Interseting communication and the
transition to school

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Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, understand that it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services, Charles Sturt University or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of thesis, subject to confidentiality provisions as approved by the University.

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Publications

Conference Papers


Conference Presentations


Abstract

Communication between children’s educators in preschool and school settings has been promoted in theory, policy and practice. Ecological perspectives of children’s transition to school argue that intersetting communication provides a crucial connection between preschool and school that can build relationships between children’s educators. These relationships have the potential to impact on the experiences of children as they start school, as well as their educational outcomes.

Whilst communication between preschool and school educators has been encapsulated in key policy and curriculum documents in recent years, little is known about educators’ experiences of the communication practices. Evidence from the scant research literature to date provides an indication that preschool-school communication can be problematic. Research reporting communication between educators, as well as inter-professional communication in other contexts, suggests that there are many factors that impact on communication between professionals.

Underpinned by ecological systems theory and utilising models and concepts from the field of communication studies, this research examines communication between preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school. Educators from two states of Australia, New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, and from a diverse range of preschool and school settings, participated in the research.

The investigation of preschool-school communication employed an integrated mixed method design and utilised a diverse range of data collection and analysis techniques, some of which have been drawn from the communication audit approach.

The results from questionnaires, focus groups and cases have been brought together to present a picture of the complex nature of communication between preschools and schools. The results of the research demonstrate that preschool and school educators do communicate across settings for a range of reasons and that their motives impact on the nature of that communication.

There are many factors relating to individual educators and wider contexts which influence intersetting communication, including educator’s
beliefs about children, the type of setting in which they work, and the channels through which communication is enacted. The outcomes of communication are complex, wide-ranging and multi-faceted and they relate to educators, children and families. The research results have contributed to the development of an *Enhanced model of preschool-school communication*. 
Glossary

**Best Start:** *Best Start Kindergarten Assessment.* Literacy and numeracy assessment conducted in the first term of school for children attending government schools in New South Wales.

**CDL:** Communication Diary Log

**Co-located/Co-location:** This term is used to describe schools and preschools which are located on the same grounds. These schools and preschools have a range of governance structures, some are managed by one leader such as the school principal, others have separate governance structures.

**DEECD:** Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

**DEC:** New South Wales Department of Education and Communities

**DEEWR:** Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

**EC:** Early childhood (qualification)

**Educators:** Practitioners who work directly or indirectly with children in preschools and schools. This is an inclusive term which refers to practitioners with a range of qualifications including teachers, assistants, school principals, and preschool directors.

**EYLF:** *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (DEEWR, 2009)

**Families:** This is an inclusive term used to describe children’s significant others, including, but not limited to, their parents. The term ‘parents’ appears in this thesis specifically where it is used by participants.

**Feeder preschool:** In reference to a particular school, this term is used to identify preschools which children attend the year before they start at that school. Typically in Australia, schools have multiple feeder preschools and in larger communities, they may vary from year to year.

**First-year-of-school:** the first year of primary school education. This term includes Kindergarten (New South Wales) and Preparatory (Victoria).

**ICE:** Intersetting communication experience

**LGA:** Local Government Area

**NQS:** *National Quality Standard* (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2011)
**Preschool:** This is an over-arching term to describe the range of regulated early childhood education and care services attended by children in the year immediately before the first year of primary school. These include services known as ‘Kindergarten’ (Victoria) and ‘Preschool’ (New South Wales), long day care, mobile children’s services and family day care services.

**Intersetting communication:** This is the term used by Bronfenbrenner (1979) to describe communications between children’s settings. Where it is used in this thesis, intersetting communication refers to preschool-school communication.

**School:** This term refers to primary school which is part of the compulsory school system in Australia and encompasses seven years of schooling from Kindergarten (NSW)/Preparatory (Victoria) to Year 6.

**Transition to school:** Refers to the transition to primary school

**Transition Statement:** *Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statement* (DEECD, 2009b)

**VEYLDF:** *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (DEECD, 2009c)
Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter One situates the study within its historical and policy context, and explains the significance and purpose of the research. The chapter begins with a brief overview of research which has influenced transition to school policy in Australia. This overview notes recent influences on transition to school policy, particularly in the Australian states in which this study was conducted. It highlights the sectored nature of early childhood education and outlines the impetus for communication across preschool and school sectors.

1.1 Research which has influenced transition policy

Children’s transition to primary school has been researched in Australia and internationally from a diverse range of perspectives. Children, educators and parents have articulated that the transition to primary school can be a time of great excitement as well as presenting some challenges (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). The effects of children’s early school experiences on their academic and social success at school have been shown to persist for some time (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Magnuson, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2007; Margetts, 2009), emphasising the importance of a positive start to school. One element of a positive start to school is the support children receive from adults, including their preschool and school educators.

For some time, researchers have promoted connections between children’s prior-to-school experiences and their new school setting. In New South Wales 60.4% of children attend preschool the year before they start school, and in Victoria this statistic is 95.8% (Productivity Commission, 2013). Positive relationships between children’s preschool and school educators, serving as a basis for collaboration in planning for children’s transition, have been promoted as one of the key elements of an effective transition program (Dockett & Perry, 2006). Confirming this in a recent literature review of transitions research, Peters (2010, p. 1) reported that “Respectful, reciprocal relationships between the adults involved are…. key factors in a successful transition”.

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Communication scholars assert that relationships and communication cannot be separated from each other, arguing that communication is “the means by which people construct and maintain relationships” (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006, p. 331). That relationships between adults have been identified as important in children’s transition means that communication, as basis of these relationships, assumes a vital, underlying role in promoting positive transitions.

Communication between preschool and school educators (preschool-school communication) has been promoted as a way of gathering authentic information about children’s prior knowledge to assist school educators in constructing teaching and learning programs based on prior learning, thereby helping children become confident and capable learners in the new school setting (Dockett & Perry, 2006; Niesel & Griebel, 2007). Communication between educators can build continuity, making it possible for children to transfer the expertise developed in preschool settings to the new school setting (McNaughton, 2002).

Based on the notions of developing positive relationships between educators and building on children’s capabilities at school, preschool-school communication has become an important focus of transition policy and practice internationally and within Australia (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2006). Particular communication strategies which have been suggested by researchers such as the exchange of written information about children between preschools and schools, network meetings for educators, and visits to each other’s settings, have been taken up by policy makers. For example, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (2009b) promotes reciprocal site visits and has introduced a formal, written channel of communication between preschools and schools called the Transition Learning and Development Statement. The DEECD’s Transition: A positive start to school resource kit (DEECD, 2009b), also contains information about transition to school network groups occurring in Victoria and asserts that these are an important channel of communication between preschools and schools. In order to understand the current context for preschool-school communication, an understanding of the history of the separation of the preschool and school sectors is needed.
1.2 The preschool and school divide

Starting school represents what Bronfenbrenner (1979) has termed an ecological transition as children move from home and preschool settings to the primary school. According to Bronfenbrenner, transitions involve crossing borders between settings. When children who attend preschool in Australia start school they make border crossings, as preschools and schools are distinctly different settings. Despite some re-structuring nationally and within individual states to move schools and preschools under the same government portfolio, and the development of shared curriculum documents, preschool and school represent very different environments for children. There have been documents introduced to guide educators’ practice that span both preschool and school sectors such as the National Professional Standards for Advanced Early Childhood Teaching 3-8 years (Early Childhood Australia and Teaching Australia, 2009), Victoria’s Early Years Learning and Development Framework (DEECD, 2009c), Early Childhood Australia’s Code of Ethics (Early Childhood Australia [ECA], 2006) and Foundations for learning: Relationships between the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum (Connor, 2011).

Despite these, preschools and schools generally sit in what Graue (1999) describes as opposing camps. These opposing camps have historical roots which continue to have an impact today.

The preschool and school sectors in Australia have evolved with different histories. Complicating this, the preschool sector incorporates both preschool and childcare services, which also reflect different histories, having evolved in different contexts and conditions (Brennan, 1998). In terms of governance, preschool services in Australia have generally fallen within health and community services portfolios, with schools in dedicated education portfolios (Watson, 2006).

Similar to the healthcare professions about which Hugman (1991) writes, the history of preschools and schools is a “story of the present” (p.105) with past divisions continuing to impact on preschools and schools today. Providing services for children under school age has traditionally been associated with women’s work and has been portrayed as being different from education (Rockel, 2009). Caring occupations have
historically had a subordinate status to other professions, such as education, and society has attached to them a high moral but low material status and this image has “served to define and maintain an ambiguous place for these professions within the general public” (Rockel, 2009, p. 106). Hugman (1991) describes historical divisions within caring professions in terms of the age of the clients with whom professionals work. This division can be seen between the primary school and preschool sectors in Australia with divisions based on age: preschool generally providing services for children from birth to 5 years of age and schools 5 to 12 years of age. This division has implications for the conditions under which educators in preschools and schools work in Australia.

There is evidence that there is a clear preschool-school divide in Australia in the way that the workforce is organised, curriculum and pedagogy is conceptualised and services are located. In addition, differences are noted in funding structures, regulations, qualifications of educators and supports available for children. With some exceptions, most preschools and schools in NSW and Victoria are located on separate sites. They receive funding from different levels of government (Watson, 2006). Educators in schools and preschools, in many cases, are employed by different organisations, paid at different rates, under different awards and work under different conditions. In general, preschool educators receive poorer pay and conditions, fewer opportunities for professional development and support, lower professional status and poorer working conditions than their colleagues in schools (Productivity Commission, 2011; Watson, 2006). Primary schools offer educators with preschool and primary school qualifications “similar, if not higher pay, and better professional development and support and more career opportunities” than preschools (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. XXX). The professional credentials of educators vary considerably across preschool and school. Although recent early childhood reforms have imposed a requirement for a minimum qualification of Certificate III for preschool educators, traditionally, fewer highly qualified educators have been employed in the preschool sector (Productivity Commission, 2011) than in the school sector. Differences are also evident in the curriculum and pedagogical frameworks that guide professional practice in preschool and school. Nationally, the Early Years
Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009) frames the practice of educators working with children from birth up until children start school. When the same child starts school, the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) and other state curriculum documents guide the pedagogical decisions of the child’s educators.

In many ways, preschool and schools have many boundaries which must be crossed, in order for educators to communicate with each other and for children to make a positive transition to school. Dunlop and Fabian (2002, p. 153) argue that educators need to work together to “resist the artificial boundaries that educational structures, different philosophies, different curricula….impose upon us”. The following sections show that the importance of educators in preschools and schools working together has been captured in international and national policy.

1.3 International policy

Recent changes in the conceptualisation of transition to school have highlighted the importance of communication between educators. For some years, there has been attention to children’s ‘readiness for school’, and children’s ability to meet the demands of school. There has been a shift in thinking around readiness to encompass not only children’s readiness for school, but also the readiness of schools for children. Within this has been a focus on the support children receive from adults when starting school (Dockett & Perry, 2009). In the United States (U.S.) the National Educational Goals Panel (NEGP) (1998) included in its definition of school readiness the concept of ‘ready schools’ which highlighted the importance of schools being ready for, and responsive to, individual children when they start school. One characteristic of a ‘ready school’ is that educators in schools communicate with children’s previous caregivers in order to plan programs for individual children on commencement at school. In this way continuity of experiences for children are promoted by “a better alignment of philosophy, expectations, and curriculum across institutions” (NEGP, 1998, p. 8). The NEGP noted that there was a need to “build bridges over
the moats that too often have separated schools from the other places where early learning takes place” (p. 3). In this way, links between schools and preschools are promoted as one of the key elements of a ‘ready school’.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2006) report on early childhood education and care recommended that links between preschools and schools be strengthened. At the same time, this report acknowledged the challenges and difficulties associated with working across the two sectors. Obstacles such as different visions and purposes of schools and preschools, different training and professional backgrounds of teachers and different regulatory, funding, workforce and delivery systems were described. The report also noted the history of preschool and school professionals working in isolation from each other rather than in collaboration. Recommendations to overcome this included professional development to assist educators to incorporate children’s prior-to-school experiences into school and in the pedagogical approaches that are used in preschool settings. The authors also suggested the possibility of regulation to mandate cooperation between preschools and schools. Some of the recommendations of this report are reflected in recent early childhood education reforms in Australia.

1.4 The Australian policy context

Communication between preschool and school educators around transition to school has been encapsulated in some key Australian policy documents. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) is the national curriculum document for preschools and the National Quality Standard (NQS) (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2011) provides the national benchmark for the quality of preschool services. Both of these key documents make reference to communication between children’s educators as being important for positive transitions. In the EYLF, appropriate sharing of information about children, building upon children’s prior experiences, and collaborative practice between educators in schools and preschools are processes that are not only expected to occur during children’s transition, but they are also expected to ensure successful transitions. The EYLF recognises the importance of children’s learning and experiences prior to the
commencement of primary school and provides impetus for these to be recognised and extended upon when children start school.

In the NQS, *Quality Area 6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities* encourages partnerships between preschool educators and other important adults in children’s lives and asserts that “community partnerships…are based on active communication, consultation and collaboration” (p. 145). Standard 6 in the NQS states that “The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children’s learning and wellbeing” and Element 6.3.2 refers specifically to children’s transitions, including transition to school: “Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities” (p. 145). Element 6.3.4: “The service builds relationships and engages with the local community” (p. 145) includes an indication that assessors may sight evidence that preschool educators liaise with other organisations including schools. These standards highlight the impetus in both the EYLF and NQS for communication between children’s preschool and school educators.

Leading Australian researchers in transition to school have identified the importance of communication between preschool and school educators. Margetts (2002a, 2002b) and Dockett and Perry (2009) have not only emphasised the transfer of children’s learning and development records but have also promoted educators visiting each other’s programs, developing shared expectations of children, collaborative planning of transition activities, developing complementary curriculum, sharing resources and membership of transition networks. In NSW, the Starting School Research Project developed a set of guidelines for transition to school which have been used as the basis to develop transition programs in schools and preschools (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Drawing on these guidelines, a positive transition for children, families, educators and communities is based on positive relationships between these stakeholders.

In NSW and Victoria, there have been commitments to promoting a positive transition for children based on communication across preschool and school settings. In 2008, the newly formed Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) encapsulated as one of the goals for early childhood and school reform, the improvement of
links between early childhood services and schools. Following the NEGP’s (1998) lead it was declared that “...by the time Victorian children start school they will be ready to learn at school and schools will be ready for them” (DEECD, 2008, p. 11). In the following year the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (DEECD, 2009c) emphasised the importance of professional partnerships based on sharing and valuing information, knowledge and experience from each sector in order to support children’s transition. In 2009, Transition Learning and Development Statements (DEECD, 2009b) (transition statements) were introduced for children making the transition from preschool to school. These transition statements were to be completed by children’s preschool educators, with input from families, and sent on to their schools. The transition statement is designed to provide information to schools about children’s learning from the perspectives of the child, their family and their preschool educator. The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all children birth to eight years (DEECD, 2009c) was also launched in 2009 as a curriculum framework that spans both preschool and school settings. Both of these documents, together with a transition resource kit (DEECD, 2009b), have provided increased impetus for communication between preschools and schools in Victoria.

In New South Wales transition to school has been identified as a priority area in the State Plan in relation to the target of increasing the proportion of children being ready for school (NSW Government, 2009). Directly linked to this outcome, the state-funded Families NSW program has as one of its four priority areas, effective transition to school particularly for children from vulnerable areas. There has been a variety of transition to school projects funded by Families NSW including a project to develop transition to school guidelines in the Riverina region (Families First Riverina Region, 2006) which were based on the Dockett and Perry (2001a) guidelines and included a focus on preschool-school communication practices. The Families NSW Regional Strategic Plans for 2008-2011, included directions to improve school readiness and build partnerships between schools, families and other services (Families NSW, 2007, 2008, n.d.). Documents to assist schools and preschools with transition planning, including suggestions for how preschool and school educators might
communicate with each other, can also be found on the NSW public schools website (NSW Department of Education and Communities [DEC], 2010).

