition and factors that can act as facilitators or barriers to children's readiness and transition to school. The next chapter will review the theoretical literature informing this research.

Chapter Three

Theoretical literature review and framework

The Importance of Theoretical Framework in Research

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a more detailed understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of this research and demonstrate the relationship between the theory and the thesis as a whole. A theory is a related set of concepts (or constructs) and principles that provides a systematic way of understanding events, behaviors or situations (Coreil, 2008). The theoretical framework serves as structure that holds or supports a research study. It acts as the compass of research process in which it guides the research methodology, method and design. According to Torraco, it also influences approaches to data collection, analysis and interpretation (as cited in Swanson, 1997).

In this chapter, the researcher developed a framework to guide the theorization and understanding of school readiness and transition. The conceptual framework of this study is guided by the research literature on school readiness and transition which demonstrates an understanding of theories and concepts relevant to these issues. The concept of school readiness and transition has been discussed in Chapter Two of the empirical literature review.

The Theoretical Framework of School Readiness and Transition to School

It is acknowledged that there is a need to have a broad framework for understanding school readiness and transition which integrates the complex network of systemic and individual factors that influence developmental systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Internationally, school readiness and transition to school have been studied using several

theoretical concepts (Meisels, 1999; Rogoff, 2003; Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008). For example, a transactional conception of readiness is largely informed by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) while Griebel and Niesel (1999) refer to attachment theory or stress theory in studying transition in Germany. Peters (2000), proposes the importance of considering maturational theories when looking at the transition to school. For Elder (2001), the use of life course theory can provide some insights into the experiences of children within the context of family, social change and the individual lives within such contexts.

After much consideration, the researcher decided to use the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) to frame this study in order to have a better understanding of school readiness and transition to school in the Indonesian context. Bronfenbrenner's theory appears appropriate within contemporary research and practice to develop children's school readiness and transition. In this study, the researcher begins with an earlier and partial version which is the major concepts of Bronfenbrenner's theory as the foundation. In addition, this ecological model is elaborated by exploring the genetic factors that influence children's development and for that matter, a bioecological framing of readiness and transition.

A Brief Overview of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner's earlier theory (1979) considers the different levels of the environment (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystems), and how they both influence and are influenced by a developing person. His earlier theorization focused excessively on context and disregarded the individual child's contribution including, biological contributions to development and role in early childhood education. Later, Bronfenbrenner criticized himself for disregarding these aspects (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). His model suggests that

children do not develop in isolation, but in relation to their family, school and community (Griffin & Harvey, 1995).

Bronfenbrenner (1995) argues that there are four interconnected structures that support an ecological approach to child development - microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems. An ecological systems theory focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. This environment is complex and interrelated and can be described as nested settings in which a child develops over time throughout the life course (Chen & Agbenyega, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The strength of this theory lies in the fact that as a child develops, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex. This complexity arises as the child's physical and cognitive structures extend and mature (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The understanding of the ecological systems perspective places children at the heart of society and not as isolated objects. It sees children as people and individuals who have a role in shaping and are shaped by their immediate and external contexts (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The ecological theory acknowledges that a child's development is shaped by his or her experiences in the settings, the number and quality of the connections between the settings (for example family and school), and other environments where the child does not spend time but which have the power of proximal processes to influence development (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Examples of such external factors include but not limited to educational, social and economic policies, cultural, religious and school values, and institutional norms.

Bronfenbrenner (1998) admitted a weakness in his theory and justifies that at the point of developing the theory, the focus of developmental psychology was firmly on individuals and their processes. In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1999, 2001a) saw the need to improve upon the earlier versions of the theory by renaming it as bioecological systems

theory to emphasize that a child's own biology is a fundamental environment affecting his development (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The bioecological theory of human development by Bronfenbrenner (2001a) explains the drivers of human development as the interactions that occur between an individual (their biological being) and the interconnected systems surrounding them (their ecology). The bioecological model represents the individual as embedded in systems of context in which it focuses more on the individual and his or her dispositions, the time dimensions and the interaction between the individual and the environment. This model incorporates the processes of development through the complex interaction between biophysiological characteristics of an individual and their environmental contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The bioecological model is comprised of four principal components (Process, Person, Context and Time), and the relationships among them. The *Process* component includes interactions between the individual and the environment, called proximal processes, which is viewed as being the “*primary engines of development*” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996). Proximal processes are bidirectional in their influence in which the ecology changes the person and the person changes the ecology. Proximal processes are defined as “enduring, reciprocal, highly interactive processes between a developing organism and other individuals or objects in the environment” (Ceci, 2006, p. 173). In terms of the *Person* concept, the individual person's characteristics contribute towards shaping the development of the person and their proximal processes. This is also incorporated into the microsystem as characteristics of parents and teachers interact with the child. The *Contexts* in which the individual develops are noted as being of importance in terms of children's relationships with objects and symbols. The *Time* concept or chronosystem has effect on the three succeeding levels (Bronfenbrenner, 2005;

Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, time changes the dynamics of values, culture, policy, parenting styles and so on.

A bioecological approach to readiness and transition to school recognizes the importance of children's individual personal qualities and skills as well as the importance of relationships and the connections of these relationships for successful transition from preschool to school and future success in moving throughout and within different educational contexts (Perry, Dockett, Whitton, Vickers, Johnston, & Siduti, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's approach also provides a transactional ecological model which views a child as an active participant in development, who actively structures and makes sense of the world. The belief in transactional ecological view suggests impossibility to isolate the singular or main effects of either the individual or contextual factors since they are constantly interacting in dynamic and unique ways (MacKenzie & McDonough, 2009).

Applying Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Model to this Study

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system model which acknowledges the shared responsibility of all stakeholders can be considered to determine the concept and practices of school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia. The model frames school readiness and transition activities at four interconnected levels (macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem) which are affected by chronosystem taking into consideration the child's biology (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Further, the four systems provide the understanding of researching school readiness and transition at an in depth level and identify complementary systems such as policy, cultural practices, values, school, family, and child characteristics. The following Figure 1 illustrates the framework informing this study.

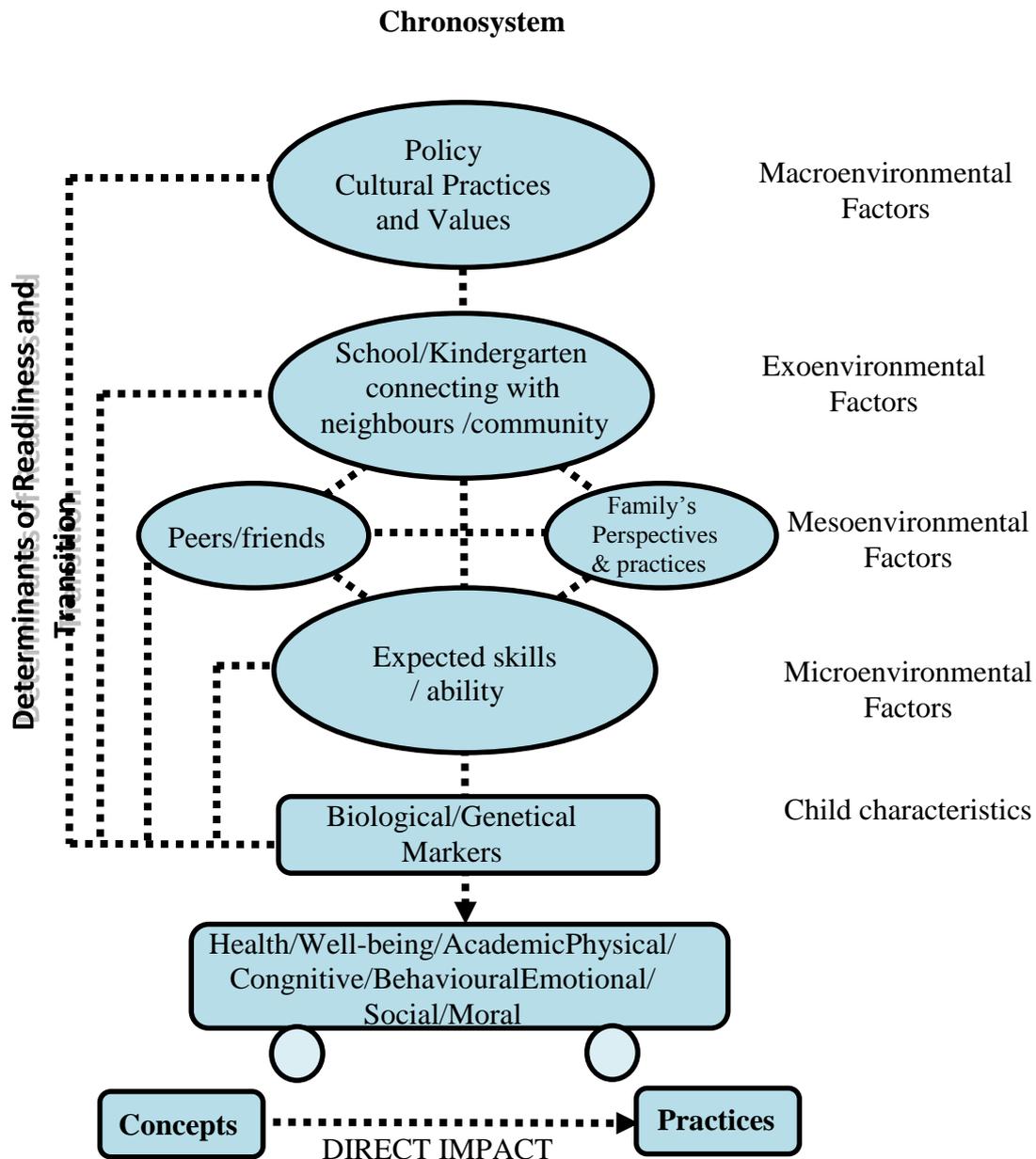


Figure 1. A theoretical framework of school readiness and transition

The figure above illustrates the determinants of readiness and transition which offer a conceptual guideline for investigating the perspectives and practices of teachers, parents and educational policy makers on school readiness and transition in the Indonesian context. It shows the importance of a child's characteristics (genetic factors and developmental aspects) and the five environmental systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystems, and chronosystem). Besides, the framework suggests how the

concept/knowledge of all stakeholders in terms of the child influences their practices. Overall, this figure presents a direction towards generating a system of school readiness and transition for children, which is holistic in nature, taking into account the multiple socio-cultural, economic and political factors in Indonesia.

Using the bioecological theory, the figure implies that a child's readiness and transition to school occur in terms of the influence of a child's characteristics (genetic, health, well-being, academic physical, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, social, moral), its context (family, school, community) and the connection among these contexts at any given time and across time (Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999). The bioecological theory suggests that the child is the center of five environmental systems and is influenced by experiences related to each of the layers. Within these layers, the individuals within each level, particularly the child himself, dynamically participate in and influence interactions. The relation of a child's characteristic and its context to school readiness and transition to school are explained below.

Relating a child's characteristic to readiness and transition to school. Many scholars (Beaver, Wright, DeLisi, & Vaughn, 2009; Haila, 2000; Rutter, 2006) indicate that genetic factors is one of the aspects that account for the child's readiness and successful transition to school, in which the environment strongly affects the activation of genes. They confirm that genetic makeup does not merely control a child's characteristics, rather, genetic messages interact with environmental experiences to determine developmental outcomes (Haila, 2000; Rutter, 2006). In other words, genetic factors have an influence on developmental outcomes, including children's readiness and achievements, but most outcomes are not determined by genes. Mehaffie and Fraser (2007) explains that the environmental aspects of school readiness consist of a supporting environment including attention, supervision, enough nutrition, health care and help in increasing physical growth,

cognition, and socio - emotional development. The encouraging and nurturing of these interactions influence the child's development. Lemelin, Boivin, Forget-Dubois, Dionne, Ãnguin, Brendgen (2007) found a substantial contribution of the shared environment to cognitive school readiness and argued that genetic effects were more important for general abilities underlying school readiness. Although some research highlights the importance of the environmental aspects of school readiness, they omit the individual differences in school readiness factors that may be accounted for through genetic elements (Lemelin et al., 2007). Other research on gender using North American and European' samples, indicated that girls have been found to be more advanced in school readiness than boys (Janus & Duku, 2007). Some studies link their reasons to chronological age of girls during early childhood who are assumed to be more matured and more ready than boys (Gullo, 1991) and with parents and teachers' higher expectations for girls' than boys' school success (Wood, Kaplan, & McLyod, 2007).

Relating the concept of microsystem to readiness and transition to school.

Microsystem as the innermost level of environment and the closest layer to the child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) includes the structures in which the child has direct contact and comprises the relationships and interactions a child has with her immediate surroundings (Berk, 2006). Research demonstrates that the child's genetic factors and skills/abilities are embedded within the family which is located in the microsystem layer. The microsystems are patterns of activities, roles and relationships experienced in a given setting in which events in one microsystem can affect what happens in another (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The bioecological definition of school readiness and transition is a multi-dimensional concept which includes not only the biological child but also the environment surrounding the child. In this perspective the biological child comes to acquire readiness as

a result of their direct and indirect interactions with environmental resources and through social relationship between children, peers, families and teachers (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006). It is recognized that there are many contributors to children's experiences and that the perspectives and expectations of each contributor shape those experiences in some way (Dockett & Perry, 2007). The family, school, community and policy in different layers of environments are central to explaining the perspective and practice on school readiness and transition.

The microsystem level consists of important elements such as family members, kindergarten and primary school teachers, peers, neighborhood area and communities. Interaction within the microsystem takes place in two directions (bidirectional influences) both away from the child and toward the child. For example, parents' warmth and support influence children's development and adjustment (Frick, 1994; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986) and children's behavior (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2000), whereas children's behavioral problems and characteristics predict more negative parenting behavior (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates & Criss, 2001). On the one hand, a teacher who provides a secure relationship with children may influence children's socio-emotional and behavioral development. On the other hand, children who have insecure relationships with teachers have more difficulty interacting with teachers and peers (Baker, 2006; Pettit et al., 2001). Some scholars provide evidence that within teacher and child relationships, children may learn or continue to use adaptive or maladaptive interpersonal and intrapersonal strategies (Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005). Moreover, high quality relationships scaffold for children the formation of important social and behavioral skills which are needed for children's educational success (Baker, 2006).

In view of this, it can be argued that readiness and children's successful transition are partly determined by the number and quality of the connections between the settings in

which children spend time. According to Peters (2010), successful transitions depend on the nature of the relationships between all involved. In this regard, families and schools must be ready for children to learn in order for them to be ready (Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000).

Relating the concept of mesosystem to readiness and transition to school. The second conceptual level is the mesosystem, which refers to the relationship between different parts of the microsystem and how they work together to support children to develop their potential. In other words, as Berk (2006) argues, this layer provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem.

Earlier research has suggested that home and school collaboration profits to enhancing children's cognitive and social skills and benefits their school achievement (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Ecological theories and empirical work also demonstrate that both families and schools are important elements in the microsystem because they critically influence the lives of young children (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009; Thelen & Smith, 2006). Ecological perspectives maintain that the interaction and collaboration between home and school is crucial for supporting positive child outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Dockett & Perry, 2006; Margetts, 2007; Ramey & Ramey, 1994; Pelletier, 2002; Peters, 2010).

The interactions that occur within this nested system enable families and schools to share ideas about the child and the work of teachers and identify challenges and opportunities for enhancing children's development (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). Therefore, in terms of children's readiness and transition, it can be argued that parents who are frequently involved in helping children and teachers as volunteers at school events, and attending parent - teacher meetings, contribute to school success (Ginsburg-Block, Manz, & McWayne, 2010; Jeynes, 2003). Furthermore, teachers who

are emotionally supportive in the classroom and create a space where parents feel comfortable, can be expected to collaborate with parents in qualitatively different ways than those who are less emotionally supportive. Collaborative teacher actions may help parents better understand their children's school challenges and monitor their problematic behaviors (Lasky, 2000). On the contrary, less emotionally supportive teachers may be more central and demanding in their interactions with parents (Walker & MacLure, 2005), which may possibly lead to less positive and unproductive communication about children's concern and progress.

Relating the concept of exosystem to readiness and transition to school. The exosystem conceptual level is a wider context in which events occur and affect what happens in the microsystem where a child is mainly involved. The exosystem is concerned with the connection between a social setting in which the individual does not have a control over the influences. This conceptual layer relates to the broader community factors that affect the lives of children such as parental employment status, extended family, mass media, workplace issues, neighbors' behaviours, and community services (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1998).

In terms of school readiness and transition to school, parental employment status and neighbourhood resources and factors for example, may affect parenting behaviors and influence children's development. Earlier studies have established that multiple risk factors (eg, poverty, family problems, ethnic minority status) have been associated with poorer child outcomes (Sameroff, Seifer, Baldwin, & Baldwin, 1993). Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2003) posit that communities who are endowed with different resources such as libraries and play-parks for children are able to support children to be ready for school than those without such resources. In developing countries, children who live in rural areas where resources such as libraries and playgrounds are less available may be less ready for

school than children who live in urban areas (Aboud, 2006). It is argued that children in rural areas have a less stimulating environment because of non-availability of learning resources than do children in urban areas and therefore, may be less ready for school (Aboud, 2006).

Relating the concept of macrosystem to readiness and transition to school.

The macrosystem concept is the outer layer, the broadest ecological contextual system and the furthest removed from the child's direct experience. Some scholars argue that the macrosystem involves a broader culture that includes the role of ethnicity and socioeconomic factors in children's development. It is the most encompassing context in which children and teachers live, including the society's cultural values, laws, policies and customs (Berk, 2006; Greenfield, Suzuki, & Rothstein-Finsch, 2006).

Paquette and Ryan (2001) argue that the macrosystem has great responsibility for children's needs as it affects all levels of support that children receive at the inner levels of the system. The macrosystem has implications for practitioners (parents and teachers) to investigate how cultural norms and school policies can affect children's school community (Caple & Salcido, 2006). It is in the Macrosystem that the experiences of children within the various cultural environments transcend other practices which children experience (Fulcher, 2007). For example, from the macrosystem spreads cultural beliefs and values that influence family functioning positively and negatively. Therefore, the effects of complex beliefs defined by the macrosystem have a flow on effect throughout the interactions of all other layers that the child experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

The belief systems and ideology of the society in which the child lives influence the child directly, however, the child does not necessarily have an active role to determine his or her how the macrosystem functions (Santrock, 2011). There may be times when policies

and values can be altered or reformed as a result of children's behaviors. Thus, it can be argued that children may indirectly influence the macrosystem at some stages in their lives.

In addition if the culture in which the children lives believe that they should have certain skills before entering primary school, the people in that culture are likely to develop policies that demand such 'standard skills'. This would in turn affect the structures in which the child lives and function. Government regulations and educational policies regarding early childhood education and in some countries where children are required to take readiness tests before they enter school, are the direct result of the interplay between the macrosystem and other subsystems. In effect, what happens in the macrosystem has a spill on effect on children's early educational experiences and impact on the structures in which their education systems function. Governments have a crucial role to play in readiness and transition programs by developing policies that strengthen family, school and community relationships and ensure that early childhood educational settings are places where all children build successful lifelong learning skills (Rhode Island Kids Count, 2005). According to Whipple, Evans, Barry, and Maxwell (2010) the importance for governments to consider contemporary educational issues from the bioecological model, and not to heavily emphasize prescriptive isolated skills is a great way forward for school readiness and transition.

Relating the concept of chronosystem to readiness and transition to school.

The chronosystem is Bronfenbrenner's later conceptualisations of the ecological model which involves the temporal changes in children's environment that produce new conditions which affect development (Berk, 2006; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Meisels (1999) notes that time is important for understanding how the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem function in children's overall development because it provides variability in children's performance. According to Meisels (1999),

policy variation in testing children's readiness as a universal process for determining who is ready may not favor some children at a particular time of the day due to physiological and psychological changes. In effect, this may affect the way children perform on the test.

It is argued that the timing of a parent's death and the physiological changes that occur with the aging of a child can affect the way the child functions (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) add that the chronosystem may include environmental events, major life transitions, and historical events such as separation of parents, moving to a new location or growing up during war. In Santrock's (2011) view, the chronosystem reflects the cumulative experiences an individual has over the course of their lifetime. The experiences include environmental events and major transitions in an individual's lifetime such as divorce, marriage or the birth of a baby.

In summary, it can be concluded that all activities and practices are time-bound. It can be changes which take place on a frequent basis through the child's life, or one off changes such as the transition from preschool to formal schooling. It should be a shared responsibility of all stakeholders involved in children's education to support children's readiness and transition to school by taking all the conceptual systems in the bioecological framework into consideration when educating young children (Berk, 2000).

Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed the theoretical literature pertaining to this research. It included and discussed the conceptual framework which has been modelled on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. The most important knowledge put forward in this chapter is that both biology and environmental factors interact to influence children's development and learning therefore, it is difficult to say how much does each contributes. School readiness and transition programs therefore, need to take into account both the child's biology and the context in which they learn and develop. The next chapter will present the methodology of this research.

Chapter Four

The Research Methodology

Introduction

The previous two chapters presented a review of related literature and the theoretical framework of this study. This chapter discusses the methodological issues and research design. It is acknowledged that there are various methodologies that can guide researchers in terms of how they ground their work (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The choice of methodology is often based on the research questions, certain assumptions, and values (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Wisker (2008) argues that the selection of methodology and the methods follow on naturally from the researcher's worldview and philosophy and from the clear definition of the research questions that underpin the research.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of research paradigms, providing definitions and discussions of the role of paradigms in the research. Next, it covers the method, research design, phases of the research, ethical considerations, language and transcription issues and the summary of this chapter.

Research Paradigm

According to Guba (1990), every researcher conceptualizes knowledge in different ways, invoking the term 'paradigm' to connote a basic set of beliefs that guides action (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), all research is interpretative because it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be studied. MacKenzie and Knipe (2006) mention a number of

theoretical paradigms such as: positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, interpretivist, transformative, emancipatory, critical, pragmatism and deconstructivist.

Positivist paradigm. Positivism which is based on the rationalistic and empiricist philosophy is a dominant paradigm that guides early educational and psychological research (Mertens, 2014). Positivists made claims that “scientific knowledge is utterly objective and that only scientific knowledge is valid, certain and accurate” (Crotty, 1998, p. 29). As positivism is situated within a quantitative approach, the researcher becomes invariably positioned ‘outside’ and ‘at a distance,’ and looking for some forms of objective truth (Wisker, 2008). Positivism as a paradigm is good at capturing some realities, and providing insights into some problem with some basis for generalizations. However, as a methodology and a theoretical construct, it is not able to find answers to every kind of research questions and purposes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Post-Positivist paradigm. Guba stated that in the positivist paradigm, there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood, whereas it is argued in the post-positivist perspectives that reality can never be fully apprehended, but only approximated (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that post-positivism relies on multiple methods as a way of capturing as much of reality as possible. The purpose of post-positivist research is the discovery of truths and not one truth. Post-positivists believe that human knowledge is based not on absolutes, but rather upon human assumptions and that emphasis should be placed on the discovery and verification of theories (Wisker, 2008).

In view of the theoretical framework of the study which is bioecological theory, it is argued that readiness reflects the child’s biology within environments in which they find themselves, their families, early childhood settings, schools, neighborhoods, and communities (Kagan & Rigby, 2003). This implies that it needs kinds of data that can be

derived from in depth exploration of beliefs, values and practices of stakeholders. It also requires measurement of attitudinal attributes. Therefore, this study's aims cannot be met within a positivist perspective alone. It requires a combination of the positivist quantitative paradigm with the post-positivist qualitative paradigm in order to get an in depth understanding of the meaning, interpretation, ideas and values related to school readiness and transition to school which has not been clearly defined in Indonesia.

Interpretivist or constructivist paradigm. Wisker (2008) explains that interpretivism is an aspect of post-positivist research which depends on the beliefs that human beings are subjects and have consciousness or a mind. Essentially, human behavior is affected by knowledge of the social world, which exists only in relation to human beings (Creswell et al., 2003). Interpretivist/constructivist approaches aim to comprehend "the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.36), which implies that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p.12). Creswell et al. (2003) argues that interpretivist/constructivist generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings throughout the research process. They tend to depend on the participants' views of the state being studied and recognize the effect on the research of their own background and experiences. Creswell et al. (2003) adds that the constructivist researcher is most likely to rely on qualitative data collection methods and analysis or a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods).

In Sheppard's (2006) view, an interpretivist perspective is concerned with how people make sense of the world, and the understanding that there is "no one single view of the world, and that individuals and groups can interpret the world in widely different fashions" (p.153). The concept that was reflected in an interpretivist approach is "to obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p.12).

Interpretivists argue that research should rely on participants' views and thoughts expressed through their own background experiences (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The basic assumption guiding the interpretivist paradigm is that "knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and researchers should attempt to understand the complex world lived experience from the point of view of those who live" (Mertens, 2005, pp. 12-13). The interpretivists assume that the conscience of human beings and their behaviour are affected by the knowledge of the social world, which exists only in relation to human beings (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Wisker, 2008). The human mind is able to interpret experience and events and make meaning (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Sheppard, 2006).

Pragmatic paradigm. MacKenzie and Knipe (2006) believe that pragmatism is not compelled to any one system of philosophy or reality. Creswell et al. (2003) argue that pragmatist researchers emphasize on the 'what' and 'how' of the research problem. Some scholars claim that pragmatic paradigm provides the underlying philosophical framework for mixed methods research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Somekh & Lewin, 2005), even though some mixed methods researchers associate themselves philosophically with the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2005). Overall, it is also acknowledged that mixed methods could be used with any paradigm. In a nutshell, the pragmatic paradigm places the research problem at the center of method and applies all approaches to understanding the problem (Creswell, 2003).

Method

Internationally, several studies on school readiness and transition have been conducted either in a positivist or post-positivist paradigm or both (Grey, 2010). The purpose of this research requires gathering relevant contextual data from teachers, parents and education policy makers on school readiness and transition to school. As this is an explorative study, this research cannot be met within a positivist paradigm alone. It needs answers that are grounded in the interpretation of different aspects; therefore it drew upon both the positivist and post-positivist interpretive paradigms. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) at the paradigmatic or philosophical level, commensurability between positivist and post-positivist worldviews is not possible, but that within each paradigm, mixed methodologies may make perfectly good sense. Some scholars believe that positivist or post-positivist paradigms tend to mostly use quantitative approaches (methods) to data collection and analysis, while the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm generally use mainly qualitative methods (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Mertens, 1998; Silverman, 2000; Wiersma, 2000). On the other hand, the pragmatic paradigm provides an opportunity for “multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis in the mixed methods study” (Creswell et al., 2003, p.12).

As the research world is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, complex and dynamic, researchers need to complement one method with another in studying complex problems (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This study employed survey, focus group, and interview methods to examine perspectives and practices of school readiness among kindergarten and primary school teachers and parents. This method was chosen because it is ideally suited to the research questions that examined the range of variation in perspectives and practices on these issues. It also has proven effective in examining how

participants make meaning of their perspectives and practices, and produced new data and insights from focus group dynamics that might not occur through individual interviews alone (Brotherson, 1994; Morgan, 1993; Patton, 2002).

Considering the nature of the questions the researcher was examining, a mixed method was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of school readiness and transition problems. Greene (2006) said, “it is not enough to think well; we must also demonstrate the value and importance of mixed methods way of thinking in our practice” (p. 14). It is argued that the mixed method research can help bridge the division between quantitative and qualitative research (Johnson & Leech, 2004). The characteristic of a mixed method research is its methodological pluralism that allows the researcher to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering the specific questions. Mixed method divides inquiry into exploration versus confirmation category (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

Research Design

A research design concerns a plan involving several decisions associated with carrying out the research (Creswell, 2009; Robinson, 2002). It is the architectural plan of the research or a blueprint of research which informs the selection of research tools and participants and determines the logical categories for analyzing the collected data (Arksey & O’ Malley, 2005; Yin, 1994). The function of a research design which deals with a logical problem is to ensure that the evidence obtained facilitates the process of answering the initial question as clearly as possible (Yin, 1989).

Research questions. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the research questions guide the research methodology and design of the study. The research questions leading this research are:

- (i) What conceptions of school readiness and transition are held by stakeholders (teachers, parents, and education policy makers) in Indonesia?
- (ii) How do the stakeholders' understandings influence policies and practices?
- (iii) What aspects of school readiness do the different stakeholders prioritize?
- (iv) How do they implement these aspects in school readiness and transition practices?
- (v) What are the concerns of the stakeholders involved regarding the practice of school readiness and transition to primary school in Indonesia?

In this study, the researcher used mixed method in an attempt to fit together the insights provided by synergizing quantitative and qualitative approaches. This study was designed as a QUAN-qual research model, a type of mixed method research design, also known as the explanatory mixed method design, where the researcher collected quantitative data first and then qualitative data. In this model the quantitative data were more heavily weighted than the qualitative data (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2003). In this model, the researcher used the qualitative analysis and interpretation to help explain and elaborate on the quantitative results.

Instruments. There were three instruments developed in this study in order to answer the research questions. The first instrument is a quantitative questionnaire for kindergarten and primary school teachers, known as Perspective, Concept and Practice of School Readiness and Transition Scale. The questionnaire, which is the main data gathering instrument for this study, was developed based on the literature, theoretical framework and on the format of Agbenyega's Attitude to Inclusive Education in Africa Scale [ATIAS] (Agbenyega, 2007). The questionnaire was divided into five main sections: a profile and the questionnaires statements. The first section which is a demographic profile

contains questions on gender, age, qualification and teaching experience. The second section measures policy issues and contain 11 questions. The third section measures school practices/support issues and contains 17 questions. The fourth section measures attitudinal issues and contains 10 questions. The fifth section measures concerns and contains 12 questions. Each statement required an evaluation on a five point Likert type scale, with scale values ranging from agree (5) to very disagree (1) (See Appendix 1 for details). Table 6 summarized the questionnaire instruments.

Table 6
Perspective, Concept and Practice of School Readiness and Transition Scale Instrument

Demographic Profile	Subscale	Number of items
Gender, age, qualification, teaching experience	Policy	11
	Practice	10
	Attitude	10
	Concern	12

The second instrument is qualitative focus group questions for kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers and parents with children entering primary school. The focus group discussion was chosen to provide a forum for teachers and parents to discuss their perspectives on school readiness and experiences in preparing children to transition to primary school. The focus group discussion is important in generating data through group interactions on generic questions in relation to the aims of the research (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The focus group questions were treated as a supplementary source of data which was developed based on the literature and theoretical framework of this study. The questions seek information about stakeholders' perspectives and experiences in children's readiness and transition to primary school. Further, it also covers the issues that were thought important according to the stakeholders. The samples of the focus group questions for teachers included: *What do you look for in children who are ready for school?*

How do you provide for individual readiness and transition to school? The sample questions for the parents were: *What do you expect from your child to be able to do before she/he enters primary school? How do you support your child's readiness and transition to school?*

The third instrument is an interview protocol for education policy makers that ask generic questions about school readiness and transition concepts and practices. The samples of the interview questions for education policy makers included: *What kinds of policy guide children's school readiness in Indonesia? What programs have the government put in place to support children's transition to primary school?*

Sampling. The target population for this research was primary school teachers, kindergarten teachers, parents having children entering primary school and education policy makers in five regions of Jakarta. Overall, a simple random sampling was used to select school sites, teacher participants and parents in five regions of Jakarta. To obtain a comparable number of teacher participants in each region of Jakarta, the researcher randomly selected a subset of schools from which she invited all of the kindergarten and prekindergarten teachers. There were more than required number of teachers from various schools in Jakarta who indicated interest in participating in this study. The researcher used a simple random sampling by assigning random numbers to select the final participants. In the case of education policy makers and parents, purposeful sampling was used to select them for individual interviews and focus group discussions.

Participants. Due to the considerable size of Indonesian Islands and the potential kindergarten and primary school aged population across Indonesia, the study demographic has been reduced to Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. Table 7 summarizes the number of participants and the reason for invitation to participate.

