Literature review:
preliminary findings emerging from research studies on transitions carried out in EU contries

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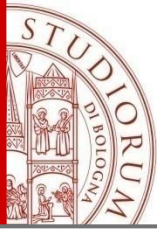
Literature Review: 3 phases

- October-December 2016
- UNIBO (Italian), ERI (Slovenian), VBJK (Dutch/French), PGRB (English national studies)
- Country literature feeding in local CS experimentations

Mapping country language studies

Review of mapped literature

- January – March 2017
- UNIBO analyse the mapped studies and circulate first draft
- VBJK, ERI, PGRB give feedback on draft

- April-May 2017
- UNIBO revise first draft
- *Findings used to assess the relevance of local CS projects (fill in the research gaps and emerging themes) at Ghent interim meeting*
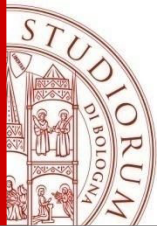- DISSEMINATION

Finalisation and dissemination

Phase 1: *mapping country language studies*

- Timeframe: 2000-15

- Scope: academic publications,research reports, grey literature, theoretical literature

- Database searches + hand-searches (books, chapters & grey literature) + personal networks
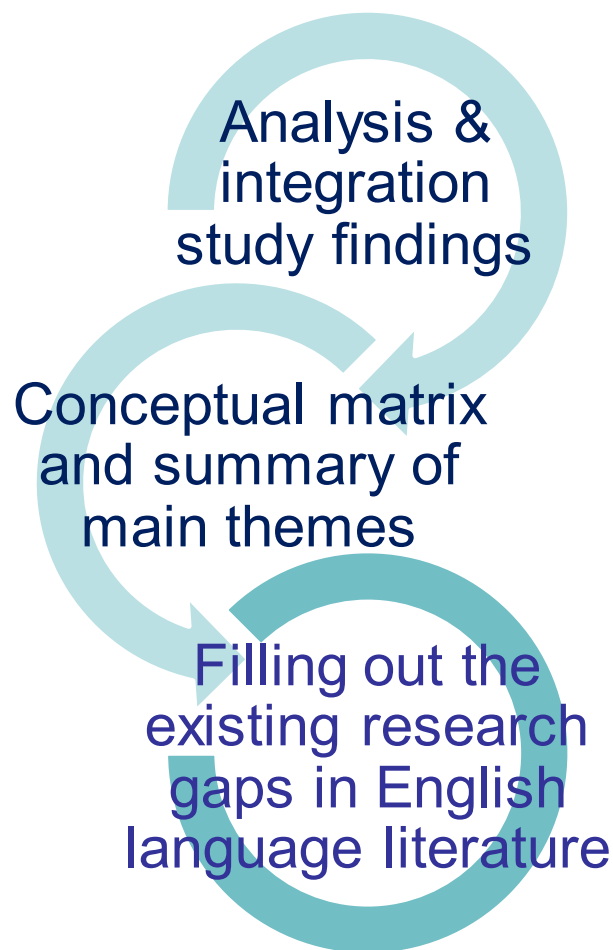
TEMPLATE TO BE FILLED OUT ➡

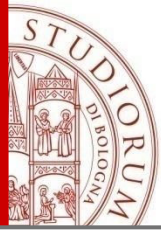| Title & Abstract	
Aim of the study	
Background *(national education system/ policy context)*	
Theoretical framework OR pedagical approach / vision	
Methodology and methods	
Main findings	
Strenghts/limitations of the study	
Critical comment from the researcher *(in which way the study is relevant for our project)*	

Phase 2:
review of mapped literature

Analysis & integration study findings

Conceptual matrix and summary of main themes

Filling out the existing research gaps in English language literature

- Complementing the findings of existing English-language reviews rather than duplicating them!

- New theoretical perspectives/ pedagogical approaches that might be silenced in mainstream literature (eg. *continuità educativa, learning trajectories, horizontal transitions*…)