1.5 Significance and purpose of the study

This chapter has established that communication between preschool and school educators is a practice promoted by transition to school research and encapsulated in key policy and curriculum documents in Australia. There is an increasing expectation provided by the EYLF and NQS that preschool educators will communicate with schools and a reciprocal expectation that school educators will engage in and with this communication. Further, there is an expectation that such communication will improve children’s transition to school. Despite this, there is a dearth of research about the nature of effective preschool-school communication and very little evidence of educators’ experiences of such communication. The argument in this thesis is based on two premises: that current policies which promote preschool-school communication are based upon assumptions about the practice; and, because of this, there is a need for in-depth research of preschool-school communication practices. Therefore, this study focuses on preschool-school communication at the time of children’s transition to school.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is comprised of nine chapters. Chapter One introduced the study by describing the historical and current policy context, and led to an explanation of the significance and purpose of the research. Chapter Two provides further background to the study by reviewing literature in the areas of transition to school and professional communication. Chapter Two also provides the theoretical framework for the research which has, as its basis, bioecological systems theory and the transactional model of communication. Chapter Three outlines the research procedures, including the research paradigm, research questions, participants, geographic location and methods of data collection and analysis. Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven present a range of results and analysis based on the separate data generation strategies. Chapter Eight discusses these results in light of the research and
policy contexts outlined in earlier chapters. Chapter Eight also presents an
Enhanced model of preschool school communication which forms the basis
of the conclusions to the study in Chapter Nine.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Two areas of research are directly relevant for this study. This chapter begins by defining the term transition to school and locates the study within the theoretical perspective of bioecological systems theory. Communication between children’s educators – interssetting communication – is identified as an important aspect of supporting children’s transition to school. As the research investigates interssetting communication between preschool and school educators, this chapter reports what is already known about communication, including communication models, research on interprofessional communication and educator communication. The specific issue of preschool and school educator communication as children make the transition to school is identified as a gap within the extant research literature, providing the rationale for the study.

2.1 Transition to school

Children’s transition to school provides the context for the study. While not the only time that preschool and school educators may communicate, it is a time of great potential for interaction between educators in different settings.

2.1.1 Theoretical perspectives on transition.

A wide range of theoretical perspectives have been used to define and understand the transition to primary school. These include socio-cultural perspectives, transitions as rites of passage, border crossings and transitions situated within life-course theory. Transitions can be considered “cultural, community events that occur as individuals change their roles in community structures” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 150) and beginning school from a socio-cultural perspective is viewed as “a child’s beginning to participate in the family or the community in a new way” (p. 158). In life course theory, Elder (2001) has described transitions as being part of the life-cycle of individuals which have “long-term consequences through their effects on subsequent events and choices” (p. 194). Van Gennep (1960) described life as “a series of passages” (p. 3) where transition processes occur over time, rather than one-off events (Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008). The
concepts of borders, border crossings and borderlands have also been used to think about transitions in that people must negotiate cultural, geographic, political, social, and economic borders which can be “enabling and exclusionary” (Giroux, 2005, p. 6). These theoretical perspectives all highlight the importance of transition events and processes to human development.

While there are many theoretical perspectives that underpin transitions research, ecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and bioecological perspectives (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) have been used extensively in this area. A bioecological perspective offers one way of understanding the complexity of transition to school by conceptualising it around children’s immediate contexts such as home, school and preschool and the connections between these settings (Dockett & Perry, 2007). It also recognises wider influences on children’s transitions such as social and political factors.

Ecological perspectives provide much of the rationale for promoting intersetting communication. In his early work Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined both transition and intersetting communication. These processes are incorporated into bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) but are not redefined in this later work. Transitions research draws on both ecological and bioecological perspectives, emphasising the four systems of ecological theory as well as the chronosystem introduced in bioecological theory.

According to ecological systems theory, human development is characterised by the interactions between an individual and their ecological environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological environment is structured into four systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Microsystems are the immediate settings in which children interact with others, such as the child’s home, preschool and school. Interactions between these settings form the mesosystem. The exosystem consists of settings in which the child does not actively participate but elements within this system such as programs and policies “affect or are affected by what happens” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25) in the preschool, school and home settings. The macrosystem encompasses the other three systems and also functions to influence children’s development indirectly.
through means such as legislation and government policies. The chronosystem is the temporal dimension of the bioecological system which reflects change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The application of these systems to transitions research is conceptualised and refined by Dunlop (2014) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Transition as an ecological system
(Dunlop, 2014)¹

¹ Reproduced with permission of the author.
Movement from one setting to another is described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as an ecological transition. The transition children make to school from preschool settings is a “phenomenon of movement through ecological space” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). It is not just a physical movement for children between settings, but also a re-positioning of the child in terms of their role in the settings. The preschool and the school each have their own unique “set of behaviours and expectations” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25) for children and thus a child’s “position in the ecological environment is altered” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26) when they make the transition to school. Changing roles and positions “mark a significant change in the ways a child participates in the family and community” (Dockett & Perry, 2007, p. 5). Using ecological perspectives, transition to school has been conceptualised as the “dynamic process of continuity and change as children move into the first year of school” (Educational Transitions and Change Research Group [ETC], 2011, p. 1).

Children’s transition to school is an important context in which to conduct research. Bronfenbrenner (1986, p. 724) argued that ecological transitions “often serve as direct impetus for developmental change”. Over forty years of research focussing on transition to primary school has emphasised the importance of children’s experiences at this time in having both immediate and long term impacts on children’s development (see for example Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Magnuson et al., 2007; Margetts, 2009; Winter & Kelley, 2008). The transition to school is a time of opportunities for children’s development in terms of “shaping their identities and [extending] their existing knowledge, skills and understandings” (ETC, 2011, p. 1). Children experience starting school in different ways and, for many children, it is an eagerly anticipated event (Fisher, 2009; Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Walsh, McGuinness, Sproule, & Trew, 2010).

2.2.2 Supporting children as they start school.

The changes in roles and positions that occur as children start school also can present particular challenges for children, families and educators. These include children coping with physical, social and philosophical discontinuities between home, preschool and school (Fabian, 2002).
Bioecological approaches advocate a range of support as children start school, on the basis that such support can address these challenges (Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999). The most effective support for children comes from those closest to them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Winter & Kelley, 2008) and could include peer support, buddy programs and collaboration between parents and educators.

One form of support for children advocated in many contexts involves communication between the adults in the child’s home, preschool and school settings (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, et al., 1999). The embedded arrangement of each of the systems demonstrates that “relations between settings” and “external environmental contexts” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 18) beyond the child’s immediate setting, influence their development (Figure 1). Bronfenbrenner argued that interconnections between children’s settings impact on how they function in new settings, such as the primary school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Interconnections between preschool and school settings include the primary link of the child but also other links, one of which is intersetting communication. This communication involves the “principal persons with whom young children interact” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 997) – in this case, children’s preschool and school educators. Intersetting communication is defined as “messages transmitted from one setting to the other with the express intent of providing specific information to persons in the other setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 210) and can occur through a variety of formal and informal channels and sources. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that a child’s development is enhanced when, prior to entry into a new setting, the members of both settings are “provided with information, advice and experience relevant to the impending transition” (p. 217) and that once the child has moved into the new setting the child’s development is “enhanced to the extent that valid information, advice and experience relevant to one setting are made, on a continuing basis, to the other” (p. 217). Intersetting communication is an important part of the preschool-school mesosystem, forming a connection between the child’s microsystems of the school and preschool, and it is an element inherent to many current models of transition.
Interactions between the people in children’s settings and the relationships that result from these, are located within mesosystems. Links between settings, “create a dynamic network of relationships that influence children’s transition to school both directly and indirectly” (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000, p. 492). These relationships are, in turn, key factors in children’s success during the transition to school. The importance of supportive relationships for children as they adjust to the new school setting and their role within it has been advocated by transitions research (Ashton et al., 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2007; Educational Transitions and Change Research Group, 2011; Griebel & Niesel, 2009) including the development of positive personal connections between stakeholders in transition (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Since communication is the basis of all relationships (Verderber, Verderber, & Berryman-Fink, 2010), approaches to transition that emphasise relationships between the people in the home, preschool and school (see Figure 1) rely upon communication.

2.2.3 Intersetting communication as an important support for children.

Communication between children’s preschool and school educators has been promoted for some time (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002; Kagan & Neuman, 1998; Niesel & Griebel, 2007; Smolkin, 1999). The guidelines developed for effective transition to school programs in Australia by the Starting School Research Project (Dockett & Perry, 2001a) included two guidelines which emphasised the importance of communication between the people involved in children’s transition. The first asserted that transition programs should establish positive relationships between those involved in children’s transitions, including preschool and school educators. The other hinges effective transition programs on communication between stakeholders including preschool and school educators, asserting that transition programs “rely on reciprocal communication” (p. vii). Margetts (2002b) also argues that ongoing communication between preschool and school educators is a critical element in successful transition programs for children. Following this, she has outlined particular communication strategies, including the transfer of children’s records from preschool to school, and educators visiting each others’ settings to discuss children.
Communication between educators has been recommended as one strategy to promote continuity between children’s experiences of preschool and school, where continuity is defined as “coherence of children’s experience in curriculum, pedagogy and culture” (Petriwskyj, Thorpe, & Tayler, 2005, p. 57). Examples of research studies advocating greater communication between preschools and schools include those focusing on efforts to improve pedagogical continuity (Ashton et al., 2008; Li, Rao, & Tse, 2011). Recommendations from transitions research include the exchange of information about children’s learning and the programs they attend (Fabian, 2013). However, Rinaldi (2006) argues that continuity involves more than information exchange, requiring shared dialogue in a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Intersetting communication has been argued as important in efforts to promote continuity of children’s experiences.

 Whilst bioecological perspectives emphasise interconnections between preschool and school settings, much of the previous research about children starting school has focussed on children’s readiness for school (Dockett & Perry, in press). This focus is premised on the belief that children’s success at school is based on the skills and abilities they bring with them to school. Much of the research focussing on the measurement of children’s readiness for school emanated from the U.S. (recent examples include Bell, Greenfield, & Bultotsky-Shearer, 2013; Kleisner Walker & MacPhee, 2011; McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012). In the Australian literature as well, children’s readiness is the most prevalent topic of articles about children starting school (Dockett & Perry, in press).

Children’s readiness for school is an aspect of the broader concept of transitions (Dockett & Perry, in press). However, bioecological perspectives emphasise the importance of a range of processes and interactions over time, rather than the measurement of children’s skills at a single point in time. The focus on children’s readiness has been criticised as readiness assessments provide “limited predictive information about children’s future school success” (Dockett & Perry, 2009, p. 22). It has been argued that, regardless of what children’s competencies are on entry to school, it is what happens in the classroom that is important in terms of whether these
competencies are enhanced or not (Konold & Pianta, 2005). The use of readiness assessments by schools has also been critiqued in terms of the “equity of requiring a level of performance for admission to free and public education” (Graue, 2006, p. 47). Transition activities that focus on preparing children for school have been criticised as they regard school as “an unchangeable unit to which the children have to adjust and to which the preschool must deliver children who are ready” (Einarsdóttir, 2013, p. 76)

Moves away from efforts to “make ready children” (Graue, 2006, p. 43) have argued for an increasing emphasis on the range of supports that children receive when starting school (Dockett & Perry, 2009) and on “schools being ready for children in all their variety” (Zill, 1999, p. 68). Bioecological perspectives on transition promote interssetting communication as an important support as children start school, and it is advocated that this support can assist schools to be ready for children (Curtis & Simons, 2008; NEGP, 1998).

The promotion of interssetting communication as an important support as children start school is reflected in the recent Transition to School Position Statement developed by Australian and international transition researchers (ETC, 2011). This position statement insists that transition to school is an opportunity for preschool and school educators “to work together and draw support from each other” and a time where “educators aspire to the development of strong partnerships” such as those with other educators (ETC, 2011, p. 2). While contemporary research and theory identify the importance of interssetting communication, little educational research has examined the pragmatics of such communication.

2.2 Communication

In this study interssetting communication is defined as any practice that involves interactions between the adults in preschool and school settings. The field of communication studies offers a wealth of knowledge about communication between adults, including models which aid in understanding the complex nature of communication. Research results regarding inter-professional communication in a range of contexts, including educator communication, have revealed the problematic and challenging nature of communication between professionals. These aspects
of the communication literature are considered, leading to an analysis of research addressing communication between preschool and school educators.

2.2.1 Communication models and their elements.

Communication scholars have developed many models to illustrate the complex processes of human interaction, on the basis that “any conceptual device which might give order to the many and volatile forces at work when people communicate deserves attention” (Barnlund, 1970, p. 102). Communication models help to explain relationships between the many “volatile forces” and provide different definitions of communication. An understanding of how each concept within the models operates to impact on communication between people is useful in studying communication in different contexts. The two models presented here, the linear and transactional models, describe the process of communication from different perspectives. Much of the seminal work on models of communication and the conceptual bases for these was undertaken in the mid-twentieth century. Contemporary communication scholars (Adler & Rodman, 2012; Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2010; Tyler, Kossen, & Ryan, 2005; Wood, 2010) have built upon and refined these models.

2.2.1.1 Linear model of communication.

Linear models of communication were developed and revised by communication scholars including Shannon and Weaver (1963), based on the transmission theory which regards communication as “a process of sending and receiving messages or transferring information from one mind to another” (Craig, 1999, p. 125). Linear models depict communication as a one-way process in which one person – the sender – transmits a message to another person – the receiver – through a particular communication medium – a channel. Messages in these models flow in one direction only and meaning rests within the actual words used in the message. Linear models such as that of Shannon and Weaver (1963) introduced the concept of ‘noise’, referring to factors that interfere physically with message transmission. The impact of noise can be that the received message “contains certain distortions, certain errors, certain extraneous material that
would certainly lead one to say that the received message exhibits, because of the effects of the noise, an increased uncertainty” (Shannon & Weaver, 1963, p. 19).

Although contemporary communication scholars regard linear models as overly simplistic (Craig, 1999), they nonetheless provide useful insight into the communication process by introducing the concepts of channel and noise (Rothwell, 2004). The linear model is sometimes regarded as being better suited at explaining the process of mass communication, rather than interpersonal communication, where communication may be constituted as a one-way, mechanical process (Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin, & Jackson, 1968). However, the linear model “does seem to reflect popular and cultural assumptions about communication” (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006, p. 341) and seems to serve the interests of privileged and powerful groups of people by reinforcing the “value of experts as reliable sources of information” (Craig, 1999, p. 125).

2.2.1.2 Transactional model of communication.

In contrast to linear models, transactional models view communication as a dynamic, complex process that “has no beginning or end” (Barnlund, 1970, p. 89) because it is comprised of the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages. The transactional model (Figure 2) incorporates a range of factors that influence communication, including various forms of noise, the context in which communication occurs and communicators’ fields of experience. This model has been adapted from the Transactional Communication Model (Adler & Rodman, 2012, p. 14) and the Transactional Process Model (Tyler et al., 2005, p. 21). The concepts within the model are defined and described further in this chapter.
The relational nature of communications is reflected in the transactional model. Accordingly, communication is a process of transactions and negotiations between people where “each individual negotiates and arrives at their own personal understanding of what the other party has expressed” (Tyler et al., 2005, p. 22). In this way, messages can have multiple interpretations and meaning needs to be negotiated between people in order to produce a shared meaning (Adler et al., 2010). Because the transactional model recognises the relationship between communicators, interaction is considered to be ‘interpersonal communication’ (Tyler et al., 2005). Both content and relationship dimensions are considered in transactional models, drawing attention to the exchange of information that
happens as people communicate, as well as the ways in which relationships are defined, developed and maintained through communication (Watzlawick et al., 1968). Based on the transactional model the following definition of communication is offered by Tyler et al. (2005, p. 22):

[Communication is] an ongoing process involving a relationship between communicators who occupy individual but overlapping fields of experience, who are involved in the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages where meaning is interactively negotiated but also subject to distortion from various forms of noise.