Table 7
Size of participants

Participants	Number	Reason for invitation
Kindergarten Teachers	200	Be responsible for preparing children for school
Primary School Teachers	115	Be responsible for accepting ready children into primary school
Parents with children entering Primary School	35	Have children who fall into the core transition group
Education Policy Makers	2	Be responsible for early childhood and primary education policy making

Teachers who were involved in responding to the questionnaire were further invited to participation in the focus group discussion, whereas education policy makers who met the criteria as responsible for primary school and early childhood policy were invited to have an individual interview with the researcher. Table 8 shows the numbers of FGD and interview participants.

Table 8
FGD and Interview Participants

Participants	Numbers
Kindergarten teachers	40
Primary school teachers	30
Parents	35
Education Policy Makers	2

Phases of the Research

The phases of this research consist of conducting a pilot study followed by questionnaire survey, focus group discussions and interviews. Figure 2 shows the data collection process.

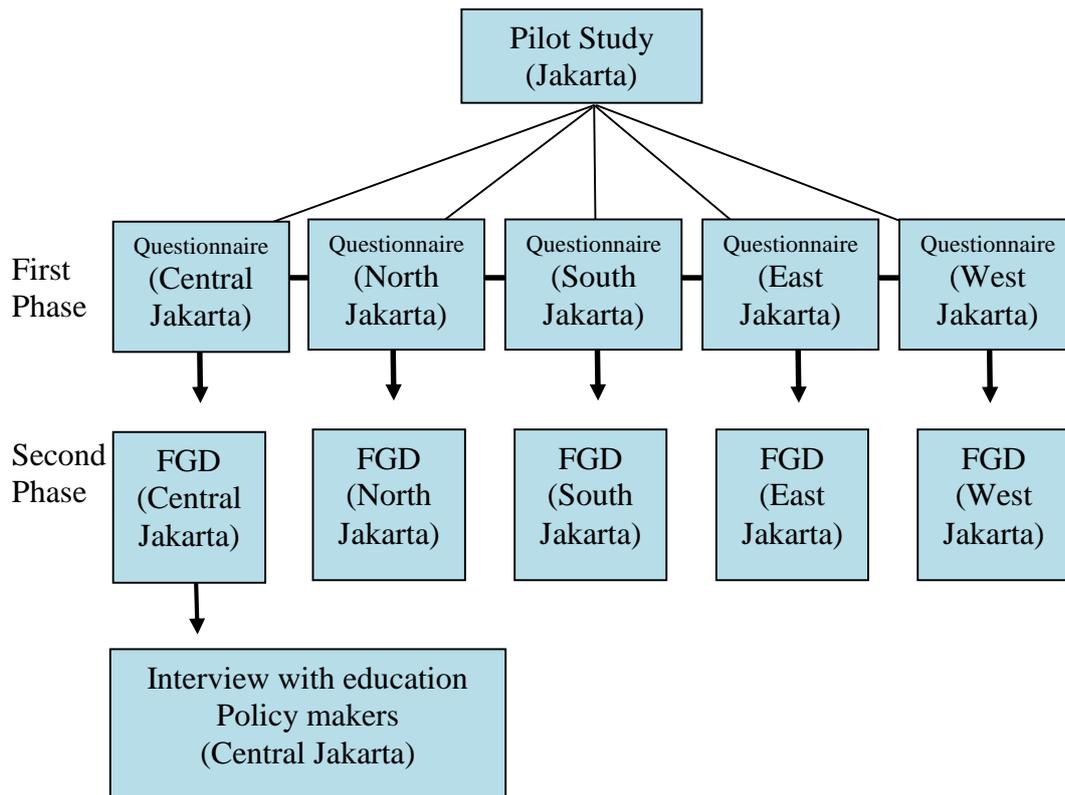


Figure 2. The research process with various participants

Pilot study. A pilot study determines the direction and the layout for conducting the main research. The pilot study is necessary as it guides the selection of items in the questionnaire which would be used in the framing of final questions. In this research, the pilot study involved a survey using a 50-item questionnaire to 30 teachers who were selected from 10 kindergartens and five primary schools in Jakarta to pilot - test the questionnaire in April 2011. Of these, all teachers returned the questionnaire signifying a hundred percent response rate. Teachers who participated in the pilot study initially

expressed fear that their responses would impact on their job and wondered if they would be reported to the Indonesian government should the research find something against them. They also expressed doubt about the meaning of school readiness and transition to school. Thus, in the main study the researcher took time to explain to the teachers through the explanatory statement that their names as well as the schools would be kept confidential and not mentioned by name in any publication. The teachers were also assured that the study was not about judging their performance on school readiness and transition, but to gain an insight into issues related to school readiness and transition, and how to better support them in their daily work to enhance children's learning. Apart from this, the general responses showed that the items were user-friendly. The pilot study has provided the opportunity to the researcher to word the questionnaire items and semi-structured interview questions to generate in-depth understanding on school readiness and transition.

Both validity and reliability tests were conducted prior to using it for the pilot study. A face validity test was conducted to measure its accuracy in covering all the domains of the research objectives which revealed a positive result. To find the reliability coefficient, the results were coded using a five-point Likert scale and calculated using the SPSS to find the Cronbach's alpha of the total items in the questionnaire.

The internal reliability coefficient alpha for the 50 items in the questionnaire for most of the items in each subscale items were found acceptable, excluding teachers' Practice Subscale which was found to be very low at .492. The researcher decided to reduce some particular items to 43 to increase the reliability. Therefore, with 7 items left from the Practice Subscale, the coefficient alphas for this subscale arrived at an acceptable level of .660. Finally, the overall reliability coefficient for the total scale was .762 making the instrument reliable for use. The table below provided the alpha coefficient for each subscale of the instrument used for the main study.

Table 9
Coefficient Alphas

Subscale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Policy	.776	11
Practice	.660	10
Attitude	.809	10
Concern	.804	12
Total	.762	43

Collecting data with the questionnaire. Initially, the researcher sought permission from the Ministry of National Education, Directorate General Of Early Childhood Education and the Department of Education in Jakarta in order to recruit kindergarten and primary school teacher participants in five regions within Jakarta. After obtaining the permission letters (see appendix 9), the researcher made an initial contact with the school principals whose schools were randomly selected and left her contact details. Once the researcher was contacted, she asked for the interested participant's contact details. Next, the teachers, who meet the criteria as a final year kindergarten teachers and primary one teachers were informed by the researcher about the research. The teachers interested in participating were sent invitation letters, explanatory statements (see appendix 4) and consent forms (see Appendix 6).

A total of 315 teachers consisting of 200 kindergarten teachers and 115 primary school teachers of the first grade agreed to participate in the study. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to these teachers in each group of all regions. The questionnaire on school readiness and transition was distributed in May - June 2011 by the researcher to the selected teachers to obtain first-hand information on the teachers' perspectives and practices on school readiness and transition to primary school. The researcher gave the participants a week to complete the questionnaire after which she went

and personally collected the completed questionnaires. The return rate of the questionnaire was 100% indicating that all the teachers completed and handed in their questionnaires.

The focus group discussions. Focus group discussion was an important part of data collection for this research. The main argument for using them in this research context is their collective nature. For example, many Indonesian parents, particularly women grew up in a submissive society and find it difficult to articulate their thoughts in individual interviews. Thus the focus groups provided the space to articulate their thoughts easily, providing a collective power to them as marginalized people. It is argued that focus group approach to data collection is useful in exploring and analysing participants' thoughts, the way they think about issues and the reasons they attribute to their thinking and actions in a non-threatening way (Horner, 2000; Kitzinger, 2005).

Kitzinger (2005) argues that the focus group method is an 'ideal' approach for examining the stories, experiences, points of view, beliefs, needs and concerns of individuals. By using a focus group in this research, the researcher was offering opportunity to the participants to develop their own counter questions. Morgan (2002) indicated that there are two broad types of focus groups: a structured approach which is more rigid and oriented towards market research; and a less rigid and unstructured approach which has emerged from focus group research in the social sciences. In structured focus groups the researcher is more visible and takes an active role in the group in which they seek specific answers from the participants. In this way there is less interaction between the moderator and the participants. Additionally, discussion between the participants will be minimal and they are likely to be influenced more by the moderator's cues and guides (Morgan, 2002). On the other hand, in the less structured approach to focus groups, which is commonly adopted in social science research, the participants are encouraged to engage in conversation with participants instead of just focusing on or answering the moderator's

questions. In the unstructured focus group, the primary role of the moderator (s) is to facilitate discussion, rather than to direct it. This kind of facilitation in focus groups leads to extended insights into the participants' meanings and interpretations (Curry, 2009).

In this current research, the researcher adopted both structured and unstructured approach of focus groups based on the topic and the research questions, using some pre-prepared questions to guide the discussion and at other times, allowing for the participants to talk to each other. According to Morgan (2002), depending on the research topic and theoretical approach, both approaches can be adopted in social science research. A focus group, as a research method, "involved more than one participant per data collection session" (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 271). In order to conduct a successful focus group, the researcher allowed for the participants to talk freely in a non-threatening way (Wilkinson, 2004).

In this phase, the researcher informed the teachers who were involved in the questionnaire to participate further in the focus group discussion. Parents of children currently enrolled in the final year of kindergarten were also invited to participate in the focus groups. Once the researcher obtained agreement from the principals of the randomly selected schools, teachers, and parents, she discussed the selection of sites for the focus group discussions. The consideration of the place was made on the basis of how central the location was to the other schools in that region. Consideration was given to parent's schedules and convenience across sites when planning the focus groups.

Overall, the focus group discussion involved 105 participants across the research sites comprising of 15 groups across Jakarta's regions (Centre, East, West, South and North) from three types of settings (30 primary school teachers, 40 kindergarten teachers and 35 parents). Each focus group consisted of 6 - 8 participants in a group who were led directly by the researcher to ensure that the discussions followed the same format and

addressed a standard set of questions. During the focus groups probes were used to elicit additional information. The researcher used a digital recording device to record the proceedings for later transcription and analysis. In addition, she wrote notes about the participants' answers as a complement to the voice recording. Each focus group lasted for about one hour.

During the focus groups sessions the researcher generated data through group interaction on generic questions related to the aims of the study. According to Khan and Manderson, the discussions in group are important for describing and understanding perception, interpretation, and beliefs of the selected participants to gain some understanding of school readiness and transition (as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2007; Morgan, 1996).

Interviews. Prior to the interview, the researcher sent an official invitation letter and explanatory statement to the Head of Early Childhood Directorate (Ministry of Early Childhood Department) indicating the need to have an interview with education policy makers, who met the criteria as responsible for primary school and early childhood policy making. The interview technique provided an excellent way to discover the subjective meaning and interpretation that the policy makers give to their experience (Denzin, 1989; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2007). In this study, the researcher used unstructured or in-depth interviews to discuss school readiness and transition to school topics (Fox, 2009) and applied a more 'conversational' style of interview technique in order to generate data in relation to the research questions (Barnes, 1992; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995). This is important as it increased the comprehensiveness of the data and made data collection somewhat interactive (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Each interview was conducted in the policy maker's respective offices for about 45 minutes in duration.

The Role of the Researcher in the Research Process

In this study, the researcher worked directly with participants and become a learner whose key responsibilities were to collect, describe and analyze data based on experiences of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Specifically, in the focus group discussion, the researcher facilitated interaction among participants in order to gain deep insights into how they made sense of their experiences (Creswell & Plano -Clark, 2007). In qualitative studies, the researcher' interests, values and positions in society may influence the decisions as to how the research process should proceed (Ariola, 2006; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). As an Indonesian researching issues in her home country, the researcher became positioned as an insider and an outsider in the research (Creswell, 2009). The outsider positioning was the result of the researcher's western education and perspectives that in many ways knowingly or unknowingly influenced the research process. By drawing on theories the researcher was able to move in and out of the research situation as the data collection and analysis proceeded.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical processes are crucial for good quality research for the following reasons: Firstly, ethical norms enable the researcher to adhere to the aims of the research and guide the research process in such a way that the knowledge derived from the research is trustworthy with minimal or no error (Resnik, 2011). By factoring ethical principles into research, the researcher is guarded against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data (Steneck, 2013). Second, in this research, the researcher involved a number of human participants. Their involvement in the research involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination as they came with different values, beliefs and knowledge levels. In this way ethical norms provided the researcher with the understanding to respect

the values that are essential to build trust and collaboratively research with the participants with accountability, respect, and fairness (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2006). Thirdly, ethical considerations have also guided the researcher in respecting copyright and patenting policies, data sharing and storage policies, and confidentiality rules at Monash University. Fourth, ethical norms of Monash University help to ensure accountability by sharing the data with the participants before including the final version for analysis and writing of the thesis.

Tahakkori and Teddi (2003) states that a researcher must take into account ethical considerations such as anonymity, informed consent, voluntary participation and integrity in designing and implementing social research. For this reason ethical approval was obtained for this research from Monash University Ethics Committee on Research Involving Humans with approval number CF11/0745-2011000363 (see Appendix 8)

Prior to the commencement of the field work, the approval letters and explanatory statements were given to each of the participants to examine (see Appendix 4 and 5) before they completed a consent form (see appendix 6 and 7). Participants were given freedom to opt in and out of the research at will as a measure that respects their rights. In addition, sites for interviews and focus groups were decided upon in collaboration with the participants, and measures were put in place for psychological counselling in case any participant became distressed in the course of participation.

Language and Transcription Issues

All the participants in this study were Indonesians to whom English is a foreign language just like a researcher. To facilitate a smooth data collection process the questionnaire, the focus group questions and the interview protocols were translated and data collection was conducted in Indonesian language. For the translation, the researcher has been supported by a certified translator.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data analysis. To answer the research questions, quantitative data was analyzed first followed by the qualitative data. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The quantitative analysis involved Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation, T – Test, , mean scores, standard deviations (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2006; Coakes, Steed, & Price, 2008; Pallant, 2013). These were done with the help of computer software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The qualitative data analysis. The qualitative data were obtained through the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The analysis involved the use of Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) framework analysis with five key stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and mapping interpretation. In this study, the researcher used semi-structured questions to instigate discussions in a focus group discussion with parents and teachers, and during individual interviews with education policy makers. Using the Framework Method developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), the researcher engaged in a combined approach to analysis, enabling themes to be developed both inductively from the focus groups and individual accounts and supported with deductive application of related research literature. Recursive approach to the analysis

allowed for a critical exploration of participants' responses, discussion of outlying cases and reaching agreement on recurring themes. The specific steps taken to do this are presented below.

Transcription of the data. The data was collected in Indonesian and recorded on a digital recorder in addition to field notes. The researcher, who is an Indonesian herself, transcribed the data into a computer file. The transcribed data was then given to a certified translator to translate it from Indonesian into English after which the researcher verified to ensure similarity in transcription across the whole dataset by listening to the tapes several times. In doing this, she supplemented each transcript with notes made during and immediately after the focus groups and interviews, for example noting background information and instances where views were given after the recorder was turned off. When the researcher was satisfied that any inconsistencies had been resolved, she proceeded to analysis stages.

Step 1: Familiarization with the data. The researcher thoroughly read and re-read each transcript, and listened back to the audio-recorded focus group discussions and interviews with the policy makers to become familiar with the whole data set. Since the researcher was present at each focus group and interviews, this process brought back memories of personal attachment to the data set. In this first step, the researcher also wrote down initial impressions in the margins of transcripts, for example where participants expressed exceptionally strong or contrasting views to their colleagues. Familiarization through reading and making notes also enabled the researcher to negotiate through several pages of transcript later in the analysis.

Step 2: Coding to identifying a thematic framework. The second step in the analysis process is to develop a coding scheme and code the data in order to identify a thematic framework. The researcher started by underlining interesting segments of the

transcripts and used the left hand margin to describe the content of each passage with a coded label. Few words, short phrases and parts of sentences or whole paragraphs were marked and designated to represent important points. The right hand margin was used to record more detailed notes and ideas, for instance, important points that need to be revisited or probed further, and which could lead to ideas for explanations, patterns and theming the data. The table 10 presents an excerpt of the coding process.

Table 10
Sample Coding of Data

Coding labels	Kindergarten teachers' focus group 1 (KG1)	Notes and ideas
Professional knowledge & practice	We have many children in the class. Some of them are not ready to learn...they do not have strong basic skills... they are not independent...they cannot concentrate...they do not obey the kindergarten rules We do not have adequate knowledge to support all these children	Teachers' difficulty in the classroom, exacerbated by lack of professional knowledge, high class sizes
Expected academic skills	School readiness...of course...is about reading, writing and arithmetic... because if children cannot read, write and count, they will be left behind.	Academic expectations affected the teachers' understanding and practice of school readiness and transition

Step 3: Indexing. After the researcher had open-coded all the transcripts she went through all the coded data to ascertain the meaningfulness, what it expressed about participants' views on school readiness and transition and how it might be useful for answering the research questions. This process led to sometimes revisiting the transcripts to ensure the codes better captured the ideas being expressed by the participants.

Step 4: Charting. Once all the data had been coded using the analytical framework, the researcher summarized the data in a matrix for each theme. The matrix comprised of one row per focus group and each policy participant and one column per code. Following

this the researcher abstracted data from transcripts for each participant and code, summarised it using verbatim words that correspond to the theme codes.

Step 5: Mapping and interpretation. Themes were generated from the data set by reviewing the matrix and making connections within and between focus groups and policy participants and categories. To do this well, the researcher revisited the objectives of the study and research questions as reference points in addition to novel conceptual ideas generated inductively from the data. This stage has led to the interpretation of opinions expressed by the participants and going beyond descriptions of individual policy makers' cases and each focus group towards developing coherent themes which offered possible explanations for what was happening within the data regarding school readiness and transition to school understandings and practices in Indonesia. To gain further insights into the data at this stage of the analysis, the research drew upon relevant theoretical ideas and literature which for the foundation of the study to extend the interpretation of the findings.

Chapter Summary

This methodology chapter discussed the research paradigm used in this study and explained the method and research design informing this study. Further, it discussed the phases of the research and ethical considerations and language and transcription issues. In the following chapter, the data obtained from the first phase of this research will be presented and analyzed.

Chapter Five

Questionnaire Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of phase one of the current study. The results presented in this chapter came from questionnaires distributed to a total of 315 kindergarten and primary school teachers who were randomly selected from various schools in the capital city of Jakarta. The questionnaire was distributed in May - June 2011 by the researcher to the selected teachers who agreed to participate. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain first-hand information on the teachers' perspectives and practices on school readiness and transition to primary school. All teachers returned the questionnaire representing a hundred percent return rate.

The questionnaire had two parts. The first part focused on the following demographic information of the teachers: gender, age range, qualification, teaching experience, and location of school. The second part of the questionnaire contained 50 items altogether, and consisted of 11 items about policy issues, 17 items about teachers' practices, 10 items about teachers' attitudes and 12 items about teachers' concerns on school readiness and transition to primary school. These parts of the questionnaire were measured on a five point Likert Scale responses (strongly disagree-1, disagree - 2, do not know - 3, agree - 4, and strongly agree - 5). All the questionnaire items were based on the research questions of the study. A copy of the questionnaire in full is available in appendix 1.

Results of First Part of The Questionnaire

As mentioned above, this part reports the demographic information related to teachers' responses.

Teacher information (N = 315). Most of the respondents were females which can be expected, as in Jakarta there were very few men who would like to work in kindergarten and first grade of primary school. There were nine male teachers (2.9 per cent) and 306 female teachers (97.1 per cent) in the sample, giving a total of 315 respondents. The large number of female teachers in early childhood and primary education level in Indonesia might be due to Indonesian culture which has a female cultural orientation that views female teachers as educators who are best suited for raising young children. In this sense, it can be argued that many people in Indonesia consider early childhood teaching as a mothering profession. Furthermore, early childhood teachers' salary is generally low and ranges from IDR 50,000 (USD 6) to IDR 2,000,000 (USD 210) per month depending on the institutions in which they work (World Bank, 2012a). Therefore, it is a disincentive for males who are expected to be the main providers within the family system in Indonesia to choose a profession in early childhood education. Due to the insignificant number of male participants in this study no comparative analysis was done to determine the difference in perspectives and practices between the male and female teachers.

Table 11
Information on Participants' Gender

Gender	N	Percent
Male	9	2.9
Female	306	97.1
Total	315	100

Age of participants. The age distribution of teachers who responded to the questionnaire as shown in Table 12 indicated that more than half of the participants (53 per cent) were in the age of 20 - 34 years. In the last few years, the numbers of early childhood centers and kindergartens in Jakarta have been growing. In particular, young teachers are in demand, either by non-profit or profit centers because they are generally considered as more energetic but less qualified and could be paid lesser than teachers with more years of experience. This may explain the large number of participant teachers who fall in the age bracket of 20 - 34 employed in the sector. Alternatively, the majority of the teachers falling into 20 - 34 age bracket, is a promising sign for the early childhood sector because these teachers are young and could serve the industry for years to come if they are sufficiently remunerated and supported by government and the communities where they work.

Table 12
Age of Participants in Years

Age	N	Percent
20-24	47	14.9
25-29	77	24.4
30-34	43	13.7
35-39	49	15.6
40-44	56	17.8
45-49	31	9.8
50+	12	3.8
Total	315	100

Type of schools. Table 13 provided information about the number and percentage of kindergarten and primary school participants. As it can be seen, more kindergarten teachers (65.1 per cent) were involved in this study than primary school teachers (34.9 per cent). In Jakarta, the number of public primary schools is less than kindergartens. Moreover, each public primary school usually has one teacher in the first grade. Whereas in kindergartens, there is more than one class for the same level, and some kindergartens have more than one teacher in each class. The increasing number of private ownership of

kindergartens in Jakarta might contribute to this issue, although there is still a limited investment from Indonesian government in early childhood sector compared to other higher levels of education.

Table 13
Type of Schools

Type of school	N	Percent
Kindergarten/ Early Childhood Centre	205	65.1
Primary School	110	34.9
Total	315	100

Concerning the distribution of kindergarten and primary school teachers involved in this study, it so happened that more kindergarten and primary school teachers in Central Jakarta voluntarily participated than teachers from the other regions. The number of participating kindergarten teachers in the Central Jakarta group is about doubled compared to that of the other teacher groups. This may be due to the enthusiasm of the early childhood education association leaders in Central Jakarta area who motivated their teachers to share their views about young children's development and learning.

Table 14
Location of Kindergartens/ECE Centers

Location of Kindergartens	N	Percent
Central	70	22.2
North	30	9.5
South	39	12.4
West	38	12.1
East	28	8.9
Total	205	65.1

Table 15
Location of Primary Schools

Location of Primary Schools	N	Percent
Central	26	8.3
North	22	7.0
South	20	6.3
West	24	7.6
East	18	5.7
Total	110	34.9

Teaching experience. Information in Table 16 suggested that the majority of teacher participants (42.2 per cent) had been teaching up to four years, followed by those with five to nine years working experience (30.2 per cent) indicating that almost half of the participants were not experienced teachers. This supported the previous information on age distribution of teacher participants that more than half of the teachers were in the range of 20-34 years of age. In this study, the researcher only asked about the length of participants' teaching experiences in general. It is possible that some teachers' previous experiences were not in early childhood or primary education. Despite this assumption, it is possible that teachers who have teaching experience in any other area or different level of education might draw on this experience in teaching young children.

Table 16
Experience of Teaching by Year

Years	Frequency	Percent
0-4	133	42.2
5-9	95	30.2
10-14	26	8.3
15-19	14	4.4
20-24	17	5.4
25-29	22	7.0
30+	8	2.5
Total	315	100

Qualification of participants. Data from Table 17 indicated that almost half of the teachers (46.7 per cent) had diploma qualification. In Indonesia, there are four kinds of diploma education. These include Diploma I (approximately 1 year full-time of higher education), Diploma II (two years full-time), Diploma III (three years full-time) and Diploma IV (four years full-time, which is comparable to a bachelor degree). Currently, Indonesia is improving the early childhood education system. The upgrade of qualification has resulted in few Diploma I program still in practice. In the near future, this level would probably disappear completely.

In this study, neither did the researcher ask specific questions about whether the participants have finished certain level of diploma nor did she ask about their subject specializations. Currently in Indonesia, having an early childhood education background is not a main requirement for teaching in kindergartens or first grades of primary school. Due to the limited number of universities in Indonesia that offer early childhood education courses, graduates with any background are allowed to teach in early childhood education. For example, in the Capital City of Jakarta, there is only one state university that offers early childhood education. This university is the pioneer of Early Childhood Education in Indonesia but itself has limited number of postgraduates to teach in its early childhood programs.

Table 17
The Highest Level of Education Completed

Qualification	N	Percent
Secondary school	56	17.8
Diploma	147	46.7
Undergraduate	108	34.3
Postgraduate	4	1.3
Total	315	100

Results of Second Part of the Questionnaire (Items 1 - 43)

This part presents the questionnaire results with four subscales (Policy, Practice, Attitude and Concerns). It contained a total of 43 items that were measured on a five point Likert scale responses. The questionnaire items were based on the research questions of the study. A descriptive statistical procedure was used to analyze the data generated for all items in each subscale. The means, standard deviations, T-test and were computed for the kindergartens and primary schools separately to compare the responses. The participants' perspectives and practices on school readiness and transition were also presented in percentages. Further, Factor Analysis technique with Varimax Rotation was computed for Policy and Concern subscales to reduce the number of variables, detect structure in the relationships between variables and classify variables. By using Varimax Rotation, the sums of the variances of the squared loadings were maximized. The basis for the rotation was to economically represent each individual variable so that each can be well described by a linear combination of only a few basic functions (Pallant, 2013). This helps in identifying how groupings of questions (items) measured the same construct (Pallant, 2013). The descriptive analysis and the results from Factor Analysis were presented below.

Policy. This part of the questionnaire generated responses to the questions regarding the existing policies on school readiness and transition.

The results of T-Test. In this study, a T-test was used to compare the actual differences between two means in relation to the variation in the data. Further, to compare the results of the two groups of teachers (early childhood and primary), independent sample T-test were used and differences with $p < 0.05$ were to be considered statistically significant. Table 18 showed a comparison between kindergarten and primary school teachers' responses on school readiness and transition policy. The T-test failed to produce significant differences existing between the scores from kindergarten teachers (N = 205) and primary

school teachers (N = 110). Therefore, only means, standard deviations and the slight mean differences were reported.

Table 18
Means, Standard Deviations and Mean Differences (N = 315) (Items 1 - 11)

Items	Kindergarten		Primary School		Mdif
	M	SD	M	SD	
1 This school has transition to school policy	4.06	.519	4.09	.613	-.022
2 The policy aims to reduce barriers to school readiness and transition	3.88	.814	4.14	.603	-.262
3 This school has school readiness policy	4.17	.537	4.15	.679	.016
4 The policy outlines how parents can participate	4.17	.537	4.16	.567	.007
5 There are policy guidelines on transition programs for all staff	3.81	.813	3.70	.838	.105
6 I understand the school transition policy	3.96	.483	3.89	.654	.070
7 School policies on readiness and transition are clear to me	3.82	.689	3.75	.803	.074
8 The views of teachers are sought when developing school policies	4.15	.687	3.98	.812	.169
9 There are school policies on how parents should participate in their children's education	4.40	.573	4.36	.537	.036
10 The views of parents are sought when developing school policies on transition and school readiness	4.05	.665	3.96	.789	.090
11 The school policies on school readiness are fair to all children	4.37	.727	4.33	.694	.039
Total	4.07	.339	4.05	.425	.029

It is evident from Table 18 in response to the policy aims to reduce barriers to school readiness and transition that slightly more primary (M = 4.14; SD = .603) than kindergarten teachers (M = 3.88; SD = .814) agreed that their policies were developed to do this (item 2). The results further indicated that more kindergarten teachers (M = 3.81; SD = .813) than the primary school teachers (M = 3.70; SD = .838) reported that there were policy guidelines on transition programs (item 5). On the question of whether the views of

teachers are sought on policy matters, the result indicated that slightly more kindergarten participants ($M = 4.15$; $SD = .687$) than their primary school counterparts ($M = 3.98$; $SD = .812$) responded that they were involved in developing school policies (item 8). One explanation that can be given to this is that the majority of kindergarten teacher participants work in private kindergartens where they are involved in daily planning and decision making, whereas primary school teacher participants worked in public primary schools where policy on transition and readiness are not often given serious attention or done at the school level. Instead policy decisions regarding public schools are centrally determined by the Indonesian education departments and teachers are not given opportunities to make input into these policy measures. From my own experience, Indonesia is a hierarchical society where people must submit to those higher than them in the hierarchy. Thus even at the public school level, principals or head masters are those that dictate what teachers should do in a submissive way. Failure to do what superiors mandated could lead to a severe punishment for example, loss of job.

Further, in comparing the two independent samples (kindergarten, $N = 205$ & primary school teachers, $N = 110$), the significant level of Levene's test was 0.245; ($f = 1.354$) which means the variances for the kindergarten and primary school teacher groups were relatively the same. Overall, the few differences did not suggest that the kindergarten and primary school teachers have significant different perspectives regarding policy issues on school readiness and transition.

The results of factor analysis. It was identified that a factor analysis be computed to find out how responses from teachers on policy issues clustered on certain items. Items 1-11 of the questionnaire comprised questions regarding the existing school policies on school readiness and transition to primary school. The responses of teachers ($N = 315$) to

these items were factor analyzed to find out if their perspective were clustered in some particular way to have a deeper understanding about this area. To do this, the items were first assessed by using the Kaiser–Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The data on policy issues was found to be suitable for factor analysis considering KMO value was .809, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p = .000$) as indicated in Table 20.

Table 19

KMO and Bartlett's Test (Policy)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.809
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity- Approx. Chi-Square	673.969
df	55
sig	.000

The number of components (factors) to be extracted was determined by focusing the component that has an eigenvalue of 1 or more and by inspecting the 'scree plot'. Based on the total Variance Explained, there were only the first three components which recorded eigenvalues above 1, which explained a total of 52.181 % of the variance. These factors were therefore retained for further analysis and submitted to Varimax Rotation. The highest loading item was used to determine which factor was relevant for each item with the correlation of factors showing that each factor is independent of the other (see Table 21)

Table 20

Correlation of Factors

Factor I	1.000		
Factor II	.224	1.000	
Factor III	.306	.280	1.000

Table 21

Factor Loadings for Principal Component Factor Analysis (item 1 - 11)

Items	Factors		
	1	2	3
1 This school has transition to school policy	.592		
2 The policy aims to reduce barriers to school readiness and transition	.724		
3 This school has school readiness policy			.731
4 The policy outlines how parents can participate			.627
5 There are policy guidelines on transition programs for all staff	.677		
6 I understand the school transition policy	.534		
7 School policies on readiness and transition are clear to me	.602		
8 The views of teachers are sought when developing school policies		.509	
9 There are school policies on how parents should participate in their children's education		.741	
10 The views of parents are sought when developing school policies on transition and school readiness			.670
11 The school policies on school readiness are fair to all children		.691	

Numbers indicate selected factor coefficients.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 22

Percentages of Square Loadings Before and After Rotation

Component	% of variance before rotation	% of Variance after rotation
Component 1	32.255	20.438
Component 2	10.797	15.944
Component 3	9.129	15.799

*Total Variance explained 52.181 percent

Five items (1, 2, 5, 6, & 7) loaded on Factor 1 as shown in Table 21. Item One described the participants' confirmation that their schools have policies on transition. Item Two described whether the existing policy aims to reduce barriers to school readiness and

transition. The other three items (5, 6, & 7) described if there are policy guidelines on transition programs for all staff and whether staff clearly understood the policies. This factor is labelled *General Policy Awareness*. Policies are important for establishing guidelines, procedures and standards for quality readiness and transition programs, including expectations and accountability. The absence of clear policy guidelines for kindergartens and schools can lead to ineffective school readiness and transition programs for young children. However, the availability of policy alone would not ensure that education practices are effective. Teachers as policy implementers need to know and understand the available policies. They also need to own the policies, which means, their inputs into policy decisions are critically important. The teachers' confirmation of existing policy on school readiness and transition is a promising indication that there are directions and structure to guide schools in the provision of educational services that meet the needs of all children. Although the majority of teachers admitted that the policy is clear to them, the extent to which the existing policies meet the requirements of contemporary conceptualizations and practices of school readiness and transition is a question for interrogation in the discussion chapter of this thesis. Current early childhood education policies need to recognize the complex environment in which children develop and learn and the complementary factors that support this process. It is important for teachers to be part of every policy making process that concern them in order to plan and work within the policy parameters to provide effective readiness and transition programs for children, supporting them to develop capabilities for life - long learning.