- Research gaps: good transition practices (not only perceptions of actors involved), transitions for *children and families with migrant backgrounds* (whose voices are often absent in research), children with *special educational needs* (transition pathways which strengthen inclusion)
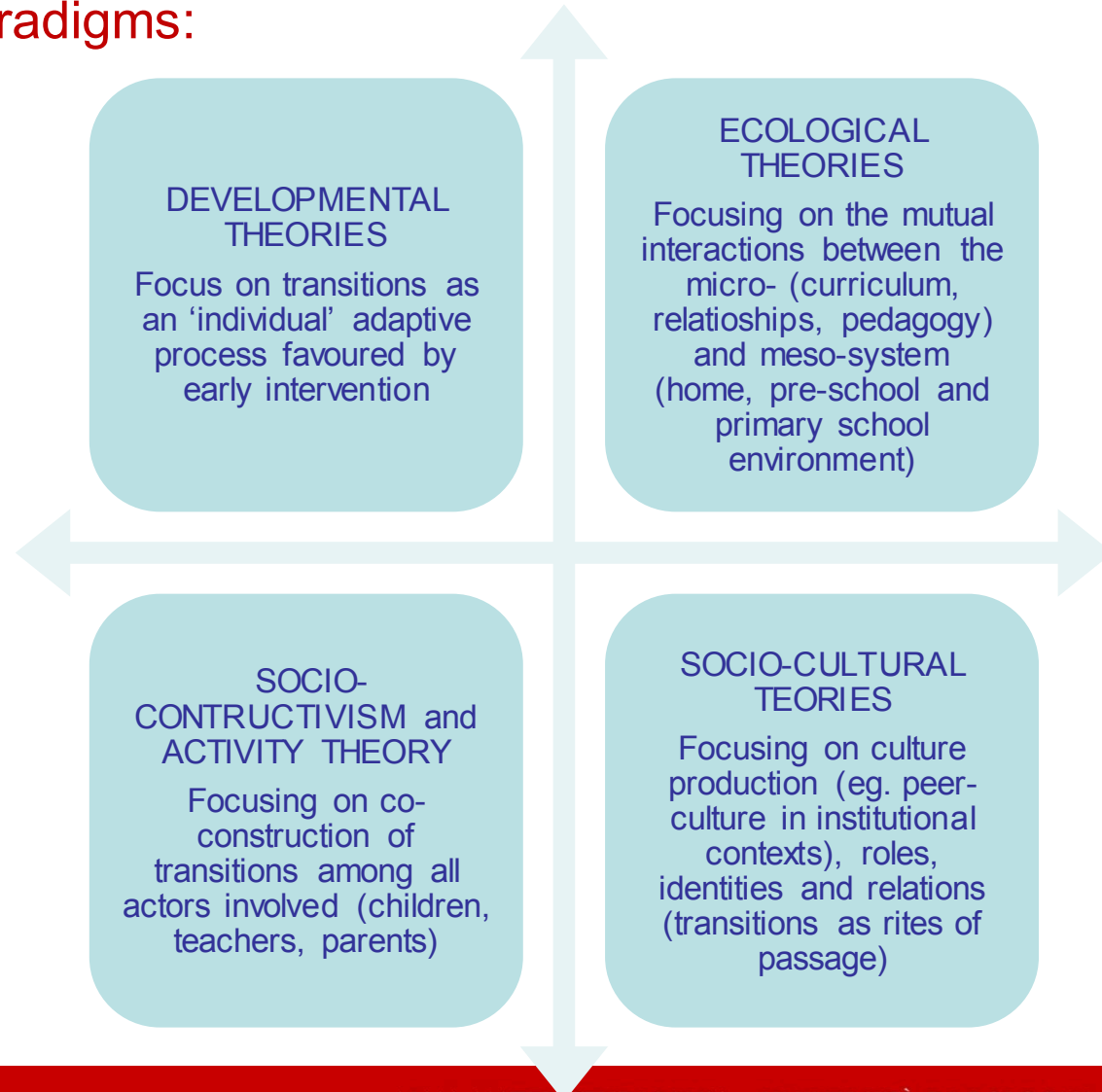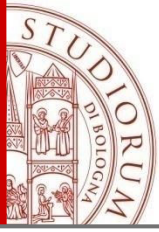
Phase 3:
Analysis of research studies

Mapping research paradigms:

conceptual matrix

DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES

Focus on transitions as an 'individual' adaptive process favoured by early intervention

ECOLOGICAL THEORIES

Focusing on the mutual interactions between the micro- (curriculum, relatioships, pedagogy) and meso-system (home, pre-school and primary school environment)

SOCIO-CONTRUCTIVISM and ACTIVITY THEORY

Focusing on co-construction of transitions among all actors involved (children, teachers, parents)

SOCIO-CULTURAL TEORIES

Focusing on culture production (eg. peer-culture in institutional contexts), roles, identities and relations (transitions as rites of passage)

Actors involved and methods used

- Early years practitioners, pre- and primary school teachers (Brostrom, 2002; Griebel & Nielsen, 2002; Dunlop, 2002; Brooker, 2008; Cecconi, 2012; Karila & Rantavuori,2014; Amerijckx & Humblet, 2012-15;)

- Children (Kiening, 2002-2013; Farrelly & Hennessy, 2014; Griebel & Nielsen, 2002; Fabian, 2002; Dunlop, 2002; Corsaro & Molinari, 2005; Einasdottir, 2003-07-13; Johansson, 2007; Brostrom, 2007-13; Brooker, 2008)