The transactional model is particularly helpful in understanding the complex nature of communication by drawing attention to the elements of feedback, context, fields of experience, noise, code and channel. These are outlined in the following review.

2.2.1.3 Feedback.

Responses to messages, conceptualised in a variety of ways by communication scholars as ‘feedback’, are a critical element of human communication. At a basic level, feedback helps the sender of a message determine if their message has been received and comprehended (Rothwell, 2004): it also assists in clarifying the meaning of messages (Adler & Rodman, 2012). Feedback also has an important function in interpersonal relationships: it shows value for what the sender is communicating (Adler & Rodman, 2012). Responses to messages provided through feedback convey value or lack of value for the sender, which helps to establish climates for communication. The communication climate is shaped by people’s interactions with each other and is determined by the extent to which people see themselves as valued in their relationship (Adler et al., 2010).

Communication scholars have depicted climates on a continuum from ‘confirming’ to ‘disconfirming’. From this perspective, two types of feedback are received: ‘confirming messages’ which build supportive climates, and ‘disconfirming messages’, which create defensive climates (Wood, 2010). Gibb’s (1961) theory of supportive and defensive communication proposes that being confirmed leads to supportive climates for communication where people are more likely to communicate openly with each other. In contrast, being disconfirmed leads to defensive
communication climates where people are more unwilling to communicate with each other.

The work of Cissna and Sieberg (1981) operationalised confirmation by identifying types of messages that confirm or disconfirm. Confirming messages include those that convey value to the receiver including recognition, acknowledgement and endorsement. On a very basic level, confirming messages recognise the existence of the person who is communicating.Confirming messages have been shown to be important in healthy interpersonal relationships in the workplace, such as between physicians and nurses (Garvin & Kennedy, 1986).

In contrast, disconfirming messages include those that communicate a lack of value from the receiver. This could include ignoring communication. The destructive power of disconfirming messages has been demonstrated in a range of workplace contexts where the deliberate strategy of co-workers avoiding communication with a particular peer has been linked to the person leaving their job (Cox, 1999).

Feedback also has an important role in providing assessment information to communicators. Clevenger and Matthews (2008) argue that a response to a message is only considered to be feedback if it influences the future behaviour of the communicator. Viewed from this perspective, feedback is a response to a message which provides information to the communicator in order for them to evaluate and adjust their communication to enhance its effectiveness and to meet the needs of the receiver (Tyler et al., 2005). If a communicator alters the way they communicate in response to their audience, they “may be said to be responding to feedback” (Clevenger & Matthews, 2008, p. 39). Thus “people use information about the effects of their communication in controlling how they communicate” (p. 40). In this way receiving feedback can provide for audience analysis – “information that can help us tailor messages in ways that cater for the needs and wants of our intended receivers” (Tyler et al., 2005). Feedback has an important role in influencing future communication behaviour.

Feedback also has a specific role in providing assessment information to the receiver about their work. In higher education, providing feedback to students is regarded as being “central to the development of effective learning” (Sadler, 2010, p. 536), as it provides information about
performance. The formative purposes of feedback include correction and reinforcement of behaviour, diagnosing problems with work, and impacting on learner’s long-term development (Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010). Feedback relates to past work, but can also impact on future work (Sadler, 2010). Self-regulated learners use internal feedback as well as external feedback to assess their own performance against their goals (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Feedback is important in communication for several key reasons: it helps communicators know if their messages have been received, assists in clarifying the meaning of messages, conveys value to the sender, contributes towards climates for communication, provides assessment information to the communicator in order to understand the audience, and influences future communication behaviour and future work performance.

### 2.2.1.4 Context.

The transactional model argues that communication occurs within contexts. There is a parallel here between the transactional model of communication and bioecological systems theory. Both situate communication within contexts and recognise the impact of broader contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Contexts influence communicators’ expectations of each other, what is communicated and how messages are interpreted (Wood, 2010). The transactional model describes contexts as social systems that affect communication, such as shared systems of workplaces, group belonging and cultures (Wood, 2010). Communication contexts have physical, historical, temporal, social-psychological and cultural dimensions. The physical environment in which face-to-face communication takes place includes such elements as the location, temperature, and number of people present. The context for written communication can include such things as the layout of print on a page (DeVito, 2009). The temporal context includes where in history the communication is happening and where it is in the sequence of communication between individuals (DeVito, 2009). Here again is a parallel with bioecological systems theory, where the temporal context of the ecological system is defined as the chronosystem.
2.2.1.5 Fields of experience.

While situated within broader contexts, communication also occurs within each communicator’s personal field of experience. In the transactional model, two circles represent individual communicator’s fields of experience. It is within these personal contexts that messages are constructed and interpreted (Wood, 2010). Concentric circles also represent the mesosystem in ecological approaches to transition such as in Figure 1. In the case of communication, each communicator’s field of experience must have some overlap with the other person’s in order for them to generate shared understandings and for communication to occur (Tyler et al., 2005). When there is no overlap, or limited overlap “effective communication [can be] more challenging” (Adler et al., 2010), as there is increased potential for misunderstandings (Rothwell, 2004; Wood, 2010).

Fields of experience reflect the personal histories and past experiences of communicators and include a myriad of factors about individuals such as their education, gender, physical location, age, culture, occupational status, preconceived ideas, biases, values, beliefs, world views, perspectives, interests and assumptions (Tyler et al., 2005). Personal fields of experience change over time (Wood, 2010). The concept of fields of experience helps to explain why each communicator interprets information in different ways, recognising the “variability that exists between people’s perceptions of the world” (Tyler et al., 2005, p. 12).

2.2.1.6 Noise.

With reference to communication between people, noise is “anything that distorts communication or interferes with people’s understanding of one another” (Wood, 2010, p. 23). Noise can also be “anything that prevents the receiver from receiving the message” in the first place (DeVito, 2009, p. 11). Shannon and Weaver (1963) write that when noise is introduced to communication systems there is an “increased uncertainty” (p. 19) in the way messages are received. Noise is ever-present in communication but the effects of noise can be reduced (DeVito, 2009). There are various types of noise which can have a negative impact on communication including: psychological, semantic, physical and physiological (Rothwell, 2004;
Wood, 2010). An example of semantic noise was suggested by Ridge (1965, p. 7), who argues that different disciplines, such as the arts and sciences, have “divergent systems of definition”, that is, ways of thinking which cause problems in communication. Although communication scholars identify noise as a key concept in models of communication, there is very little recent research which identifies forms of noise in specific communication contexts.

2.2.1.7 Encoding and decoding.

Within the transactional model of communication, the process of communicating involves more than just sending and receiving messages: it encompasses the ways in which communicators encode and decode, that is, the ways they assign meaning to codes (Barnlund, 1970). The sender of a message puts their thoughts into a code which can be understood by the receiver of the message. Codes can be a verbal or non-verbal language, and involve the communicator speaking, writing or gesturing (Tyler et al., 2005). To understand the content of a communication, the receiver decodes it, by assigning meaning to the code. Each communicator’s beliefs about the knowledge of the recipient of their message influences the production of message they send. Based on assumptions about what the other person knows, the message constructor adjusts the amount and type of information in messages. It has been suggested that when communicators themselves do not know much about the topic, they may include redundant information in messages; when they know a lot about the topic they may include insufficient information for the receiver to be able to decode it (Lau, Chui, & Hong, 2001).

2.2.1.8 Channels.

Messages travel between communicators through channels. Channels can include media such as letters, emails, text messages and the technology which transmits them such as telephone or computer (Tyler et al., 2005). The type of channel chosen to communicate a message can make “an enormous difference in the way the message is received” (Rothwell, 2004, p. 10). For example, communication via technologies such as phone and email can “function to distance and depersonalize communication when
Communication channels which allow for the two-way flow of communication provide for immediate interactivity and feedback, compared with written forms of communication where this interactivity and feedback are delayed (DeVito, 2009). Choice of channel can also result in certain restrictions on communication, such as how and if a message can be edited, whether pauses are possible and how long the message can be (DeVito, 2009).

2.2.2 Communication motives.

The different purposes and functions of communication are important elements of communication for researchers to address (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006). Essentially, people communicate to fulfil needs and reach goals (Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988; Walter, Anderson, & Martin, 2005). Communication motives drive “who we talk with, how we interact with others, and what we talk about” (Graham, Barbato, & Perse, 1993, p. 181). Rubin, Perse and Barbato (1988) developed an Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale incorporating six reasons why people communicate with each other: inclusion, escape, relaxation, control, pleasure, and affection. Expanding on this work, researchers have identified additional motives, including a duty motive that relates to communication in the workplace (Anderson & Martin, 1995). Understanding people’s motives for communication can assist in understanding other elements of communication, such as outcomes and effectiveness (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006).

2.2.3 Communication satisfaction.

Communication satisfaction is an important element that has been investigated in studies of communication within and between organisations. Communication satisfaction is a construct regarded as an important indicator of the healthy functioning of an organisation (Downs & Adrian, 2004; Zwijze-Koning & de Jong, 2007) and of organisational climate (Tourish & Hargie, 2009a). Hargie, Tourish and Wilson (2002, p. 431) describe communication satisfaction as “satisfaction with an aspect of communication (e.g. information flow)” and Carrière and Bourque (2009, p. 45
31) add that “communication satisfaction is an employee’s affective appraisal of the organization’s communication practices and is a multidimensional construct”. In the development of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ), eight dimensions of communication satisfaction were identified in the workplace including employee’s satisfaction with personal feedback received, communication with managers and communication with subordinates (Downs & Adrian, 2004).

Communication satisfaction has also been conceptualised as the difference between the amount of information employees currently receive and the amount they need to do their jobs. The International Communication Association (ICA) survey (Goldhaber, 1976), was originally developed in the 1970s and adapted by many researchers over the next three decades and it included a measure of communication satisfaction as the difference between information received and information needed. In this survey employees are asked to rate information received currently and information needed on a range of topics, through particular channels and from a range of sources. The difference between the scores is taken as a measure of communication satisfaction and “the assumption is that the wider the gap between ‘need’ and ‘current amount received’, the more a problem exists” (Downs & Adrian, 2004, p. 135). Measures of communication satisfaction such as that in the CSQ and ICA survey have been used extensively in communication audits of organisations to identify problem areas relating to communication and to develop improvement plans (see for example, Gray & Laidlaw, 2009; Hogard & Ellis, 2006; Hogard, Ellis, Ellis, & Barker, 2005). Communication satisfaction has also been shown to be related to important organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment (Carrière & Bourque, 2009) and productivity (Downs & Adrian, 2004).

2.2.4 Inter-professional communication.

Effective communication is essential for developing an appreciation and respect for the contributions of different professionals working collaboratively (Gotlib Conn et al., 2009). Communication has been identified as one of the keys to successful collaboration between professionals with diverse disciplinary backgrounds. In the business world
and the health care sector much research has focused on identifying the barriers and facilitators of effective interdisciplinary communication. In one study of the initial partnership stage of an inter-agency collaboration between an early childhood program and a drug treatment agency in the U.S., participants identified communication as one of the main elements required to promote collaboration (McWayne, Broomfield, Sidoti, & Camacho, 2008). The researchers asserted that communication “could be positioned as the base upon which the other spheres of collaborative ecology exist” (p. 104). In this study, poor communication between professionals was seen to work against collaborative efforts and with particular effect on joint-decision making. In other reports, such as in nurse-physician relationships, communication practices of physicians are related to collaborative medical practices as well as nurse's job satisfaction (Wanzer, Wojtaszczyk, & Kelly, 2009).

2.2.4.1 Time.

Having adequate time to communicate with each other has been recognised as important in developing successful inter-professional partnerships. In their research into the integration of services for children in Europe, Katz and Hetherington (2006) found that “services that were successful in improving communication and collaboration encourage the building of relationships” and that “the provision of resources and time for both formal and informal communication between practitioners from different agencies and professions is a priority for making integration work” (p. 439). Similarly, Smith and Preston (1996) recommended from their study of inter-professional communication in a hospital that an increase in contact between professionals would improve their knowledge of each other and thereby improve inter-professional communication. Some studies have recommended that such knowledge is improved by inter-agency cooperation (Griffin, 2010), with others noting that such cooperation is most valuable when continuity of personnel over time provides impetus for the development of lasting relationships (Easen, Atkins, & Dyson, 2000).
2.2.4.2 Understanding of practice.

Developing an understanding of each others’ practice and the ability to clearly articulate one’s own practice are two keys elements in inter-professional communication. Beliefs, attitudes and values that are not accessible within the culture of a profession can cause communication difficulties between professionals. Jarvis and Trodd (2008) note that with the trend for multi-agency, integrated services for children, professionals from different disciplines are increasingly expected to work together with others who have “different experiences, training and ways of seeing children and their contexts” (p. 212). Tensions between professionals can result. In order to work well in inter-disciplinary teams, individuals must be able to articulate their beliefs, knowledge, skills and values to others. Jarvis and Trodd (2008) caution that unless these aspects are clearly communicated, individuals can become defensive about their way of working. Related to being able to articulate practice is professionals’ developing an understanding of each other’s work. Smith and Preston (1996) identified that “a lack of understanding of capabilities, skills and roles” (p. 38) among professionals in a hospital was a perceived to be “a major factor in hindering good communications” (p. 37).

2.2.4.3 Trust.

Trust is an important element in inter-professional communication. Trust is defined by Thomas, Zolin and Hartman (2009, p. 290) as “the voluntary acceptance by the trustor of risk based on the actions of the other party”. Trust and communication are inter-related: communication is an important facet of trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) and a good level of trust is necessary for effective professional communication (Hargie & Tourish, 2000). For example, trust impacts on communication in that high levels of trust allow for the open exchange of information, and communication also influences trust by the amount and quality of communication received (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In Thomas, Zolin, and Hartman’s (2009) study of communication within a multinational corporation a complex relationship existed between trust and communication. In this study communication was shown to be important in
building and maintaining trust between co-workers, supervisors and managers. It was determined that when employees received information from their co-workers and supervisors that was timely, accurate and relevant, they were more likely to trust the sources of the information. Previous studies around communication have identified that trust is related to collaboration (Johnson, 2003; Mitchell, Ripley, Adams, & Raju, 2011; Musanti & Pence, 2010), and that a culture of trust can be created through open and honest communication (Mitchell et al., 2011).

2.2.4.4 Barriers to communication.

Barriers to communication can be related to particular differences between professions. In a study of collaboration between professionals in the education, health and social work sectors working with children in disadvantaged communities, Easen et al. (2000) highlighted that the ways in which these different professionals conceptualised their practice, as well as their different conditions of practice, and described how these formed barriers to collaboration. Overcoming these barriers depended upon shared understandings, values and purposes. Fraser and Schalley (2009) write that when working in interdisciplinary collaborations, shared understandings at the level of the meaning of individual words is crucial as people from different professions may use the same words when conversing, but have very different meanings. However, changing the ways in which language is used can compromise a professional’s values and threaten their identity. In order to have discussions about shared language, each professional has to respect the values and goals of the other professional (Fraser & Schalley, 2009).

Working within professional ‘silos’ can create barriers to inter-professional communication. Hall (2005) explains that professionals working in different areas of a sector can develop “profession-specific world-views” (p. 193) which include different languages, approaches to work and values. Hall describes these as professional ‘silos’. Eunson (2008, p. 579) explains that the term ‘silo’ is:

a metaphor for over-compartmentalised and over-territorial organisations whose sections, departments or divisions stand aloof and apart from other sections, departments or divisions, like monolithic grain silos. The ‘us versus them’ climate means that
communication between areas that should be communicating is minimal, or does not take place at all.