Factor Two included three items (8, 9, & 11). Item Eight is concerned with whether the views of teachers are sought when developing school policies; Item Nine whether there are school policies on how parents should participate in their children's education; and Item 11, is concerned with the fairness of the policies to all children. This factor was labelled

Policy Dynamics. The factor scores demonstrate that the majority of teachers were affirmative that the policy is fair to all children, parents have opportunity to participate in policy making and the views of teachers are sought in the process of policy making. In this study Policy dynamics have been conceptualized as the policy particulars or how the policy details are constituted in ways that support each individual child's aspirations and circumstances. Policy dynamics connote the changing aspects of policy making which can result from teacher and parent consultations. Policy consultations lead to public input into policies and can make policies more inclusive and fairer to all children. Effective policies on readiness and transition to school practices need to take into account how it includes teacher and parental contributions. It is argued that parents' involvement in children's education makes a difference in their school outcomes, which is as well relevant to policy making (Dockett et al, 2007; Margetts 2007). Many scholars argue that when parents collaborate with school, children would exhibit positive outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Dockett et al, 2007; Margetts 2007; Pelletier, 2002; Peters 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 1994).

The third factor had three items loaded on it (Items 3, 4, & 10). Those items are related to whether the research schools have school readiness policy, whether the views of parents are sought when developing school policies on transition and school readiness and whether the policy outlines how parents can participate in decision making in the schools. This factor was labelled *Parental Role in School Level Policy Making*. Every school has its own policy and culture which are based on the general government policy. Apart from the national policy, a local level or school-based policy is important for the success and safety of a school. An effective local policy is that which clarifies the roles of parents in the process of policy making. Schools that value and solicit parents' contribution to decision making are more able to provide comprehensive programs that facilitate children's smooth

transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2011) than those that serve as gate - keepers to parents. Parent collaboration in policy issues may help in determining how children are taught and what they are taught (Epstein et al., 1997).

Participants' responses to policy items in percentages. This section of the result presents teachers' responses to the policy items on school readiness and transition to primary school in percentages.

Data in Table 23, showed that a great number of teachers were aware of the existence of school readiness and transition policy and its effectiveness (Items 1, 3, 4, 9 & 11). However, a small percentage of teachers (Items 3, 4, & 11) reported their lack of awareness of existing policies or were unclear about the policy guidelines on school readiness and transition to primary school. Surprisingly, more than a quarter of the teacher participants disagreed that the policy is fair to all children (Item 11). Teachers' realization that the policy is not fair to all children is a worrying development. The purpose of early childhood education is to build a strong foundation for all children to continue learning. Thus, policies that discriminate against some children can lead to their potentials being compromised, which can affect their overall present and future development.

Table 23

Teachers' Responses to Policy Items Measured in Percentages (Item 1 - 11)

Items	Strongly agree/agree	Do not know	Strongly disagree/Disagree
	%	%	%
1 This school has transition to school policy	92.7	5.1	2.2
2 The policy aims to reduce barriers to school readiness and transition	87	7.3	5.7
3 This school has school readiness policy	94.2	3.8	2.0
4 The policy outlines how parents can participate	94.6	4.1	1.3
5 There are policy guidelines on transition programs for all staff	75	14.9	.6
6 I understand the school transition policy	86	11.7	2.2
7 School policies on readiness and transition is clear to me	78.5	13.7	7.9
8 The views of teachers are sought when developing school policies	89.5	5.7	4.8
9 There are school policies on how parents should participate in their children's education	97.5	1.9	.6
10 The views of parents are sought when developing school policies on transition and school readiness	86.4	8.9	4.7
11 The school policies on school readiness are fair to all children	94.0	3.5	2.6

Practice. This part of the questionnaire asks questions concerning school practices. It contains 10 items focused on identifying good practices that support children's readiness and transition to primary schools.

The results of T-Test. First, independent T - test was computed to compare kindergarten and primary school teachers' responses on school readiness and transition practices. It was found that kindergarten and primary school teachers did not differ statistically in their responses to items on practices on school readiness and transition to primary school. There were minimal differences between the means and standard deviations of the two groups of teachers. However, with regard to practice issues in the case

of using tests to determine whether children are ready for school, slightly more primary school teachers ($M = 3.99$; $SD = .107$) than kindergarten teachers ($M = 3.20$; $SD = 1.27$) agreed that tests are worthwhile processes for determining children's readiness and selection for school. Despite the fact that there appeared to be a slight difference in opinion between the two teacher groups it was not statistically significant as the independent sample tests gave the results of Levene's test for equality of variances as .541 and f statistic as .375, which means that the variances for the kindergarten and primary school teacher groups were relatively the same.

Participants' responses to school readiness and transition practice items measured in percentages. This section provided the percentages on participants' responses to practice items (teachers) on school readiness and transition to primary school. Table 24 showed a significant number of teachers agreeing that parents are involved in school practices (Items 12, 13, 14, 15, & 16). On the other hand a small number of teachers do not know whether parents have the opportunity to participate in school transition programs (Item 12, 13, 14, & 15). It can also be determined from the results that almost half of the teachers disagree that all children despite their ability are given the same tasks (Item 20).

Table 24

Teachers' Responses to Practice Items Measured in Percentages (Item 12 - 21)

Items	Strongly agree/agree	Do not know	Strongly disagree/Disagree
	%	%	%
12 Parents are constantly kept informed about school practices	95.2	2.2	2.5
13 Parents have a role to play in school readiness and transition programs	95.2	3.5	1.3
14 There are opportunities for parents to participate in their children's education	97.1	1.3	1.6
15 There are opportunities for parents to participate in their children's transition to primary school programs	94.0	3.2	2.8
16 Parents usually participate in their children's transition to primary school programs	84.5	11.7	3.8
17 There are opportunities for primary and kindergarten teachers to participate in school programs together	85.8	8.9	5.4
18 The age of children are used to determine they are ready for school	91.8	.6	7.6
19 We provide the basic information parents need to know about their children	97.8	1.6	.6
20 All children, despite their ability are given the same tasks	47.6	3.5	48.9
21 Time for transition support activities is included in school's program	84.5	10.8	4.7

Based on the teachers' responses as detailed in Table 24, it can be concluded that the teachers were relatively positive about existing school readiness and transition practices.

Attitudes. This part of the questionnaire asks questions concerning attitude toward children's school readiness and transition to primary schools practices.

The results of T-Test. First, an independent T-test was computed to determine if the two teacher groups (Kindergarten & Primary) differ in their attitudes on school readiness and transition. The independent sample tests gave the results of Levene's test for

equality of variances and showed that the significant level was .239 which means that the variances for the kindergarten and primary school teachers groups were relatively the same ($f = 1.394$).

Participants' attitudes on school readiness and transition measured in percentages. The data in Table 25 demonstrated that almost half of the participants had different opinions regarding the requirement of using children's academic performance as a determinant of primary school entry (Item 22). Almost the same percentage of the participants favoured the use of children's age as the main criteria for their acceptance into primary school (Item 31). It can be explained that in this case, participants who think of readiness in terms of age may demonstrate negative attitude towards younger children. In the same way, teachers who favour academic competence may resent children they consider academically weak. Further, more than half of the participants indicated that children with communication problems are not ready for school and should not be accepted in primary school (Items 23 & 24). It may be that the majority of the teachers may find it difficult teaching these children by rote which is their main method of teaching hence their negative attitude or unwillingness to accept them. However, more than sixty percent do not mind to accept children with mild academic difficulty, behavior and attention problems (Items 27, 28, 29, & 30).

Table 25

Teachers' Attitudes Measured in Percentages (Items 22 - 31)

Items	Strongly agree/agree	Do not know	Strongly disagree/ Disagree
	%	%	%
22 Children who perform poorly in kindergarten should be allowed into primary one	48.0	11.7	40.3
23 Children who often need help to communicate their thoughts are ready for primary school	37.1	9.2	53.6
24 Children's whose speech is difficult to understand should be allowed to move into primary school	33.0	7.6	59.4
25 Children who cannot read well should be allowed into primary school	74.9	5.4	19.7
26 Children who are aggressive to their peers should be allowed to transit into primary school	78.1	7.9	14.0
27 Children who lack daily living skills (eg. Not able to dress or go to the toilet themselves) should be allowed to transit into primary schools	60.9	6.7	32.4
28 Children who have difficulty controlling their behaviour should be allowed to transit into primary school	61.2	8.9	29.8
29 Children who have difficulty following rules should be allowed to transit into primary school	70.2	6.7	23.2
30 Children who have difficulty sustaining attention should be allowed to transit into primary school	60.7	6.3	33
31 Children who have not reached the required school age but are performing above their age should be allowed to transit from kindergarten to primary school	44.7	7.7	47.6

Concerns. This part of the questionnaire included items that measured teachers' concerns on school readiness and transition to primary school. To determine whether statistical differences exist between the two teacher groups, an independent t-test was computed. Although there were no significant statistical differences between the scores

from the kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers' concerns the data showed some negligible differences. The independent sample tests gave the results of Levene's test for equality of variances and showed that the significant level was .173 which means that the variances for the kindergarten and primary school teacher groups were relatively the same ($f = 1.86$) suggesting that there were no significant differences between the scores, therefore, only means, standard deviations and the negligible mean difference were reported.

The results of T-Test. Table 26 showed a comparison between kindergarten and primary school teachers' concerns on school readiness and transition. It is evident from the Table 26 that there were small differences between the means and standard deviations of the two groups of teachers regarding the use of universal testing as a requirement for children to be accepted into primary school (Item 33). Specifically, slightly more primary school teachers ($M = 3.51$; $SD = 1.08$) than the kindergarten teachers ($M = 2.89$ $SD = 1.03$) expressed their support for universal testing as a measure of children's school readiness. The data demonstrated that the teachers were concerned that without using a form of universal testing, it would be difficult to know if children are ready for school (Item 43). In addition, slightly more primary school teachers ($M = 2.95$; $SD = 1.18$) than kindergarten teachers ($M = 2.40$; $SD = .979$) were concerned that allowing children who failed their readiness tests (showing that they are not ready for school) to enter primary school would incur additional burden for teachers or increase their workload (Item 34).

Table 26

Means, Standard Deviations and Mean Differences (N = 315)

Items	Kindergarten		Primary School		Mdif
	M	SD	M	SD	
32 If students who failed their readiness test are included in primary schools the academic standard will decline	2.62	1.03	2.85	1.07	-.225
33 It will be difficult to know if children are ready for school without testing them with universal tests	2.89	1.03	3.51	1.08	-.625
34 If children who do not pass their tests are allowed into primary school they will increase teachers' workload	2.40	.979	2.95	1.18	-.544
35 Children who have low scores in their readiness tests if allowed to primary school can cause stress and anxiety for teachers	2.40	.948	2.57	1.05	-.167
36 I do not have the requisite knowledge and skills on how to support child readiness and transition to school	2.46	.941	2.24	.792	.217
37 Our school does not have adequate resources to support children's readiness and transition	2.31	.954	2.55	1.03	-.242
38 Class sizes affect how we support children's school readiness and transition to school	3.06	1.08	3.35	1.08	-.286
39 Parents do not have the knowledge to be involved in their children's education	2.42	.945	2.38	.948	.047
40 We do not receive adequate support from policy makers on children's school readiness and transition to school	3.01	1.04	2.73	1.00	.283
41 We do not have time to spend on school readiness and transition programs with families	2.40	.905	2.57	1.05	-.167
42 No clear-cut policies and programs exist for readiness and transition programs	2.60	1.08	2.60	1.02	-.004
43 Without testing children for school readiness we cannot identify and separate who are ready and not ready	3.09	1.10	3.57	1.07	-.480
Total	2.60	.539	2.75	.629	

The result of factor analysis. A Factor analysis was conducted on Item 38 - 50 of the questionnaire regarding teachers' concerns on school readiness and transition to primary school. The purpose was to find out if their concerns were clustered in some particular way on certain items and to have a deeper understanding about how to address their concerns. It can be argued that failure to address teachers' concerns can lead to substandard practices in school readiness and transition services. To do this, the items were first assessed by using the Kaiser–Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The data on the concern area was suitable for factor analysis, considering the KMO value was .817, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p = .000$).

Table 27

KMO and Bartlett's Test (Concern)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.817
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity- Approx. Chi-Square	933.226
df	66
sig	.000

Table 28

Correlation of Factors

Factor I	1.000		
Factor II	.293	1.000	
Factor III	.198	.147	1.000

The number of components (factors) was determined to be extracted by focusing on the 'scree plot' and the components that have an eigenvalue of 1 or more. Based on the total Variance Explained, there were only the first three components that recorded eigenvalues above 1 which explained a total of 54.485 % of the variance. These factors were therefore retained for further analysis and submitted to Varimax rotation. The highest loading items were used to determine which factor was relevant for each item.

Table 29

Factor Loading for Principal Component Factor Analysis (Item 32 - 43)

Items	Factors		
	1	2	3
32 If students who failed their readiness test are included in primary schools the academic standard of the school will decline		.643	
33 It will be difficult to know if children are ready for school without testing them with universal tests		.668	
34 If children who do not pass their tests are allowed into primary school they will increase teachers' workload		.766	
35 Children who have low scores in their readiness tests if allowed to primary school can cause stress and anxiety for teachers		7.04	
36 I do not have the requisite knowledge and skills on how to support child readiness and transition to school			.506
37 Our school does not have adequate resources to support children's readiness and transition to school	.619		.530
38 Class sizes affect how we support children's school readiness and transition to school			.790
39 Parents do not have the knowledge to be involved in their children's education and transition to school	.533		
40 We do not receive adequate support from policy makers on children's school readiness and transition to school	.800		
41 We do not have time to spend on school readiness and transition programs with families	.665		
42 No clear-cut policies and programs exist for readiness and transition programs	.755		
43 Without testing children for school readiness we cannot identify and separate those who are not ready from those who are ready for primary school		.648	

Numbers indicate selected factor coefficients

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 30

Percentage of Square Loadings Before and After Rotation

Component	% of variance before rotation	% of Variance after rotation
Component 1	32.138	21.493
Component 2	13.993	21.461
Component 3	8.353	11.531

The first factor included five items (37, 39, 40, 41, & 42) that described the concern on resource, knowledge and support issues. This factor was labelled *Standard problem*. The same number of items loaded the second factor. These five items (32, 33, 34, 35, & 43) were related to the schools' practices and teachers' stress. This factor was labelled *Teacher and school factors*. The third factor contains three items (36, 37, & 38) that were related to teachers' competency and school's resources. Therefore this factor was called *Knowledge and Resources issues*. The data showed that the teachers were more concerned with school problems such as adequate resources to support children's readiness and transition to school; class sizes and how they affect their support for children's school readiness and transition to school; low levels of parents' literacy to be involved in their children's education and transition to school programs; lack of adequate support from policy makers on children's school readiness and transition; and lack of time to work with all children in their schools. As the schools cling to transitional pedagogy the second rated concern is testing to determine a child who is ready for school. It appears that the teachers would not be comfortable in their practices if tests are completely abolished. For these teachers, without testing, many children who are not ready for school might enter leading to further school and teacher problems. It is therefore important to effectively address teachers' concerns in terms of resources, time, knowledge and testing to improve their practices.

Participants' concerns on school readiness and transition measured in

percentages.

Table 31

Participants' Concern in Percentages

Items	Strongly agree/agree	Do not know	Strongly disagree/Disagree
	%	%	%
32 If students who failed their readiness test are included in primary schools the academic standard of the school will decline	33.3	8.3	58.4
33 It will be difficult to know if children are ready for school without testing them with universal tests	49.5	6.7	43.8
34 If children who do not pass their tests are allowed into primary school they will increase teachers' workload	29.5	5.7	64.8
35 Children who have low scores in their readiness tests if allowed to primary school can cause stress and anxiety for teachers	21.3	9.2	69.6
36 I do not have the requisite knowledge and skills on how to support child readiness and transition to school	15.2	14.6	70.2
37 Our school does not have adequate resources to support children's readiness and transition to school	20	9.8	70.2
38 Class sizes affect how we support children's school readiness and transition to school	54.6	7.0	38.4
39 Parents do not have the knowledge to be involved in their children's education and transition to school	17.8	11.7	70.5
40 We do not receive adequate support from policy makers on children's school readiness and transition	39.4	14.3	46.3
41 We do not have time to spend on school readiness and transition programs with families	20.9	10.5	68.6
42 No clear-cut policies and programs exist for readiness and transition	28	12.7	59.4
43 Without testing children for school readiness we cannot identify and separate those who are not ready from those who are ready for primary school	56.9	8.9	34.3

Table 31 showed that more than half of the teacher participants (58.4 per cent) disagreed that including children who fail in readiness test in primary school will decline the academic standard of the school (Item 32), but those that agreed (33 per cent) are quite large, which is a worrying situation because it is possible that those teachers will be reluctant to work with children who fail their readiness test but find their way into primary school. The results further showed that almost half of the teachers (49.5 per cent) agreed that testing children is beneficial for identifying those who are ready or not ready for primary school (Item 33). In addition, a significant number of the participants (70.2 per cent) indicated that they were confident about their competence in supporting children to have smooth transition to school (item 36). The majority of teachers (54.6 per cent) noted that class sizes affect how they support children's school readiness and transition to school programs (Item 38). A further 56.9 per cent were concerned that without testing children for school readiness they cannot identify and separate those who are not ready from those who are ready for primary school (Item 43). Interestingly, this data demonstrate that these teachers have varied concerns regarding school readiness and transition practices. It is important to work collaboratively with these teachers to find a common ground and solution to the issues they encounter in their daily work with children.

Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the quantitative results. A number of themes and subthemes emerged which consisted of policy themes (*general policy awareness, policy dynamics, parental role in school level policy making*) and concern themes (standard problems, teacher and school factors, resources problems). The next section will present the results of the qualitative phase of the study which extended the insight into the quantitative findings.

Chapter Six

Focus Group Discussions and Interview Results

Introduction

This chapter provides the themes of the results that emerged from the data during phase two of the current study. This phase involved focus group discussions (FGD) with kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers, parents and individual interviews with education policy makers in Jakarta. The FGD and interviews were conducted in June 2011 by the researcher. In addition, further interviews were conducted at the end of 2012 to get more information and to clarify issues regarding the changing policy issues on requirements for children to enter certain public primary schools in Jakarta. In this study, the purpose of the FGD was to provide a forum for the teachers and parents to discuss and extend each other's perspectives on school readiness and transition, as well as to provide the researcher more insights into their experiences. The FGD allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of teachers and parents' enacted practices including issues that they thought were important for implementing school readiness and transition to school programs for young children (Khan & Manderson, 2002, as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2007). Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daughtery, Karoly, and Howes (2009) argued that apart from focus groups, unstructured individual interviews can enable researchers to get valuable information on education policy related to children who are about to enter primary school. The data gathered in this study was treated as a supplementary source of data, which assisted in extending insights into factors that might influence teachers and parents' perspectives on, and practices of school readiness and transition.

There were 105 participants altogether in the qualitative phase of the study, which consisted of 15 groups across five regions in Jakarta (Central, East, West, South and North). The participants from the three types of settings (30 primary school teachers, 40 kindergarten teachers and 35 parents) were involved in the focus group discussions and two education policy makers were involved in the individual interviews.

In the preliminary study, some teachers who participated in the FGD expressed their doubt about their understanding of school readiness and transition to school. Some participants pointed out that they did not feel sure about the meaning of school readiness and transition policy framework in Indonesia. During the initial group discussions, some teachers expressed worry whether their comments would impact on their job because they were unsure if the comments they were about to make would be reported to the Indonesian government. Assurance from the researcher that the study was not about judging teachers' performance, but rather to explore their perspectives, practices and experiences on school readiness and transition to identify how they can be supported in their schools, gave them a great relief and opened up the window for discussions.

Generally, responses showed that the prompting questions were understood although the answers seemed difficult forthcoming at times.

General Qualitative Results

The procedure for collecting the qualitative data and analysis of the data were presented earlier in the methodology chapter. The qualitative result therefore began with the description of all participants who agreed to be involved further in sharing their perspectives on children's school readiness and transition to primary school. Kindergarten and primary school teachers selected, as well as parents having children entering primary school, were from five locations of Jakarta. The kindergarten teacher groups were coded KG1, KG2, KG3, KG4, and KG5; the primary school teachers' groups were coded PM1,

PM2, PM3, PM4, PM5; and the parents' groups were coded PC1, PC2, PC3, PC4, and PC5 respectively.

Table 32

Code Names of Schools, Participants' Number and Location

Central Jakarta	East Jakarta	West Jakarta	South Jakarta	North Jakarta
KGI (10)	KG2(8)	KG3(8)	KG4(7)	KG5 (7)
PMI (6)	PM2 (7)	PM3 (5)	PM4 (6)	PM5 (6)
PC1(8)	PC2(8)	PC3 (6)	PC4 (6)	PC5 (7)

The majority of the kindergarten and early childhood teachers worked in private kindergartens, while most of the primary school teachers worked in public primary schools. The primary schools were designated as Regular Public School, National Standard School and Primary Schools Attaining International Status. The average number of children per class in the kindergartens was about 20, indicating children- teacher ratio was 20:1. Conversely, the average number of students per class in the primary schools was about 35 to one teacher. All the parents were between 28 - 35 years of age and have a child in the last year of kindergarten about to enter primary school the next year. A number of issues were explored during the focus group discussions with kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers and parents separately.

Results from the Focus Group Discussions and Individual Interviews

The four key themes that emerged from the teachers and parents' FGD were (1) Expected Academic Skills, (2) Professional Knowledge and Practical Issues, (3) National Policy Prescription and Accountability, and (4) Parental Factors. Each theme was further explained and typical comments were noted to corroborate the findings. For example, for the question, *what is your understanding of school readiness?* The teachers and parents' responses were categorized under the 'expected academic skills' theme. On the question, *how do you provide for individual readiness and transition to school,* the participants'

answers were categorized under the ‘professional knowledge and practical issue’ theme. Regarding the question, *what policies guide the way you prepare children for primary school*, the participants’ responses were categorized under ‘national policy prescription and accountability’ theme. In terms of the question, *what role do parents play in children’s school readiness/transition to primary school*, the participants’ responses were categorized under the ‘parental factors’ theme.

The qualitative findings provided a rich description of teachers, parents and education policy makers’ perspectives and practices on school readiness and transition to primary school. Representative quotes from the focus group discussions have been reproduced to reflect each of the four themes. Each quotation was identified by its source from kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers, parents having children entering primary school, and education policy makers.

Expected academic skills. The findings indicated that the majority of teacher and parent groups identified with academic skills such as reading, writing and basic arithmetic skills as an important criterion for children’s school readiness and transition to school. Even though some of them demonstrated a broader understanding and considered other aspects of children’s development, such as their physical health, they ended up with arguments suggesting that the ‘real practices’ that matter to them in making children acceptable or enabling them to succeed at primary schools are those that focus on children’s academic skills. Kindergarten teacher groups stated that:

School readiness...of course...is about reading, writing and arithmetic competency... because if children cannot read, write and count, they will be left behind. However, we also prepare our children to be physically and mentally ready for school (KG1).

We consider all aspects of children’s development. But there are many difficult subjects that are learnt in primary schools. So, preparing children to be able to

read, write and do basic arithmetic skills are important because if children cannot read, write and do basic arithmetic well, they will experience difficulty when they enter primary school (KG3).

We expect from children to be able to do reading, writing and arithmetic... we introduce them about letters to support them to be ready for school...anyway, we also train them to be independent (KG5).

The data further demonstrated that although some of the kindergarten teachers view teaching of core subjects, such as reading, writing and arithmetic to be the responsibility of primary schools teachers, they often implement programs to build foundation for children in these areas in kindergartens prior to school entry. The next comments by some kindergarten teachers demonstrate this perspective:

We have a center for readiness in our class for children, where we give an introduction to reading, writing and basic arithmetic. We just familiarize the children with these subjects... we cannot force children to have these skills... it is not our responsibility (KG2).

In addition, the majority of the kindergarten teacher focus group members were aware that it is not worthwhile to teach young children subjects, however, the expectations from primary school teachers created situations where they are compelled to do what they think would meet the expectations at the primary school level.

We know that teaching academic skills is a primary school teachers' job. But in kindergarten we also teach children the basic of reading, writing and counting, because some primary school teachers want their students to be able to have these skills before they entering the schools (KG4).

These comments showed that the common practice the kindergarten teachers implement as school readiness programs focused excessively on developing children's academic skills. It appears the teachers believe that by preparing children to read, write

and do arithmetic, contribute to building a strong foundation for future learning in school settings.

Further, some kindergarten teacher groups indicated that their focus on academic skills is associated with selection tests through which they determine who is ready or not ready for school. The kindergarten teachers shared their thoughts on these practices:

We hope that children can pass their test when they read, write and do arithmetic. So, in the second semester we increase the level of reading, writing and mathematics skills for children as a preparation to enter primary school (KG1).

We give our children an introduction to learning letters and numbers so they are ready to do the tests...because there are some public primary schools that are still conducting an academic selection test for children (KG2).

Well, we actually worry if our children cannot read, write and do basic mathematics. We worry that if they lack these skills they may not be ready to do the test to enter primary school...if they fail the test, they may be disadvantaged for life because the only have options to go to substandard primary schools... (KG4).

It is interesting that the practice of setting academic test for children who are about to enter primary school was confirmed only by one group of primary school teachers. However, this group was convinced that the test they gave was not difficult for children. In view of the nature of tests given to the children, members of a primary school teacher group stated:

We have a test for children about reading, writing and some basic arithmetic. However, it is not a difficult one; actually we do not give difficult test... We believe that children who are ready for school should be able to read, write and do some basic arithmetic like counting and adding simple one digit numbers (PM1).

It is interesting to note that from some of the kindergarten teacher groups that entrance examinations to some primary schools are diminishing. However, they still

support their kindergarten children to meet the demands of primary school education. The following are some of the comments made by the kindergarten teacher groups:

Recently, some regular public schools have stopped conducting selection tests in reading, writing and counting for children entering primary school. However, there are many difficult subjects children will learn in primary school, so we help our children to be ready for these (KG3).

Now, the selection to enter some public primary schools is not based on children's academic skills. However, we still train our children to read, write and count. We do this so that when they study many subjects in primary school, it will be easier for them because they already have the basic skills (KG5).

Related to primary school teacher groups' perspective on the academic selection tests to determine children's readiness, most of them indicated that they did not conduct the academic test anymore in public primary schools. However, they mentioned their expectation about the importance of children's basic knowledge in reading, writing and counting and 'the benefit' of previous selection tests as some primary school teacher group explained:

Currently, in public primary school, we cannot conduct an academic test for children. However, we do expect our children to have reading, writing and counting skills (PM2).

We hope that children graduating from kindergarten have reading, writing and basic mathematic skills...thus we think that if we can conduct a local test for children, it will be better...so we can select children who are ready for school...just like previous years (PM4).

The data further showed that although the majority of the primary school teachers did not see the academic skills as the requirement to study in primary school, they expressed

their concern for children having limited skills in reading, writing and counting who are entering primary schools. These concerns were raised by stating that:

Primary school program is different from kindergarten. Our curriculum is very difficult, isn't it? Actually we want our children...at least... to know basic reading, writing and counting...children at grade one already have a long reading list to read...it needs their reasoning as well...it is a concern to us (PM3).

It can be argued that these teachers were being driven by the prevailing conditions in primary schools. It can be implied that failure to follow the line of what is happening in the primary schools would place their children at risk as indicated in the following statements:

We hope that children who enter primary school are able to read, write and do basic arithmetic. However, because the skills are not the requirement to accept children in primary school... we have some children who can neither read, write, nor do basic arithmetic in our school. It will be difficult for them in the future (PM4).

These comments indicated that in general, the primary school teachers were not happy with the diminishing nature of selection tests for children who are seeking to enter primary school and their expectation on children to have basic knowledge of academic skills. They generally believe that children's academic skill is needed in order to cope with curriculum or programs in primary school settings.

The participants in this study also include views from parent groups who have children studying in the last semester of kindergarten. Some parent groups generated comments on academic skills preparation as important aspects for their children's readiness. The following are some of the comments made by the parents:

We think that when children are ready, it means they can read, write and count. That's why we encourage our children to be taught how to study primary subjects...we give them our attention and support... we prepare to meet their needs

to be ready to enter primary school by organizing tutoring programs for them...but not all parents can afford this (PC4).

...of course...children should be ready to learn. They should know letters, understand addition, and can do subtraction. We send our children to have a reading and writing training in a tuition center so that they can develop the required academic competencies before they enter primary schools (PC5).

While some parent groups expressed their supports on children's demonstrable skills in reading, writing and counting, other groups showed mixed feelings about focusing solely on academic skills and would like their children to have the opportunity to play.

Although we want our children to develop academic skills, we cannot ignore the fact that children must have some time to play... Play is important for being a child (PC1).

Although some parents recognized the importance of play in children's development, the primary subject oriented curriculum appeared to be driving parental demands, robbing the children of the opportunity to learn through play as they are even overloaded with homework by their teachers.

...we expect our children to adapt with the task in primary school so as to compete with others...this is making it difficult for us to allow them to be playful...to make them effective learners their kindergarten teachers give some homework about reading, writing and basic arithmetic, so that we can support them at home (PC1).

Despite the parents' push for their children to do well at primary school thereby supporting the learning of academic subjects at the preschool level, some others have realized the dangers academic learning pose to young children. These parents cannot help, but to continue to support it for fear of their children being uncompetitive in the future when they enter primary school.

We are concerned that our children are being forced to study academic skills...we realize that some of them get bored with these subjects...but if they only play at kindergarten, how can they be accepted and learn well in primary school? (PC2).

The ideal is not to force our children to read... but 'out there' the requirement to enter primary school is very difficult. We worry if our children are the ones that cannot read among their peer group... so we have to train the children in these skills. What can we do when the system is so competitive? (PC3).

The above statements showed that many participants in the parent groups did not agree that an emphasis on academic learning rather than play was appropriate for meeting the current needs of the child. However, they felt there should be priority on academic skill aspects in order to prepare their children to learn well in primary schools.

Concerns about tests that children have to take before they enter primary school were also reiterated by parents:

We wonder why young children have to compete...but what can we do?... It will be very sad if they are rejected from entering certain schools. We should think about the way to explain it to them (PC3)

Well...the test is there...whether we want it or not...if our children cannot pass the test, we will keep encouraging them not to feel so sad. We will find another way...we will send them to register to other primary schools...well sometimes it is better for children to repeat grade than to force them when they are not ready (PC4).

We know that some children are worried about testing...., even they may feel trembled when having a test... but this is only one day...we should think that there is also a positive side of the test (PC5).

The parent groups' comments indicated that they do not have a choice except for sending their children to join the tests given. They seemed to realize that these practices

make children feel uncomfortable. However, they tried to negotiate with these practices by viewing it from a positive perspective.

Overwhelmingly, some parent groups shared their own great efforts in preparing their children to do the selection test. The following quotes are examples of how parents worry about tests and support their children:

We worry if our children cannot pass the test...we looked at some information about the previous tests... we learn the items... and then drilled our children on these items...some of us bought books in the book store about 'ready to enter primary school' to practice the questions...we shared information...we do all of this for our children (PC2).

Children getting prepared for the selection test to enter primary school means we should support them...give them our attention...teach them patiently to read...to understand simple arithmetic... like addition and subtraction...this is tough...but that is what we have to do for them! (PC5).

The parent groups' commenting above showed their considerations and commitments to support their children based on their perspectives. It showed parents' confidence that by supporting their children to learn academic skills while giving them good attention can play a role for children's readiness.

Unpredictably, one parent group expressed different reasons in terms of their motivation to prepare their children to enter primary school. While the majority of parent groups worry by focusing on children's academic skills to pass the test and be accepted in primary school, one parent group viewed it from a different perspective:

Before, we did not really worry when our children cannot read, write and count well. We are sure that some primary schools can still accept our children. However, what makes us concerned is when we realize that many children in our surroundings are not good at reading, writing and counting. We worry about this situation....we worry if our children are left behind their peers (PC4).