- Parents (Griebel & Nielsen, 2002-07-13; Dunlop, 2002; Johansson, 2002; Amerijckx & Humblet, 2012-15; Farrelly & Henessy, 2014; Brooker, 2008; Kaltenekar, 2008)

-> specific focus on children and parents from marginalised groups:

- Exploratory studies (eg. Van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017; Phaller-Rott, 2010; Rothe, Urban, Werning, 2014; Brooker, 2008; Van Oudenhove, 2013)

- Action-research / development studies (eg. Vonta et al., 2013; O'Kane & Hayes, 2007; O'Kane, 2013)

- Analysis of good practices / approaches to ease trasitions (eg. Polak, 2008; Vonta and Jager, 2013)

- Ethnographic studies (eg. Peleman, B., Van Avermaet, P. & Vandenbroeck, M., 2017)

- Evaluation studies (Vandecandelaere, 2015; Vonta et al. 2011)

Method used: mostly surveys, interviews and FGs (exploratory studies), children's observations in educational settings, ethnographic accounts

Contextualised by analysis of policies, especially in context of educational reforms/curricular changes (eg. Stephenson&Parsons, 2007)
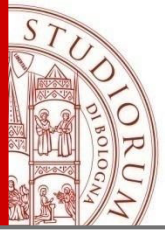
Understandings and perspectives on transitions

-> as a complex and multidimensional phenomena involving many interelated spheres (policy <> pedagogies <> instituitionalised practices / working cultures <> children's agency <> famili**es' **cultur**es**)

-> vertical as well as horizontal (home environment, after-school care)

School readiness

 - Learning in ECEC is functional to what come next (and ultimately the goal of schooling is to prepare responsible workers for labour market) - HIERARCHY

- early intervention for disadvantaged children

- Schoolification / pre-primary approach to early education (formalised learning, narrow curriculum approach)

Continuity

Discontinuity

Transitions as opportunities for development, learning and progression (Zone Proximal Development)

Children-ready schools

- Dialogic perspective and shared vision (democratic participation VS adaptation)

- Negotatied values and pedagogical assumptions (agency of children, families and professionals VS top-down curriculum pressure)

- educational contexts valuing multiple way of learning, co-constructed by all actors involved (children's and families' cultur**es**)

- Extended collegiality & shared reflection on practice and approaches
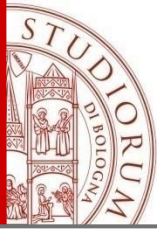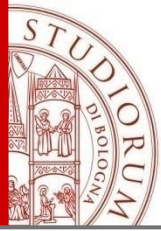
Meta-analysis of research findings I

Risk factors from discontinuities

- Understanding of TIME (shorter/ fragmented vs integrated experience) and SPACE (rigid vs flexible organisation) > makes it more difficult especially for children with additional needs

- IMPLICIT changes in rules and expectations -> children's loss of control over the learning environment (mostly adult-initiated and -directed activities)

- Changes in IDENTITY: from competent / independent child to a 'incompetent novice', transition into a new group of peers (redifining roles)

Protective factors: what makes a good transition? Continuity in discontinuities

- *Sense of self-worth and a positive sense of identity* (valuing children's previously acquired competences)

- *Presence of trusted/familiar adults* (gradual introduction to new setting)

- *Friends and familiar peers from former setting* (sense of belonging)

- *Understanding rules and routines* > anticipation (priming events), explicit induction

- *Sense of control and purpose* > opportunity to exercise choices, participate in decisions and taking responsibilities (eg.classroom environment)

- *Environment of opportunities* -> diversified activities & resources allowing children to learn at their own pace (individual/group)

Meta-analysis of research findings: implication for practices

Barriers to smooth transitions

- *different educational traditions, visions and cultures* (pedagogy, curricular goals, understanding of learning, image of the child)

- *institutional barriers* (staff training and working conditions, eg. co-presence, no-contact time) > *limited knowlege of practices implemented in other segments of the educational system* and *children's previous experiences*

- *communication barriers* between staff and parents (eg. not only uni-directional exchange of information but knowledge of the child & his/her home culture, reciprocal expectations) hindering negotiation of educational goals

Opportunities for overcoming them

- *Creating boundary spaces* -> re-discussing given-for-granted assumptions / coaching & ongoing professional development

- *Democratisation of educational institutions* > opportunities for decisions to be collectively discussed > children's agency & meaningful partnership with parents (*no one model fits all*)

- *Diversified methodologies* and *approaches* > valuing eterogeneity of children's learning styles in contexts of diversity as opportunity for revising and improving practices

- *Advocacy* > co-constructed transition curriculum VS risk of top-down approaches (schoolification, testing pressure and admission practices reinforcing exclusion)
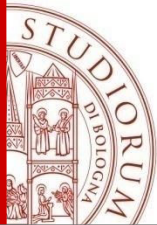
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