Silos have been identified in the business sector as “barriers that exist between departments within an organization, causing people who are supposed to be on the same team to work against one another” (Lencioni, 2006, p. 175) and are likened to “turf warfare” (Lencioni, 2006, p. 175). Lencioni suggests that to overcome silos, management must provide employees with a “compelling context for working together” (p. 176) and a “context for interdependency” such as a common goal.

Particular communication practices can impede inter-professional collaborations. In a study of the communication genres in General Internal Medicine wards, Gotlib Conn et al. (2009) examined the use of particular communication channels. In one example, the institution of a ‘communication whiteboard’ was seen to reflect the preferences of some, but not all, professionals. Indeed, some regarded this as an “imposition of other’s norms and preferences, and a reinforcement of professional silos, hierarchies, and communication barriers” (p. 950). The researchers argued that the whiteboards did not support inter-professional communication when they were not accompanied by face-to-face communication and failed to meet the inter-professional communication goals for which they were introduced.

### 2.2.5 Educator communication.

Overall, there is a dearth of research focussing specifically on professional communication between educators. However, research relating to educator collaborations and partnerships often makes reference to communication and the importance of communication within these relationships. As a consequence, a number of issues have been identified and suggestions made about ways to promote communication among educators.

Effective communication is an important element of cooperation and collaboration between educators. In a Greek study of kindergarten educators’ beliefs about cooperation between educators, effective communication was determined to be the “most significant condition for effective cooperation” (Moutafidou & Sivropoulou, 2010, p. 352). Other
factors, such as having a similar level of training, were ranked as less important when describing the necessary conditions for cooperation. Conversely, lack of communication was identified as the most important factor inhibiting cooperation between educators. Factors such as differences in educators’ values were rated by teachers as hindering cooperation less than lack of communication. Communicating in order to share ideas and experiences was identified as an important characteristic of educator collaborations in a Dutch study (Meirinka, Imants, Meijer, & Verloop, 2010). Dalli (2008) describes good communication skills as an important attribute of collaborative early childhood educators. These studies substantiate the argument that communication, or lack of it, impacts on cooperative and collaborative relationships between educators.

Professional relationships are developed and enacted through communication. In the case of educators, a number of barriers to effective communication, and hence effective relationships, have been identified. In early childhood contexts, these barriers include high staff turnover, as well as limited time and lack of response (Barblett, Barratt-Pugh, Kilgallon, & Maloney, 2011). Issues related to time feature regularly in discussions of the barriers to effective communication. Regular contact, over an extended timeframe supports professional communication, often providing a context for negotiating different perspectives and values (Tayler, 2006).

The roles and positions of those involved can both facilitate or hinder professional communication. The exercise of power in relationships, often associated with positions such as principal or director, can build barriers, rather than promote collaboration. In many instances, successful collaboration depends on “the degree of reciprocity and intersubjectivity achieved between the principals and teachers” (Tayler, 2006, p. 262).

Communication between educators is important to promote continuity of children’s experiences between settings. In a study of educators’ perceptions of transition practices as children moved from long day care (LDC) to kindergarten, the service children attend in the year prior to school in Western Australia, educators identified communication between LDC and kindergartens as a key factor impacting on continuity of children’s experiences (Barblett et al., 2011). Lack of educator communication was regarded as impacting on “children’s sense of continuity (p.45) as they
moved from one setting to another, resulting from the educators’ inability to “negotiate a curriculum which promoted continuity of experience” (p.48). Recommendations from this study supported increased interactions and communication between educators in the different settings. These results reflect similar outcomes from research of educator partnerships in a Queensland study. This project identified a dilemma around how to connect long day care and school educators in order to “address issues of discontinuity that inhibited children’s learning” (Tayler, 2006, p. 259).

Communication between educators can result in valuable professional learning and support for educators, particularly when it involves discussion of values and practice (Johnson, 2003; Meirinka et al., 2010). Educators in a New Zealand study (Grey, 2011) reported benefits from talking with other educators, including “understanding of colleagues, team building, being able to connect teaching philosophy to teaching practice in a meaningful way, and a chance to reflect on and gain fresh insights into teaching practice” (p. 28). As well as affording an opportunity for professional learning, communication can provide support for educators: “professional dialogue provides a structure for support and mentoring within a team” (Grey, 2011, p. 24). These results indicate that professional communication can have major benefits for educators themselves, as well as the children with whom they work.

However, professional communication can also generate tension, anxiety, conflict and resistance (Musanti & Pence, 2010). For example, collaborations that involved observing and discussing teaching practice, left some educators feeling “exposed, vulnerable and powerless” (Musanti & Pence, 2010, p. 82). In Fisher’s (2011) study, being able to observe and discuss practice with other educators was seen as a key factor in bringing about classroom change to a play-based pedagogy. However, participants also reported feeling threatened by this approach. While communication about pedagogy and practice promote change, it can also be a source of resistance. Successful collaborations between educators require regular communication and the nurturing of relationships based on trust.

Profession-specific languages and an inability to articulate practice have been suggested as barriers to communication. Fleer (2003) describes the early childhood profession as having “its own codes of practice, its own
discourse and its own theoretical perspectives” (p. 64) and, as a result, “it is difficult for anyone to communicate effectively within the profession without the appropriate knowledge of the discourse” (p. 65). Broström (2000) argues that early childhood professionals do not describe well what they do. The assertions of Fleer and Broström suggest that clear, articulate communication of practice and a shared discourse are important in reducing communication difficulties between educators.

Communication between educators does not necessarily result in positive relationships. Johnson’s (2003) study of educator collaborations reported evidence of interpersonal conflict between educators, including “disputes between some staff” (p. 348) and “the dominance of some staff over others” (p. 348) as a result of ongoing communication. Johnson warned of the dangers of assuming that educator collaboration is “benevolently good” (p. 349) and argued that it is “good for most teachers, but not so good for others” (p. 349). Teachers who were reported to benefit least from ongoing communication described a loss of autonomy and personal independence as a result of collaboration. Some regarded the impetus for communication as a deliberate strategy to ensure alignment of practices, promoting conformity rather than collaboration.

The literature on professional communication between educators indicates that communication is an important element of cooperation and collaboration, and that professional relationships are developed through communication. Previous studies in this area have highlighted that communication between educators is important to promote continuity of children’s experiences between educational settings and it can result in valuable professional learning and support for educators. There is also evidence in the literature that professional communication can generate interpersonal conflict between educators, and that barriers to communication include profession-specific languages and an inability to articulate practice.

2.2.6 Communication between preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school.

Communication between educators during times of children’s transition to school has been promoted as good practice. Yet it is a practice more talked about than enacted. Pianta, Cox, Taylor and Early (1999)
reported that ‘school teachers visiting preschool classrooms’ and ‘coordination of curricula between preschool and school’, both practices which require communication, were amongst the least reported transition practices among U.S. teachers. In a comparative study of transition practices in Iceland and Australia, more teachers reported that meetings to discuss curricula and observation of classroom practices were ‘good ideas’, than actually participated in these in practice (Einarsdóttir, Perry, & Dockett, 2008). In Ireland, very few preschool educators reported that they transferred children’s records to schools (O'Kane & Hayes, 2006). However, school and preschool educators were open to increased amounts of communication and both groups felt that it was the first-year-of-school educator’s responsibility to initiate communication. Hopps (2004) has also reported that educators regarded communication between preschool and school educators as a good idea, but difficult to put into practice.

In addition to self-reported low levels of interseting communication, there is only a small amount of evidence that communication between preschool and school educators benefits children. The cooperative development of curricula between preschool and school educators, which requires communication, and the passing on of children’s written education records from preschool to school were reported as being rarely used practices in Finland (Ahtola et al., 2011). However, these two transition practices were also reported as the best predictors of children’s academic development in the first year of school because they assist school educators “to treat and teach the pupils of the new class according to their personal traits and needs” (p. 300). In a U.S. study, communication between preschool and school educators about curricula and the children starting school resulted in those children being judged by their school educators to have positive social competence and fewer negative behaviour problems than children whose teachers did not engage in these practices (LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008).

While the goal of achieving continuity of children’s experiences between preschool and school (Margetts, 2002a; Petriwskyj, 2013; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003) is often espoused as one of the purposes of interseting communication, definitions of continuity and how this might be achieved vary considerably. For example, ongoing communication between preschool
and school settings has been reported, yet the content and intent of the communication may not be sufficient to build continuity (Noel, 2011). Even when there is communication about individual children and there are attempts at creating program continuity, problems can remain. In a further example, preschool and school educators in a New Zealand study articulated a commitment to intersetting communication and described strong relationships with each other (Timperley, McNaughton, Howie, & Robinson, 2003). However, this was not deemed sufficient to achieve program continuity. Preschool educators attributed this to school educators’ lack of response to the information that had been sent to schools. Timperley et al. concluded that efforts to promote continuity were impeded when educators had limited understanding of settings other than their own.

Intersetting communication often focuses on sharing of information about children making the transition to school. While the act of sharing information has been encouraged in a range of contexts, there has been less attention to what information is to be shared and how this is to be achieved. As a result, the utility of the shared information has been questioned. In one Scottish study of preschool-school communication, Cassidy (2005) noted that school educators did not use the information about children provided by preschool educators, arguing that it was not appropriate for their purposes. The school educators described the pressure they felt from increasing accountability, testing, and prescribed curriculum and argued that this impacted on their time to use the information. Problems with misinterpretation of written information were also identified. For example, some educators sought information about learners; others sought information about potential problems. However, in another study, preschool and school educators in Ireland who collaboratively developed and used a ‘Child snapshot form’ to transfer information about children, were positive about the utility of the document in supporting children’s transition to school (O’Kane & Hayes, 2010).

Misunderstandings between preschool and school educators have been attributed to a lack of knowledge of each other’s work. In Ashton et al.’s (2008) study of links between preschools, families and schools, interview data revealed misunderstandings from school educators about preschool services. These misunderstandings were attributed to limited
awareness of what happened in preschool and the educational focus of these settings. Consequences included a general mistrust of reports about children coming from preschool educators and general unwillingness from the school educators to have working relationships with preschool educators. A lack of knowledge of the other setting, including the pedagogy, programs and practices is also evident in other Australian (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Hopps, 2004) and international studies (O’Kane, 2013). However, it is important to note that misperceptions can still exist despite the presence of communication between preschool and school (Timperley et al., 2003). It is not communication per se that overcomes misunderstandings; the nature, content and intent of the communication is critical.

Different philosophies and practices between preschools and schools can pose a barrier to communication between educators. Sawyer (2000) revealed what she describes as a ‘stalemate’ between the pedagogy of preschool and school which impacts on attempts to provide continuity for children when they make transitions. In this Queensland study, preschool-trained educators spoke about opposing philosophies and practice between preschool and school, primary-trained teachers devaluing their preschool experiences and the perception of preschool and school educators being in competition with each other rather than positioned as collaborators. Sawyer’s study highlighted that “fundamental differences in the ways in which preschool and primary teachers conceptualise teaching and learning continue to impact upon the interrelationship of such teachers and influence their ability to work collaboratively together” (Sawyer, 2000, p. 340).

Some structural and ideological barriers to communication between preschool and school educators are evident in the literature. Educators have identified issues such as a lack of time to communicate, not knowing what schools the preschool children will be attending, uncertainties with the next year’s staffing, not having a person to facilitate communication and different governing bodies as being barriers to communication (Hopps, 2004). Broström’s (2002) study of Danish teachers’ attitudes towards transition activities indicated that the barriers caused by professional secrecy, cultural differences, lack of interest and reluctance to work with each other made effective communication difficult between preschool and school educators. Noel’s (2011) Queensland study where school educators
reported a lack of response from preschools in their attempts to communicate, indicates a need for caution in the attribution of the source of communication difficulties. Indeed, Noel calls for further research to identify the “factors obstructing relationships between these educators” (2011, p. 51).

Lack of effective or consistent communication between educators can cause difficulties for children and families in their transition to school. For example, parents in one Australian study (Dockett et al., 2011) received contradictory advice from school and preschool educators, particularly around perceptions of children’s readiness for school. The disparities in advice “seemed to be symptomatic of the lack of communication across the prior-to-school and school sectors where professionals in different areas were working on different expectations and perceptions” (p. 23).

2.2.6.1 Power in preschool-school relationships.

Relations of power and communication are interrelated: according to Foucault (1997, p. 292) “in human relationships…power is always present” in ways that “one person tries to control the conduct of the other”. Foucault (2000b, p. 337) also writes that communicating “is always a certain way of acting upon another person”, the objectives of communication can be “in the realm of power” and power relations can “pass through systems of communication”. It is important to identify how power is exerted in relationships and what happens as a result (Foucault, 2000b). According to Foucault (1990), power is not “a general system of domination exerted by one group over another” (p. 92) and it is not “something that is acquired, seized or shared” (p. 93). Foucault (1997) uses the term ‘power relations’, rather than power, and defines it as “strategic games between liberties – in which some try to control the conduct of others, who in turn try to avoid allowing their conduct to be controlled or try to conduct the conduct of others” (p. 299). He asserts that power relations are “mobile, they can be modified, they are not fixed once and for all” (Foucault, 1997, p. 292) and that there are only power relations where people are free to resist them.

Foucault (2000b) explains that “power relations have come more and more under state control….power relations have been progressively govermentalized” (p. 345). According to Foucault, knowledge and what is
regarded as the truth establishes power relations, and a set of truths which exist in a given field are known as a ‘regime of truth’ (MacNaughton, 2005). Foucault (2000a) was interested to “see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth” (p. 231).

There is some evidence that relations of power are present in relationships between school and preschool educators. In particular the research literature suggests a level of resistance from preschool and school educators to communicating with each other and tensions between the sectors. Partly, this has been attributed to the constraints of each working environment, governed as they are by different curriculum and pressures (Ashton et al., 2008). Sometimes, teachers have indicated that they simply do not have time to communicate more with their counterparts in the different sector (Cassidy, 2005). Another possible explanation recognises resistance to changing practice and incorporating different ways of doing things in the classroom (Broström, 2002). Preschool educators, in particular, report concerns related to a potential imposition of school curriculum and the subsequent loss of preschool pedagogy and ideology (MacNaughton, 2005). The resistance of preschool and school educators can be viewed as the exercise of power, where ‘regimes of truth’, in the form of the ideologies behind different curricula, are used to both support and resist struggles for power over preferred ways of constructing curriculum (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000; MacNaughton, 2005).

2.3 Summary and research questions

Positive relationships between children’s educators in preschool and school settings have been identified as one of the key elements of effective transition to school programs (Dockett & Perry, 2006). Professional relationships are developed and maintained through communication. As well as developing positive relationships between children’s preschool and school educators, intersetting communication is promoted as a way of gathering information about children’s prior learning which can assist schools to construct teaching and learning programs to help children become confident and capable learners in the new setting (Dockett & Perry, 2006; Niesel & Griebel, 2007). It is argued that communication between educators can build continuity of learning, making it possible for children to
transfer the expertise developed in preschool settings to the new school setting (McNaughton, 2002). In this way preschool-school communication has been consistently promoted in the literature as a solution to the lack of continuity between preschool and school pedagogy and curriculum as children transition to school (Petriwskyj et al., 2005). Based on its importance in building positive relationships between educators and creating continuity for children, preschool-school communication has become an important focus of transition policy and practice internationally and within Australia.

Despite support for the idea of communication between settings, the research literature reports generally low levels of preschool-school communication in practice and, indeed, highlights the problematic nature of such communication. Within the extant research literature, there is a dearth of research focussed specifically on communication between preschool and school educators. Where studies do exist, most tend to be embedded within larger studies of transition practices. Whilst it is important to investigate the broad picture of preschool-school communication, it is also important to investigate the views of individual educators in order to reflect a diversity of experiences and opinions of this practice.