Overall, the explanations given by the focus group participants related to school readiness indicated that school readiness is generally understood in academic terms. The participants perceived key curriculum areas of literacy and numeracy as the core determining factors of children's readiness for school. These perspectives demonstrate a traditional mindset of using academic skills as a way for measuring an individual child's potential against some set of curriculum standard expectations. For these reasons it appears that the parent and teacher groups would rarely provide chances for children to express their feelings, interests, and creativity and instead use intensive academic training to prepare children to be accepted into a preferred primary school.

In addition to teachers and parents' comments, education policy makers also shared their awareness of kindergartens' heavy reliance on academic preparation of children:

We realize that some schools are still practising rote reading, writing and arithmetic skills for young children as the processes for preparing them to enter primary school. Even some of them conduct a kind of readiness test. This is a problem. Actually the most important thing to do is to stimulate all aspects of children's development (EP1).

Another policy maker clarified the problem related to the way children are taught in some kindergartens in Indonesia:

Teaching of young children in our country is not that easy...we have conducted some training for teachers in all parts of Indonesia... this is really a big job. We believe that by having a good training, teachers can perform their roles better. They will understand how young children develop and learn (EP2).

The above explanations showed that Indonesian education policy makers are aware of the practices of academic drilling, as well as the use of selection tests in many schools in this country. In this regard, the policy participants have made it clear that teacher training is a priority and that teachers are a national resource that must be supported. It is recognized

that a professional development effort is needed to improve the training and service delivery to children appropriate to their overall development needs.

Professional knowledge and practice issues. The results indicated that the teachers face many challenges when teaching young children. Some of these challenges were related to professional competency and the teachers' ability to cope with large numbers of children in their classes. Other practice issues were associated with children's behavior and developmental problems. These sentiments were shared by some of the kindergarten teachers in focus groups:

We have many children in the class. Some of them are not ready to learn...they do not have strong basic skills... they are not independent...they cannot concentrate...they do not obey the kindergarten rules...we do not have the required knowledge to support all of them (KG1).

We only have one teacher to teach many children in the class. Sometimes children cannot concentrate...they do not have the ability to study...some children don't know how to socialize... it is difficult to teach them all (KG3).

The data further demonstrated that teachers experienced challenges related to lots of work they have to complete daily as some teacher groups explained:

There is a lot of works to do as kindergarten teachers...we have to prepare the children to be ready for school...we have to train the children to be independent ...to have a good social skills... to be disciplined. We have to develop children's emotional, social, intellectual and language skills. We wonder how we can do all these (KG4).

We have lots of things to do... you can imagine everyday we teach our children to understand the concept of reading, writing and counting. We train them to be matured, to be independent, to have a self-confidence...to be brave...this is not easy (KG5).

In spite of their many responsibilities, many teachers are still encouraged to find a different strategy to reduce their burdens. Some kindergarten teacher groups showed their efforts through the following strategies:

We tried several times based on our experience to find ways to manage our jobs...sometimes, we group the children based on their similar competencies in reading, writing, counting ...at other times we mixed the groups so each group has children with different levels of skills...we feel that by doing this some children may learn from others. This strategy reduces our burden (KG2).

We usually teach our children classically in reading, writing and counting...sometimes we feel this is a load, then we also try to apply different approaches by grouping the children based on their skills. Every group consists of a maximum of 10 children. We found that by grouping them, it makes it easier for us to teach (KG5).

The kindergarten teacher groups' comments above indicated their motivation to find different methods of teaching to facilitate the preparation of children for school. In respect of grouping the children, the teachers appeared to see this approach as giving them the benefits for supporting the children's developmental needs.

For other teachers, their main concerns were about the practice of rote learning they often used in teaching children to read and write or do basic arithmetic but which they cannot do without:

Other problem is about drilling our children to learn reading, writing and arithmetic in their early ages by rote. We are worried that they will get bored with these subjects but we do not have other alternatives (KG1).

Specifically, other kindergarten teacher groups indicated that their practice of rote learning is associated with the selection test, the demanding primary school curriculum and the regular exams that children have to take. The kindergarten teacher groups said that:

...We actually want to apply learning through play instead of drilling the children in academic skills. However, we have to consider the selection test and the exams in primary schools, the curriculum there is firm and different (KG3).

We train our children to learn reading, writing and counting in the second semester everyday intensively. We do this to facilitate them because later they have to deal with some tests...they have to cope with many things to learn in primary school. The curriculum is difficult in primary than early childhood (KG4).

The teachers' comments above suggested that they were concerned about their instructional practice in kindergarten settings due to their lack of competency to create appropriate learning that is suitable for children's particular needs that fit with the primary curriculum. Therefore they decided to continue the tradition of what they think would best prepare the children for school.

One surprising practice echoed by some teacher groups was academic homework such as reading, writing and calculating which they often give to young children to do with parents at home:

We give some homework to children...this can help them learn because they can repeat the lesson with their parents at home... this is another way to prepare the children according to our knowledge (KG1).

Our challenge is about children's readiness to learn... so we give homework to our children everyday... so they can learn at home too...we use this to see whether their parents support them with this task (KG3).

The teachers' statements above implied their limited knowledge on children's development and learning. In this regard, the teachers believe that academic homework is important to prepare children to enter primary school. It seemed that teachers do not understand the impact too much formal schooling on young children would have on their overall physical, emotional and cognitive development. It is a good practice that parents

contribute to their children's education but it is difficult to argue the benefit of assigning homework to children in preschools.

Primary school teacher groups also shared their challenges pertaining to their competency in handling many children in the class with their related problems including the following:

We have problems with many students in our class... it is around 40 students and there is only one teacher to teach them. There are some children who actually can read, write, and count well but they do not want to listen to teachers' instructions. ...they are very active and disturb other children...it is difficult to manage this situation (PM1).

Our school accepts all children regardless of their skills.... we just limit the number of children in our class to a maximum of 40 children....It is a challenge to make children feel comfortable at school or make them concentrate on our explanations if the number is too large. We really have difficulty because we do not have the appropriate skills to reduce their anxiety at school and not be scared with the teachers. Moreover... to teach them to read, write and count is a difficult job (PM5).

In addition, some primary school teacher groups raised an issue on the target of learning for children which has to do with many subjects to be taught in the curriculum.

In primary school, children have more subjects to learn such as math, language, science, moral education, etc. We know that it is difficult for them but we have to do this because we have to accomplish the learning target which is the standard curriculum (PM3).

Children should be on the track for primary learning, this is important so they can move on to learn more subjects according to the curriculum...we know that some children are behind their peers and this is tough for them; therefore we provide extra classes to teach them, especially those who are not good at reading, writing and counting (PM5).

The teacher groups' explanations highlighted their effort to helping their children to reach the learning target prescribed in the curriculum standard. Even though some teacher groups recognized the difficulty that children have to cope with, they seemed not to have any options. Surprisingly, their approaches did not take into account children's developmental potentials, differences and individual characteristics.

One unexpected practice confirmed by some teachers was the implementation of a routine test for grade one children which is organized by many primary school groups around each region. Some teachers reported:

We have to manage our teaching program and our time very well, if not, our children cannot reach the target. By doing this, they can pass the tests which are given every three months: math, language and science test. These are the tests designed by many schools in our region and not internal tests (PM3).

The teachers' statements above implied their narrow understanding of the impact of formal tests, which involved paper and pencil responses from young children. The teachers appeared to consider the tests as integrally tied to the curriculum, the outcomes, which could inform them about the children who are below the target standard of learning and those above, and who should be given the chance to enter primary school. It seemed that the teachers are concerned with the product of learning instead of the process of learning, which is important in early childhood education.

Regarding transition programs in primary school, all the primary school teacher groups who participated in the study shared their practices with reference to government's recommendation. These teacher groups conducted similar activities in their school as expressed by the primary school teacher groups:

As public primary schools, we just adopt the 'transition' program from the government, we call it 'orientation day'... on these days, children learn to know

about their new school... we have no idea whether we should develop this program ourselves or not (PM2).

The transition program we have is orientation day which is a given from the government... we think that it is already good and from our own point of view there is no problem so far, we just do it (PM4).

The comments from the primary school teacher groups indicated that they were not making an effort to develop their own transition program for children who are entering their schools for the first time. It appeared that their unfamiliarity and limited awareness on the importance of transition programs lead them to withhold the development of any innovative activities.

The limited knowledge of kindergarten and primary school teachers about effective teaching and appropriate learning for children were revealed by the education policy maker's statement:

Our government encourages teachers to provide a good environment for children to be ready to school. So we expect that teachers should implement learning through play and cater for all aspects of children's development. But the challenge is that we have limited number of professional teachers in the early childhood area, who comprehend an appropriate practice for young children (EPI).

In general, there is evidence in the data to suggest that the kindergarten and the primary teachers who participated in this study were not receiving the needed professional development that could support their professional and pedagogical knowledge in school readiness and transition to school. The results suggest that the majority of the teachers lacked current research knowledge in child development, school readiness, and effective components of transition to primary school leading to an emphasis on academic competence in the form of reading, arithmetic, and writing.

National policy prescription and accountability. The results indicated that the majority of both teacher participants referred to the general government policies on education when they were asked about the policies that guide children's preparation and transition to primary school. Initially, the data showed that some of the teacher groups were not sure whether they have a specific policy on school readiness or not. Despite this finding, they brought up the age criteria policy for children's school entry as one of the government's regulations. The following are some of the comments made by kindergarten teacher groups:

As far as we know it seemed that we do not have a specific policy on readiness and transition, we stick to what the government says about age for children to be considered ready to enter primary school. The information and guidance we give to parents about their children's readiness to be accepted in primary school is based on age (KG2).

We do not really know about the policy. But we think it is about age criteria policy from the government. We gave information to parents that for this year, children who will be accepted in public primary schools are those who are at least seven years of age (KG5).

Primary school teacher groups seemed more convinced in explaining the existence of the policies related to school readiness. All primary school teacher groups confirmed that there is a policy about the requirements for children to be accepted into primary school. The following quotes are examples of how the majority of teachers showed their awareness and compliance to the policy:

Yes, there is a new policy, it is stated that children who are at least six years old can be accepted in primary school. We follow the policy and the requirements recommended by government (PM1).

We are a public primary school, so we follow the government policy to select children only based on their age. The older children will have more opportunity than the younger ones (PM3).

The comments from both teacher groups showed that the teachers usually conform to the government's policy. It can be noted that using the age criteria can disadvantage capable children who have not reached the required age.

However, in the conversation process, both teacher groups expressed their confusion about the inconsistencies in the policy. These feelings were shared by kindergarten teacher groups in the following quotes:

If we are not mistaken, the government policy says that children should have capabilities in reading, writing and counting when they are 7 years of age...this is grade one children, but on the other hand, it is said that kindergarten children cannot be taught reading, writing and counting... when should we begin to teach them these academic skills? We know it needs time to learn these skills....This policy is contradictory and confusing (KG1).

The first requirement to be accepted in primary school as suggested by the government is only children's age. But in addition, the government allowed children who have not reached the required age to be accepted if they got recommendation letter from a psychologist that confirms that these children are ready for school...these children are capable to learn in our experience... some children are younger, but they can read, write and count well and parents want these children to enter primary school....so they asked for a recommendation letter from a psychologist... this can be tricky (KG2).

The statements from the kindergarten teacher groups indicated their uncertainty about the uniformity of the age criteria policy. According to these teacher groups, the policy appeared to be contradictory. It appeared that the lack of understanding of this policy led some teachers to implement what they deemed fit for the children by introducing academic skills to children in early ages.

Primary school teacher groups also shared their experiences about the effect of age criteria policy, and that it increased their burden in teaching children in primary school.

Some primary school teacher groups commented by saying:

This policy puts us in a difficult situation...because we have to select children who are ready to enter primary school only based on their age, there are some children who enter our school without the basic skills of reading, writing and counting at all. This is a problem for us (PM2).

With this policy, we have to accept all the children registered in our school whether they can read or not, in effect, some of the children coming to our school are not ready to learn... this is an extra job (PM4).

The above comments suggest that the teachers were not comfortable about the policy specifications. In this regard, they thought that this policy created additional responsibility for them. Additionally, the teacher groups criticized that the policy has no clear guidelines for them to follow.

On the other hand, one primary school teacher group viewed the value of this age criteria policy from another perspective. They shared their thought as follows:

We belong to public primary schools...so we refer to the government's policy including the age criteria policy. In our view this is good and fair, we just consider children's age...we do not see whether these children are smarter than others...we do not see whether they come from rich families or not...so it will limit the favoritism and nepotism (PM1).

Related to their dissatisfaction with the effect of age criteria policy from the government, it is noteworthy that some kindergarten teacher groups have created a school level policy to guide them in terms of reading, writing, and counting.

We noted that recently most public schools do not give a test for their children, they just select children based on their age... however, we consider that there are many difficult subjects that will be learned in primary school...so we have 'our own

policy' to help our children to be ready...we just facilitate them though learning of key subjects before they reach primary school (KG3).

We have our 'local policy' to guide how we teach our children to be ready for school. We know that the government policy does not allow us to teach children in kindergarten to read, write and count like in the primary school or allow public primary school to give a test...however, we are worried that our children may lack basic skills needed in primary schools without training in these subjects. We think that there might be some benefits with the introduction of these skills early... moreover, we feel pity for those children who already have interest to read and count, but they are not allowed to do it because of the policy (KG4).

In spite of the claims that some public primary schools are not allowed to conduct a selection test for children, the following comments by both teacher groups provided a clearer understanding about the government's policy description as both teacher groups explained:

There is always an exception with the policy... it is true that in general, public primary schools cannot give a test for children...however, there are some favorite and 'better standard' primary schools around us. They often do tests...and it is allowed by the government (KG2).

We give 'a kind of test' for children entering our school... we do this because more children are coming to our school so we have to select them anyway ...this school is a favorite one... there is a special policy from the government about this kind of selection test for certain public primary schools... anyway, it is not a difficult test...well, few items may be difficult but this test is much easier than the same tests years before (PM5).

The educational policy regarding the criteria to be accepted in primary school is confirmed by the education policy makers in Indonesia. The education policy makers explained the policy circumstances:

We have a new policy that for all children who are entering a public primary school, the requirement is based on their age, not their academic skills. But there is another 'requirement' for children who are entering a 'better standard' school such as national standard public primary schools or primary schools attaining international status (EP1).

The requirement for accepting children into primary school are based on their age... we do not judge whether the children are 'ready' to school or not ... we give priority for older children in the area to be accepted in a regular public primary school. However...there is a special requirement for other primary schools... those are 'favorite schools' (EP2).

In this respect, it is recognized that there are specific issues related to Indonesian education policy and school policy contexts. It appears that kindergarten and primary school teachers still struggle with the dilemma in implementing government's policy prescription related to supporting young children to enter primary school. The policy appears contradictory and unfair as it prescribes double standards and different treatments for different children in terms of the primary school they would like to enter.

Further, the findings indicated that the dilemma kindergarten teachers face in terms of the government's policy on the requirements for children entry to primary school affects the transition programs currently in practice. For example, some kindergarten teacher groups thought that:

Teachers have to work very hard to teach children to read, write and count so they can adapt with the primary school tasks later... this is 'the policy' ...what matters at the end is how we give account of our teaching. You can measure it by the number of children who can read and write which the government wants to see when they evaluate us (KG1).

We worry that if we do not prepare our children in these academic skills parents will question us...we know that the government said that there will be no selection

test for children who are about to enter primary school... it's a policy' but this message is not delivered ...or cannot be delivered to many schools which are designated as 'favorite and better standard schools who are 'still giving tests for their children (KG2).

In contrast, with regard to transition programs in primary schools contexts, all teacher groups seemed to have no problems conducting their programs recommended by the government. All schools participated in this study related the transition program to 'orientation day'. The following are primary school teacher groups' responses to orientation days which are almost alike:

We just follow the national policy from the central government. So we facilitate children to know their friends' and teachers' names on the orientation days...take them to walk around the school, show them their class and the principal's office (PM1).

We have a letter from the government about the orientation day program for children entering primary school. It explains what we should inform the children about and what activities they can participate in on these days. So they have opportunity to know their friends, teachers, the school (PM3).

On the whole, there is confirmation in the data to suggest that the majority of kindergarten and primary school teachers who took part in this study experienced disorientation in understanding the policy prescription from the government. The results implied an inconsistency in the government policy which created a dilemma for the teachers in the implementation process.

Parental factors. The data showed varied responses from participants regarding what parents expect from teachers and what teachers expect from parents in supporting their children's readiness and transition to primary school. In addition, the findings indicated that parents' background and involvement with schools influence children's

readiness and transition to school. Interestingly, parents expect kindergarten teachers to provide various services to their children:

We do not want our children to just play at school... they must learn more about reading, writing and basic arithmetic... we do not have to send our children to get a reading course outside of the school anymore (PC3).

We expect teachers to give more attention to the children...they should give more extra attention in reading, writing and arithmetic... they should motivate the children to study...this is important because before entering primary school children are expected to have these skills...so teachers should educate them accordingly (PC4).

The parents' comments indicated their perceptions that their children are not receiving adequate preparation for primary school. It appeared that parents viewed the academic skills preparations as critical for children to be accepted in primary school. Some kindergarten teachers confirmed the parents' aspirations:

Some parents wanted us to teach extra courses in reading, writing and counting for their children at school...some asked for homework and others decided to send their children to study in a course center for additional tuition (KG1).

Some parents asked for a lot of homework in reading, writing and math for their children from us....they believed that it helped their children to learn...what we do is to give some information to parents about primary school requirements, so they can prepare their children in respect of these (KG3).

The data further showed that some other parents expect primary school teachers to focus on teachers' relationship with children, nurture good manners in children, and show dispositions that can make children feel comfortable at primary school.

We hope that our children will be ready to learn...we want them to be praised by their teachers... we want the teachers to be nice to our children...to give good advice... so that our children are encouraged to study at school (PC5).

Concerning parents' role in preparing children's readiness for school, some kindergarten teacher groups explained that if parents do not support their children in academic skills to read, write and do basic arithmetic their children may not be accepted in primary schools:

Many parents in our school really support our program... They like to support us but they do not ask lots of things from us...some support their children to learn at home and some others register their children to take a reading tuition in a course center (KG2).

Many parents want their children to be able to read, write and count...so they asked for a lot of homework from us...and they supported their children to study at home (KG3).

The kindergarten teachers' comments were clarified by some parent groups:

We give our best to support our children...we train them in basic skills that we consider are important for children to enter primary schools with...we often discuss our children's progress with teachers (PC2)

We send our children to have an extra course in reading, writing and counting; besides we give them courage, attention and love (PC4).

Other kindergarten teacher groups expressed disappointment with some parents because those parents do not attend parent teacher meetings and were difficult to work with.

The kindergarten teachers expressed feelings of frustration in the following ways:

Some parents want us to prepare their children to have a skill in reading, writing and counting since early age... but do not want to discuss it with us...they decide everything by themselves (KG4).

We felt that it is more difficult to collaborate with some parents. They make their own rules...some just do not care about what we do (KG5).

In terms of teachers' dissatisfaction from some parents' lack of attention to their children's learning, some parent groups commented:

We have our own way to support our children....well, we sometimes asked the teachers about our children's development is our business...we do not want to disturb them too much about what we should be doing (PC2).

We do not give a lot of support...because we think that the teachers can handle the children's problem, we think they are preparing them well and it is good already so we just leave it to the teachers (PC3).

The perspectives of teachers toward parents and vice versa indicated that there was a lack of effective communication between both parties which created misunderstanding of the kinds of support each can contribute to children's development.

Again, in relation to parents' limited participation in kindergarten activities, it seems logical that one of the reasons is the absence of formal procedures in place for parents to be involved in school activities. Some kindergarten teachers commented:

Most of our schools do not have a special program to involve parents at school... some parents teach their children at home and repeat the lesson that has been given at school but occasionally some come to the school to help (KG1).

The views expressed by the primary school teachers were a bit different from the kindergarten teachers' comments. The majority of primary school teachers seemed apathetic about the importance of parents' involvement with schools, especially in the transition period. The findings suggested minimal parental involvement in their school programs which happen during drop-off time and when children's reports are distributed to parents.

So far, there are not many parents who are involved in our school programs. We meet parents when they send off their children to school and meet again when we give children the reports (PM1).

Until now in our school, some parents usually take their children to school in the first days of schools. Next, they come to school when we give a report of their children's progress (PM2).

Although the primary school teachers have tried to engage with parents their attempts have not proved very successful. This effort was raised by one primary school teacher group:

We actually need support from parents. We have told them but there was no parents who care... this is really a big job for teachers. We actually have given some information to parents that their children need help in learning, but many of them do not respond to our invitation (PM3).

Further revelations from the teachers suggest that a lack of parental involvement is partly due to the busy life of parents. However, the teachers added that the problem is also caused by their minimal attempts to involve parents:

Based on our experience, there were no parents involved in our program...well few parents come to school when their children have problems. However, we recognize that this happens because we do not show them how to be involved either (PM2).

So far, there is no participation from parents in our program. We know that they are very busy with their own business...they have to struggle to support their family life...besides, we do not have a clear process of how to involve them ... (PM4).

The findings suggest some concerns related to inadequate relationship between teachers and parents. This calls for the need to increase rapport between parents and teachers, particularly at the primary school level to ensure that the programs are effective and tailored to children's readiness and transition to school.

Chapter Summary

The data generated from the focus group discussion and interview sessions demonstrate that generally, teacher and parent groups consider the teaching of three learning subjects (reading, writing and basic arithmetic skills) as the most important areas of focus for young children when preparing them for school. Further, the data suggested that professional knowledge and practice are limited and tied to national policy requirements. Moreover, teacher-parent relationship and involvement in school programs are still poor, particularly at the primary school level. The next chapter will discuss the common themes generated from the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study jointly in response to the research questions.

Chapter Seven

Discussion of common themes of the quantitative and qualitative results

Introduction

This study investigated the perspectives and practices of key stakeholders (kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers, parents, education policy makers) pertaining to school readiness and children's transition to school in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. The study combined questionnaires with focus group discussions to yield data on school readiness and transition practices for children who are about to transition to primary schools. In addition, individual interviews with education policy makers generated data on policy issues and demonstrated how available education policies played significant roles in determining the teachers' early childhood and primary school pedagogical practices including the allocation of resources to support school readiness and transition to school for young children in Indonesia.

The previous chapters presented results obtained from the quantitative and qualitative phases of the current study. Generally, the two approaches identified a number of common themes that are discussed jointly in this chapter. The discussion focuses on teachers and parents' perspectives and practices of school readiness and transition to school including how the aspects of the data connect with or challenge some of the relevant literatures in the areas of school readiness and transition to school. The Bronfenbrenner's (1998) theoretical concepts of Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem are used to explain the findings.

There were six themes identified from the Policy and Concern subscales in the quantitative analysis: (1) General Policy Awareness (2) Policy Dynamics, (3) Parental Roles in School Level Policy Making 4)Standard Problems (5) Teacher and School Factors (6) Resources Problems. The qualitative approach is interrelated with the quantitative and identified four themes namely: (1) Expected Academic Skills (2) Professional Knowledge and Practical Issues (3) National Policy Prescription (4) Accountability, and Parental Factors. The table below shows the various research questions, sources of data and the theoretical concept used to frame and explain the findings.

Table 33
Research Questions, Data Sources and Theoretical Concept

No	Research Questions	Sources of Data	Theoretical Concept
1	What conceptions of school readiness and transition are held by the stakeholders (teachers, parents, and education policy makers) in Indonesia?	Questionnaire FGD/ Interviews	Microsystem Mesosystem Exosystem Macrosystem
2	How do the stakeholders' understandings influence policies and practices?		C H R O N
3	What aspects of school readiness do the different stakeholders prioritize?	Questionnaire FGD/ Interviews	Microsystem Mesosystem Exosystem Macrosystem
4	How did they implement these aspects in school readiness and transition practices?		O S Y S T E M
5	What are the concerns of the stakeholders regarding the perspectives and practices of school readiness and transition to primary school in Indonesia?	Questionnaire FGD/ Interviews	Microsystem Mesosystem Exosystem Macrsystem

The first and second research questions are: *what conceptions of school readiness and transition are held by the stakeholders (teachers, parents, and education policy makers) in Indonesia? And how do the stakeholders' understanding influence policies and practices?*

The first and second research questions require gathering and analyzing opinions of teachers, parents and education policy makers to determine their conception of school readiness and practices. Understanding the stakeholders' perspectives on school readiness is important for both conceptual, policy and practical reasons. Teachers and parents' views are critical to the understanding of school readiness because they are the primary influences on children's development (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; McAllister, 2005). Also, it is important to gain policy makers' views since policies, to a great extent, determine what teachers do in practice (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; ARACY, 2009; Saluja, Scott-Little, & Clifford, 2000). The findings to the first and second research questions can be discussed under two main themes namely: (1) Conceptualizing age as readiness and transition as one - day orientation program (2) Expected academic skills.

Conceptualizing age as readiness and transition as one – day orientation program. One major finding showed that the majority of the teachers and parents conceptualized school readiness largely in terms of children's age. This understanding of readiness for transition to school revealed a conception that is closely related to the Indonesian nationally prescribed policies which stipulated the age of seven as the main criterion for determining readiness and transition to school. The findings further suggest that the education policy stipulate a range of ages as a requirement for children's school entry. Commenting on this aspect of the policy, participants in the kindergarten teacher groups stated:

...children who will be accepted in public primary schools are those who are at least seven years of age in the first of July....It is not a good thing if children are not well matured before they enter primary school because some cannot cope....we know some very young children bellow age seven are smarter than the big guys but they are not physically ready and this can be a problem (KG5).

It seemed from these understandings of readiness and transition to school that the kindergarten teachers are likely to retain some children irrespective of their potentials on the basis of their physical maturity until they reach the stipulated age before they allow them to transition to school.

Alternatively, a participant in the primary school teacher groups asserted:” *it is stated that children who are at least six years old in the first of July can be accepted in primary school. We follow this policy...*” (PM1). These age ranges appeared to complicate issues for teachers regarding who should be accepted and who should not (McCartney & Phillips, 2011). According to some scholars (Cannon & Libscomp, 2008; Shepard & Smith, 1986; Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008), regardless of the target date, there will be a full range of ages and abilities represented by children in any classroom. This is due to parental choices and attempts to evade complicated policies. For example, parents of children with birthdays just before the cut-off date may choose to hold their children back to gain the perceived extra edge of another year in kindergarten, while other children who are far from the deadline may be pushed ahead by parents to enter primary school. The findings to this question indicated traditional, biological or maturational understanding of school readiness and transition to school.

In general, both teacher groups who responded to the survey (91.8%) thought that children’s age is one important way to think about school readiness and transition to school. Similar views were expressed by the primary and kindergarten teachers in the focus group

discussions. They suggested that the government's policy about age play an influential role in the ways the teachers conceptualized school readiness and transition to school. The following comments from the primary school teachers buttress this point:

we belong to a public primary school, so we follow the government's policy to select children only based on their age at 7 years..." (PM3).

Similar comments were expressed by the kindergarten teachers who noted that: *"...the requirement for transitioning to primary school is only based on children's age..."* (KG2). Surprisingly, these statements were confirmed by one education policy maker who stated: *"we have a new policy which mandated that all children entering a public primary school... must attain the required age..."* (EP1).

According to many researchers of children (Cappelloni, 2012; McCartney & Phillips, 2011; Shepard & Smith, 1986; Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008), conceptualizing age as readiness and for transition to school denotes a traditional view of education with the assumption that older children would perform better academically at school. The researcher would argue that age-based conceptualization of readiness for transition to school is a narrow way of perceiving children's development as it centers on a maturationist perspective or biological markers as the main predictors of children's development and success in schools (Kagan & Rigby, 2003). The implication that can be gleaned from this finding is that teachers who concur with such perspectives may offer limited and specific forms of learning to children only when they reach certain age levels that are deemed by the teachers as sufficient for coping with certain subjects in schools. Age-related conception of development and school readiness may also limit services and support communities and teachers may offer to children to promote their school readiness because all their attention may be directed to how the children are developing biologically (Kagan & Rigby, 2003). In this way, the biological-maturational view expressed by the

participants in this research is contrary to the bioecological perspectives which focus on both the child's biology and the relationships between the individual and the settings in which they develop and function (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Although some researchers highlight that older children at school entry do better academically in the short and longer terms (Lin, Freeman, & Chu, 2009), some other studies have found that age of entry does not really matter for children's academic progress and well-being (Berliner, Robert, & Calfee, 2013; Morrison, Griffith, & Alberts, 1997). The latter authors stress that younger children in the classroom make just as much progress academically and socially as their older classmates in the early grades. Therefore, holding children back because of their age will not guarantee they will learn better or be in less danger of academic risks. It can also be argued that age -based conceptualization and the Indonesian cut - off date entry policy created some problems in relation to the variability in children's age and they could lead to issues of equity. For example, schools often select some children and reject capable others because they have not attained the age-specified requirement for entry into school. In fact, there will always be a younger group of children and a range of abilities represented in the classroom (Cannon & Libscomp, 2008). Thus, decisions over which children are considered younger or older by teachers can be quite subjective. Younger children might refer to children whose birthday is up to six months before the cut - off date for school entry, but it might likely refer to children whose birthdays are closer to the cut - off for school entry.

It appears that both teacher groups' compliance with the government policy is the direct result of them being under the government's supervision. For instance, the majority of primary schools in Indonesia are public schools and managed by the government, which implies that the schools must adhere strictly to the policy requirements or face sanctions (Sardjunani & Suryadi, 2005). The use of age as a criterion can also be historically

explained. Decades ago, the requirement for children to enter primary school mainly considered age and maturation of physical health. In many countries, age is still the most used single criterion for starting school despite the complexity in defining individual readiness (De Lemos & Mellor, 1994; Fromberg, 2012; Gidney & Millar, 2012). Within the framework of age as the main component for the conceptualization of school readiness, it is assumed that the skills and knowledge needed for success in school are associated with age (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Rosier & McDonald, 2011).

It is interesting to note that the Indonesian government still focuses on age as the main criteria in viewing children's readiness. The age criteria policy implies that older children will have more opportunity to be accepted into primary school than younger children, because the latter are more likely to be considered unready for school (DIKDASMEN, 2009). In this way, it can be argued that policies that view chronological age alone as a determinant of children's readiness for school is not grounded in values and beliefs about the complex nature of children's development. This may compel children to be ready for school instead of schools transforming their practices to be ready for children. Furthermore, policies that view younger children as less ready for school are more often influenced by the child development theory of Piaget, which sees development as unfolding within the child according to an inner biological clock that no amount of external intervention can alter (Dockett & Perry, 2007). The participants' conception of age as readiness is implicated in a theoretical argument by Hitz and Ritcher's (1993) who put forward two major perspectives on school readiness called the educational and the legal. The educational aspect of readiness has to do with children's preparation to perform tasks such as reciting the alphabet, counting and writing their names. Based on the legal standpoint, readiness has to do with every state's policy that outlines procedures to provide all children with an equal access to educational services regardless of their backgrounds or

abilities. Some scholars (Elliot, 2006; Lewit & Baker, 1995) reiterate that legal requirements proposing to have all children in school by a certain age may conflict with educational readiness and school systems and thus require from researchers and policy makers to work together to create measures to assess exactly when children are intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially ready to begin learning school materials.

Regarding the participants' understanding of the transition concept, so far the appropriate concept of transition has not seemed to be recognized in the majority of primary schools in Indonesia. The finding showed that when many of the kindergarten and primary school teachers (75%) explained that they had policy guidelines on transition programs in the survey, they were referring it to one day orientation program. This was supported by the results from the primary school teachers' focus group discussions in which they agreed with the comments given by the education policy maker: *"we just follow the national policy from central government. So we set aside one day to facilitate children transition to know their friends and teachers' names on the orientation days...take them to walk around the school, show them their class and the principal's office"* (PM1). The result suggests that in a kindergarten context in Indonesia, the transition program is assumed as preparing children for academic skills, whereas in a primary school context, transition to school is strictly acknowledged as orientation day programs.

