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# It's Time to Ask Parents What Makes a Good Start to School – Innovations in Transitions

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### Abstract

Starting school, known in the literature as ‘transitioning into school’, for the first time, has been shown to correlate with later school outcomes, both academic and social. The experience of transitioning is contextualized as a social ecological phenomenon with the experiences of each group of children being unique to themselves and the context in which they are operating. As the experience of transitioning is a highly context dependent phenomenon, each context warrants investigation to ensure as positive a start to school as possible for each child. For each child starting school, there are a number of involved stakeholders including, but not limited to, parents and teachers. The views of teachers on first transitions has been common and, in practical terms, feeds into transition policy and practice easily within schools. Listening to the viewpoints of parents relating to transition, is innovative and somewhat novel. Integrating the needs of parents is imperative to ensure a positive transition experience for children. The current study compares the viewpoints of parents in the UAE, both expat and UAE nationals, with parents in the UK. Parents from each group took part in a survey asking them to comment on issues relating to their child’s starting school experiences. Thematic analysis was employed to identify overriding themes relating to their interpretation of this experience. The themes and outcomes are discussed in relation to educational practice.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural, Qualitative, Thematic Analysis, Transitions, UAE