Given its prominence in the transition literature, and the accompanying absence of knowledge about it generated through empirical research, there is a need for an in-depth study of communication between preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school. The following research study has been designed to address this. Research questions guiding the investigation of intersetting communication between school and preschool educators at the time of children’s transition to school are:

1. Do preschool and school educators communicate with each other and, if so, what are their motives for communicating?
2. What is the nature of the communication between preschools and schools?
3. What are the outcomes of preschool-school communication?
4. What are the factors that impact upon intersetting communication at the time of transition and how do they influence intersetting communication?
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology for the study of intersetting communication at the time of children’s transition to school. The chapter presents the interpretivist framework underpinning the research, outlining the assumptions upon which this research paradigm is based. The rationale for the use of a mixed methods design is outlined. The research questions are then revisited before participants, sampling, and the geographic location of the study are explained. This is followed by the rationale for adapting communication audit data collection techniques for the purposes of the study. The data collection techniques are detailed followed by an explanation of the development of two of these. The processes of mixed method data analysis are outlined, and a discussion of the impact of the researcher on the research and ethical considerations complete the chapter.

3.1 The research framework

Interpretive inquiry offers a way of understanding the complexity of a phenomenon by permitting multiple realities, focussing on participants’ explanations of events, situating human action within contexts, and generating depth of description. The interpretive paradigm is based on the assumptions that reality is an individual construct, the nature of knowledge is subjective, (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and that research is value-laden (Creswell, 1994). There is no single, objective reality in interpretive inquiry; instead there are multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), that is, “multiple interpretations of and perspectives on, single events and situations” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 21). The interpretive paradigm recognises that both the researcher and participants bring their own values and beliefs to the research. With the view that a phenomenon can only be known through people’s representations of it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), there is an emphasis in interpretive approaches on the participants’ perceptions of events (Doolin & McLeod, 2005). Interpretive inquiry is concerned with understanding the meaning of social action and assumes that this meaning depends upon “the context and intentions of the actor” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191). Interpretive, qualitative research is concerned with generating depth of understanding (Denzin & Lincoln,
2011) through thick descriptions of complex situations (Cohen et al., 2007).

Educators’ views and experiences of preschool-school communication are the subject of this research. Interpretive inquiry positions these views and experiences as unique to each educator and, from this, argues that there is no single truth or set of facts that will necessarily be common across these. Interpretive inquiry also recognises that the values of both the researcher and participants shape the exploration of preschool-school communication. Examining intersetting communication using interpretive inquiry involves generating rich descriptions that capture some of the complexity of communication between preschools and schools, educators’ motives for communicating, as well as the nature, outcomes and factors which impact on communication. The elements of time and context are important in the research, particularly as educators’ experiences are affected by these elements. In summary, interpretive inquiry facilitates approaches that recognise multiple realities, accept that research is value-laden, provide depth of description, and recognise the impact of context and time on participant’s experiences.

Studies of communication located within the interpretive paradigm recognise the effect of a wide range of influences – both external and internal – on interactions between people. Interpretive inquiry “accepts ambiguity and uncertainty as ever-present features of human communication, and seeks to explore the paradoxes, contradictions and deep structures that lurk beneath the surface of interaction” (Tourish, Marcella, Tourish, & Hargie, 2009, p. 291). As such, it provides an appropriate conceptual framework for the investigation of preschool-school communication.

Within the framework of interpretivism, mixed methods can be used to generate data which are rich and complex. The analysis of such data helps to build understanding of a phenomenon (Plano Clark, Creswell, O’Neil Green, & Shope, 2008; Richards, 2009) through the integration of qualitative and quantitative strategies at different phases in a study (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012). Integrated mixed method research generates qualitative and quantitative data and “involves both statistical and textual analysis. Different types of data and methods of analysis are used to develop, extend or otherwise inform each other…at various stages through data gathering
and analysis processes” (Bazeley, 2003, p. 412).

A common assertion in the literature is that mixed methods provide a better understanding of a research topic than can be produced by either a qualitative or a quantitative design (Creswell, 1994; Greene, 2007; Plano Clark et al., 2008). The reason for this enhanced understanding is not simply that multiple methods are used, but that there is an interdependence and integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches and that “the product of integration will be something that would not have been available without that integration” (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012, p. 69). Conducting an integrated mixed methods study which involves not only the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data, but also the “meshing of multiple data sources” and “meshing analyses” (Bazeley, 2009, p. 204) offers a more thorough way of investigating a phenomenon and of developing stronger conclusions to a study than using either qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012). In other words, mixed methods research offers an “integration of ways of looking that better answer our research questions and advance our knowledge” (Johnson, 2008, p. 204).

Building an understanding of communication between preschool and school educators is the key focus of this study. Mixed methods underpin approaches to understand the complexity of this topic, through an “iterative exchange between methods” (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012, p. 67). Employing mixed methods is consistent with the interpretive framework of this research which regards the nature of reality as “multilayered and complex” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 20). In mixed methods studies the researcher is able to “quantify and explore” (Hall & Howard, 2008, p. 267) participants’ perspectives and to employ a range of data collection and analysis techniques (Gorard, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010).

Even more important than having a range of tools and different forms of data in a mixed method study, is the conversation between the methods which can inform data collection and analysis, thereby making important contributions to the interpretation of data and understanding of results (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012). Mixed methods provide the research with “a continuing dialogue or exchange between the multiple data to understand the phenomenon of interest” (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012, p. 68). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) suggest that the “ultimate goal of this is to attain a
global understanding of the phenomenon or behaviour under investigation as well as understanding the relationship between parts of the evidence and between each part and the whole” (p. 812).

The integration of data sources and analysis in this mixed methods study occurred at different stages of the research for a range of purposes. The divergence of different sources of data helped to represent the complex nature of preschool-school communication. For example, the sources of data in this study included self reports of communication between preschool and school educators as well as actual communication texts. Divergent findings from different sources were used to initiate (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012; Greene, 2007) further questioning and analysis. For example, the quantitative results indicated low levels of communication through emails. This prompted the intentional collection of email correspondence from preschools and schools and interview questions exploring the reasons for the low usage of this communication channel. Analysis of one type of data in the research informed the analysis of the other, a critical aspect of integrated mixed methods projects (Bazeley, 2003). The data and analysis in this mixed methods research do as Bryman (2007, p. 21) suggests: “talk to each other, much like a conversation or debate and the idea is then to construct a negotiated account of what they mean together”.

While mixed methods offer opportunities for an enhanced understanding of preschool-school communication, it is unlikely that this approach has provided a complete picture of communication between preschools and schools. Bergman (2011) argues that the claim that mixed method research can provide some kind of holism when investigating a phenomenon is not substantiated and contends that “no matter how many theoretical approaches, data sets, or analyses are part of a research project, it will never answer a research question in all its complexity” (p. 274). Nonetheless, research utilising an integrated mixed method design, has provided an appropriate basis for the investigation of preschool-school communication.
3.2 Research questions

The research study investigates communication between preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school. It aims to build an understanding of preschool-school communication through the exploration of four research questions:

1. Do preschool and school educators communicate with each other and, if so, what are their motives for communicating?
2. What is the nature of the communication between preschools and schools?
3. What are the outcomes of preschool-school communication?
4. What are the factors that impact upon preschool-school communication and how do they influence communication and transitions?

3.3 Participants

Educators from preschools and schools involved in children’s transition to school in two education department-defined regions of Australia were invited to participate in this research. Invitations to participate were initially issued in two ways – in person or via telephone contact. A follow-up email invitation was also sent to participants who expressed interest in being involved in the research. In total, 213 educators were involved in the study. Educators with a diverse range of roles at their schools/preschools participated including preschool directors, school principals, transition coordinators, regional support workers and classroom teachers. All educators had a role in children’s transition to school, such as working directly with children in the prior-to-school or first-year of school class, or indirectly, such as through the administration of programs and services. Table 3.1 outlines general background information about participants in the overall sample. Further demographic data about participants is reported in Chapters Four, Six and Seven with the results from each of the levels of data collection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Co-located school/preschool</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool educators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 116)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School educators</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 97)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall sample of preschool and school educators in the study was overwhelmingly female, most had 10 years or more experience and worked in services and schools which were not co-located. There were more educators from NSW than Victoria involved in the study.

3.4 Sampling strategies

Purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2007) was used to recruit participants. Factors considered related to the settings in which educators worked and included: geographic location (rural/regional centre), size (enrolment), governance (government/non-government school, private/community-based/local council sponsored preschool), and co-location (located on the same grounds) of school and preschool. The intention of this sampling strategy was to involve educators from a diverse range of contexts, on the basis that contexts influence the experiences of the people within them (Dockett & Perry, 2001b). However, accessing participants presented some challenges. For school educators in particular, a series of gatekeepers (Cohen et al., 2007) including administrative staff and school principals meant that it was often difficult to speak with educators themselves.

Opportunity sampling (Cohen et al., 2007) was used to supplement the number of participants recruited. When opportunities arose for in-person contact with educators, the researcher made use of a variety of “captive audiences” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 114). To boost recruitment, the researcher attended several meetings of educators accessed through key contact people. The meetings were often based around existing educator networks, such as those supporting community-based preschools; a transition network; a regional meeting of school principals and school professional development sessions. Information and expression of interest sheets were given to facilitators of some further meetings of educators which the researcher could not attend in person. For the educators recruited via personal contact at meetings or expression of interest sheets, a further phone call was made to seek consent from the school principal or preschool director for the staff member to participate. At such times, the opportunity to invite the principal or director to participate in the study was also taken.
3.5 Geographic location

Participants were drawn from two rural education department-defined regions of Australia: one located in New South Wales (NSW) and one in Victoria. These two regions were large in terms of their geographical size and included a number of major regional cities as well as many smaller rural towns and villages. Convenience sampling was used in this study due to the physical location of the researcher. Therefore all research sites were located in regional areas.

The decision to research in two states was made to capture the experiences of educators working under different conditions. The transition to school policy directions of Victoria and NSW differ significantly. It was anticipated that as a result of recent policy initiatives such as the introduction of the *Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statements* (DEECD, 2009b), the conditions under which Victorian preschool and school educators communicated with each other would be different from the conditions in NSW. Whilst data from educators located in two geographic regions allowed for a certain level of comparison of views and experiences based on their state location, more importantly for the aims of this research it allowed for a focus on the general issues for educators practicing intersetting communication that transcend state borders. Conducting the study in two states was also intended to avoid the research being interpreted as a critique of one particular state’s approach to transition to school.

3.6 Data collection and analysis

Several of the data collection techniques used in the study were derived from the communication audit approach (Downs & Adrian, 2004). Before detailing the six data collection techniques employed, some background to this approach is provided.

Communication audits generate data about communication and provide information to management about an organisation’s communicative health (Tourish & Hargie, 2009b). They have been used to evaluate the internal and external communication of organisations, and provide the basis of many communication strategies (Tourish & Hargie, 2009b).
Communication audits have been used in a range of organisations, including the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland (Quinn & Hargie, 2004) and an Australian retail chain (Gray & Laidlaw, 2009). The communication audit, as a research approach, has been used within organisational studies (see for example, Hogard & Ellis, 2006; Hogard et al., 2005; Thomas et al., 2009) as well as studies of everyday interpersonal communication (Step & Finucane, 2002). Communication audits focus on amounts, sources and channels of communication, highlight areas of difficulty as well as strengths in communication systems, measure interpersonal trust and examine the impact of communication on working relationships (Hogard & Ellis, 2006; Tourish & Hargie, 2009a). For example, a communication audit was used to assess communication between and within organisations involved in the Sure Start program in the United Kingdom, where enhanced collaboration between organisations was desired (Hogard & Ellis, 2006). As a result of the communication audit, recommendations were made to improve communication between the agencies involved in the program.

One of the advantages of communication audit techniques is the adaptability of the instruments for different contexts and purposes (Tourish & Hargie, 2009b). In this study, six data collection techniques were modified to examine preschool and school educator communication:

- Communication audit questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Recordings of communicative interactions
- Communication Diary Logs
- Document collection

The first five techniques are commonly employed in communication audits. Document collection, referred to as “archival analysis” (Tourish & Hargie, 2009b, p. 405) is less common in communication audits but is an important technique within qualitative research (Hodder, 2000). Some of the methods, such as interviews and focus groups are also familiar in educational research. All six data collection techniques have been adapted for this study and formed the “tools in the toolbox” (Gorard, 2010, p. 247) of the research. Each technique contributed something unique to the study.
Data collection occurred at three levels (Figure 3) and involved 213 educators in total. Educators participated in one level of the study only. The first broad level used communication audit questionnaires to canvass the views of 183 educators across two large geographical regions. The data collection narrowed at the second level with the implementation of focus groups, generating data from eight educators who worked within a smaller geographical area. On the third level, to concentrate on some very specific illustrations of preschool-school communication, data were organised into five cases which involved a total of 22 educators. Four data collection techniques: interviews, document collection, recordings of communicative interactions and Communication Diary Logs were utilised as the sources of information for the cases. In this way the data generated contributed to both a general and a specific picture of communication between preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school.

Figure 3: Three levels of data collection.

Each level of data collection is described in the following discussion. A time-line (Table 3.2) is included to illustrate the schedule for data collection and analysis.
### Table 3.2: Data collection time-line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of data collection</th>
<th>Data collection commenced</th>
<th>Data collection completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication audit questionnaires</td>
<td>17 March 2011</td>
<td>22 January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>12 August 2011</td>
<td>9 September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>12 September 2011</td>
<td>30 March 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.6.1 Communication audit questionnaires.

This study used a communication audit questionnaire modified from an existing instrument: Hargie and Tourish’s (2009b) adaptation of the International Communication Association (ICA) survey. This instrument was used to canvass a wide range of opinions and experiences from educators in a diverse range of transition to school situations. This self-report tool involved rating scales (example in Figure 4) and open-ended questions, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. Two adaptations were constructed for this study: the *Preschool-school Communication Survey* for preschool educators and the *School-preschool Communication Survey* for school educators (see Appendix 1 for the full versions of these instruments).
For each channel listed below please indicate how much information you ARE RECEIVING through this channel about children’s transitions to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face contact with school staff</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls with school staff</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic communication with school staff e.g. email</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication with school staff</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

![Rating Scale](image)

Figure 4: Example of a rating scale question in the *Preschool-school Communication Survey*
The two questionnaires sought information about educators’ practice of intersetting communication, amounts of information regarding particular topics sent and received, as well as the amounts needed, channels of communication, sources, timeliness of communication and action taken as a result of communications. The questionnaire concluded with the opportunity for educators to share one particular communication experience (Figure 5). Quantitative analysis of the questionnaires provided measures of communication satisfaction and trust as well as collecting attribute information about each respondent and their setting (Figure 6). Permission to use Hargie and Tourish’s (2009b) adaptation of the ICA questionnaire was obtained (Owen Hargie, personal communication, 22 August, 2010).
Figure 5: Communication experience question from the Preschool-school Communication Survey
Figure 6: Example questions gathering attribute information in the *Preschool-school Communication Survey*
The *Preschool-school* and *School-preschool Communication Surveys* went through several stages of development before they were implemented. Hargie and Tourish’s (2009b) adaptation of the ICA questionnaire was used as a basic template. Changes were made to reflect the context of communication between educators, as well as contemporary research literature related to transition to school, and to ensure relevance to the stated research questions. The basic format of Hargie and Tourish’s (2009b, pp. 420-437) adaptation of the ICA questionnaire remained the same, with the exclusion of two of the original sections as they were not relevant to the research. Changes to question wording included replacing terms to refer to people used in the original questionnaire such as ‘managers’ with more appropriate terms such as ‘preschool and school educators’. Changes to question wording also included a focus on the transition context. For example, one question in Hargie and Tourish’s (2009b, p. 427) adaptation of the ICA questionnaire reads “How much information are you receiving through these channels?”. In the *Preschool-school Communication Survey* this was changed to “For each channel listed below please indicate how much information you are receiving through this channel about children’s transition to school”.