It is typical that all the primary schools involved in this study often follow the government's policy as they are public primary schools that are compelled to submit to the policy. The existing nature of the education policy in Indonesia context seems to influence decisions of how transition programs are delivered. It shows that the policy has a significant impact on the teachers' way in facilitating programs for the children on the orientation days. Regarding their practices, some primary school teacher groups explained:

“the letter from the government about orientation day programs explain what we should inform the children about and what activities they can participate in these days...(PM3).

On the one hand, it is obvious to suggest that the transition concept held by the participants in this study which is limited to orientation days may not adequately address children’s needs. One - day transition program is inadequate to serve as a bridge from kindergarten to school setting, cannot provide diverse activities involving children, families, educators, carers and wider communities and cannot attend to individual or particular children’s needs (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, Early, 1999). This situation can make children feel discomfort or experience internal conflict in school (Cowan & Cowan, 2003). On the other hand, effective transition programs are those that establish partnership between preschools and primary schools (Dockett & Perry, 2001).

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004) foregrounds the importance of this form of partnership by suggesting that the relationships between contexts or settings in which children develop and learn must connect with schools. Bronfenbrenner considers families and many environmental factors as essential driving force affecting children’s readiness, which must be factored into school readiness programs. According to the bioecological theory, the contextualized nature of learning and development for children, parents, teachers, and communities must be taken into consideration in any program for children. This requires transforming the traditional perspectives of school readiness and transition that are grounded in age and the one-day orientation program that detaches from the microsystem elements such as parents, siblings, grandparents and so on. It is in school-community partnership that positive development occurs because the complexity within which children develop, are carefully interrogated and considered in the program planning for readiness and transition to school.

These findings imply that a movement away from a rigid age-related policy making will consider the mesosystem which entails teachers and parents' interactions in children's immediate settings (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The exosystem level incorporates the stakeholders who make policies. In this way the ground rules for school readiness and transition to school would encompass the broadest level of children's ecology (Doucet & Tudge, 2007). It is argued that what counts as credible educational policy and practices are not only shaped by research but also by macrosystem factors such as culture and ideology (Woodhead, 2006). In other words, there are various dynamic influences, direct and indirect, that impact children's readiness to school. For example, the national policy on age criteria for school entry as well as the values and customs in Indonesia emerges from the macrosystem and indirectly influence children's development and learning. Besides, the relationship children have with teachers and parents (microsystem), and parent-teacher interaction (mesosystem) directly influence children's readiness (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This means, a re-examination of macro-level factors such as early childhood education policy is needed to reappraise the policy on school readiness as well as to help teachers and parents understand that factors which are external to their practice can influence the daily conception and practices of school readiness. Thus, it cannot be argued that the participants' conception of school readiness as age-related and transition as a day program is not framed by the Indonesian government's policies alone, but their historical root may lie in the culture of Indonesians.

Importantly, by examining the temporal element of environmental change (chronosystem) such as the chronological age, academic task and personal conception of school readiness, attempts can be made to move beyond age-related criteria and the one-day orientation program. This is consistent with the perspective that interrelates with the components of readiness, namely children's readiness for school, school's readiness for

children, and the capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for their young children (Emig & Scarupa, 2001). Kagan and Rigby (2003) also reiterate school readiness and transition to school to consider elements of families, early childhood settings, schools, neighbourhoods, and communities in policy making and practices.

If the concept of transition is not understood in terms of the influence of contexts (for example, families, schools, communities) and the connections among these contexts at any given time and across time (Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999), adjustment to school will continue to induce stress and resentment of schooling for young children. This means, a reconsideration of macro-level factors such as the early childhood education policy to reappraise the policy on readiness and transition is essential because an effective policy that considers the whole child in the context of culture and ecological factors might influence quality readiness programs and transition to school.

Expected academic skills. The second important finding regarding the participants' conceptual understanding of readiness for transition to school is mainly cognitive, the ability of children to do basic arithmetic and to read. The initial findings in the survey showed that the majority of teacher participants (74.9%) agreed to allow age eligible children to enter primary school even though they cannot read well. However, further findings from the focus group discussions indicated that some teacher groups gave attention to academic skills as requirements for determining children's readiness and for allowing them to transition to primary school. To these teachers, age as a criterion of school entry does not solve the problem of school readiness. The data shows that specific skills such as reading, writing and basic arithmetic dominated the kindergarten teachers and parents' perspectives. Kindergarten teacher group said: *“school readiness...of course...is about reading, writing and arithmetic... because if children cannot read, write and count,*

they will be left behind” (KG1). Some parents pointed out similarly: “*we think that children who are ready...it means that they can read, write and count*” (PC4). This finding is consistent with a study finding by Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000) which noticed that teachers often consider children as not ready to school when they are weak in academic skills.

The explanations given by kindergarten teachers and parents related to school readiness indicated that school readiness is generally understood in academic terms. The arguments in favour of children being taught academic skills appeared to construct children solely in terms of cognitive development (Halle, Zaff, Calkins, & Margie, 2000). It can be argued that this perception situates children in an empiricist perspective which identifies a child’s school readiness by focusing on the predetermined set of cognitive skills and knowledge considered prerequisites for later success in school (Gredler, 1992, 1997; Marquez, 2006). Whitebread and Bingham (2012) argue that based on the government’s policy perspective, this model can be attractive to governments as it seemingly delivers children into primary school ready to conform to classroom procedures that centre traditionally on reading, writing and mathematics skills. However, from a pedagogical perspective this approach fuels an increasingly dominant notion of early childhood as preparation for school rather than for life.

A belief in the empiricist view suggests that development is stimulated by learning and is not a prerequisite for it (Berk & Winsler, 1995). The empiricist view addresses that children should be trained in certain related skills followed by universal testing on specific curriculum tasks or through universal standardized instruments. Instead of focusing on cognitive skills alone around reading, mathematics and writing, educators must play a role in providing children with appropriate social opportunities and scaffolding early experiences needed to develop significant social and learning skills needed for school entry

(Carlton & Winsler, 1999). This need to be done because the practice of the whole-group instructions on isolated skills for groups or individuals, including intensive drilling practice are not effective in preparing children for the process of learning (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 1998). In this regard, teachers' competency are needed to bring into play a variety of teaching strategies that can encompass the great diversity of children in preschools and schools. Excellent instructions build on what children already know and can do and provide knowledge, skills and dispositions for lifelong learning (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 1998).

An effective conceptualization of readiness for transition to school induces practices that arouse children's curiosity for learning through discovery and projects instead of a traditional mindset of using academic skills as a way of viewing children's readiness (Campbel & Jobling, 2010; Porter, 2008). The participants' conceptualisation is consistent with some earlier research which gives much attention to early literacy development as one aspect of being ready for school. For example, the finding that pre-schoolers' literacy and language abilities may predict their reading achievements in grades one through three (Walker, Greenwood, Hart, & Carta, 1994), which conceptualizes readiness for transition to school in terms of academic prudence, informs a limited understanding of school readiness. Teachers might use children's results for accountability purposes leading to a focus on academic skill-related practice of readiness for school. It also reflects a top down policy with rigid and contradictory mandatory requirements for teachers to show evidence of children's attainment for school entry reflecting a lack of comprehensive understanding of children's holistic development. Thus, in view of the findings related to school readiness conceptions, macro level factors (policy, ideology, & beliefs) must be taken seriously when thinking about what teachers and parents believe in terms of school readiness.

Further, regarding the conception of school readiness and transition, Scott-Little and Maxwell (2000) argue that the concept of school readiness should not be simply defined as the skills and abilities that are important for children. It should be viewed as a multi-faceted construct that includes the capacity of families, early care and education programs, the broader communities to support children's early learning and development, and the capacity of schools to effectively educate children once they start school, as well as to consider the characteristics of children. This is in line with Emig and Scarupa (2001) who suggest that interrelated components, namely children's readiness for school, school's readiness for children, and the capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for their young children should be critically considered.

Other scholars McCain and Mustard (2002) also comment that the concepts of readiness that focus on individual child development have been put as being somewhat limited. According to Nolan, Hamm, Cartin, & Hunt (2009) this concept is limited because it neither identifies processes that lead children to acquire these competencies, nor does it recognize children's dependence on opportunities within settings that support development of these competencies. It is acknowledged that there has been an impressive change in the thinking of educators and researchers about children's brain functioning in relation to their development and learning. Research on brain development has suggested that direct action - physical and intellectual engagement with experiences - in addition to problem-solving and repetition, ensures that the synapses or neural pathways become stronger (Bruce, 2004).

The findings of the current study have demonstrated that Indonesian children in kindergarten have limited time experiencing their natural environment as a result of gluing children to their seats to learn academic subjects. The benefits of giving children freedom to explore learning rather than to receive it as a given, is supported by Karr-Morse and Wiley (1997) and that, children who are allowed to explore stimulating surroundings are

more likely to develop improved neural connections which aid later learning. Therefore, children who learn actively have positive dispositions to learning which a key aspect of readiness for school. It can be argued based on the findings of this study that the teachers' overconcentration on rote - learning and memorization can rob children from developing interest in what they are doing, experience enjoyment and success. Instead, their confidence to learn or become self-directed and inquiry learners will diminish as a result of forceful pedagogy which is devoid of intrinsic motivation to learn (Hohmann & Weikart, 1995). McCain and Mustard (2002) highlight that there is connections or synapses in the developing brain which are created through input from a child's interactions with people and objects in their social environment. This neuroscience research (UNICEF, 2008) reflects the importance of rewarding children with learning environments that create passion for interactions between teachers and children as well as parent and children for healthy brain development to occur. It can be argued therefore that school readiness is not something that suddenly happens with age or through academic drilling as the participants in this research have indicated, but rather it is an outcome of a child's rich experience provided through the interaction of biology and environmental and cultural factors (Blair, Knipe, Cummings, Baker, Gamson, Eslinger, Thorne, 2007).

The findings of this research demonstrate that the majority of the participants' thought of school readiness in cognitive terms alone. This is quite worrying as Heckman (2006) highlight the importance of the concept of school readiness to include non -cognitive skills such as children's ability to interact effectively in the classroom, listen with attentiveness, and follow simple instructions. School readiness and transition need to be viewed as an ongoing and multi-faceted process that incorporates children's holistic development. Therefore, it is important to conceptualize school readiness in bioecological terms, considering the concept of school readiness as a function of an organized system of

interactions and transactions among people (children, teachers and parents), settings (home and school) and institutions (communities and governments) is crucial (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Brown, Odom, Mc Connell, 2008; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006).

In addition, Vernon-Feagans, Pancsofar, Willoughby, Odom, Quade, & Cox (2008) recommend that readiness must be conceptualised as a broad construct that incorporates all aspects of a child's life that contribute directly or indirectly to that child's ability to learn. In this regard, the way teachers think of readiness and transition to school must take into account the setting, context, and conditions under which the child acquires skills and is encouraged to learn (Dockett & Perry, 2009). Dockett, Perry, & Kearney (2010) argue that approaches to readiness and transition to school that focus only on developing children's skills do not necessarily lead to improved school success. This means, children's lack of readiness to transition to school is not a problem of children being insufficiently skilled to learn at school, but instead it is where there is a mismatch between the attributes of individual children and families, and the ability and resources of the school and/or system to engage and respond appropriately. This is where the findings of the current study are significant.

The use of bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) considers multifaceted aspects of children's development including their abilities, health, and behaviors, the capacity of families, educational programs and the broader community to support children's early learning and development. This conception also recognises the availability of appropriate services within conceptualisations of readiness for school (Boethel, 2004) and highlights the complexity of processes that foster a readiness to learn how parenting practices, the quality of education, and the resources of a community are implicated in the quality and quantity of children's overall development (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system theory emphasizes the interactional

processes in the home, classroom, school and community produce developmental trajectories for children (Bronfenbrenner, 2001a). In this regard, unless teachers and parents provide the environments and experiences that support the physical, social, emotional, language, literacy, and cognitive development of children, school readiness and transition to school would become isolated educational practices. This requires changing limited perspectives of school readiness that only focus on children academic skills to a broader system approach.

On the whole, the findings of this study has confirmed what others have argued that perspectives on children's readiness are complicated, debatable, and still developing (Graue, 2006; Janus & Offord, 2000). Even though there is no consensus about the meaning of readiness, it is important for group participants to move beyond academic conceptualization and consider the importance of less structured aspects of early childhood learning on children's readiness for school such as social competence, physical health, emotional adjustment, language and cognitive skills, and general knowledge (Janus & Offord, 2000; National Education Goals Panel, 1992).

It can be concluded that the findings in relation to the first research question suggest that, indeed, the kinds of activities in which individuals engage, shape their learning and concept formation. Rogoff and Lave (1984) refer to 'activity structures cognition' (p.v), which implies that when teachers engage in goal-directed activities, they deploy what they know in undertaking the task. Also, stringent educational policies can compromise the refining of what we know or the transformation of that knowledge (Billett & Henderson, 2011). Interestingly, our conceptualization and practices are shaped by the social and physical contexts in which they occur (Billett, 1995). Therefore, in order to develop a holistic conceptualization of school readiness and transition, Indonesian government and teachers must seek to understand alternative theories that carve new images of children as

the right holders and capable learners who coproduce knowledge with teachers and families.

Research question three and four asks: “*what aspects of school readiness do the different stakeholders prioritize? And how do they implement these aspects in school readiness and transition practices?*”

These research questions bring together the perspectives and practices of teachers, and parents about their priority aspects of school readiness and transition practices. The implicit assumption is that educators’ conceptualization of school readiness and transitions have consequences for the ways they do practice. Generally, the findings revealed that the teachers and parents often prioritize academic skills (reading, writing and counting) as the most important aspects in children’s readiness and transition to primary school. This prioritization appears to overwhelmingly influence the organization and delivery of services to young children in the research preschools. These have been discussed under the subheading of academic skills and practice issue.

Academic skills and practice issues. The findings showed that both teacher groups would prefer children who have good academic performance and language skills to be accepted into primary school. While less than half of the teacher participants in the survey (48%) approved that children who perform poorly in general should be allowed to get into primary schools the rest felt that doing so would increase the burden on teachers as well as situate the children to failure. Interestingly, only a smaller number of the teacher participants in the survey (33%) agreed to accept children whose speech is difficult to understand. On the other hand, more teacher participants (74.9%) agreed that they would accept children who cannot read well into primary school. This establishes that the teacher participants do not regard reading skills as a more important aspect than other aspects, including performance and communication skills.

The findings concur with what many previous researchers argued that teachers' beliefs about children and their understanding of readiness influence their priority in teaching certain skills to children (Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Hatcher, Nuner & Paulsel, 2012; Lewit & Baker, 1995; Piotrkoski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000). In this regard, further information through focus group discussions showed that the most important aspect of school readiness considered by the teachers was related to the intellectual component, which is implemented through the practice of academic drilling such as reading, writing and counting. The kindergarten teachers described their consideration regarding their priority on academic skills for children in the following comments: "*we consider all aspects of children's development. But there are many hard subjects given in primary school. So, preparing children's readiness in reading, writing and basic arithmetic skills are important ...* (KG3). Other kindergarten teacher groups showed a more obvious practices that prioritize academic skills: "*...in the second semester we increase the level of reading, writing and mathematics skills for children as a preparation to enter primary school*" (KG1). This finding, which indicates the importance of academic aspects of children's learning, is in line with some studies that showed some preschool teachers to emphasize on academic competencies and basic knowledge, such as letters of the alphabet (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Scott-Little, 2006). Next, primary school teachers also have certain expectations which showed their priority on children's learning: "*we hope that children graduating from kindergarten should have reading, writing and basic mathematic skills...* (PM4). In the same way as teachers, some parents confirmed the importance of these skills: "*...of course...children should be ready to learn. They should know letters, understand addition and be able to do subtraction...*(PC5). However, other parents showed mixed feelings about focusing solely on these skills and gave their reasons : "*... actually, we want to give some time for our children to play... but we have to train*

them to adapt with the task in primary school...(PCI). This finding demonstrate that parents' beliefs play important roles in shaping children's early experiences (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Bowes, Harrison, Taylor, Sweller, & Neilsen, 2009; Graue,1999) and affect the way the transition to school is experienced (Griebel & Niesel 2002; Johansson, 2002). It is argued that in terms of school readiness, children are likely to learn the skills that are prized within a particular culture (Harkness & Super, 1992, 1996; Watkins & Noble, 2008).

It is recognized that the belief that teachers and parents should attempt to prepare their children for the academic demands of first grade have gained a wide acceptance in recent decades (Clark & Moss, 2001). However, a number of studies have concluded that qualities related to academic readiness (e.g., recognizing the alphabet, counting, knowing basic concepts) have usually been viewed as less significant than those associated with being healthy and well-adjusted (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Further, the important aspects of school readiness are explained by many early childhood and educational experts who suggest five principal dimensions related to school readiness - physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language development, approaches to learning, and cognition and general knowledge. These aspects are taken into account to ensure that children's readiness and transition practice to primary school become a positive experience (Janus & Offord, 2000).

The emerging priority aspect of school readiness reflected in the participants' responses is not consistent with current views of readiness about children's early learning and development through theory and research. The practices that prioritize readiness as the mastery of academic skills are limiting because they do not consider children's readiness as a whole development process. Some scholars assert that a comprehensive priority of school readiness involves interplay between a child's inherent characteristics and past and present environmental and cultural contexts (Meisels, 1999; Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

Besides, activities that prepare children for school with little consideration for lifelong learning might cause those children to face difficulty in exploring other parts of their environment (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). It is confirmed by many theorists of early childhood education who view accomplishments for life preparation as building confident children who are self-motivated learners, responsible and independent thinkers with a love for learning and value knowledge (Berk, 2006; Brooker, 2008; Kuhn, 2005). It means that activities at school should help children “learn to use their minds well” (Jackson & Davis , 2000, p.11).

An academically oriented skill priority for school readiness is in sharp contrast to recent findings that advocate for a broader and more holistic prioritization of school readiness (Janus & Duku, 2007; Rosier & McDonald, 2011). For example, many research findings have made it clear that children's education and later life success depends not only on children's cognitive skills, but also on their physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and ability to relate to others (Cavanaugh, Lippitt, & Moyo, 2000; Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, Calkins, 2006; Huffman, Mehlinger, & Kerivan, 2000; Raver, 2002). Therefore, it is important to provide the quality of the early childhood environment experienced by the child, as it helps to lay the foundation for future development critical for important outcomes of children’s learning and thinking (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Fox, Levitt & Nelson, 2010).

Teachers’ rote learning practices as indicated in the finding of this study demonstrate their prioritization of children’s academic skills in the form of reading, writing and counting as well as giving homework to children. This practice is in contradiction to current research on the importance of experience to stimulate children’s thinking. For example, some scholars recommend the importance of capitalizing on children’s self-initiated activities that provide opportunities for children to problem solve and extend their

thinking (Lambert, 2000; Sylva, Melhuis, Sammons, Siraj- Blatchford & Taggart, 2004). In this regard Jensen (2008) suggests an active and authentic learning for children to explore, discover and acquire knowledge (Jensen, 2008) instead of memorizing things that they do not understand just because they wanted to use it to pass tests and forget as the findings of the current study have shown. Whitebread, Dawkins, Bingham, Aguda, and Hemming (2008) assert the importance of adult - child joint problem solving for children's metacognitive development which is a key component of readiness for school.

Donaldson (1993) explain the negative impact of learning experiences which are abstract and removed from the child's everyday experience. According to Moyles (2001), "children's thinking is embedded in a context which has some meaning to them whereas much school activity ...is 'disembedded' (p. 14). In this regard, activities such as 'filling in the blanks', worksheets and 'colouring in' are often removed from meaning and purpose for the child and therefore make the process of learning more difficult (Moyles, 2001, p. 14). On the contrary, learning that provide opportunity for children to have a first-hand learning experiences, and engage children in activities which matter to them, can fuel children's imagination and unquenchable thirst for understanding (Griebel & Niesel, 2001; Rich & Drummond, 2006). In this research, it was found that the *academic expectations of parents has become a catalyst for rote learning as a preparation for transition to school (KG1)*. This is in line with the argument by Fisher (2010), which states that the implementation problem of transition is being posed by parents' demand to move from a play-based approach to a more structured curriculum in children's early learning because most parents do not believe in play for learning. It can be argued that academic - oriented programs for young children is not effective as many research findings have shown that academic kindergartens offer children a short advantage academically, and may make them feel anxious because such programs are not associated with the acquisition of skills and

achievement in the future (Davis & Pratt, 1995; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Yoshikawa, Weiland, Brook - Gunn, Burchinal, Espinosa, 2013).

Another key finding to these research questions is the prioritization of academic test for children. The participants in the current research clarified their logic related to the practice of selection tests in determining children's readiness. Regarding the use of selection test for determining children's readiness for school, almost half of the participants (49.5%) believed that it would be difficult to know if children are ready or not ready for school without testing them with universal tests. For example, more than half of the participants (56.9%) agreed that without testing children for school readiness they cannot identify and separate those who are not ready from those who are ready for primary school. This finding is consistent with both teacher focus groups as the kindergarten teachers indicated: *"we worry if our children lack these skills because it means they are not ready to do the test to enter primary school"* (KG4). The primary school teachers espoused similar perspectives: *"we worry if our children cannot pass the entrance test..."* (PC2). A good practice of school readiness according to current research is concerned with the development of the whole child through the provision of ongoing support, enabling environments for rich experiences and effective early intervention strategies to optimize children's development before they approach primary school entry (ARACY, 2007; Daily, Burkhouer & Halle, 2010; Dockett, Perry, & Kearney, 2010). It is unexpected that teachers view children as the center of the problem by prioritizing testing of young children before they enter school. Moreover, this practice for young children is harmful because it increases pressure on children and leads to labelling those who may fail on these tests as deficient (Amsterlaw, Lagattuta, Meltzoff, 2009; Shepard, 1994). Instead of testing children, it is important for teachers to re-imagine their priority areas and provide an early

educational programs that attend to the whole child, which also promotes emotional development and health.

Hair et al (2006) suggest that assessments of children's readiness for school should encompass not only children's cognitive and literacy abilities, but also their health and their social and emotional well-being. Therefore, a focus on interventions to bolster early health and social/emotional development is needed along with interventions targeting language and cognition. In this regard, Indonesia government should improve children's early health including programs to enhance prenatal care, provide immunizations, conduct early screenings for disabilities, and enhance children's nutrition. In addition, the importance of considering other dimensions of school readiness should be communicated to all stakeholders involved.

Concerning teachers and parents' practice on preparing children in basic academic skills, Sharp (2002) argues that it is possible for schools to teach young children basic reading, writing and numeracy skills, however these skills are not sustained in the longer term. Margetts (2002) explains that children also need some skills that include the ability to work independently, to respond to behavioral expectations, to cope with the length of the school day, to interact with others, to accept rules and to adjust to the size of a class. Thus, it is depressing that the teachers and parents' common practice in Indonesian schools focus excessively on developing children's academic skills at the expense of other equally important skills they need for life-long learning. It appears that the teachers and parents are convinced that by preparing children to read, write and do arithmetic, this might contribute to building a strong foundation for their children's future learning. More surprisingly, the teachers and parents' approach which do not take into account children's developmental potentials, differences and individual characteristics is recognized by an education policy maker: "*we realize that some schools are still practising rote reading,*

writing and arithmetic skills for young children as the only processes for preparing them to enter primary schools... actually the most important thing to do is to stimulate all aspects of children's development (EP1). It is evident that Indonesian education policy makers are aware of the practices of academic drilling in many schools in the country; however it appears they are still struggling to improve teachers' training to change this practice as noted in this comment: *"teaching of young children in our country is not that easy...we have conducted some training for teachers in all parts of Indonesia aimed at improving practice... this is really a big job..."(EP2).* Some scholars (Stipek & Byler, 2001; Tate, 2012) argue that the notion that all children should enter elementary school with the skills that prepare them to learn primary level academic contents is identified to be especially important for populations that are judged to be at risk based on the poverty status of their families or other characteristics.

The findings also described the practice of teachers and parents in supporting children's transition to primary school. Some researchers argue that parents value academic skills more as important readiness skills for their children's transition than primary school teachers do (Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989). In the current study, all of the focus group participants highlighted their efforts in helping their children's transition to reach the learning target prescribed in the curriculum standard. It appears that the nature of Indonesian schools require kindergarten children to have basic academic skills by the time they enter the first grade of primary school. Therefore, the teachers and parent groups often implemented programs which they believed could build foundation for children prior to school entry. Concerning the teachers' response to the transition to school the majority of both teacher groups (85.8%) were positive that they have opportunities to participate in the school program together. However, further discussion showed inconsistent findings. The kindergarten teacher groups expressed : "...

we also teach children the basics of reading, writing and counting, because some primary school teachers want their students to be able to have these skills before they entering the schools” (KG4). It appears that the teachers often used teacher-led academic work approaches rather than child-centered play-based learning which can disadvantage children in making transition between the two educational settings (Carr & May, 2000; Peters, Hartley, Rogers, Smith, & Carri, 2009). Parents, in response also explained: *“we send our children to have a reading and writing training in a tuition center before entering primary schools (PC5).* These results show a lack of parents and teachers’ deep understanding of school readiness. Focusing on academic skills alone is associated with limited and fixed standard of intellectual development, which may impact on children’s less engagement and enthusiasm for learning (Hyson, 2008). This may result in lack of initiative and curiosity, persistence, reasoning and problem solving skills (McDermott, Green, Francis & Stott, 2000). It is acknowledged that learning is an active process that must involve children’s engagement. Some scholars believe that children’s learning outcomes are enhanced when teachers take an active role in children’s learning through observation, listening, questioning, constructive feedback and open communication (Marbina, Church & Tayler, 2012). In addition, many experts suggest play - based learning as a critical element in early childhood education which is effective when it is interactive, physical and concrete, and involves people, materials and the natural environment (Broadhead, 2006; McLachlan, Fler & Edwards, 2010; Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, Trew, Rafferty, & Sheehy, 2006).

Next, primary school teachers explained their practice regarding transition program in which they stated: *“ we just adopt ‘the transition program’ from the government, we call it the orientation days...on these days children learn to know about their new school...”* (PM2). This finding shows that transition programs in many primary schools in Indonesia are attending solely to help children become familiar with school. Researchers have

criticized the one-day orientation day for children as insufficient and tokenistic because during such orientation days, the teachers often play a leading role by focusing the program more on short presentations about the school to children (Dockett & Perry, 2001). According to Giallo, Treyuauud, Matthews, & Kienhuis (2010), a positive transition to school programs generally focus on helping children settle into the school environment before they commence school, so as to become more familiar with the new environment, teachers, activities, and peers. The participation in comprehensive transition activities has been shown to be associated with better adjustment to the first year of school, greater self-confidence, fewer behavioral difficulties and higher levels of social skills and academic competence, and achievement (Giallo et al., 2010; Margetts, 2002). Further, Margetts (2002) suggests that one-off transition to school events may be less effective than multiple and ongoing transition activities. Therefore, it is better for children to participate in a number of activities rather than single or only few events. In addition, to be most effective, school transition programs should create a suitable degree of continuity between preschool and school experiences and help children develop strategies to adjust to school (Margetts, 2002; Peters, 2000).

A good transition program premised on bioecological systems theory not only includes an orientation time but is more geared to the individual needs of children and families which may be planned and implemented by a team of people representing all those involved in the change such as children, families, and educators (Dockett & Perry, 2001). What is currently practised as evident in these research findings showed that the Indonesian early childhood transition program is inflexible and does not consider the various time frames according to children and their family's background. The transition programs have not involved other stakeholders such as family and community and neither considers the influence of the contexts nor the changing time children pass through in their development.

The researcher would argue that the current transition programs for young children are not effective at helping parents to be involved in supporting their children's needs. Engaging stakeholders in authentic instances of transition practice provides the basis to understand some of the unique needs of schools and children thereby making what children learn in their socio-cultural communities more accessible to schools.

Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox (2001) reported that the transition practices which are aimed at individual children and families that occur while the child is still in the preschool setting are rare. The most common types of transition practices occur after the beginning of the school year and are aimed at the class as a whole. Importantly, the transition to school should be viewed as a pathway that commences well before school begins and continues on into the first years of school as "children's long term success in school derives from their learning experiences before school and the ongoing learning environment in the early school years" (CCCH, 2008b, p.1). Consequently, school transition programs should create a suitable degree of continuity between preschool and school experiences and help children develop strategies to adjust to school. Giallo et al (2010) argue that a way of promoting positive transitions to school is to provide transition to school programs that generally focus on helping children settle into the school environment before they commence school, so as to become more familiar with the new environment, teachers, activities and peers. Astbury (2009) says that to make transition effective children must be supported to feel valued, comfortable and ready to learn. According to Peters (2010), transition programs for children should include activities that help the child develop a sense of belonging and well-being at school, acknowledge children's values, languages and cultural knowledge, enable children to deeply engage in learning that is suitable, interesting and challenging, help children establish a positive identity as a learner, and a positive disposition towards learning.

It can be concluded that the findings to these research questions suggest that teachers have various considerations in relation to the practice of school readiness and transition to primary school which implicated different values and traditions shared by the kindergarten teachers. On the other hand, there were minimal variations of values and practices expressed by the primary school teachers. This may be due to the condition that kindergartens which were administered by private management had their own vision related to children's school readiness, while primary school teachers' practices of school readiness and transition tended to depend on central government policy.

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), children's academic skills is shaped in the microsystem and influenced by a number of interdependent factors including biological and developmental characteristics and social and cultural factors. Whereas in the mesosystem level children interact with teachers, parents and peers in the immediate setting. In this interaction, unless teachers and parents implement practices that support the physical, social, emotional, language, literacy, and cognitive development of children, a meaningful learning is unlikely to occur. Therefore, it appears that Indonesian stakeholders need to rethink about school readiness and transition, and their role in preparing children for school entry.

The fifth research question is; *“what are the concerns of the stakeholders involved regarding the perspectives and practices of school readiness and transition to primary school in Indonesia?”*

This research question yields data indicating various concerns on school readiness and transition as perceived by the teacher and parent participants. In addition, it indicates the discrepancies between what the research on school readiness internationally argues as good practices of school readiness and transition to primary school and what appears to be implemented in the Indonesian schools. In view of this, some common themes have

emerged in light of this research question pertaining to national policy prescription and accountability issues, teacher and school factors, and parental involvement.

National policy prescription and accountability issues. The findings indicate that there are unclear and inconsistent elements of the national policies regarding school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia. These inconsistencies create a dilemma for teachers when implementing practices related to school readiness and transition. For example, while some schools such as private and elite primary schools still conduct examinations for young children to sort them into primary schools, the government primary schools in particular are prevented from doing the same. In addition, the mixed message regarding age of children, for example 6 or 7 years complicates issues for teachers and families.

In general the findings show that the majority of both teacher groups are aware that their schools have school readiness (94.2%) and transition policies (92.7%). This is confirmed by the primary school teacher group who stated: *“yes, there is a new policy. It is stated that children who are at least six years old can be accepted in primary school.”*(PM1). Although confirmation of the existing policy on school readiness and transition is a promising indication that there are directions to guide schools in the provision of educational services that meet the needs of children, it is not sufficient as the policy elements need to demonstrate consistency for teachers to understand how to implement the policy parameters to provide effective readiness and transition programs for children. Although the quantitative findings have shown that many of the teacher participants (78.5%) admitted that they understood the school readiness and transition policy in their schools, further discussions uncovered that the policy has no clear guidelines for them to follow which is one of their major concerns. For example, the kindergarten teacher group explained that they do not really know much about the policy: *“...it seems that we do not*

have a specific policy on readiness and transition...”(KG2). In this regard, some teachers (21.6 %) are concerned about the lack of clarity on readiness and transition practices. The ambiguities in the policies open the possibility to various teachers and parents to implement practices which they consider to provide the best opportunities for their children’s development. The kindergarten teacher group for example argued: “*...we know that the policy does not allow us to teach children to be proficient to read, write and count...however we are worried that our children may lack basic skills needed in primary schools without training in these subjects...*”(KG4). Primary school teachers also shared their opinion: “*the primary school program is different from kindergarten...our curriculum is very difficult...children at grade one already have many sentences to read in the book...*”(PM3). Another confusion was expressed by the parent group who described the real situation : “*the ideal is we cannot force our children to read...but ‘out there’ the requirement to enter school is very difficult...so we have to train the children in these skills...*” (PC3). Given these expectations, parents worry that their children may not have the necessary skills to be ready for primary school. In general, it appears that the current public policy demands that Indonesian schools meet higher standards. For this reason, kindergarten children are often expected to be ready to learn academic skills. The findings suggest that there is a gap between current policy and practice in which many kindergarten teachers and parents are introducing formal structures to prepare children ready for transition to primary school. Given the critical role, a policy plays in school practices; it is more than urgent to stimulate critical discussion around the policies on school readiness and transition to school (Brostrom, 2000). This need is in recognition of the finding that there are inconsistencies in the policy regarding the different standards for different schools as indicated by the majority of teacher participants (94%). Creating different standards for primary schools resulted in a situation whereby only children from elite kindergartens can

have access to 'a better standard primary school'. The inequality induced by the policy where some primary schools require children to display reading, writing, and academic competencies in a test before they are accepted is one of the major concerns for both the primary and kindergarten teachers. For example, kindergarten teacher group said: *"it's a policy...but this message is not delivered...or does not bind many schools which are designated as 'favourite and better standard schools' who are still giving tests for children"* (KG2). Primary school teacher group explained further: *"we give 'a kind of test' for children before they enter our school...we do this because more children are coming to our school, so we have to select them anyway...(PM5)"*. It seems that for these teachers without testing, it is difficult for them to select those they deem capable children. It can be argued that they were doing this in a way to avoid challenges that they may face when children they consider weak enter primary school without screening. Surprisingly, this 'double standard policy' is confirmed by an education policy maker: *"...the requirement is based on their age, not their academic skills. But, there is another requirement for children who are entering 'a better standard school' to go through a test...(EP1)*.

For this reason, some parent groups reiterate their concern if their children cannot pass the tests given. These parents favour the use of direct transmission approach of teaching their children in preparation for such tests. Some parents expressed concern regarding children who are discriminated against through the testing system in some notable schools: *" we wonder why young children have to compete...it will be very sad if they are rejected from entering certain schools..."* (PC3). This testing policy is unfair to children as it views children as the center of learning problems. It is known that some children are not good at taking academic test such as reading, writing and arithmetic in a tense situation (Elkind, 2009; Shepard, 1994). The results of the tests may not be valid or reliable because children usually have a short attention spans and often do not expend

maximum effort in a testing situation (Epstein, Schweinhart, Parecki, & Robi, 2004). Although at present there is no clear-cut policy regarding what kinds of test children should take, teachers working in a primary schools that are designated as ‘better standard school’ are likely to identify children's competency through their own tests. It can be argued that these practices demonstrate a proliferation of meanings of school readiness and transition to school in terms of the very plurality of contexts in which children’s education takes place.

Another concern on national policy is related to the establishment of a specific chronological age range for children to begin school and the implementation of date entry policy. By following these policies, some schools favor older children during admission to primary schools without regard for children who may be advanced in their cognitive and physical development but have not yet attained the required age for entry into primary school. Besides, these policies will not guarantee that all children who satisfy the chronological age would be able to achieve within the demanding school environment. For example, some primary school teacher groups found it confusing to practice within the policy framework: *“this age criteria policy makes us in a difficult situation... there are some children who enter our schools without the basic skills of reading, writing and counting at all...but they are old enough”* (PM2). The kindergarten teacher group also expressed their confusion about the policy in terms of its gap with parents’ expectation : *“...some children are younger, but they can read, write and count well, and parents want these children to enter primary school...”* (KG2). A rigid age specific policy on school readiness and transition to school is likely to lead to some children who are intellectually ready to enter primary school but miss a chance until they are age-ready. Perceiving children’s readiness in this way is problematic because age based criterion can prevent some gifted and talented children from starting school early. This age related view, seems

to lead to some younger capable children deferring school entry as they are judged by age of not being ready for school. In fact, delaying entry has been shown to contribute to greater variation among children in the same class: in chronological age, size, motor ability, experiential backgrounds, and other learning characteristics.

Further, teachers were highly concerned that the abolishing of tests would open the door to many children who are not yet ready to cope with primary school task to enter school, which would lead to increased workload. They made this claim in the light of the extra support they have to give to those children they deem not ready for school. In general, there was a feeling of discomfort among the teachers regarding 'no tests' and instead to rely on children's age as the main determinant of their readiness for school as exemplified in the following remarks: "...with this age criteria policy, we have to accept all the children registered in our school whether they can read or not, in effect, some of the children coming to our school are not ready to learn... this is an extra job..." (PM4). Kindergarten teacher groups also described their feelings: "there are many works to do...we have to prepare the children to be ready for school...we have to train them to be independent...to have a good social skills...to be disciplined which becomes additional burden for us..."(KG4).

The findings above indicate that the age-related policy conflicts with the teachers' beliefs about test - based readiness in which children must demonstrate academic competence. It is to be anticipated that any policy that has no clear-cut guidelines for teachers and parents will raise issues of dilemma regarding practices. Considering this reality, it appears that the voices of teachers and parents in policy making have not been recognized either suggesting that education policy making remains outside the contributions of teacher and parent consultations to make it effective in Indonesia (MoNE, 2009). In this way, there is a need to solicit public input into education policy making on school readiness and transition practices in Indonesia.

It is acknowledged that the availability of policies is important for establishing guidelines, procedures and standards for quality readiness and transition programs, including expectations and accountability (Kagan & Rigby, 2003; Rosier & McDonald, 2011). Without consistent government education policy, schools would lack the direction and structure upon which they need to provide educational support that meets the specific needs of children. Further, the absence of clear policy guidelines for kindergartens and schools can lead to ineffective school readiness and transition programs for young children as in the absence of policy each primary and early childhood institution may be compelled to do what they deemed best for their schools (Boethel, 2004; Graue, 1993; Meisels, 1999; Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Smith & Shepard, 1988) and on family and school communications. Safran (1997) and Raver (2002) recommend that policy makers at the local levels must capitalize on public support for developing readiness programs that include a range of possibilities for children's emotional adjustment as well as their academic skills.

It can be argued that current policy making for school readiness and transition is situated in the macrosystem level, but it needs to connect to schools at the meso-level to enable its effective practice. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) acknowledges that policies made at the macrosystem level have implications for stakeholders including teachers and parents positively or negatively. In this way, the effects of policy defined by the macrosystem have a flow on effect throughout the interactions of all other layers that the child experiences (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Teacher and school factors. The findings show that the teachers have concern related to their professional knowledge to support children's readiness and transition and skills to cope with the academic requirement from parents, workload, class sizes and

resource problems. The study found that both teacher groups were positive that they have the requisite knowledge and skills (70.2%) and understand the school policies on school readiness and transition to school (78.5%) because their views are sought (89.5%) when developing the school policy. In contrast, their practices showed that they lacked adequate contemporary child development knowledge as their practices appear inappropriate with current research. For example, they often stress on academic skills in preparing children ready for transition to primary school by giving a reason that refers to primary school teachers' expectation: "*...if children cannot read, write and do basic arithmetic well, they will experience difficulty when they enter primary school...*" (KG3). Other kindergarten teacher groups reiterated: "*...because some primary school teachers want their students to be able to have these skills the first time children enter the schools we teach according to this requirement...*"(KG4). Comments by primary school teacher groups further reinforce this point : "*we hope that children entering primary school are able to read, write and do basic arithmetic...*" (PM4).

The findings of this study is in line with earlier studies that showed that preschool teachers emphasize more on academic competencies and basic knowledge, such as letters of the alphabet (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; West, Jausken, & Collins, 1993). These teachers' understanding and practices are ironic because they show traditional approaches about children's learning and development. Researchers (Kagan, Moore, Bredekamp, 1995; Fantuzzo, Bulotsky-Shearer, Mc Dermott, Wayne, Frye, & Perlman, 2007) have reported that one of the factors that contribute to children's school readiness and achievement at school is associated with positive learning approaches. According to Hyson (2008), learning approaches are important because they can enhance or detract a child's ability to learn. Instead of describing what children learn with regard to specific content areas, approaches to learning must focus on how children learn across varied curricular

tasks. By attending to approaches that are conducive to learning, teachers can make a critical contribution to children's school readiness and early school success (Copple & Bredekamp, 2006).

The issues on teachers' limited competency is probably due to the Indonesian teachers' educational background. In this study, many participants (72.4%) had teaching experience less than 10 years and almost half of them (46.7%) had diploma qualifications. The rest had qualification from secondary school (17.8%), undergraduate (34.3%) and post graduate (1.3%). Actually, it has been a problem for early childhood teachers in Indonesia in terms of teachers' qualification. The data from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2010b) shows that 60.6% of the teachers only have high school qualification or less and that there are only 15.7% teachers who have bachelor degree (MoNE, 2010b). It is noted that teachers with early childhood training who are equipped with information on how young children learn and develop, can help ease the transition of children and families to schools much more than teachers who lack this background knowledge (UNICEF, 2012). It is also believed that teacher's training for professional development plays a critical role as they view that individual teachers are the single largest factor that adds value to children's learning (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Ingvarson, 2002) and having the most significant impact on children's outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2003). This finding has established professional development needs of early childhood teachers in Indonesia. Recently, the government of Indonesia has proposed a system in which the in-service courses and training for teachers can be valued as part of bachelor courses to overcome this problem. However, there is a challenge for universities in Indonesia to develop a system that can implement the training conversions into the university degree's requirement (Nugraha & Yulindrasari, 2012).

Many researchers argue for the importance of teachers' understanding of readiness within the context of school by exposing them to multiple theories that expand their holistic understanding of child development (Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Lewit & Baker, 1995; Piotrkoski et al., 2000). Jacobs (2001) reminds us of the importance of teachers' knowledge about children's development which can help significantly to provide a framework for understanding what children may be capable of accomplishing at certain ages. In this regard, Janus and Offord (2000) recommend the importance of teachers' knowledge to move beyond academic preparation and consider the importance of less structured aspects of early childhood learning on children's readiness for school such as social competence, physical health, emotional adjustment, language and cognitive skills, and general knowledge. Overall, teachers' belief, knowledge and expectation are important components that may impact on children's transition. Some scholars argue that teachers' perceptions of children, families, communities or curriculum, have a major influence on what happens as children start school (Feeney, Grace, & Brandt, 2001; Peters, 2000; Timperley, McNaughton, Howie, & Robinson 2003). Specifically, teachers' discontinuities in teaching style and teachers' high expectations are the factors that lead to difficulty in children's transition (Greig & Taylor, 1999).

Next, some teachers raised concern regarding the academic standard of their schools. It is a common practice in Indonesian schools to focus on primary school league tables and in effect this puts pressure on children to work hard to promote the academic standard of the schools. This has influenced the teachers' practice in the ways they often approach the teaching of children in view of the next level demands. The findings showed that some teachers (33.3%) were concerned if children who failed their readiness test were included in primary schools as they thought this would lead to a decline in the academic standard of the school. They believed that allowing only those they deemed expedient to

the school would influence the goals of the school and the destination at which students should arrive at the end of each year. Next, some primary school teacher groups raised concern regarding the target learning for children which has something to do with many subjects to be taught in the curriculum. The following comments buttressed this point: “*...we know that it is difficult for them... but we should do this because we have to accomplish the learning target.. the curriculum standard (PM3)*”. It is disheartening that even though some teacher groups recognize the difficulty that children have to cope with, they seemed not to have any options to change this. The teacher groups’ explanations highlight their effort to help their children to reach the learning target which refers to the curriculum standard. Consequently, their approaches do not take into account children’s differences in developmental levels and individual characteristics.

The findings further show that more than half of the teacher participants (56.9%) agreed to the use of testing to identify and separate children who are ready or not ready for primary school. Some teachers (56.9%) were concerned that without testing children from kindergarten, they cannot identify and separate those who are not ready from those who are ready for primary school. In respect of this some teachers tend to ask external agents such as psychologists or psychometricians to conduct school readiness test for their children at school. Some participants in the kindergarten teacher group commented: “*we do not know about school readiness because we are not the experts. But we ask the experts to come to our school to conduct the test...(KG2)*”. This practice is ironic because the teachers rely on the readiness test results to select a more-ready children which they use to determine the educational fate of children entering primary school. Ideally, to assess children, a team of people such as teachers, parents, administrators and experts should work together to plan a school readiness assessment. It should take teachers and parents’ information into account as the key players for children’s learning. The current practice by Indonesian teachers is

opposed to the findings from Meisels (1998, 1999) about the use of readiness test which is considered to be relatively poor predictors of future school success and lack of sufficient validity and reliability for making placement decisions. Other scholars demonstrate the misuse of testing as a single measure of children's readiness (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; NAEYC, 1995; Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz, 1998). Although standardized measures are extremely helpful in allowing peer comparisons on various cognitive and social development measures, there has been criticism regarding the macro and micro-level use of standardized instruments to determine school readiness. Primarily, given the early years of children's development considered to be rapid, individualistic, and heavily influenced by children's social context and family characteristics, and the complex learning process of young children, it is extremely difficult to develop a set of reliable and valid assessment measures (Meisels, 1987; Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz, 1998). Further, because teachers interact with their children within a learning context on a daily basis, their judgments concerning children's readiness for school may be the best information source in evaluating children's performance and competencies (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006). Moreover, the implication in the practice of testing according to Bronfenbrenner theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) is that it is not only the child that should be assessed, but also teachers and family to identify the difficulty children face.

Other teacher's concerns were related to their increased amount of work related to children's poor performance based on some testings' results. For example, some teachers (29.5%) were worried that if children who do not pass their tests were allowed into primary school it would increase their workload. Moreover, some other teachers (21.3%) indicated that children who have low scores in their readiness tests, if allowed into primary school, can cause stress and anxiety for them. Some teachers believed that children's problems such as poor performance, problem in communication, inability to read well, being

aggressive, lack of daily living skills, difficulty in controlling behavior, difficulty in following rules, difficulty in sustaining attention to a certain extent contribute to teachers' workload. In addition, teachers added that they are already required to do numerous tasks such as classroom teaching, lesson planning and teacher meetings which sometimes cannot be handled on their working day. They also have to devote their time to teaching literacy and numeracy considering 'the requirement' at schools and high expectation from parents.

Regarding teachers' competency on preparing children for transition to school, some scholars (Angus, 2009; Brown, 2009; Chan, 2010; Early et al., 2001; Keyes, 2002; Peters, 1997) suggest that teachers' competency is crucial in facing the challenges and obstacles in the process of children's transition to school including the knowledge to prepare transition activities, the skills in promoting family engagement and reaching out to families and promoting children's growth, development and learning. Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2005) argue that teachers' competences have powerful effects on children's achievement in which up to three quarters of school effects on children's outcomes can be explained by teacher effects. Other scholars emphasize the importance of teacher's competency in knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, as well as dispositions such as motivation, beliefs, value orientations and emotions (Rychen & Salganik, 2003); competency to act professionally and appropriately in a situation (Koster & Dengerink, 2008) and to demonstrate a certain level of achievement (González & Wagenaar, 2005). In this regard, teachers' professional development is relevant both for improving educational performance and effectiveness, and for enhancing teachers' commitment (OECD, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner's theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) foregrounds the importance of teachers in their interaction within the microsystem level with children through two directions, both away from the child and toward them. This is supported by

many scholars who argue that a teacher who provides a secure relationship with children may influence children's socio-emotional and behavioral development (Cohrssen, Church & Tayler, 2011). A high quality relationships can scaffold children in the formation of important social and behavioral skills which are needed for children's educational success (Baker, 2006). On the other hand, children who have insecure relationships with teachers have more difficulty interacting with teachers and peers (Baker, 2006; Pettit et al., 2001). Thus, providing pre-service and in - service training for teachers may help children to succeed in transition, and at the same time reduce or eliminate teachers' concerns.

Another major concern identified in this research is related to large class sizes. More than half of teacher participants (54.6%) believed that class size affected how they supported children's readiness and transition to school. In the Indonesian context, high teacher - child ratio is very common and it is not easy to avoid. Considering the population of Indonesia relative to available kindergartens and primary schools, teachers have to manage a large number of children per class, on average 25 children per teacher. This immense task is likely to make teachers feel a lack of confidence. According to Harmer (2000), teaching large classes brings difficulties to both teachers and children in the process of teaching and learning. On the part of children, it can lead to disruptive behaviours and lack of individual attention (Early, Pianta, Taylor & Cox, 2001). On the part of teachers, as Locastro (2001) has argued, it can create pedagogical, management-related and affective problems. On the one hand, drawing on the bioecological systems theory, it can be concluded that mesosystem level pressure and demands made on teacher (Kyriacou, 2001), as well as the degree of mismatch between the demands made upon teacher's ability to cope can be a substantial hindrance to effective teaching and learning.

On the other hand, mesosystems that operate smaller classes have been confirmed to lead to better learning outcomes particularly for young children in kindergarten and

primary school (Kyriacou, 2001). This is because in smaller classes, teachers are more likely to provide a supportive environment and an opportunity for individual interaction between teacher and children (Magnuson, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2007; Phillips et al., 2004). Other research contested that small class size alone does not ensure a good practice on its own, a small class does not guarantee a high quality learning experience, as there are many factors that are implicated in the various system within the various layers of the bioecological system theory that can affect the implementation of school readiness and transition including the quality of teachers, the quality of curriculum and the home environment (Stephen & Cope, 2003).

In view of the large population of Indonesia coupled with fewer schools, advocating for smaller classes is not a realistic option as indicated by the findings from the teachers. Teachers who are well - prepared can handle large classes in view of the argument that large classes can provide richer human resources and greater opportunities for creativity than smaller class (Ur, 2000; Hess, 2001) including serving as sites for innovation and possibilities (Xu, 2001). This finding calls for teacher education that equips teachers with classroom management expertise so they can promote co-students' interaction, foster an atmosphere of cooperation and encourage group work (Qi & Wang, 2009).

The results also found that some teachers (39.4%) were concerned about the lack of adequate support from policy makers including reports about a lack of resources (20%) to support children's readiness and transition in their schools. When they were asked about the resources needed for school readiness and transition practices, they mention academic learning resources and facilities in the classroom. It is understandable that the lack of learning facilities has become an excuse for some teachers to relegate on their duty in supporting children's learning. A poor learning material may contribute to uncomfortable condition for children's learning. However, it appears that the teachers do not think about

creating learning sources and materials by recycling, reusing or utilizing things around them which are cheaper and more environmentally friendly. Furthermore, it is surprising that the teachers do not consider either a crucial service such as health service that may give information about child health and development issues.

Even though learning facilities is really crucial, until recently, little has been written on the issue on limited educational facilities in Indonesia (MoNE, 2009). This lack of supports from the government may impact on the quality of Indonesian children's development and learning. Some studies showed that when services and supports are not available to children on regular basis, they can impact on children readiness for school (Farrar, Goldfeld, & Moore, 2007; CCCH, 2008a). In terms of bioecological theory, this concern is situated in the mesosystem level (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) in which these resources need to be enhanced to function the program effectively. It means that teachers need a better support from the government to solve this problem.

Parental factors. In general, the findings show that although the majority of the teachers (94%) were aware of the importance of parental engagement in preschool or school activities, they raised concern about the lack of parental engagement in children's learning. The parent participants attributed their lack of engagement in school activities to their limited knowledge in this area.

In this study, although the majority of teacher participants (94.6%) indicated in the survey that local policy exists on how parents can participate in school activities for their young children, further discussions suggested otherwise: : *“most of our schools do not have a special program to involve parents at school...(KG1)*. While the teachers blamed the lack of parental engagement with schools on the busy life of parents by indicating that *“....so far there is no participation from parents in our school program...some parents do not have good jobs and they have to struggle to support their family life...” (PM4)*, parents

put forward their own reason in the following way: *“we do not give a lot of support...we think that the teachers can handle the children’s problems...”*(PC3).

This is quite worrying considering the fact that formal learning setting is one of many ways that children learn and develop. From a bio-ecological perspective, it can be argued that the process of learning begins well before children enter preschool or school, and once children are in formal learning settings, they continue to learn at home, and in the community (Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012; Rosier & McDonald, 2011). It is along this perspective that the critical role of parents in providing learning opportunities at home and in linking what children learn at school warrant parental engagement. In this way, the concept of microsystem foregrounds how parental engagement is implicated in their participation and in the facilitation of diverse learning-experiences and activities outside the preschool. Teachers may lose all the important learning that parents facilitate at home in the absence of parental engagement (Emerson et al., 2012; Hayes & Kernan, 2008).

Specific contribution of parental engagement to children’s development include but not limited to lower drop-out rates, a greater likelihood of commencing school strong, more regular attendance, better development of social skills, improved behavior, better adaptation to school, increased social capital and a greater sense of personal competence and efficacy for learning (Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004). Parental engagement in children’s learning in formal and informal settings is premised on the ecological construction of child development to demonstrate how individuals, families, schools, and communities interact through the education process and contribute in different ways to children’s development and learning outcomes. In the current research, it was found that teachers are concerned about the lack of parental engagement. It could be argued that the extent to which parents are engaged and the likelihood of that engagement being sustained over time is predicated upon how they perceive themselves as valuable stakeholders in their

children's education and the availability of clear-cut policies that welcome their participation. In this way, parental role construction and policy play a decisive role in the likelihood of a parent becoming engaged in educational practices for their children (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008).

In general, these findings indicate inadequate relationship between teachers and parents in which both parties do not consider the importance of collaboration for supporting children's overall developmental readiness and transition to school. It is overwhelming to note that the teachers and parents do not realize their collaborative role in facilitating children's readiness and transition. It is acknowledged that a good natured relationship between stakeholders including parents and teachers is needed for children's successful transition (Peters, 2010). It is also generally known that specifically, the role of parent is important to implementing a good school readiness and transition practices that might link the possible gap between and prior to school and formal school settings.

In terms of parents' collaboration in school policy issues, it may help in determining how children are taught and what they are taught (Epstein et al., 1997). An effective local policy is that which specifies and clarifies the roles of parents in the process of educational practice. Schools that value and solicit parents' contribution to decision making are more able to provide comprehensive programs that facilitate children's smooth transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2011) than those that serve as gate-keepers to parents.

A plethora of literature provides direction for parental involvement regarding why, when and how parents should play a role in their children's education (Graue, 1993a, 1993b; Graue, Kroger, & Prager, 2001; Mapp, 2003; Pérez-Carreón, Drake & Calabrese - Barton, 2005). Regarding the relationship between teachers and parents, it is also well established that positive relationship and collaboration between teachers and parents have been connected with children's positive adjustment to school (Ladd, Birch & Buhs, 1999;

Ladd, Kochenderfer & Coleman, 1996), children's positive start to school and the promotion of children's achievement (Brown, 2009; Chan, 2010). Collaboration includes communication which is the basis of successful transition activities. In addition, it appears that in the current research teachers and parents did not demonstrate awareness of either the value of communication for children's smooth transition. This situation may serve as a critical barrier to successful transition as there is no sign of ongoing efforts to create linkage and continuity among parents and teachers of their children.

In addition, the lack of parental engagement with schools and teachers can be attributed to the high incidence of poverty reported by the parent participants. This is a challenging issue as a socio-economic status has been found to influence children's achievement in readiness and transition practice. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) linking family SES (Social Economic Status) and school readiness argue that families with fewer available financial resources are less able to engage with schools to provide enriching experiences (such as books, toys, games and outings) to children. Janus and Duku (2007) reiterate that children from lower SES families are often less ready for school than are children from higher SES families because parents of those children are less involved in their children's education. Some other researchers have confirmed the difficulty children from low income families face during transition from preschool to primary school because of lack of family support (Love, Logue, Trudeau & Thayer, 1992; Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999). It is further argued that living in poverty is one of the factors that influence young children's adjustment beyond kindergarten (Alexander & Entwistle, 1988; Crnic, 1994; Ramey & Ramey, 1998).

The findings of this study thus draw implication for educators to develop clear strategies and guidelines that encourage low socio-economic families to develop self - efficacy and engage in school activities instead of constructing them from a deficit

perspective (Kishiyama, Boyce, Jimenez, Perry, & Knight, 2009; Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2000). Opportunities that provide clear guidelines for families and value their input may serve to enhance their self-efficacy for enhanced participation in school activities. (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Cowan, Ablow, Johnson, & Measelle, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Margetts, 2007a; Monkeviciene, Mishara & Dufour, 2006).

Next, the findings indicate that communication between preschools/primary schools and teachers was ineffective. For example, the kindergarten teacher groups expressed their disappointment on parents: *"...some parents want us to prepare their children to have a skill in reading, writing and counting...but do not want to discuss it with us...they decide everything by themselves (KG4)*. In addition, the primary school teacher groups reiterated this point: *"we actually need support from parents...but there were no parents who care...because they don't talk to us (PM3)*. In response to statements like these, some parent groups provided their own reasons: *"we have our own way to support our children but we don't know how to communicate this to teachers..." (PC2)*. These perspectives demonstrate that teachers and families do not engage in shared thinking about children's needs and what they can collectively plan and implement to support children's development and readiness for school. Effective communication is fundamental to school family partnership and to building a strong sense of learning community where shared thinking takes place (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Graham - Clay, 2005). Communicating effectively with families is imperative for parent involvement and participation in practices that establish strong foundation for children to start school healthily and capably start school.

The findings thus imply teacher preparation and professional development programs to actively promote the development of communication skills for teachers (Graham-Clay, 2005; Prozesky, 2000). Professional development will assist teachers to

overcome knowledge barriers to effective communication and to avoid situations like those echoed in the comments previously and below:” *we recognize that parents are not involved in school matters because we do not show them how to be involved either*” (PM2)... “*We meet parents only when they send off their children to school and when we give children the reports...*” (PM1). Effective communication is important for families to know what teachers expect of them as their contribution to their children’s learning. In this regard, Indonesian teachers both at the preschool and primary school levels can initiate communication efforts with parents through written or phone contacts. Next, teachers can provide opportunities for parents to share their expertise and knowledge of their children through parent-teacher meetings or invite local artisans to share their knowledge with children. With this program in place, all stakeholders involved can work collaboratively to share any information and make plans to support children in their development and transition to school. The need for effective communication is further supported by some scholars (Brooker, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2001) who argue that there are many stakeholders who have relationship with children and know a great deal about children’s interests and abilities that should be involved in the process of transition. Therefore, transition to school should involve the interaction and collaboration between children, families, preschools and schools to provide comprehensive support in the early years of school (Ramey & Ramey, 1994).

Arguing from a bioecological framework perspective it is recognized that family, school, community, policy makers in different layers give contribution to shaping children’s experiences in many ways (Dockett & Perry, 2007) and that effective communication serves as the main catalyst for this process. The study findings thus call for re-imagining how effective communication is implicated in Bronfenbrenner’s theory (1998) that recognizes the important role family members including parents and teachers

play in orchestrating children's holistic development (Frick, 1994; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986) and children's behavior (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000). Arguably, teacher's secure relationship with children and families is contingent upon effective communication if it is to positively influence children's socioemotional and behavioral development. In the same way, poor communication can serve as ecological barriers and critically influence the lives of young children in negative ways (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009; Thelen & Smith, 2006). Bioecological perspectives maintain that the interaction and collaboration between home and school is crucial for supporting positive child outcomes but this cannot materialize in the absence of effective communication (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Dockett & Perry, 2007; Margetts 2007; Pelletier & Brent, 2002; Peters, 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 1994). Therefore, it is important to set a school climate that demonstrates respect for individual families, children and fosters a sense of belonging for both children and families (Dockett et al. 2008; Margetts 2007; Peters, 2010; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). In this regard, channels of collaboration and communication must be opened and considered from ethical and cultural perspective to creating partnerships with families that honor their contributions.

Chapter Eight

Summary of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

The previous chapter of this study discussed the main findings in relation to the research questions, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's theory and relevant literature on school readiness and transition. This final chapter presents an overview of the research, summarizes the findings, and examines their implications based on the discussion of the findings. In addition, it offers recommendations, contribution to knowledge, limitations of the research, suggestions for further research, personal reflection and concluding remarks of the study.

Overview of the Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate how school readiness is understood and practised by teachers, parents and education policy makers in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. By drawing on Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory, it attempts to review policies, school practices, parents' perspective, and concerns regarding school readiness and transition to primary school. The aim of the study was not to make generalizations based on the limited data collected but to provide some indications about the understanding and implementation of programs by stakeholders involved in children's development and education. The specific aims of this research were to (i) contribute to directions on school readiness and transition policy development; (ii) feed the results into developing teachers' capacity to support children's learning, development and transition to school; (iii) add to the literature on school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia;

and (iv) develop strategies that can lead to more parents' participation in school transition programs. The findings from this study might be used to influence policies and practices related to some issues on school readiness and transition considering the context of Indonesia and as suggested by international literatures. The use of Bronfenbrenner's theory provides insights into the contradictions and possibilities relating to how teachers, parents and education policy makers view and practice school readiness and transition to school.

The study was conducted using a mixed method approach. The characteristic of a mixed method research is its methodological pluralism that allows the researcher to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering the specific questions the researcher asked in this study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It is argued that a mixed method research can help bridge the division between quantitative and qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005a). This study was designed as a QUAN - qual model, a type of mixed methods research designs, also known as the explanatory mixed method design, where the researcher collected quantitative data first and later qualitative data. In this model the quantitative data were more heavily weighted than the qualitative data (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2003). In this model, the researcher used the qualitative analysis and interpretation to help explain or elaborate the quantitative results.

The first phase of the study involved 315 teachers in Jakarta altogether that consisted of 200 teachers working in the last semester of kindergarten and 115 teachers working in the first grade of primary school. They were asked to fill a questionnaire on school readiness and primary school. The second phase involved 105 participants across Jakarta in focus group discussions. There were 15 groups across Jakarta's regions (Centre, East, West, South and North) from three types of settings (30 primary school teachers, 40 kindergarten teachers and 35 parents). The teacher participants on the later phase were selected from those who were involved in the first phase. Simple random sampling was

used to select school sites, teacher participants and parents for the study. Individual interviews were also conducted with two education policy makers. The later were selected through purposeful sampling.

The data collected were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis involved Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation, T-Test, Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Ranking (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006; Coakes, Steed, & Price, 2008). These were done with the help of computer software, SPSS version 20.0. The qualitative analysis involved the use of Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) framework analysis approach which involved five key stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and mapping, and interpretation.

Summary of Findings

This part brings together all the findings in order to consolidate the objectives of the research and examine possible implications. There were six themes identified from the Policy and Concern subscales in the quantitative analysis. Those are General Policy Awareness, Policy Specifics and Effectiveness, School Level Policy Awareness, Standard Problems, Teacher and School Factors, and Resources Problems. The qualitative approach is interrelated with the quantitative, and identified four themes namely: Expected Academic Skills, Professional Knowledge Issues, National Policy Prescription and Accountability, and Parental Factors.

Revisiting the research questions, the first and second questions sought to find out : *what conceptions of school readiness and transition are held by stakeholders (kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers, parents, and education policy makers) in Indonesia, and how do the stakeholders' understandings influence policies and practices?* These research questions required gathering and analyzing opinions of teachers, parents and education policy makers to determine their conception of school readiness. The

findings suggested that the majority of both teacher groups perceive chronological age as the major criterion for school entry by making a reference to the national policy prescription related to a specific entry age. The concept of school readiness held by the teachers is reinforced by the Indonesian government's new school entry policy which indicates that children are permitted to enter primary school when they reach the designated age of seven years regardless of their experience. Other findings revealed that teachers and parent groups who have the most immediate effect on children's development and learning, conceptualized school readiness mainly in terms of academic oriented skills.