The items in the original instrument, such as communication topics, source persons and channels were also adapted to the transition to school context. To determine these items, contemporary transition to school literature was used as a source as well as the researcher’s own experience of interseting communication. For example, in Hargie and Tourish’s (2009b, p. 425) adaptation of the ICA questionnaire the communication topics listed include “pay, benefits and conditions” and “how decisions that affect my job are reached”. These items were changed to reflect the context of communication between preschools and schools at the time of children’s transition to school. For example, there is evidence in the work of Timperley et al. (2003) that information about individual children is passed on from preschools to schools. Therefore, several of the topics of communication in the adapted questionnaires reflected this: “individual children’s social development”, “individual children’s literacy and numeracy development”, and “other areas of children’s development.”
The two questionnaires were evaluated by a reference group and then field tested in a pilot study. The final versions are included in Appendix 1. Details of the reference group and pilot study are contained in section 3.6.4.

The questionnaires were piloted as a paper-based instrument. As a result of feedback from the pilot testing, electronic versions were created to capitalise on the benefits of online technology. Advantages of making the questionnaires available online included enhanced distribution and collection of responses. Further, the data generated could be downloaded into qualitative (NVivo) and quantitative (SPSS) data analysis software for a more rigorous integrated analysis as suggested by Bazeley (2010). An online questionnaire also allowed for emailed thank-you and reminder notices to participants, and for ease of monitoring of the response rates of particular groups of educators. This was important in ensuring that particular groups, for example, educators in long day care services, could be purposefully invited to participate in the research. Good response rates for the questionnaire were also desired for the purposes of statistical analysis and to include a diverse range of perspectives and experiences of educators. According to Downs and Adrian (2004) participants are more likely to respond to an electronic questionnaire and their responses tend to be more in-depth when answering open-ended questions, in contrast to handwritten questionnaires. The questionnaires were devised to impact minimally on participant’s time, which also helps to increase the likelihood of a good response rate (Clampitt, 2009).

The two questionnaires were divided into 11 parts, with 87 questions in total. The two questionnaires differed only in the language used to refer to the type of setting (for example, substituting the term ‘schools’ for ‘preschools’) and educators in that setting (for example, substituting the term ‘principal’ for ‘director’). The structure was identical for both questionnaires and consisted of several different questioning strategies including open ended questions, Likert-type scales, dichotomous questions, optional comments and multiple choice responses.

The questionnaires were implemented using the online SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey.com LLC, 2011) program. For each of the two questionnaires, web links were created through which educators
accessed and responded to the surveys. Within each questionnaire, separate web links were created for educators from NSW and Victoria. This enabled response rates from each state to be monitored. When educators expressed their interest in completing a questionnaire, they were asked to provide their preferred email address. The corresponding web link to the appropriate questionnaire was then emailed to participants. The initial email contained a thank-you for expressing interest, the web link to the questionnaire and information regarding consent to participate. Data collection commenced on the 17 March, 2011 which was during the latter part of Term 1 of the 2011 NSW and Victorian school year. The final questionnaire was completed on 22 January, 2012, just prior to the beginning of Term 1, 2012. Response rates for the questionnaires are presented in Chapter Five, alongside the results from this level of data collection.

3.6.2 Focus groups.

Focus group interviews (focus groups) were employed to capture a richness of data that could not be obtained through the questionnaires (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Two focus groups were conducted: one with preschool educators and one with school educators. The aim for these groups was to investigate the quantitative questionnaire data as well as to collect qualitative data (Dickson, 2009). In particular, the focus groups were designed to explore factors that influenced educators’ perspectives on the range of issues canvassed in the questionnaire (Downs & Adrian, 2004). In this way, they explored the ‘why’ (Litosseliti, 2003) of educators’ perspectives. In addition, the focus group method created “multiple lines of communication” (Madriz, 2000, p. 385) where educators could share their experiences in preschool-school communication with other educators from the same sector as well as the researcher and, at the same time, generate high quality data.

The composition of each focus group was designed to create a social environment in which educators felt comfortable to discuss the research topic freely (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 82). It was considered highly likely that, for example, preschool educators would not be comfortable speaking about their experiences communicating with schools, in front of school educators. Madriz (2000) recommends that focus groups be
homogenous in order to minimise the potential problem of participants feeling uneasy about disagreeing with each other. This was an important ethical consideration of the focus group method, since what participants shared with the researcher was also shared with the other members of the group.

The focus groups were comprised of a small number of educators from both NSW and Victoria as well as from a range of preschool and school types. The educators who participated in the focus groups were invited specifically for this part of the study and did not complete a questionnaire or participate in the cases. The groups were deliberately kept small so that participants had ample time and opportunity to contribute to the discussion and share their views and experiences. The educators were sampled from a range of preschool and school types, had different roles in transition and were located in the two states, so time in the interviews was devoted to getting to know each other’s roles and explaining and asking questions of each other about some peculiarities in relation to the systems, services and roles in which they worked. This was not only extremely helpful to participants in building rapport with each other, but also resulted in a richness of data that would not have otherwise been achieved if all the educators and their contexts were well known to each other. The preschool educator focus group was conducted on 12 August and the school educator group on 9 September, 2011, during the third term of the school year in NSW and Victoria. The focus groups were conducted in a neutral location, convenient for all participants. Specific details of the individual focus group participants are included in Chapter Six.

The focus groups were similar to what Dickson (2009) describes as a type of group interview and “a way of doing qualitative research, using group discussion” (p.121). The researcher asked questions of the group, rather than to each individual in turn, and for the most part stayed in the background of the discussion amongst participants. The focus groups were planned to facilitate interaction between participants. The hour-long, audio-recorded interviews were semi-structured. An interview guide which had been field tested with two preschool educators was used in the interviews. The interview guide contained general topics to be covered as well as some specific questions (see Appendix 2). The guide permitted the discussion to
follow the direction of the participants and cover issues important for the research.

As well as questions from the interview guide, the focus group participants asked each other questions. In this way, as Madriz (2000) has suggested from her focus group work, the focus group method was particularly advantageous as it moved the discussion towards areas of the topic relevant and of particular interest to the participants. The interactions between the focus group members had the desired effect of giving “more weight to the participant’s opinions, [and] decreasing the influence the researcher [had] over the interview process” (Madriz, 2000, pp. 836-837).

3.6.3 Cases.

Five cases were developed as a way of organising data to illustrate actual preschool-school communications and provide insight into issues which impacted on intersetting communication in unique and specific contexts. As Sillars and Vangelisti (2006) write, communication “is situated; it is only fully understood when it is examined in context” (p. 345). Cases were comprised of a “functioning specific” (Stake, 2000, p. 436), consisting of a single primary school and one or two of the feeder preschools for that school. The cases, (referred to as ‘sites’), were purposefully chosen to examine preschool-school communication where positive relationships were reported to exist already.

Reputational-case sampling, that is, sampling based on the “recommendation of experts in the field” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 176) was used to identify sites for the development of cases. The purpose of the reputational-case sampling strategy was for the cases to be an opportunity to learn (Stake, 2005) about preschool-school communication where the practice was reportedly working well. Not only was the presence of communication important in cases, but also that the preschools and schools were recognised by people, other than the researcher, as having positive relationships. As well as reputational-case sampling, there were other attributes of potential case sites which were considered. Geographic location, size of the school, and the types of feeder preschool settings were considered so that the selection of cases reflected five very different transition communication situations for the focus of the investigation.
Strategies to enact reputational-case sampling included contacting key Departmental staff such as Victorian government schools Regional Network Leaders, local transition network coordinators, and Children’s Services Advisors to ask for advice on schools and preschools who were reported to have positive communicative relationships. For example, a Victorian government schools Regional Network Leader recommended one of the schools in a case, and described the school as having a strong relationship with the community’s preschool. For another case, a preschool educator recommended a particular community which had an active transition network and where she had had positive experiences in the past. A third case was a self-nomination from a school educator who identified positive relationships with their co-located preschool. Two further cases were purposefully selected through reputational recommendations not related to the presence of positive relationships. One case study school was recommended by a NSW School Director because of its potential for being an interesting case as the school had no preschools in the community. The fifth case was recommended by the researcher’s doctoral supervisor as a large school at which the principal had a background in transition.

As each case was comprised of a school and one or two of its feeder preschools, the sampling of sites was often led by the suggestions of key educators. For example, once a school had been selected to form part of a case, key educators within that site were asked about local preschools that they communicate with about children making the transition to school. This was important in three cases in particular as there was no one-to-one feeder relationship between the school and preschools in the community. For example, in one case located in a large regional centre where it was not known year-to-year which preschools the new school children would be coming from, the school’s transition coordinator provided a list of seven preschools which children had, in the past, attended the year before they started at the school. In another case, the school’s first-year-of-school educator provided a list of nine preschools attended in 2011 by children who were known to be starting at the school in 2012. The school educator made a particular recommendation about one of the preschools on this list because one of the children transitioning from there had additional needs. The educator explained that she expected there would be communication
between the preschool and the school in this instance.

Data collection for the five cases occurred over a period of three school terms, during which children were making their transition to the primary schools from the preschools. Each case began with the researcher making an initial site visit to meet participants and discuss the nature of the research. At each site, the school principal or preschool director nominated educators to be invited to participate in the research. The number of educators involved in each case was determined by a variety of factors including who had a role in children’s transitions at that site and their availability and interest in the research. Initial site visits occurred in Term 3 of 2011 and data collection continued until the end of Term 1, 2012. The number of participants in each of the cases is presented in Chapter Seven.

Four communication audit data collection techniques were employed to generate data for the cases, with each providing an important source of information about communication between the schools and preschools. The data collection techniques were:

- interviews;
- Communication Diary Logs;
- document collection; and
- recording of communicative interactions.

Interviews and Communication Diary Logs recorded self-reports of preschool-school communication including educators’ views, perceptions and experiences. Document collection and recordings of communicative interactions captured actual communications between educators in the preschools and schools.

**3.6.3.1 Interviews.**

Interviews generated data regarding individual educator’s experiences, opinions and perceptions of preschool-school communication. The interviews provided depth of information about the intentions, nature, impacts on, and results of, preschool-school communication experienced by the educators in the past and during the three terms of data collection. They provided opportunities to view these experiences through the eyes of the participants, within their particular context. As Patton (2002) writes, interviews “allow us to enter the other person’s perspective” (p. 341).
Perspectives of individual educators regarding preschool-school communication are important to this research and interviews enabled an in-depth exploration of these. The interviews were semi-structured, responsive to the individual contexts and used data collected via other techniques as stimulus material. An interview guide was prepared for each interview, listing the questions and issues to be covered, but at the same time allowing for freedom of exploration of other questions and lines of inquiry (Patton, 2002).

For most of the 22 educators involved in the case research, multiple interviews were conducted and data collected via other techniques provided important stimulus material for the interviews. Conducting several interviews with participants enabled the researcher to gauge perceptions over time and ask clarifying questions about data collected via the other techniques employed in the cases. Educators were interviewed at least once and up to three times over the three terms of data collection. Most educators were interviewed at the commencement of data collection, with initial interviews focussed on gaining an insight into the context of transition and at each site, inquiring into the educators’ past experiences of interseting communication and their motives for communicating. Eight educators were then interviewed for a second time after other self-report data and data in the form of actual communications had been collected. These interviews focussed on gaining an in-depth understanding of the meaning behind the reported communications. Six educators, mostly those teaching the first-year-of-school class, were interviewed a third time, in Term 1 of the 2012 school year. The intention of these interviews was to follow up with how the information provided by preschools had been used and to seek detail of any further interseting communications at the beginning of the school year.

Example interview guides for the three phases of interviews are included in Appendix 3. Within some of the interviews, asking educators about the data in the Communication Diary Logs, documents collected and recordings of communicative interactions was particularly important in gaining their insights into these sources of actual communications and added a richness of data to the cases. These materials provided an effective stimulus for the interviews and aided in memory recall of specific instances of interseting communication.
All interviews were audio-recorded and most were conducted individually. On two occasions, two educators were interviewed together, at their request. The average time for interviews was 30 minutes. All but two interviews were conducted face-to-face; the others were conducted on the telephone. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher.

3.6.3.2 Communication Diary Logs.

Data collection log sheets were employed to generate data about actual communications between preschool and school educators. Data collection log sheets are communication audit instruments that collect information about actual communication experiences immediately after they have occurred (Hargie & Tourish, 2009a). Data collection log sheet methods involve “obtaining written responses from participants on a carefully prepared pro-forma, or data collection log-sheet (DCL), on which they itemize and evaluate communicative activities over a set time period” (Hargie & Tourish, 2009a, p. 124). A form of data collection log sheet, the Communication Diary Log (CDL) was developed, field tested and implemented in this study. Full versions of the CDLs used in this study are included in Appendix 4.

To generate data about communication over time the log sheets were produced in diary form. Diary methods are useful in studying phenomena over time (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). The CDL was particularly appropriate in the cases where the research could capture communicative interactions between preschool and school educators over the time that children make their transition to primary school. Another advantage of the diary method was that the CDLs minimised the time between the communication event being experienced and being recorded. This is in contrast to other self-report methods in this study, such as the interviews and questionnaires, which asked educators to recall and reflect upon communication experiences that occurred sometime in the past. Educators were encouraged to record communications in the CDL as soon as practicable after the event. The CDLs focussed the participant on “the specific here and now” (Hargie & Tourish, 2009a, p. 123) of communications and minimised the amount of time between the communication event and its reporting. Diaries also provided some
advantages for the researcher, who was unable to be present during the full time of data collection. The CDLs captured data that would not have been possible to collect by any other means over an extended time period at the many different research sites involved in the five cases.

A further advantage of the diary method is that it is a familiar concept for most people “and so the task of keeping one is viewed as fairly unproblematic” (Hargie & Tourish, 2009a, p. 125). A decade ago Bolger et al. (2003) suggested that the pencil and paper diary method was the easiest diary technology for participants to use. It seems that this was the case for educators completing CDLs in the research in 2011/2012, as all but one of the educators who completed a CDL chose to do so using pen and paper, rather than electronically. The CDL in this study was designed to be easy to complete and to impact minimally on educators’ time, yet was still able to capture important information about the nature of preschool-school communication.

The Communication Diary Log instrument in this study was developed from a combination of a time-based and event-based design (Bolger et al., 2003). Since data collection log sheet methods are relatively disruptive compared with other communication audit data collection techniques (Tourish & Hargie, 2009b), the CDL was designed to be time-limited. The CDL was intended to record as many preschool-school communications experienced by the participant as possible during a defined time period. Bolger et al. (2003) note that, in time-based designs, the researcher must determine the most appropriate interval for the diaries to be implemented. Initially, the interval had been intended to be a period of three consecutive weeks during Term 4, 2011 as this time of the year is typically the busiest period in terms of transition communication practices (Dockett & Perry, 2006). However, many of the educators involved in the cases wanted to record more of their communications during the course of the research, so the time periods were negotiated with each participant. Often the decision on the time period was based on two criteria: when the participant thought that communication was likely to occur and when the diary would not be too disruptive to the educators’ work. In one case, the educators at the school and preschool agreed together on three different log periods to capture communication in Terms 3 and 4 of 2011 and during
Term 1 of 2012. In another case, an educator used her own diary to back-date all the communications she had had with preschool educators. The individually-adapted log periods, as suggested by the educators involved in the cases, allowed for the capturing of data about communication that occurred both within and outside of the previously recognised time period where communication was likely to be occurring. The data captured in the CDLs are therefore participant-selected samples of communications that occurred in a defined, but variable, time period.