The third and fourth research questions were: *what aspects of school readiness do the different stakeholders prioritize and how do they implement these aspects in the school readiness and transition practice?* These research questions bring together the perspectives and practices of teachers, and parents about their priority aspects of school readiness and their practice on transition. The most important aspects of school readiness considered by the parents and kindergarten teachers were related to the intellectual component, which is implemented through activities that focused on direct teaching instructions and academic learning experiences in preparing children for primary school. In addition, all primary school teacher groups considered that other aspects of readiness such as emotional and social components are given less attention and were only focused on through orientation day programs with a reference to the national education policy. Therefore, the transition program in kindergarten was focused exclusively on preparing children in academic skills. In the primary school context, transition to school practice is limited to few hours of orientation day programs which is based on the prescribed national policy.

The fifth research question was: *what are the concerns of the stakeholders involved regarding the perspectives and practices of school readiness and transition to primary school in the capital city of Indonesia?* This research question yielded data indicating

discrepancies between what the research on school readiness internationally endorse as good practices of school readiness and transition to primary school and what appeared to be implemented in the Indonesian schools. Some common themes which emerged in light of this research question pertained to national policy prescription and accountability, teacher and school factors, and parent involvement. The case about national policy prescription and accountability is due to the lack of clarity and inconsistency of the policy. Concerns about teachers' factor is related to teachers' low competency and minimum opportunity for training; concerns about school factors for example, the lack of resources, high teacher-child ratio (large class size), and the academic standard of the schools; whereas the parental involvement is in connection with their lack of involvement and collaboration in school matters.

Recommendation for a school readiness and transition to school model for Indonesia

The findings of this study have demonstrated that it is crucial to rethink school readiness concept and transition practice in light of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory for Indonesia. This means, the conceptualization of school readiness and transition practice should be grounded in values and beliefs about the nature of children's development, and not only focused on the child's academic skills in order to be accepted in a 'better standard' primary school (Dockett, Perry, & Kearney, 2010).

Based on the results of this study, the researcher has developed a school readiness and transition practice model for the Indonesian context. The model takes into consideration, the nested system of relationships within Indonesian cultural community, theorized from Bronfenbrenners' Bioecological system perspective to make a case that school readiness and transition to primary school must consider the contexts of home, kindergarten, and primary school. This means, there should be a strong collaboration

between schools and families and between kindergartens and primary schools in the preparation of children and their transition to school. To do this, effective communication and trust building are crucial to good collaboration. This relation demonstrates the importance of mesosystem that links the people in the microsystems with each other. For example, parental expectations regarding the academic success of their children can often create dynamics that directly and indirectly impact the climate of the school. It is important to note that in the layers, children learn some skills and develop some cultural knowledge that will assist them during the transition process.

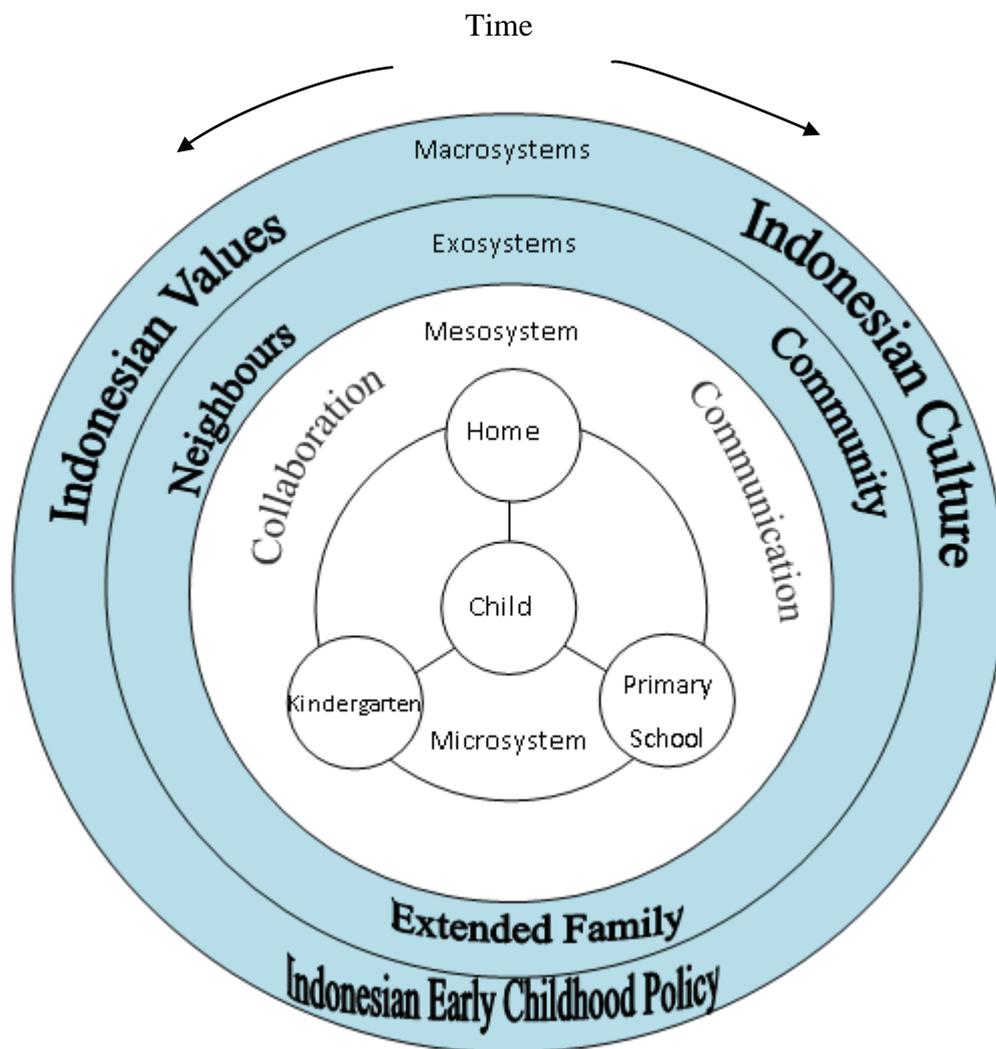


Figure 3. A school readiness and transition practice model for Indonesian context

The exosystem represents the larger social system, and encompasses events, contingencies, decisions, and policies over which the developing person has no influence. The exosystem thus exerts a unidirectional influence that directly or indirectly impacts the developing person, for example local regulation and economics. The outer layer, the macrosystem, consists of policies and cultural values within which children in the capital city of Indonesia are located. This means, conscious efforts must be made to transform education policies regarding education of young children. Attention should also be directed towards transforming cultural values that consider academic prudence as the only requirement for school readiness and transition to school. Finally, the chronosystem refers to the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life of individual as well as socio-historical circumstances. This provides insights into how children's development is constantly affected by the continuous and rapid changes in their socio-cultural and political environments. It is therefore imperative that school readiness and transition programs consider the frequent adaptations that children have to make and how time affects children's readiness and transition.

Key Recommendations

These recommendations are made in relation to the findings of this study in three domains: policy, theory and practice.

Policy. In light of the findings of this study and the proposed framework in Figure 3, the Indonesia government need to re-examine the cut-off date entry and transform traditional perspective of school readiness that focuses on age alone, to a systems approach that considers the interaction between children, parents and teachers, as well as historical practices that lies in the culture of Indonesians. Approaches to school readiness must

involve various stakeholders who work together at micro and macro levels to engage and discuss issues of readiness and transition as one of the early childhood national priorities.

As it was found that there are policy contradictions regarding school readiness and transition to primary school, the Indonesian government needs to resolve the ambiguities of education policies on school readiness and transition to school. A policy review may eliminate inconsistent practices which currently are not serving well the interest of all children. For example, the current public policy that demands certain public primary schools to meet higher standards thereby administering tests for kindergarten children to enter a ‘better standard ‘ primary school while other schools do not, is contradictory and unfair practice. Although at present there is no firm policy regarding this procedure, teachers working in primary schools designated as ‘better standard schools’ are likely to identify children's competency through a range of tests which informs the practice of rigid academic learning in kindergartens. Therefore, it is important to reform and promote policy that foster school readiness and transition as holistic development of children rather than focusing narrowly on mental computations and reading alone.

At the macro level, the Indonesian government needs to make good efforts to strengthen public education on the importance teacher - parent collaborations at the micro level in supporting children's development and readiness for school. Fostering positive communication and collaboration between family, school and community would enhance shared responsibility for children's success. Related to the daily practice of transition which is influenced by macro level policies, there is need for involving teachers and families in decision making about Early Childhood Education Policy to reappraise the policy on school readiness and transition. By involving teachers and families in national policy making, barriers to children's readiness and transition can be collectively identified and addressed in appropriate ways that meet families and different needs of children.

The research also uncovered limited resources for teachers to support children's learning and development. In light of this, the Indonesian government needs to commit to providing adequate financial and logistical support to schools. It is argued that public support for education impacts the quality of child development and learning (Barnett, 2008). By providing a comprehensive child development services that ensure smaller class sizes and teacher - child ratio, and giving opportunity for teachers to have training in early childhood education, support for children's education would improve for them to have a smooth transition to school. Besides, efforts should be directed to improving the quality and standards of all kindergartens by undertaking systematic evaluation and monitoring of school readiness and transition practices. Accountability and tracking of general trends and parental expectation could help improve practice in all three dimensions such as ready children, ready schools and ready families.

Theory. The results of this study have demonstrated that the policy makers and teachers who participated in this study considered academic skills as the main important criterion for determining children's readiness to school. They believed that children who have commenced primary school without academic skills are unready children and are at risk of coping in primary school. This suggests that school readiness and transition practices are weak and narrow in focus, and exemplifies teachers and policy makers' lack of deep knowledge in this area. Theoretical competency is important for understanding and implementing a good readiness and transition program for children (Denham, 2006; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2012). Education practices need to be based on a sound theory, and teachers without deep understanding of how a theory informs practice may practice at a surface level (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2012; Riley, 2009). Therefore, teachers and policy makers need to deepen and broaden their understanding of multiple theories on holistic child development. This understanding can only come from learning deeply about

theories of child development. When teachers and policy makers become theoretically competent, they would be able to educate parents about children's needs in relation to school readiness and transition to school (Riley, 2009; Zhai, Gunn, & Waldfogel, 2011). Teachers with deep understanding of theories of child development would also be able to transform their own practice (Daniels & Shumow, 2003; Riley, 2009). Similarly, policy makers who are theoretically competent on child development would be able to use their deep knowledge of theories to inform policy making decisions that facilitate positive and progressive school readiness, and transition programs for all children.

The insight into theories would enable teachers to involve parents and take into account children's multiple competencies that might support their readiness such as physical and mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, as well as language and cognitive skills (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dockett, Perry & Kearney, 2010). The academically oriented skills perspective is in contrast to recent findings that advocate for a broader and more holistic view of school readiness (Raver, 2002). Research has made it increasingly clear that children's school readiness and later life success depend not only on children's cognitive skills, but also on their physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing, and ability to relate to others (Cavanaugh, Lippitt, & Moyo, 2000; Huffman, Mehlinger, & Kerivan, 2000; Raver, 2002).

Practice. One crucial recommendation that emerged from this study relates to teacher education and professional development. As the findings indicated that school readiness and transition programs are non-existent and where something exists, it is rigid and narrow in focus, calls for a focus on school readiness and transition education for primary and kindergarten teachers. This means, teacher educators themselves have to be informed about contemporary practices of school readiness in order to provide adequate training for teachers. It also calls for ongoing professional development for teachers in

practice, including community education programs for families to be involved in their children's education. It is argued that training which meets teachers' needs gives them the capacity to meet their professional obligations (Ramey & Ramey, 1998). Training and retraining of teachers help them to increase their accountability to schools, children and families (Brown, 2009; Dickinson & Caswell, 2007). This can happen because through efficient and relevant training they would possess the requisite knowledge and skills on how to support child readiness and transition to school. They also can have an insight to developing continuous approach for children's transition by combining play and flexible curriculum to teach children to learn.

When teachers become knowledgeable through effective training, they would provide a variety of supports to help ease children's tension and support their transition to primary school. This also includes providing parent training strategies, encouraging families to maintain their involvement in children's transition, and supporting families to provide learning resources and experiences for their young children. In addition, training can also build teachers' awareness of the negative impacts of academic drilling on children. Further, teachers with competent skills would reflect on how the use of selection test in their schools for the sake of achieving academic school standard can be detrimental to the readiness of some children. They would also be able to reflect on how information about children's background and experiences is needed as well as gathering information about teachers and parents' condition to inform school readiness and transition programs. Importantly, training and collaborative professional learning could help parents, kindergarten and primary school teachers to work collaboratively to share information regarding children in the year prior to primary school. For example, kindergarten teachers and the children attending primary school can collaborate to familiarize themselves with

the school environment, or spending some time in the classroom and experiencing school routines prior to formal entry.

Limitation

This research study has several limitations as follows:

The first limitation is related to the scope of the study and participants. As the geographical location of this study is Jakarta and with participants representing urban communities, the findings of this study can be said to provide some evidence which may not be generalizable, although relevant to communities and schools in rural parts of the country. Moreover, two educational policy makers were involved in this study as such this could not provide a broader perspective regarding the early childhood policy framework in Indonesia.

Second, the diverse issues of stakeholders were not fully represented in this study. The study only focused on teachers, parents and education policy makers' perspectives and practices, without considering the voices of children, nor the socio economic and cultural background of children. Despite these limitations the study provided relevant snap - shot information on what is currently going on in preparing children in Indonesia to enter primary schools. The findings therefore are signposts for stimulating further debate and research into school readiness and transition practices in Indonesia.

Contribution of Knowledge

The contribution of this thesis to the body of literature focusing on school readiness and transition practice can be summarized in three domains: theory, policy and practice.

Theory. The study contributes to the knowledge and understanding of how the participants in this study conceptualized school readiness and transition based on Piagetian, and Gesellian perspectives where the child's biology is considered as the determinant of

development, hence a marker of readiness (Agbenyega, 2009). This understanding of school readiness and transition was found to influence the teachers' practices. In this regard kindergarten children are subjected to teacher directed teaching and drilling to be ready to pass the requirement test before entering primary schools. It showed that there is opportunity for transforming teachers' practice through supporting them to develop a comprehensive understanding of alternative theories of child development, for example, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological system theory and its application to school readiness and transition to school. This understanding can help improve practice.

Policy. This study contributes to knowledge about how theoretical competency can help to transform the rigid school readiness and transition policy which remains a problem in Indonesia. The *cut-off* date entry policy creates some problems related to children's various age, abilities, and equity in which there will always be a younger group of children and a range of abilities represented in the classroom. The different standards of primary school policy create some problems related to teacher and parents' practice in preparing their children to achieve academic requirement to be accepted in a 'better standard' primary school. It shows that where policies convey complex and contradictory messages to teachers, this is bound to be problems.

Practice. The study contributes to knowledge of how to educate teachers and parents on contemporary practice in preparing children for school. It notes that the practice on school readiness and transition depends on effective policies and programs and considers how policy transformation can bring about effective practices as suggested by international literature. Finally, the study contributes knowledge about how to address concerns expressed by teachers and parents such as quality partnership and collaboration that focus on effective communication in preparing children for school.

Suggestion for Further Research

The findings of this research have set its limits; thus suggestions for future research are given. In the first place, since the research concentrated only on the capital city of Indonesia, further research may be done on a broader scale to involve other cities and rural areas so that emerging findings could be compared. Secondly, this research was delimited to only public primary schools in Jakarta, a further research could be replicated in private primary schools in the country where there are diverse ‘local policy’ requirements. Thirdly, future research can address the problem of how the current approaches such as academic drilling and testing for selection affect children’s development and learning. In relation to this, further research may focus on children’s voices. Longitudinal research is necessary to address issues of how academic pressure on young children affect their readiness in Indonesian context. The transition to formal schooling has unique implications for understanding risk factors in school readiness and transition programs. The changes that characterize school transition create an opportunity for the development of new patterns of relationships, and these relationships may mitigate or exacerbate risk status among diverse groups of children. Systematic research on these relationship patterns may lead to their reformulation, and related policy may ultimately enhance relationship sustainability over time (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Policies that bridge preschool and kindergarten programs help maintain the social infrastructure that sustains children during transition to school.

Personal Reflections and Concluding Remarks

This doctoral research has provided the researcher with the initial answers about school readiness and transition practice in Indonesia. It has particularly (re)shaped the researcher’s thinking and perspective about what should really constitutes school readiness

and transition in the capital city of Indonesia from a bioecological point of view. By embarking on this study, the researcher came to the realization that the concepts of school readiness and transition practice are multifaceted. This complexity is associated with the shifting nature of readiness and transition as discussed previously in the thesis. Yet, involving teachers and parents in school readiness and transition program is important as they have significant roles in preparing children for school and in facilitating children's transition to school. The Indonesian government appeared to care about children's readiness but from the findings of this study it appears little has changed in the ways children are prepared to enter primary school in views of the teachers' approaches. Discussion had with teachers and parents in the capital city during data collection for this study, gave images of stressful children who are objects of school programs. These circumstances have raised questions regarding how readiness could be when children's emotions and other areas of development are woefully neglected.

This research investigated the perspectives and practices of stakeholders in the capital city of Indonesia on school readiness and transition, so it cannot be used to make a generalization for the entire stakeholders in Indonesia. However, given that the research area is the most populous city in Indonesia and has the highest number of schools and teachers, it could be argued that the findings have brought to light specific gaps in the field of school readiness and transition and contributed significantly to the body of knowledge about this area.

The research has revealed some traditional perspectives which continue to impact on teachers and parents' practices in preparing children to enter primary school. Several questions emerge from this study regarding the place of school readiness in transition to school programs and whether the transition activities of one off event can support children. The results enlightened the researcher to rethink the current transition policy for Indonesian

context in terms of a transformative approach to ensure a notable arrangement between kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers and parents with children entering primary school are implemented. In addition, developing a continuous curriculum framework across educational contexts is also fundamental to having a smooth transition program for children.

Conclusion

While the limitations of this study cannot be ignored, the study findings highlight the contributions this study makes to the early childhood education field. This study demonstrates the importance of addressing issues at multiple levels (child, home and teacher) when helping a child to transition to school. By promoting the importance of acquiring key child had social and academic skills, early educators and parents can help ensure that children are ready for the academic challenges and various social experiences they will encounter in school. Additionally, parents can help children transition to school by providing simple, yet important experiences in the home such as providing a home environment that promotes learning and by speaking with their children about what to expect when they enter school. These early home experiences will better prepare children for the shift in settings and expectation. Finally, by encouraging early childhood teachers to become partners with parents, together they can reinforce key child-level skills that will ease the transition to school for both parent and child.

Early school transitions are best understood not only by the prevailing child-centered perspective (which accounts for children's competencies and features of family demography), but when the influence of multiple contexts on child competence is acknowledged. This view seems to have gathered strength in recent years and many educators, researchers, and policy makers acknowledge the direct influences of contexts such as family, peers, and school on child competence.

There are links among the contexts-home, school, peers, and neighbourhood - that play a role in this important period of a child's school journey. These links have indirect effects on children's transition to school. In the case of home and school contexts, descriptions of these linkages exist in the family involvement literature.

Relationships among contexts develop and change over time and can be thought of as a social system that plays a role in regulating aspects of the transition to school. The more we know about how the system develops and changes, the more it will become possible to influence the nature and course of these relationships and to respond to the wide range of needs of children entering school.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Teacher Questionnaire

This questionnaire and scale concerns school readiness and transition from kindergarten to primary school as one method of supporting children to have a positive school experience. Your responses on issues related to school readiness and transition to school will be used to identify barriers, practice and policy issues which are important for a good school readiness and transition to school programming.

Although the questionnaire contains some demographic materials all data will be de-identified before they are published. Time for completion is about 20 minutes.

Part One

Demographic information

Please indicate your response by placing a tick or writing on the blank lines.

1. Sex: male.....Female.....
2. Age range: 20-25 [], 26-30 [], 31-35 [], 36-40 [],41-45 [],46-50 [],
55+[]
3. Highest qualification.....
4. Experience in years.....

Part two: policy issues

1. This school has transition to school policy [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
2. The policy aims to reduce barriers to school readiness and transition [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
3. This school has school readiness policy [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
4. The policy outlines how parents can participate [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
5. There are policy guidelines on transition programs for all staff [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
6. I understand the school transition policy [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
7. The views of teachers are sought when developing school policies [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
8. There are school policies on how parents should participate in their children's education [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
9. The views of parents are sought when developing school policies on transition and school readiness [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
10. The school policies on school readiness are fair to all children [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
11. School policies on readiness and transition is clear to me [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].

Part three

School Practices/support issues

12. Parents are constantly kept informed about school practices [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
13. Parents have a role to play in school readiness and transition programs [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
14. There are opportunities for parents to participate in their children's education [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
15. There are opportunities for parents to participate in their children's transition to primary school programs [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
16. Parents usually participate in their children's transition to primary school programs [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
17. There are opportunities for primary and kindergarten teachers to participate in school programs together [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
18. The age of children are used to determine they are ready for school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
19. Tests are useful ways to know if children are ready for school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
20. Children who perform poorly in their test should be allowed to enter primary school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
21. We use punishment to help children learn and be ready for school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].

22. Children who are not progressing should be punished [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
23. All children no matter their differences are assessed in the same way for school readiness [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
24. We provide the basic information parents need to know about their children [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
25. All children, despite their ability are given the same tasks [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
26. Time for transition support activities is included in the school's program [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
27. Children's diversity is taken into consideration when planning for transition [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
28. School readiness and transition to school is the responsibility of schools only [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].

Part four

Attitudinal issues

29. Children who perform poorly in kindergarten should be allowed into primary one
[Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
30. Children who often need help to communicate their thoughts are ready for primary
schools [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
31. Children's whose speech is difficult to understand should be allowed to move into
primary school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly
Disagree].
32. Children who cannot read well should be allowed into primary school [Strongly
Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
33. Children who are aggressive to their peers should be allowed to transit into primary
school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
34. Children who lacked daily living skills (eg. Not able to dress or go to the toilet
themselves) should be allowed to transit into primary schools [Strongly Agree],
[Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
35. Children who have difficulty controlling their behaviour should be allowed to
transit into primary school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree],
[Strongly Disagree].
36. Children who have difficulty following rules should be allowed to transit into
primary schools [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly
Disagree].
37. Children who have difficulty sustaining attention should be allowed to transit into
primary school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly
Disagree].

38. Children who have not reached the required school age but are performing above their age should be allowed to transit from kindergarten to primary school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree]

Part five-Concerns

39. If students who failed their readiness test are included in primary schools the academic standard of the school will decline [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree]
40. It will be difficult to know if children are ready for school without testing them with universal test[Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree]
41. If children who do not pass their tests are allowed into primary school they will increase teachers' workload [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
42. Children who have low scores in their readiness tests if allowed to primary school can cause stress and anxiety for teachers [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree]
43. I do not have the requisite knowledge and skills on how to support child readiness and transition to school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
44. Our school does not have adequate resources to support children's readiness and transition to school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
45. Class sizes affect how we support children's school readiness and transition to school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
46. Parents do not have the knowledge to be involved in their children's education and transition to school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].

47. We do not receive adequate support from policy makers on children's school readiness and transition to school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
48. We do not have time to spend on school readiness and transition programs with families [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
49. No clear-cut policies and programs exist for readiness and transition programs [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].
50. Without testing children for school readiness we cannot identify and separate those who are not ready from those who are ready for primary school [Strongly Agree], [Agree], [Don't Know], [Disagree], [Strongly Disagree].

Apendik 1. Kuesioner guru

Kuesioner dan skala ini berkaitan dengan kesiapan sekolah dan transisi dari TK ke sekolah dasar sebagai satu metode dalam membantu anak untuk mendapatkan pengalaman sekolah yang positif. Jawaban saudara terkait dengan kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah akan digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi hambatan, praktek dan masalah kebijakan yang penting untuk kesiapan sekolah yang baik dan program transisi.

Meskipun kuesioner ini berisi informasi demografi, semua data akan diidentifikasi sebelum dipublikasikan. Waktu untuk menyelesaikan kuesioner ini adalah sekitar 20 menit.

Bagian Satu

Informasi Demografi

Tuliskan respon saudara dengan member tanda v atau menulis di garis yang kosong

1. Jenis Kelamin: Laki-
Laki.....Perempuan.....
2. Rentang Usia: 20-25[], 26-30[], 31-35[], 36-40[],41-45 [],46-50 [],
55+[]
3. Kualifikasi tertinggi.....
4. Pengalaman dalam tahun.....

Bagian dua: masalah kebijakan

- 1 Sekolah ini memiliki kebijakan tentang transisi [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 2 Tujuan kebijakan adalah mengurangi hambatan kesiapan sekolah dan transisi [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 3 Sekolah ini memiliki kebijakan kesiapan sekolah. [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 4 Kebijakan tersebut menjelaskan cara orang tua dapat berpartisipasi [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 5 Ada tuntunan kebijakan tentang program transisi untuk semua staf [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 6 Saya memahami kebijakan transisi sekolah [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 7 Pandangan guru dicari ketika mengembangkan kebijakan sekolah [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 8 Ada kebijakan sekolah tentang cara orang tua seharusnya berpartisipasi dalam pendidikan anak mereka [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 9 Pandangan orang tua dicari ketika mengembangkan kebijakan sekolah tentang transisi dan kesiapan sekolah [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 10 Kebijakan sekolah tentang kesiapan sekolah bersifat adil untuk semua anak [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 11 Kebijakan sekolah tentang kesiapan sekolah dan transisi jelas bagi saya [Sangat Setuju, [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], Tidak Setuju], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].

Bagian tiga

Praktek Sekolah/masalah dukungan

- 12 Orang tua secara kontinyu diberikan informasi tentang praktek-praktek di sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 13 Orang tua memiliki peran dalam kesiapan sekolah dan program transisi [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 14 Ada kesempatan bagi orang tua untuk berpartisipasi dalam pendidikan anak mereka [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 15 Ada kesempatan bagi orang tua untuk berpartisipasi dalam program transisi anak ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 16 Orang tua biasanya berpartisipasi dalam program transisi anak ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 17 Ada kesempatan bagi para guru TK dan guru SD untuk berpartisipasi dalam program sekolah bersama sama [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 18 Usia anak digunakan untuk menentukan kesiapan sekolah mereka [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 19 Berbagai tes adalah cara yang bermanfaat untuk mengetahui apakah anak siap sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 20 Anak yang hasil tesnya rendah seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 21 Kami menggunakan hukuman untuk membantu anak belajar dan siap ke sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 22 Anak yang tidak mengalami kemajuan seharusnya dihukum [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].

- 23 Semua anak meskipun beda perlu di-ases dengan cara yang sama untuk mengetahui kesiapan sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 24 Kami menyediakan informasi dasar pada para orang tua agar mengetahui perkembangan anaknya[Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 25 Semua anak diberikan tugas yang sama meskipun kemampuannya berbeda [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 26 Waktu untuk kegiatan yang mendukung transisi dimasukkan dalam program sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 27 Perbedaan anak menjadi pertimbangan saat merencanakan transisi [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 28 Kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah adalah tanggung jawab sekolah saja [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].

Bagian empat

Masalah sikap

- 29 Anak yang performansinya rendah di TK seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke SD kelas satu [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 30 Anak yang seeing membutuhkan pertolongan saat mengkomunikasikan pikirannya sudah siap masuk SD [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 31 Anak yang bahasanya sulit dimengerti seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 32 Anak yang tidak bisa membaca dengan baik seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 33 Anak yang agresif terhadap teman sebayanya seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 34 Anak yang kurang terampil kesehariannya (misalnya tidak bisa berpakaian atau ke toilet secara mandiri) seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 35 Anak yang memiliki kesulitan mengontrol perilakunya seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 36 Anak yang mengalami kesulitan mengikuti aturan seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 37 Anak yang memiliki kesulitan konsentrasi seharusnya diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].

38 Anak yang belum mencapai usia sekolah yang dipersyaratkan tetapi performansinya di atas usianya seharusnya diperbolehkan dari TK masuk ke SD [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].

Bagian lima-Perihal

- 39 Jika para siswa yang gagal dalam tes kesiapan sekolah diperbolehkan masuk SD , standar akademik sekolah akan menurun [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 40 Akan sulit untuk mengetahui apakah anak siap sekolah, tanpa memberi mereka tes umum [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 41 Jika anak yang tidak lulus tes diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar ,maka mereka akan menambah beban kerja guru [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 42 Anak yang memiliki nilai rendah dalam tes kesiapan sekolah jika diperbolehkan masuk ke sekolah dasar akan dapat menyebabkan stres dan kecemasan bagi para guru [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 43 Saya tidak memiliki persyaratan pengetahuan dan ketrampilan tentang cara membantu kesiapan anak sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 44 Sekolah kami tidak memiliki sumber yang cukup untuk membantu kesiapan sekolah dan transisi anak [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 45 Ukuran kelas mempengaruhi cara kami membantu kesiapan sekolah dan transisi anak [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 46 Orang tua tidak memiliki pengetahuan untuk dilibatkan dalam pendidikan anak dan transisi ke sekolah [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 47 Kami tidak mendapat bantuan yang cukup dari pembuat kebijakan tentang kesiapan sekolah dan transisi anak [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].

- 48 Kami tidak memiliki waktu untuk digunakan bagi kesiapan sekolah dan program transisi bersama keluarga anak [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 49 Tidak ada kebijakan dan program yang jelas untuk kesiapan sekolah dan program transisi [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].
- 50 Tanpa memberikan tes kesiapan sekolah pada anak kita tidak dapat mengidentifikasi dan memisahkan mereka yang tidak siap dan yang siap masuk ke sekolah dasar [Sangat Setuju], [Setuju], [Tidak Tahu], [Sangat Tidak Setuju].

Appendix 2a. Focus Group Questions for Kindergarten Teachers

1. What is your understanding of school readiness?
2. What kindergarten policies guide the way you prepare children for primary school?
3. What do you look for in children who are ready for school?
4. How do you support children to be ready for school?
5. What kinds of school programs do you organise to support children's transition to primary school?
6. What role do parents play in children's school readiness?/transition to school?
7. How do you encourage parent's participation in their children's school program?
8. What kind of things do parents expect from you as a teacher before their children enter primary school?
9. What challenges do you face in preparing children for school?
10. How do you think school readiness programs should look like?
11. What kinds of activities do you think are important for children's transition to school?
12. How do you know if children are ready for school?
13. How do you provide for individual readiness and transition to school?
14. How do you think we must develop school readiness and transition programs?
15. What are your major concerns with regard to school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia?

Apendik 2a. Pertanyaan Diskusi Kelompok untuk Para Guru TK

1. Bagaimana pemahaman saudara tentang kesiapan sekolah?
2. Kebijakan seperti apa di TK yang menjadi tuntunan saudara dalam mempersiapkan anak ke sekolah dasar?
3. Apa yang saudara cari pada anak yang siap sekolah?
4. Bagaimana cara saudara membantu anak untuk siap sekolah?
5. Program sekolah seperti apa yang saudara atur untuk membantu transisi anak ke sekolah dasar?
6. Apa peran orang tua dalam kesiapan sekolah anak?/transisi anak ke sekolah ?
7. Bagaimana saudara membangkitkan partisipasi orang tua dalam program sekolah anak mereka?
8. Hal apa yang diharapkan orang tua pada saudara sebagai guru, sebelum anak mereka masuk sekolah dasar?
9. Tantangan seperti apa yang saudara hadapi dalam mempersiapkan anak ke sekolah ?
10. Bagaimana menurut pendapat saudara program kesiapansekolah yang seharusnya?
11. Kegiatan seperti apa menurut saudara yang penting untukt ransisi anak kesekolah ?
12. Bagaimana saudara dapat mengetahui bahwa anak siap sekolah?
13. Bagaimana saudara memberikan bantuan untuk kesiapan individual dan transisi anak ke sekolah?
14. Bagaimana pendapat saudara bahwa kita harus mengembangkan kesiapan sekolah dan program transisi?
15. Menurut saudara apakah yang menjadi masalah utama terkait dengan kesiapan sekolah dan transisi di Indonesia?

Appendix 2 b. Focus Group Questions for Primary School Teacher Grade One

1. What is your understanding of school readiness?
2. What primary school policies guide the way you prepare to accept children from kindergarten?
3. What do you look for in children who are about to enter primary school?
4. How do you support children entering primary school for the first time?
5. What kinds of school programs do you organise to support children's transition to primary school?
6. What role do parents play in children's school readiness?/transition to primary school?
7. How do you encourage parent's participation in their children's school program?
8. What kind of things do parents expect from you as a teacher before their children enter primary school?
9. What challenges do you face in helping children to adjust to school climate?
10. How do you think school readiness programs should look like?
11. What kinds of activities do you think are important for children's transition to primary school?
12. How do you know if children are ready for primary school?
13. How do you provide for individual readiness and transition to primary school?
14. How do you think we must develop school readiness and transition programs?
15. What are your major concerns with regard to school readiness and transition to primary school in Indonesia?

Apendik 2b. Pertanyaan Diskusi Kelompok untuk Para Guru SD Kelas 1

1. Bagaimana pemahaman saudara tentang kesiapan sekolah?
2. Kebijakan seperti apa di SD yang menjadi tuntunan saudara dalam menerima anak dari TK?
3. Apa yang saudara cari pada anak yang akan masuk ke sekolah dasar?
4. Bagaimana cara saudara membantu anak yang masuk ke SD pertama kalinya?
5. Program sekolah seperti apa yang saudara atur untuk membantu transisi anak ke sekolah dasar?
6. Apa peran orang tua dalam kesiapan sekolah anak?/transisi anak ke sekolah ?
7. Bagaimana saudara membangkitkan partisipasi orang tua dalam program sekolah anak mereka?
8. Hal apa yang diharapkan orang tua pada saudara sebagai guru, ketika anak mereka masuk sekolah dasar?
9. Tantangan seperti apa yang saudara hadapi dalam membantu anak beradaptasi dengan iklim sekolah ?
10. Bagaimana menurut pendapat saudara program kesiapan sekolah yang seharusnya?
11. Kegiatan seperti apa menurut saudara yang penting untuk transisi anak ke sekolah dasar ?
12. Bagaimana saudara dapat mengetahui bahwa anak siap sekolah?
13. Bagaimana saudara memberikan bantuan untuk kesiapan individual dan transisi anak ke sekolah dasar?
14. Bagaimana pendapat saudara bahwa kita harus mengembangkan kesiapansekolah dan program transisi?
15. Menurut saudara apakah yang menjadi masalah utama terkait dengan kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah dasar di Indonesia?

Appendix 2c. Focus Group Questions for Parents

1. What do you expect from your child to be able to do before she/he enters primary school?
2. What is your view on children's readiness to school?
3. How do you support your child's readiness?
4. How do you support your child's transition to primary school?
5. How do you participate in school programs with your child?
6. How do you expect from teachers with regard to your child?
7. Do you think if your child does not pass the readiness test he/she should be allowed into primary school?
8. Which aspect of your child's development is most crucial to you, and why?

Apendik 2c. Pertanyaan Diskusi Kelompok untuk Para Orang Tua

1. Apa yang saudara harapkan dapat dilakukan anak sebelum masuk ke sekolah dasar?
2. Bagaimana pandangan saudara tentang kesiapan sekolah pada anak?
3. Bagaimana saudara membantu kesiapan anak?
4. Bagaimana saudara membantu transisi anak ke sekolah dasar?
5. Bagaimanasaudara berpartisipasi dalam program sekolah bersama anak?
6. Apa yang saudara harapkan dari guru berkenaan dengan anak saudara?
7. Apakah menurut saudara jika anak saudara tidak lulus dalam tes kesiapan ,anak saudara seharusnya diijinkan masuk sekolah dasar?
8. Aspek perkembangananak yang mana yang menurut saudara paling penting,dan mengapa?

Appendix 3. Individual Interview Questions for Early Childhood Education Policy Maker

1. What kind of policy guides children school readiness in Indonesia?
2. What do the early childhood department do to determine whether children are ready to enter primary school or not?
3. What is the policy requirement do you have to be able for children to transit from kindergarten to primary school?
4. What programs have government put in place to support children's transition to primary school?
5. How do you explain the effectiveness of the program?

Apendik 3. Pertanyaan Interview Individual untuk Para Pembuat Kebijakan Pendidikan

1. Kebijakan seperti apa yang menuntun kesiapan sekolah anak di Indonesia?
2. Apa yang dilakukan oleh departemen pendidikan anak usia dini dalam menentukan apakah anak siap sekolah atau tidak?
3. Apakah persyaratan kebijakan yang dimiliki pemerintah yang bias memfasilitasi transisi anak TK ke SD?
4. Program apa yang dimiliki pemerintah dalam mendukung transisi anak ke sekolah dasar/
5. Bagaimana keefektifan program tersebut?

Appendix 4. Explanatory Statement for Teachers (Primary school-grade one and Kindergarten)



18/03/11

Title: School Readiness and Transition to Primary Schools. A study of Teachers', Parents' and Policy Makers' Perspectives and Practices

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student research project

My name is Lara Fridani and I am conducting a research under the supervision of Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a PhD degree at Monash University.

Why did you choose this particular person/group as participants?

You are selected to participate in this research because the research relates to children entering primary school. As you teach in the first grade of primary school, you are considered a valuable source of information for this research.

The aim/purpose of the research

This study attempts to investigate how teachers, parents and education policy makers understand and practise school readiness in Indonesia. It will investigate policies, programs and educational activities that are implemented to support children's transition to primary school. The factors that contribute to stakeholders perspectives and practices on school readiness, how they prioritize different aspects of school readiness, and how their understanding of school readiness and transition to primary school influence policy and practices in Indonesia will be examined. The specific aims are to:

- Contribute to school readiness and transition policy development
- Feed the results into developing teachers' capacity to support children's development and transition to school
- Add to the literature on school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia
- Promote parents' participation in school transition programs
- Develop a whole school approach to transition programming

Possible benefits

When completed, this research has a significance to enhance our understanding of school readiness and transition. The result will be important for developing transition policy and programs to support all aspects of children's development including, physical, social-emotional, language, intellectual and moral. Further, it has a potential significance to develop teachers' capacity and knowledge on transition through training. Parents will also benefit from transition and school readiness information and how they can be included in transition programming for children in Indonesia.

What does the research involve?

This research involves you responding to questionnaire, and participating in a focus group.

How much time will the research take?

Responding to the questionnaires will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and focus groups about 45 minutes.

Inconvenience/discomfort

All measures will be taken to conduct the research at a time and place which is convenient to all participants involved. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this research is voluntary. Not participating in this research will not in any way disadvantage you. If you decide to participate, you can choose to participate in full or part of the research. You are not under any obligation to answer all the questions if you do not wish to do so. It is not foreseen that the subject of the research will cause you any psychological distress. If however you do experience any discomfort or stress during the course of the research, you can call upon the following free counselling service whose detail is included in this explanatory statement below:

Counselling State University of Jakarta
Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan
Komplek Universitas Negeri Jakarta
Gedung Daksinapati
Rawamangun Muka , Jakarta Timur
Indonesia
Phone: 62-21-47865605

Can I withdraw from the research?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may only withdraw prior to having approved the interview transcript.

Confidentiality

All data will be de-identified. The names of all participants as well as the schools will be kept confidential and not in any publications.

Storage of data

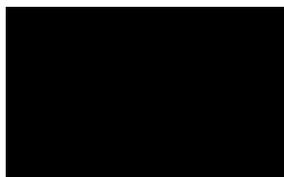
Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. The data may also be used for other research publications with your approval.

Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me via email [REDACTED]. The findings are accessible for 6 months.

<p>If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator At: [REDACTED]</p>	<p>If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is conducted please contact: Dr. Sofia Hartati Daksinapati Building Ist Floor R 117, Campus A Jl. Rawamangun Muka, 13220 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>
<p>Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega Monash University Lecturer /(MEd) Course Pathway Advisor Early Childhood Education/Inclusion Building A, Peninsula, Frankston, Vic 3199 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>

Thank you



Lara Fridani

Apendik 4. Pernyataan Penjelasan untuk Guru (SD dan TK)



18/03/11

Judul: Kesiapan sekolah dan Transisi ke Sekolah Dasar. Studi tentang perspektif dan praktek guru, orang tua dan pembuat kebijakan

Informasi ini untuk saudara simpan.

Projek penelitian siswa

Nama saya Lara Fridani dan saya sedang melakukan penelitian di bawah supervisi Dr Joseph Agbenyega, dosen di Jurusan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini untuk mendapatkan gelar PhD di Monash University.

Mengapaa saudara memilih orang/kelompok tertentu sebagai peserta penelitian?

Saudara diminta menjadi peserta penelitian ini karena penelitian ini terkait dengan anak yang akan masuk ke sekolah dasar. Karena Saudara mengajar di Tk/SD, saudara dianggap dapat menjadi sumber informasi yang berharga dalam penelitian ini.

The aim/purpose of the research

Studi ini berusaha untuk menyelidiki bagaimana para guru, orang tua dan pembuat kebijakan memahami dan mempraktekkan kesiapan sekolah di Indonesia. Studi ini meneliti kebijakan, program dan kegiatan pendidikan yang dilaksanakan dalam mendukung transisi anak-anak ke sekolah dasar. Berbagai faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap cara pandang para stakeholder dan prakteknya terkait dengan kesiapan sekolah, bagaimana mereka memprioritaskan berbagai aspek kesiapan sekolah, dan bagaimana mereka memahami kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah dasar yang berpengaruh terhadap kebijakan dan praktek di Indonesia, akan diuji. Tujuan spesifiknya adalah :

- Memberi kontribusi terhadap kesiapan sekolah dan pengembangan kebijakan transisi ke sekolah dasar
- Mengembangkan kapasitas guru dalam mendukung perkembangan anak dan transisi ke sekolah
- Menambah literature tentang kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah di Indonesia
- Meningkatkan partisipasi orang tua dalam program transisi
- Mengembangkan pendekatan sekolah yang menyeluruh terhadap program transisi

Kemungkinan manfaat

Jika selesai, penelitian ini memiliki dignifikasi dalam mengembangkan pemahaman kita terhadap kesiapan sekolah dan transisi. Hasilnya bermanfaat dalam mengembangkan kebijakan transisi dan pelaksanaannya untuk mendukung semua aspek perkembangan anak yang meliputi aspek fisik, social-emosional, bahasa, intelektual dan moral. Lebih jauh lagi, akan bermanfaat dalam mengembangkan kapasitas dan pengetahuan para guru tentang transisi melalui pelatihan. Para orang tua juga dapat mengambil manfaat

informasi tentang transisi dan kesiapan sekolah dan bagaimana mereka dapat dilibatkan dalam program transisi untuk anak-anak di Indonesia.

Apa sajakah yang dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini?

Penelitian ini melibatkan respon saudara dalam angket dan partisipasi dalam kelompok diskusi.

Berapa lamakah waktu pengambilan data ini?

Respon terhadap angker memakan waktu sekitar 20 menit dan berdiskusi kelompok selama 45 menit.

Ketidaknyamanan

Semua pengambilan data dilakukan dalam waktu dan tempat yang nyaman bagi peserta penelitian yang terlibat. Keputusan saudara untuk berpartisipasi atau tidak berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini sifatnya sukarela. Ketidakikutsertaan dalam penelitian ini tak akan merugikan saudara. Jika saudara memutuskan untuk terlibat, saudara dapat memilih apakah akan terlibat sepanjang penelitian ataupun hanya sebagian saja. Saudara tidak harus menjawab semua pertanyaan jika saudara tidak berkenan. Dalam penelitian ini, tidak diharapkan akan terjadi tekanan psikologis. Namun jika saudara mengalami ketidaknyamanan atau stress selama dalam proses penelitian, saudara dapat menghubungi pelayanan konseling bebas biaya dengan keterangan alamat sebagai berikut:

Konseling Universitas Negeri Jakarta
Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan
Komplek Universitas Negeri Jakarta
Gedung Daksinapati
Rawamangun Muka , Jakarta Timur
Indonesia
Phone: 62-21-47865605

Bolehkah saya mundur dari penelitian ?

Menjadi subjek penelitian ini bersifat sukarela, dengan demikian saudara tidak harus setuju untuk berpartisipasi. Namun jika saudara setuju untuk berpartisipasi, saudara hanya bisa mundur sebelum menerima transkrip interview.

Kerahasiaan

Semua data akan di-identifikasi kembali. Nama semua peserta dan sekolah akan dijaga kerahasiaannya dan tidak dipublikasikan.

Penyimpanan data

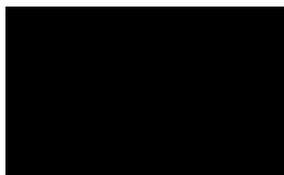
Penyimpanan data akan disesuaikan dengan peraturan Universitas dan disimpan dalam filling cabinet terkunci selama lima tahun. Laporan studi ini mungkin akan dipublikasikan , tetapi identitas peserta secara individual akan dirahasiakan. Data studi ini juga akan digunakan untuk publikasi penelitian lainnya dengan persetujuan saudara.

Hasil

Jika saudara ingin mendapatkan informasi tentang hasil penelitian ini, saudara dapat menghubungi email saya [REDACTED]. Hasil dari penelitian ini bisa diakses dalam 6 bulan.

<p>Jika saudara ingin menghubungi para peneliti terkait dengan berbagai hal dalam studi ini, saudara dapat menghubungi peneliti utama di alamat [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Jika saudara memiliki pengaduan terkait dengan sikap dalam pelaksanaan penelitian ini, saudara dapat menghubungi: Dr. Sofia Hartati Daksinapati Building Ist Floor R 117, Campus A Jl. Rawamangun Muka, 13220 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>
<p>Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega Monash University Lecturer / (MEd) Course Pathway Advisor Early Childhood Education/Inclusion Building A, Peninsula, Frankston, Vic 3199 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>

Terima Kasih



Lara Fridani

Appendix 5. Explanatory Statement for Parents Having Children Entering Primary School



18/03/11

Title: **School Readiness and Transition to Primary Schools. A study of Teachers', Parents' and Policy Makers' Perspectives and Practices**

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student research project

My name is Lara Fridani and I am conducting a research under the supervision of Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a PhD degree at Monash University.

Why did you choose this particular person/group as participants?

You are selected to participate in this research because the research relates to children entering primary school. As you have a child in the last year of kindergarten, you are considered a valuable source of information for this research.

The aim/purpose of the research

This study attempts to investigate how teachers, parents and education policy makers understand and practise school readiness in Indonesia. It will investigate policies, programs and educational activities that are implemented to support children's transition to primary school. The factors that contribute to stakeholders perspectives and practices on school readiness, how they prioritize different aspects of school readiness, and how their understanding of school readiness and transition to primary school influence policy and practices in Indonesia will be examined. The specific aims are to:

- Contribute to school readiness and transition policy development
- Feed the results into developing teachers' capacity to support children's development and transition to school

- Add to the literature on school readiness and transition to school in Indonesia
- Promote parents' participation in school transition programs
- Develop a whole school approach to transition programming

Possible benefits

When completed, this research has a significance to enhance our understanding of school readiness and transition. The result will be important for developing transition policy and programs to support all aspects of children's development including, physical, social-emotional, language, intellectual and moral. Further, it has a potential significance to develop teachers' capacity and knowledge on transition through training. Parents will also benefit from transition and school readiness information and how they can be included in transition programming for children in Indonesia.

What does the research involve?

This research involves you participating in a focus group.

How much time will the research take?

Participating in the focus groups discussion will take approximately 45 minutes.

Inconvenience/discomfort

All measures will be taken to conduct the research at a time and place which is convenient to all participants involved. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this research is voluntary. Not participating in this research will not in any way disadvantage you. If you decide to participate, you can choose to participate in full or part of the research. You are not under any obligation to answer all the questions if you do not wish to do so. It is not foreseen that the subject of the research will cause you any psychological distress. If however you do experience any discomfort or stress during the course of the research, you can call upon the following free counselling service whose detail is included in this explanatory statement below:

Counselling State University of Jakarta
 Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan
 Komplek Universitas Negeri Jakarta
 Gedung Daksinapati
 Rawamangun Muka , Jakarta Timur

Indonesia

Phone: 62-21-47865605

Can I withdraw from the research?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may only withdraw prior to having approved the interview transcript.

Confidentiality

All data will be de-identified. The names of all participants as well as the schools will be kept confidential and not in any publications.

Storage of data

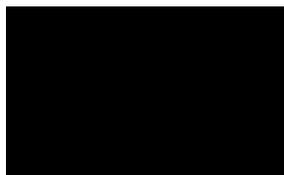
Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. The data may also be used for other research publications with your approval.

Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me via email [REDACTED]. The findings are accessible for 6 months.

<p>If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator At: [REDACTED]</p>	<p>If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is conducted please contact: Dr. Sofia Hartati Daksinapati Building Ist Floor R 117, Campus A Jl. Rawamangun Muka, 13220 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>
<p>Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega Monash University Lecturer /(MEd) Course Pathway Advisor Early Childhood Education/Inclusion Building A, Peninsula, Frankston, Vic 3199 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>

Thank you



Lara Fridani

Apendik 5. Pernyataan Penjelasan untuk Orang Tua yang Memiliki Anak yang Akan Masuk SD



18/03/11

Judul: Kesiapan sekolah dan Transisi ke Sekolah Dasar. Studi tentang perspektif dan praktek guru, orang tua dan pembuat kebijakan

Informasi ini untuk saudara simpan.

Projek penelitian siswa

Nama saya Lara Fridani dan saya sedang melakukan penelitian di bawah supervisi Dr Joseph Agbenyega, dosen di Jurusan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini untuk mendapatkan gelar PhD di Monash University.

Mengapa saudara memilih orang/kelompok tertentu sebagai peserta penelitian?

Saudara diminta menjadi peserta penelitian ini karena penelitian ini terkait dengan anak yang akan masuk ke sekolah dasar. Karena saudara memiliki anak di tahun terakhir Tamana Kanak-kanaksaudara dianggap dapat menjadi sumber informasi yang berharga dalam penelitian ini.

The aim/purpose of the research

Studi ini berusaha untuk menyelidiki bagaimana para guru, orang tua dan pembuat kebijakan memahami dan mempraktekkan kesiapan sekolah di Indonesia. Studi ini meneliti kebijakan, program dan kegiatan pendidikan yang dilaksanakan dalam mendukung transisi anak-anak ke sekolah dasar. Berbagai faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap cara pandang para stakeholder dan prakteknya terkait dengan kesiapan sekolah, bagaimana mereka memprioritaskan berbagai aspek kesiapan sekolah, dan bagaimana mereka memahami kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah dasar yang berpengaruh terhadap kebijakan dan praktek di Indonesia, akan diuji. Tujuan spesifiknya adalah :

- Memberi kontribusi terhadap kesiapan sekolah dan pengembangan kebijakan transisi ke sekolah dasar
- Mengembangkan kapasitas guru dalam mendukung perkembangan anak dan transisi ke sekolah
- Menambah literature tentang kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah di Indonesia
- Meningkatkan partisipasi orang tua dalam program transisi
- Mengembangkan pendekatan sekolah yang menyeluruh terhadap program transisi

Kemungkinan manfaat

Jika selesai, penelitian ini memiliki dignifikansi dalam mengembangkan pemahaman kita terhadap kesiapan sekolah dan transisi. Hasilnya bermanfaat dalam mengembangkan kebijakan transisi dan pelaksanaannya untuk mendukung semua aspek

perkembangan anak yang meliputi aspek fisik, social-emosional, bahasa, intelektual dan moral. Lebih jauh lagi, akan bermanfaat dalam mengembangkan kapasitas dan pengetahuan para guru tentang transisi melalui pelatihan. Para orang tua juga dapat mengambil manfaat informasi tentang transisi dan kesiapan sekolah dan bagaimana mereka dapat dilibatkan dalam program transisi untuk anak-anak di Indonesia.

Apa sajakah yang dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini?

Penelitian ini melibatkan partisipasi saudara dalam kelompok diskusi.

Berapa lamakah waktu pengambilan data ini?

Partisipasi dalam diskusi kelompok memakan waktu sekitar 45 menit.

Ketidaknyamanan

Semua pengambilan data dilakukan dalam waktu dan tempat yang nyaman bagi peserta penelitian yang terlibat. Keputusan saudara untuk berpartisipasi atau tidak berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini sifatnya sukarela. Ketidakikutsertaan dalam penelitian ini tak akan merugikan saudara. Jika saudara memutuskan untuk terlibat, saudara dapat memilih apakah akan terlibat sepanjang penelitian ataupun hanya sebagian saja. Saudara tidak harus menjawab semua pertanyaan jika saudara tidak berkenan. Dalam penelitian ini, tidak diharapkan akan terjadi tekanan psikologis. Namun jika saudara mengalami ketidaknyamanan atau stress selama dalam proses penelitian, saudara dapat menghubungi pelayanan konseling bebas biaya dengan keterangan alamat sebagai berikut:

Konseling Universitas Negeri Jakarta
Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan
Komplek Universitas Negeri Jakarta
Gedung Daksinapati
Rawamangun Muka , Jakarta Timur
Indonesia
Phone: 62-21-47865605

Bolehkah saya mundur dari penelitian ?

Menjadi subjek penelitian ini bersifat sukarela, dengan demikian saudara tidak harus setuju untuk berpartisipasi. Namun jika saudara setuju untuk berpartisipasi, saudara hanya bisa mundur sebelum menerima transkrip interview.

Kerahasiaan

Semua data akan di-identifikasi kembali. Nama semua peserta dan sekolah akan dijaga kerahasiaannya dan tidak dipublikasikan.

Penyimpanan data

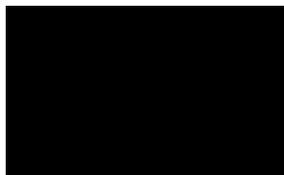
Penyimpanan data akan disesuaikan dengan peraturan Universitas dan disimpan dalam filling cabinet terkunci selama lima tahun. Laporan studi ini mungkin akan dipublikasikan , tetapi identitas peserta secara individual akan dirahasiakan. Data studi ini juga akan digunakan untuk publikasi penelitian lainnya dengan persetujuan saudara.

Hasil

Jika saudara ingin mendapatkan informasi tentang hasil penelitian ini, saudara dapat menghubungi email saya di [REDACTED]. Hasil dari penelitian ini bisa diakses dalam 6 bulan.

<p>Jika saudara ingin menghubungi para peneliti terkait dengan berbagai hal dalam studi ini, saudara dapat menghubungi peneliti utama di alamat : [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Jika saudara memiliki pengaduan terkait dengan sikap dalam pelaksanaan penelitian ini, saudara dapat menghubungi: Dr. Sofia Hartati Daksinapati Building Ist Floor R 117, Campus A Jl. Rawamangun Muka, 13220 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>
<p>Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega Monash University Lecturer / (MEd) Course Pathway Advisor Early Childhood Education/Inclusion Building A, Peninsula, Frankston, Vic 3199 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p>

Terima Kasih



Lara Fridani

Appendix 6. Consent Form - <Teachers>



Title: School Readiness and Transition to Primary Schools. A study of Teachers', Parents' and Policy Makers' Perspectives and Practices

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

List all procedures relevant to your data collection – delete those not applicable

I agree to be involved in focus group discussion Yes No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio Yes No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required Yes No

I agree to complete questionnaires asking me about **School Readiness and Transition to Primary School** Yes No

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw after submitting the questionnaire and approving the interview transcript without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview / focus group / questionnaire / survey for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that data from the **questionnaire and focus group discussion** will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name

Signature

Date

Apndik 6. Form persetujuan - < guru >



Judul: Kesiapan sekolah dan Transisi ke Sekolah Dasar. Studi tentang perspektif dan praktek guru, orang tua dan pembuat kebijakan

CATATAN : form persetujuan ini akan disimpan oleh peneliti Monash University sebagai dokumen

Saya setuju untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian di Monash university sebagaimana dijelaskan di atas. Saya telah mendapatkan penjelasan tentang penelitian ini dan telah membaca pernyataan penjelasan, yang saya simpan sebagai dokumen. Saya memahami bahwa persetujuan saya untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini berarti:

Tulis semua prosedur terkait pengumpulan data-hapus jika tak terkait

- Saya setuju dilibatkan dalam diskusi kelompok Ya Tidak
- Saya setuju interview direkam audio Ya Tidak
- Saya bersedia jika ada pertanyaan lebih lanjut jika dibutuhkan Ya Tidak
- Saya setuju mengisi angket terkait **kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah dasar** Ya Tidak

Saya memahami bahwa keterlibatan saya bersifat sukarela, dan saya dapat memilih untuk tidak terlibat dalam seluruh proses penelitian, dan saya dapat mundur setelah mengisi angket dan menyetujui transkrip interview tanpa dirugikan dengan cara apapun.

Saya memahami bahwa segala data yang dieproleh oleh peneliti dari interview/ diskusi kelompok/ angket/survey untuk pelaporan maupun publikasi, tidak akan menyebutkan nama maupun identitas karakteristik dalam kondisi apapun.

Saya memahami bahwa saya akan diberikan data transkrip terkait dengan persetujuan saya untuk terlibat dalam penelitian sebelum hasilnya dituliskan dalam penelitian.

Saya memahami bahwa segala informasi yang saya berikan bersifat rahasia dan tak da informasi tentang identifikasi individu yang akan dituliskan dalam laporan penelitian maupun kepada pihak lain.

Saya memahami bahwa data dari angket dan diskusi kelompok akan disimpan dalam tempat yang aman dan bisa diakses oleh tim peneliti. Saya juga memahami bahwa data akan dihancurkan setelah lima tahun kecuali saya memberikan persetujuan untuk bisa digunakan dalam penelitian selanjutnya.

Nama peserta

Tanda tangan

Tanggal

Appendix 7. Consent Form - Parents of Children entering Primary School



Title: School Readiness and Transition to Primary Schools. A study of Teachers', Parents' and Policy Makers' Perspectives and Practices

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

List all procedures relevant to your data collection – delete those not applicable

I agree to be involved in a focus group discussion with researcher Yes No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped and/or video-taped Yes No
I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required Yes No

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw after approving the focus group interview without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview / focus group / questionnaire / survey for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that data from the focus group will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name

Signature

Date

Appendik 7. Form persetujuan – Orang tua yang memiliki anak yang akan masuk SD



Judul: Kesiapan sekolah dan Transisi ke Sekolah Dasar. Studi tentang perspektif dan praktek guru, orang tua dan pembuat kebijakan

CATATAN : form persetujuan ini akan disimpan oleh peneliti Monash University sebagai dokumen

Saya setuju untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian di Monash university sebagaimana dijelaskan di atas. Saya telah mendapatkan penjelasan tentang penelitian ini dan telah membaca pernyataan penjelasan, yang saya simpan sebagai dokumen. Saya memahami bahwa persetujuan saya untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini berarti:

Tulis semua prosedur terkait pengumpulan data-hapus jika tak terkait

Saya setuju dilibatkan dalam diskusi kelompok Ya Tidak

Saya setuju interview direkam audio Ya Tidak

Saya bersedia jika ada pertanyaan lebih lanjut jika dibutuhkan Ya Tidak

Saya setuju mengisi angket terkait **kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah dasar**
 Ya Tidak

Saya memahami bahwa keterlibatan saya bersifat sukarela, dan saya dapat memilih untuk tidak terlibat dalam seluruh proses penelitian, dan saya dapat mundur setelah mengisi angket dan menyetujui transkrip interview tanpa dirugikan dengan cara apapun.

Saya memahami bahwa segala data yang dieproleh oleh peneliti dari interview/ diskusi kelompok/ angket/survey untuk pelaporan maupun publikasi, tidak akan menyebutkan nama maupun identitas karakteristik dalam kondisi apapun.

Saya memahami bahwa saya akan diberikan data transkrip terkait dengan persetujuan saya untuk terlibat dalam penelitian sebelum hasilnya dituliskan dalam penelitian.

Saya memahami bahwa segala informasi yang saya berikan bersifat rahasia dan tak da informasi tentang identifikasi individu yang akan dituliskan dalam laporan penelitian maupun kepada pihak lain.

Saya memahami bahwa data dari angket dan diskusi kelompok akan disimpan dalam tempat yang aman dan bisa diakses oleh tim peneliti. Saya juga memahami bahwa data akan dihancurkan setelah lima tahun kecuali saya memberikan persetujuan untuk bisa digunakan dalam penelitian selanjutnya.

Nama peserta

Tanda tangan

Tanggal

Appendix 8. Human Ethics Certificate of Approval



MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 30 March 2011
Project Number: CF11/0745 – 2011000363
Title: School readiness and transition to primary schools. A study of teachers', parents' and policy makers' perspectives and practices
Chief Investigator: Dr Joseph Agbenyega
Approved: From: 30 March 2011 To: 30 March 2016

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Ben Canny
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Mrs Lara Fridani

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Telephone +61 3 9905 5490 Facsimile +61 3 9905 3831
Email muhrec@monash.edu www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

Appendix 9a. Letter of Permission from Ministry of National Education, Directorate General of Early Childhood Education



**KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN NASIONAL
DIREKTORAT JENDERAL PENDIDIKAN ANAK USIA DINI,
NONFORMAL DAN INFORMAL**

Jalan Jenderal Sudirman Senayan, Gedung E Lantai III Senayan Jakarta 10270
Telp. 57950227-229 Tromol Pos : 1303 Kode Pos 10013 Fax. 57950228-229

S U R A T K E T E R A N G A N

Nomor: 749 /B.B2/UD/2011

Direktur Pembinaan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini memberikan keterangan bahwa Saudara :

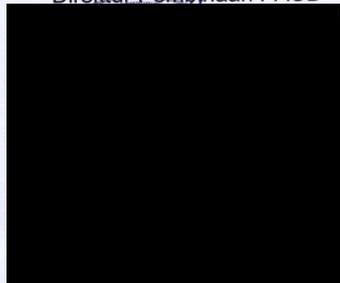
Nama : Lara Fridani
Fakultas : Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, Peninsula Campus
Universitas : Monash University

Dapat melaksanakan wawancara individu dengan pemangku kepentingan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini dalam rangka proses Penelitian yang berfokus pada kesiapan sekolah dan transisi ke sekolah dasar di Jakarta, Indonesia.

Demikian surat keterangan ini diberikan agar digunakan sebagaimana mestinya.

Jakarta, // Oktober 2011

Direktur Pembinaan PAUD



Tembusan :

1. Plt. Dirjen PAUDNI, Kemdiknas, Jakarta

Appendix 9b. Letter of Permission from Department of Education in Jakarta



PEMERINTAH PROVINSI DAERAH KHUSUS IBUKOTA JAKARTA

DINAS PENDIDIKAN

Jalan Jend. Gatot Subroto Kav. 40 - 41 Telp. 5204095, 5204087

5204039 - 5271472 Fax. 5271423, 5204039, 5271424

JAKARTA

Kode Pos 12950

Nomor : 64/TK,SD,PLB/V/2011
Sifat :
Lampiran :
Hal : Rekomendasi

Kepada

Yth. Lara Fridani
Mahasiswa PhD
MONASH University Australia
di
Jakarta

Sehubungan dengan tentang Permohonan Ijin Penelitian, atas nama :

Nama : Lara Fridani
ID : 18284558
Program Studi : Early Childhood Education

dengan ini Kepala Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi DKI Jakarta memberikan Izin untuk melaksanakan penelitian terkait dengan "Kesiapan sekolah Anak dan transisi anak ke Sekolah Dasar yang akan melibatkan para guru kelas 1 SD dan para guru TK B di Wilayah Provinsi DKI Jakarta".

Selama pelaksanaan penelitian diharapkan tidak mengganggu proses pembelajaran, dan hasil penelitian tersebut agar disampaikan ke Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi DKI Jakarta sebagai bahan masukan untuk pengembangan pendidikan di Provinsi DKI Jakarta.

Demikian Rekomendasi ini diberikan, atas perhatian dan kerjasama Saudara saya ucapkan terima kasih.

a.n. KEPALA DINAS PENDIDIKAN
PROVINSI DAERAH KHUSUS IBUKOTA JAKARTA
KEPALA BIDANG TK/SD/PLB

Dra. SEPTI NOVIDA, M.Pd
NIP 19600923 198403 2 003

Tembusan
Kepala Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi DKI Jakarta.