The CDLs were based upon an earlier communication analysis sheet (Hargie & Tourish, 2009a), to facilitate data entry by the educators themselves. They required educators to briefly record the source, topic, channel, length/duration, feedback and evaluation of communication experiences into a carefully formulated pro-forma (Figure 7). The logs sought brief information about the nature of communication between the individual educators in the cases and any other schools/preschools they communicated with during set time periods. The communication events logged were not just confined to those that occurred between the preschool and school educators involved in the cases. The logs were designed to record all sent and received communications between, for example, the preschool educator in a case and all schools they communicated with during a set time period. The participants recorded their perspectives of the effectiveness of each communicative episode by rating it using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally ineffective) to 7 (totally effective). The researcher conducted a brief information session with each educator detailing how the log was to be completed and providing a definition of what communications the CDL was designed to record. A set of instructions was provided with the log sheets and organised together in a folder, or provided electronically, depending on the educator’s preference. A draft CDL was evaluated by a reference group and field tested in a pilot. Details of the development of the Communication Diary Log is included in section 3.6.4.
Figure 7: Extract from a Communication Diary Log for the use of preschool educators in the cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>CHANNEL</th>
<th>Length or Duration</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person eg. Principal</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Sent</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>Phone call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Communication Diary Logs were important stimulus material for interviews, as they informed interview questions. After logs were completed, an interview was conducted with the educator so that depth of information could be added to the brief data recorded in the logs. In this way the researcher could investigate the log entries in much greater detail. This was particularly important in helping the researcher understand the ways in which educators had used the effectiveness scale of 1-7. The logs aided memory recall about specific communicative interactions experienced by the educator. This is in contrast to other interviews in the cases, where participants were asked to volunteer examples of their experiences as they came to mind. The logs assisted greatly in providing richer descriptions of recent communications and meant that the participants did not have to rely as much on long-term memory of events.

3.6.3.3 Document collection.
Documents exchanged between preschools and schools represent one form of actual communication between educators. These texts are important for this research as they differ from self-reports of communication and from spoken texts which are difficult to access (Hodder, 2000). Written texts exchanged between the school and preschool educators involved in each case were collected in the research. Some of these documents were also logged in the educators’ CDLs. Educators in each case were asked to collect any hard copy documents and electronic texts exchanged between the preschool and school sites during the course of the case data collection period. They were given a folder in which to store these documents until the researcher visited the site to collect them in person. The documents collected represented a participant-selected sample of the texts exchanged. From these documents, the researcher then selected the most relevant documents for use in the study. Such documents related not only to the topic of transition to school, but also preschool-school communication about this topic.

3.6.3.4 Recordings of communicative interactions.
Recordings of communicative interactions are a fundamental source of data in studies of communication. Unlike the many self-report tools in
this research, which rely on participants relating and reporting their
perceptions of communication, recordings documented interactions as they
happened (Merrigan & Huston, 2004). Recordings of preschool and school
educators’ communicative interactions were included in the study, based on
a view that what is directly recorded during an actual interaction and what is
reported by participants about communicative interactions after they
happen, may be two very different things (Merrigan & Huston, 2004).
Communicative interaction data may then reveal some significant
contradictions which have important implications for the research. For
example there may be differences between what educators report they
communicate about and what is actually said in communications. Although
the recorded interactions were not entirely naturally occurring, they were as
close as the study could get to recording verbal communication between
educators in a natural setting. These recordings, along with the documents
collected, comprise two important sources of actual communication texts
between preschool and school educators.

With the consent of participants, audio recordings of formal and
informal meetings between preschool and school educators were captured.
Although video recordings of communicative interactions are used in some
communication audits (Tourish & Hargie, 2009b), audio recordings were
considered more appropriate in this study as the content of the spoken
interactions between educators, rather than non-verbal communication, were
required to address the research questions. While the researcher was present
as a non-participant in the meetings and aimed to be as unobtrusive as
possible, the interactions were likely reactive to the presence of the
researcher (Perakyla, 2008). The recordings were transcribed by the
researcher to produce a text for analysis. Educators were also interviewed at
a separate time after their interaction. The content of the interaction
informed questions in the interviews and explored this communication
experience, seeking their perspectives and insights into the interaction and
anything that occurred as a result of the information exchanged.

### 3.6.4 Development of the data collection techniques.

Two of the data collection techniques in this study were developed
in consultation with a reference group and field tested in a pilot study. The
reference group consisted of two preschool and two school educators recruited from an existing transition network. The reference group was asked to provide feedback about the initial versions of the questionnaire and CDL in relation to the clarity of instructions, ease of use and suggestions for additions such as other topics of communication in the questionnaire. This feedback was used to refine the instruments. For example, an ‘optional comments’ box was added to accompany the Likert-type scales in the questionnaire to provide for more detailed responses. This was in response to feedback that it could prompt information about specific communication events.

Following the reference group, a small pilot study was conducted in late 2010 to field test the CDL and the Preschool-school Communication Survey prior to their implementation in the main phase of the research. The pilot also functioned as a method informant (Bruce, 2007), and helped guide the development of other data collection techniques and their implementation in the main phase of the research. A suggestion for a small change to the CDL was also received from the Victorian DEECD in the process of approval for the research. The suggestion was intended to make the log quicker for educators to complete, by requiring a tick in certain columns rather than a worded answer. This change was made to the log for the main phase of data collection.

Three educators, two preschool and one school, piloted the Communication Diary Log. Feedback, as well as data generated by the CDLs, were important influences on the development and use of logs in the main phase of the study. For example, it became apparent from the pilot that interviews with participants who completed logs were essential in providing deeper explanation and elaboration of the brief data recorded in the logs.

The Preschool-school Communication Survey was piloted with 18 NSW preschool educators and changes were made to the questionnaire as a result. The School-preschool Communication Survey was unable to be piloted due to delays in gaining ethics approval in time to conduct the pilot in Term 4, 2011. Although the validity and reliability of the International Communications Association questionnaire had been established successfully in other studies, and the tool was designed to be adapted to a range of contexts, it was nonetheless important to field test the modified
version of the instrument (Downs & Adrian, 2004). After the pilot, some minor changes were made to the questionnaire to reduce the response categories for some of the questions. This was done where the particular item was not highly relevant or clear. Reducing some of the response categories also carried the benefit of making the questionnaire less daunting for respondents with the list of response categories taking up less space on the page, as well as being quicker to complete.

3.6.5 Data analysis.

Mixed method data analysis in this research involved qualitative and quantitative techniques and an integration of both approaches. A qualitative and quantitative content analysis, and descriptive and inferential statistics were combined in this study to develop an understanding of educators’ experiences of intersetting communication. The identification of key themes was achieved through computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) (Fielding & Warnes, 2009) with the various qualitative texts coded using NVivo software (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2010). Coding of themes was used as the basis for content analysis which both identified thematic categories and reported their frequency. Statistical analysis of quantitative data from the questionnaires was performed with the assistance of SPSS (IBM Corp, 2011). The mixed method data analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) involved the results of one form of data informing the analysis of another form of data. Data analysis in the research was an ongoing process conducted throughout the data collection time period as well as after data collection was complete.

3.6.5.1 Coding.

The coding of data from the range of sources in the research formed the basis of a qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). The first step in the data analysis procedure involved what Richards (2009) describes as descriptive coding. Each source – document, CDL, transcript, or questionnaire – was coded at ‘nodes’, the place of
storage in NVivo, for the five cases and for each educator involved in the research. Attributes – particular descriptive information about the cases and each educator – were recorded at these nodes.

The next step in analysis involved what Richards (2009) describes as broad brush coding, where the general topic of each unit of analysis was identified and aggregated at a node for each research question. In this way, coding was predetermined, that is, dictated by the research questions and the literature. The units of analysis for coding were a phrase, sentence or the entire response of the educator. Each unit may have been coded at more than one node and typically educators’ responses were coded at multiple nodes as they related to multiple aspects of the research.

Analytic coding of the data, as described by Richards (2009) was then performed by collating the data within the topic categories into subcategories. The subcategories were then organised as Bryman (2012) has detailed, that is, into thematic categories so that each theme was built out of a group of codes. The identification of thematic categories and subcategories was an iterative process, similar to that described by Julien (2008) involving reading and re-reading of the text, comparing the content of each, dividing and collapsing categories. Identifying themes also involved looking for repetition in the data similar to the procedure described by Ryan and Bernard (2003). When the researcher transcribed the interviews, focus groups and recordings, recurrent themes were noted in a journal and formed an early stage of analysis.

Codes and their resulting thematic categories were built in three ways which Bergman (2010) terms ‘bottom-up’, ‘top-down’ and ‘iterative’. Bottom-up coding indentified categories by what Ryan and Bernard (2003) describe as inducing them from the data and these codes were sometimes labelled using the exact language used by educators, for example “you can’t write that” was the label used for coded data relating to the theme of the problematic nature of written communication. At other times the researcher composed code labels to reflect the content of the data within them. A priori, or top-down codes, were imposed on the data, derived from the researcher’s prior theoretical understanding of communication concepts and preschool-school communication drawn from the literature. An example of this is the code label ‘channels’ for data relating to particular means of
communication. Often in the data analysis, iterative coding was used “where coding takes place iteratively between bottom-up and top-down coding” (Bergman, 2010, p. 391).

A priori codes were used to the greatest extent in the coding of educators’ communication motives. Educators’ reasons for communicating were analysed using a coding framework developed from the literature on interpersonal communication motives, and modified in response to the data. The first step in coding was to broad brush code all responses that mentioned the educators’ reasons for communicating. In the second step a start-up coding framework was used to code the data, comprised of seven motives that have been previously identified in the literature on interpersonal communication: control, affection, inclusion, escape, pleasure, relaxation and duty (Anderson & Martin, 1995; Rubin et al., 1988). At the end of this second stage of coding, educators’ responses were included in just four of the seven motive codes: control, duty, inclusion and affection. From here, the data coded under each motive, was further coded into more detailed sub-categories in a similar procedure to that described by Coffey and Atkinson (1996). These sub-categories were developed in combination with the literature and the data and were based on the goals for communication, often expressed by educators using verb infinitives such as ‘to ensure’, for example: “to ensure a smooth transition to school”. One adjustment was made to the four categories of motives as the term ‘helping’ was determined to be a better descriptor of the motives for communicating in the ‘affection’ motive category.

3.6.5.2 Quantitative content analysis.

Quantitative content analysis, such as that described by Bryman (2012) involved the counting of themes and sub-categories that were identified in the qualitative data coding. Frequencies of themes were calculated for the open-ended questionnaire responses, focus groups and cases. Frequencies of themes were reported for various sections of the questionnaire and informed the analysis of the focus groups and cases. For example, for the presentation of cases, a case-by-variable matrix (Fielding & Warnes, 2009) was generated in NVivo, with the five cases comprising the rows, and codes comprising the columns. This matrix provided the
frequency of the occurrence of codes in each case. Cases were analysed informed by this matrix as well as the results from the questionnaires and focus groups.

### 3.6.5.3 Statistical analysis.

Analysis of the quantitative data in the two questionnaires involved descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical analysis was assisted by the use of the SPSS (IBM Corp, 2011). In some instances, variables were re-coded to assist in analysis. Re-coding, that is, combining categories, when using rating scales is “useful in showing the general trends or categories in the data” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 509). For example, to determine current and desired levels of communication regarding particular topics, channels and sources (questionnaire sections 3 to 6, see Appendix 1), educators’ responses to the five point scale were re-coded to indicate either a ‘high level’ of information sent/received reflected by a rating of 4 or 5, or a ‘low level’ of information sent/received, reflected by a rating of 3 or below. This re-coding procedure was also used for levels of trust (questionnaire section 9) where the five ratings were re-coded to indicate either a ‘high level’ of trust or a ‘low level’ of trust. Similarly, for action taken on information (questionnaire section 7) ratings were re-coded to indicate either a ‘high level’ of action taken or a ‘low level’ of action taken.

In this study, the combining of categories provided an overall indication of, for example, the level of trust preschool educators had for others in relation to working with them around transition to school. As Cohen et al. (2007) argue, combining categories “gives us a general, rather than a detailed picture” (p. 510). The purpose of the quantitative data collection and analysis was to provide a general picture of preschool-school communication. The focus groups and cases extended this analysis by providing more in-depth information about these variables from individual participants.

For timeliness of information received (questionnaire section 8, the frequencies of each of the five ratings are reported. Relationships between variables were analysed with bi-variate tests. As one example, chi-squares were used to test the relationships between preschool educators’ type of setting and their engagement with intersetting communication. The specifics
of the statistical tests that were applied are outlined where the relevant results are presented in Chapter 5.

A measure of communication satisfaction was calculated with difference scores from educators’ ratings in the questionnaires. Communication satisfaction in this analysis relates to educators’ satisfaction with actual levels of communication versus the levels educators felt they needed to receive (Downs & Adrian, 2004). The calculation of difference scores to produce a measure of communication satisfaction is a common method of analysis for the ICA communication audit survey (Clampitt, 2009). The difference between (a) each educator’s rating of the amounts of communication sent and received, and (b) the amounts of information needed for each topic, source and channel in sections 3-6 of the questionnaire was calculated (b-a) to provide a measure of communication satisfaction (Downs & Adrian, 2004). The difference scores, which ranged between 0 and 4, were then re-coded, to indicate either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the amount of information sent or received. The re-coding also reported the direction of dissatisfaction, that is, whether the difference between the educators’ ratings indicated that too much, or too little, or enough information was sent or received.

3.6.5.4 Integrated analysis.

The primary method of integrated analysis was that the analysis of one form of data informed the analysis of other forms of data. The integration of data during analysis capitalised on the “benefits of having different but mutually informing data types and the scope for new ways of exploring an experience or issue that become possible when data are combined” (Bazeley, 2012, p. 815). For example, the results of the qualitative data derived from the cases, focus groups, and open-ended questionnaire items indicated that state-based intersetting communication initiatives, such as the Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statements (DEECD, 2009b) were viewed by some educators as presenting some challenges to communication. Using this result, a statistical analysis of quantitative questionnaire data relating to the variable of educators’ state was investigated for its impact on various aspects of communication such as whether educators practice intersetting communication and their use of
different channels of communication. In an example of how quantitative analysis informed qualitative analysis, educators rated a low level of information exchange using email, so qualitative data about email communication was coded to identify some of the reasons for this low level of use. Similarly, qualitative data regarding face-to-face communication was explored to determine educators’ reasons for the higher use and need for use of this channel than all other channels surveyed. In a further example, qualitative and quantitative responses to the questionnaire were used together to explore the meanings of responses.

3.7 The impact of the researcher on the research

In conducting this study, the researcher was highly aware of the impact of her own professional experiences in preschool-school communication. The researcher’s experiences in the field as an educator have inescapably been one of the lenses through which the research has been conceived and constructed and through which it was conducted and reported. The researcher brought her own biography to the research and had an effect upon the research process, the participants and the situation being studied at the case sites. The interpretive nature of this research acknowledges that the researcher, as well as the participants, bring their own values and interests to the research.

The presence of the researcher, particularly at the case sites, had a reactive impact on the data collected (Punch, 1998). For example, a school educator in one of the cases said that being a participant in the research had prompted her to initiate a face-to-face meeting with a preschool educator. Another school educator invited a preschool group to visit the school, upon reflection on the limited communication with preschools she had described in an interview for the research. The act of recording communications in CDLs is recognised as being likely to produce reaction, that is, affect the behaviour of the participant (Hargie & Tourish, 2009a). The task of completing a CDL may have caused educators to initiate communications. However, it was emphasised in the training sessions provided for participants that the CDLs were intended to report any normally occurring communications and that the absence of communication was also important.
It is acknowledged that by researching communication it was inevitable that the researcher had an impact on the communication, particularly at the case sites.

### 3.8 Ethical considerations

With a large number of schools and preschools involved in the research across two states and across government and private sectors, the process of gaining ethics approval was long and complex. A number of ethics clearances were gained for the study including from Charles Sturt University, the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Catholic Education authorities in NSW and Victoria, and one large early childhood education organisation. Three original ethics approval letters for the main study are included in Appendix 5. As three other approval letters identify specific sites and/or organisations, they are not reproduced in the appendices. An extension in the data collection time period was also approved. Approval to involve individual educators in the research was also gained from every school principal and preschool director of the schools and preschools involved in the research.

There were three main ethical considerations in this study: informed consent, confidentiality and risk to research participants. Regarding informed consent, educators participating in the focus group and case aspects of the research were provided with written information statements, received verbal information about the research and were required to sign a consent form. Educators who were audio-recorded gave verbal consent on tape as well as signed consent to be audio recorded. Information about the study was also provided to educators completing the questionnaire and the return of questionnaires was taken as consent to be involved in the research. For the recordings of communicative interactions and document collection in which educators talked or wrote about individual children, preschool educators were requested to inform parents of the research and secure consent for their child to be discussed during the meetings. This was part of the preschools’ own routine procedures for exchanging information with third parties.

The identities of educators, preschools/schools, communities and
children are protected in this study through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, educators were requested to refer to children in recordings of communicative interactions by their first names only. Participants were asked to de-identify documents containing information about children before they were collected by the researcher. Any document that was not sufficiently de-identified was completely de-identified by the researcher upon receipt of the document. All CDLs were either de-identified by the participant or by the researcher upon collection.

There was minimal risk to participants in this study. However, it was emphasised in both the written information statements and verbal information given to participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participation in the study was voluntary and the researcher respected the wishes of any educator who did not wish to be involved in the research.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter the assumptions underlying this interpretive inquiry into intersetting communication at the time of children’s transition to school have been outlined. A rationale for the use of mixed methods was articulated, emphasising the potential for enhanced understanding of preschool-school communication that was afforded by this approach. Communication audit techniques were outlined and their utility for the study of educator communication argued. Strategies for mixed method data analysis involving both qualitative and quantitative techniques and the integration of data during analysis were outlined. The researcher has acknowledged her impact on the research and outlined ways this was minimised in the collection of data. Important ethical considerations of informed consent, risk to participants and confidentiality were addressed throughout the research. The approaches adopted in the study generated a great deal of relevant data, which is presented in the following four chapters.
Chapter Four: Questionnaire Results

Results from the two questionnaires, the *Preschool-school Communication Survey* completed by preschool educators, and the *School-preschool Communication Survey* completed by school educators, are presented in this chapter. These data inform the research questions related to whether or not educators communicate (research question 1), their reasons for communicating (research question 1), the nature (research question 2) and outcomes of intersetting communication (research question 3).

In total, 104 preschool educators and 79 school educators responded to the questionnaires. Response rates are detailed in Table 4.1. Since not all respondents completed all questions, the number of educators who have responded to each survey question detailed in the sections below is provided in each table. Percentages and means reported have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Individual preschool and school educator respondents are referred to using the prefix ‘school educator’ or ‘preschool educator’ followed by a numeral, for example, preschool educator 32.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Distributed</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Response Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool-school Communication Survey (Preschool educators)</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-preschool Communication Survey (School educators)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Educators’ background information

Demographic information from the questionnaires is outlined in Table 4.2. Percentages have been calculated for each of the respondent groups (preschool and school educators). Rounding of percentages has resulted in some totals of more than, and some less than 100%.
Table 4.2: Preschool (N=104) and school educators’ (N=79) background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information</th>
<th>Preschool Educators</th>
<th>School Educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 25 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-40 years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60 years</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+ years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood sector</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school sector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood and primary school sector</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role in setting (school)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep teacher/Kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive staff member</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and principal</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other role</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role in setting (preschool)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Director/Coordinator</td>
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<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator and Manager</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family day care coordination staff</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other role</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of school</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic school</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent school</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of preschool</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long day care or occasional care</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool (NSW) or kindergarten (VIC)</td>
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<td>Family day care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile Children’s Service</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Multi-project children’s service</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Co-location</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<td><strong>Qualifications</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications in other disciplines</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No recognised qualifications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
These data indicate that the sample of preschool educators was overwhelmingly female, most had 10 years or more experience and worked in services which were not co-located with schools. The slight majority of preschool respondents had a Bachelor or higher qualification. The preschool educators in this sample worked in a range of services and roles. Questionnaire responses were received from more NSW than Victorian preschool educators.

The majority of school educators in the sample are female, had 10 years or more of teaching experience, held a Bachelor or higher qualification, worked in public schools and schools which were not co-located with a preschool. School educators in this study had a range of roles. Questionnaire responses were received from more NSW than Victorian school educators.

### 4.2 Educators’ engagement with intersetting communication

Preschool and school educators responded to a dichotomous question (yes/no) which asked if they practiced intersetting communication. The results are presented in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 and are discussed below.

**Table 4.3: Preschool educators’ (N= 104) engagement with intersetting communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you communicate with schools in regards to children’s transition to school?</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4: School educators’ (N=79) engagement with intersetting communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you communicate with preschools in regards to children’s transition to school?</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of preschool and school educators indicated that they engaged in intersetting communication related to children’s transition to school.

4.3 Reasons for intersetting communication: Motives

The reasons educators practiced intersetting communication, their motives for communicating, were canvassed in the surveys. Eighty-nine preschool and 76 school educators who indicated that they practiced intersetting communication, also identified their main motive for communicating. As outlined in section 3.6.5.1, educators’ reasons for communicating were analysed using a coding framework developed from the literature on interpersonal communication motives. This literature included the work of Anderson and Martin (1995); Rubin and Martin (1998); Rubin et al. (1988); Rubin and Rubin (1992), Step and Finucane (2002); and Walter et al. (2005). Using this framework, four key motives were identified: control; helping; duty; and inclusion. The definitions of the four key motives used to code the questionnaire data were:

- **Control**: Motives which relate to power, control and influence over an aspect of transition.
- **Helping**: Motives related to care and concern for others, to help, to assist and to benefit someone else.
- **Duty**: Motives related to part of the educator’s job and a feeling of responsibility to others.
- **Inclusion**: Motives related to having a connection with other educators, to share, to work together and to be in a relationship with other educators around transition.

Motives were often expressed as goals (the intention of the communication)
using verb infinitives such as ‘to ensure’, for example: “to ensure a smooth transition to school”. Subcategories were developed using verb infinitives which best represented the educators’ motives collated in that sub-category. Table 4.5 presents preschool and school educators’ motives and goals for practicing intersetting communication. Multiple responses were possible.
Table 4.5: Preschool (N=89) and school educator (N=76) motives for practicing intersetting communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category - Motive</th>
<th>Subcategory - Goal</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples from preschool educators</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples from school educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To get or give information</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>“To become familiar with the individual needs of the students”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Finding out when the school’s orientation days are”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“To see if any children will need teacher aides when they get to school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“To promote the value of preschool education and its relevance to future learning”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“To communicate when the orientation program is run in our school so we don’t clash times”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“To see what their expectations are”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“To ascertain student numbers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“To get the children's needs across to their future educators”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“To promote the school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Communicate with prospective parents about expectations and other information about school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category - Motive</td>
<td>Subcategory - Goal</td>
<td>Preschool educators</td>
<td>Examples from preschool educators</td>
<td>School educators</td>
<td>Examples from school educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To influence</td>
<td>To influence the</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 “To communicate with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the knowledge</td>
<td>knowledge and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preschool staff about my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and actions</td>
<td>actions of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>expectations of how best to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prepare the kids for school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“For the teachers to have a</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Draw some students to our school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>better understanding of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>children attending”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We.....discuss with the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teachers each child's skill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>levels and areas of need so</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that this can be followed on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with at school”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure</td>
<td>“To ensure the</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7 “To ensure the children are</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7 “To ensure children's needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>children are</td>
<td></td>
<td>ready”</td>
<td></td>
<td>are met”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ready”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category - Motive</th>
<th>Subcategory - Goal</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples from preschool educators</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples from school educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping</td>
<td></td>
<td>n 33</td>
<td></td>
<td>n 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To help others</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>“To help children transition in a positive way to school and to help teachers understand individual needs of children”</td>
<td>19 13</td>
<td>“To help preschool children with the transition to school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>“To guide and support families as they make the transition to school”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“To support and affirm the preschool team in all they are doing”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category - Motive</th>
<th>Subcategory - Goal</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples from preschool educators</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples from school educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty</td>
<td>To do the job</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Organising transition times and days”</td>
<td>“To set up a buddy program”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“To organise our transition to school program during Term 4 each year”</td>
<td>“Organisation for transition program”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To smooth, to ease</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“So that transition is an easy process for the families and children involved”.</td>
<td>“For the benefit of making the children's transition from preschool to school easier for all involved”.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have the best</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“To provide for the best possible transition for my preschool children”</td>
<td>“To enhance the transition experience for students”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category - Motive - Subcategory - Goal</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples from preschool educators</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples from school educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To fulfil an obligation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be in a relationship</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To share</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work together</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As reported in Table 4.5, the greatest number of preschool and school educators listed a motive categorised as control, followed by helping, duty and inclusion motives.

4.3.1 Control motives.

Preschool and school educators cited motives for interseting communication which related to personal influence, that is, control, over an aspect of transition to school. Sometimes, educators were explicit about the particular aspect of transition they sought to influence; other educators made general statements only. The majority of responses reflecting control motives were coded into the sub-category ‘to get or give information’. Responses which included more precise detail about what the communication intended to influence were coded into the sub-categories of ‘to ensure’ and ‘to influence the knowledge and actions of others’.

Control motives based on goals to obtain information from schools or to give information to schools were present in the responses of 46 preschool educators (52%). Examples of the types of information preschool educators aimed to obtain from schools included “Finding out when the school’s orientation days are” and “To see what their expectations are”. Examples of the types of information preschool educators reported that they gave to schools included “children’s needs” and “the value of preschool education and its relevance to future learning”.

Control motives based on goals of obtaining information from preschools or giving information to preschools were present in 53 (70%) of school educator’s responses. Examples of the types of information school educators aimed to obtain from preschools included information about children’s additional needs, for example, “to see if any children will need teacher aides when they get to school”. Examples of the types of information school educators indicated they gave to preschools included information “to promote the school”.

It was not always clear from educators’ responses what exactly they aimed to influence in the other setting through interseting communication. However, 15 preschool educators and 2 school educators did provide this detail. Primarily, preschool educators referred to informing school educators of children’s needs and providing information to schools about children who
would need help. In one example, a preschool educator wrote that she talked to school educators about each child's skills and needs “so that this can be followed on with at school”. In providing promotional information to preschools to pass on to parents one school educator added that this was intended to “draw some students to our school”.

Some preschool and school educators expressed a motive for communicating with the intention of making something certain regarding children’s transitions. The sub-category of ‘to ensure’ included all responses that included an intention to control an outcome, articulated by use of the verb ‘ensure’. Specifically, ensuring “that children’s needs are met” and “that children are ready” were referred to in these responses.

4.3.2 Helping motives.

Motives that reflected care, concern or help for others in the transition to school were articulated by 29 (33%) of preschool educators and 19 (25%) of school educators. The goal ‘to help others’ was mentioned by 19 (21%) of the preschool educators and 10 (13%) of the school educators. The focus of this help included children, families and school educators. The words “support” and “assist” were often used in these responses. For example, one preschool educator noted that her reason for intersetting communication was: “to guide and support families as they make the transition to school”.

Preschool and school educators indicated that they communicated in order to make the transition to school “smoother” and “easier”. For example, one preschool educator reported communicating with schools “so that transition is an easy process for the families and children involved”, and a school educator, described communicating “for the benefit of making the children's transition from preschool to school easier for all involved”. A small number of preschool and school educators conveyed the goal of providing the “best” transition experience possible. In most responses it was children who were identified as the potential recipients of these experiences.

4.3.3 Duty motives.

Preschool and school educators reported intersetting communication motives related to the requirements of their jobs. Most of the responses in
the ‘duty’ category of motives reflected the nature of educators’ work around children’s transition to school. For example the organisation of transition activities was commonly cited as the reason for communication: “To organise our transition to school program during Term 4 each year”. Some educators’ responses in this category related to having to an obligation to communicate. For example, in the words of one preschool educator: “we are mandated to do a transition statement”.

4.3.4 Inclusion motives.

Goals related to sharing, working together and being in a professional relationship with educators in the other setting were stated motives in the responses of 19 (21%) preschool educators and 14 (18%) school educators. Responses in this category reflected the goal of being connected with others. Some preschool educators indicated that they communicated in order to develop relationships between their preschool and schools and some school educators expressed a similar goal. Several preschool and school educators articulated goals related to sharing of information, resources, ideas or special events. Relatively few educators referred to motives for communicating that related to working together such as “to be able to liaise with other professionals”.

4.3.5 Summary: Motives.

Questionnaire responses provided data about the reasons for intersetting communication. Educators’ responses reflected four broad categories of intersetting communication motives: control; helping; duty; and inclusion. Control motives were reported most frequently, suggesting that educators engage in intersetting communication in order to have a personal effect on transition, such as influencing the actions of other educators and providing information. Helping motives focussed on supporting children, families and other educators. Several educators reported a duty or responsibility to communicate in order to organise transition activities. Inclusion motives involving the development of relationships were the least reported.
4.4 Reasons for not communicating

Educators who reported that they were not involved in intersetting communication were asked to provide their main reason for not communicating. Of the 14 preschool educators who provided a reason, eight (57%) stated that they did not communicate due to children’s attendance at another preschool service. Some preschool educators elaborated further, indicating that intersetting communication and transition were duties of the educators in the other preschool setting. Other reasons for not communicating provided by preschool educators indicated that communication was not desired by schools, and that schools had yet to initiate contact. The one school educator who indicated that they do not communicate with preschools stated that “given the small community, we deal directly with the parents”.

4.5 Strengths and weaknesses in communication

Preschool educators were asked to list the main strength and weakness in the way that staff in schools communicated with them. Likewise, school educators were asked this same question regarding staff in preschools. As respondents were asked to identify strengths and weaknesses, the data are reported under these headings. The issues identified as strengths and weaknesses could also be labelled as facilitators and barriers to communication.

The strengths and weaknesses that were coded in educators’ responses are summarised in Tables 4.6-4.9. In reading these tables, it is important to note that the strengths and/or weaknesses reported were identified by the recipients of the communication and that educator’s responses could be coded into multiple categories.

4.5.1 Strengths in school educators’ communication with preschools.

Table 4.6 reports on strengths in school educators’ communication as described by preschool educators.
Table 4.6: Main strengths in the way school staff communicate with preschool educators (N = 96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication during visits and meetings</td>
<td>n = 31, % = 32</td>
<td>“They meet with us at our centre”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They come in for a visit and speak to the teachers and children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Visiting the centre to discuss and observe the children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing</td>
<td>18, % = 19</td>
<td>“Valuing my opinion as a professional”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The school respects our program, praises the efforts we make preparing children for school, and sees the importance of communicating with us about the children who will be going to school”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They listen to us”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>17, % = 18</td>
<td>“Having verbal, one to one conversations”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Shared dialogue”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Ongoing communication”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 4.6 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication*</td>
<td>n = 12, % = 13</td>
<td>“They don’t really communicate with us in long day care”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is very minimal communication from the school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness and willingness to communicate</td>
<td>10, % = 10</td>
<td>“By using positive, open communication, by being flexible and available”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Staff are very open about what they are doing/planning for transition.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>8, % = 8</td>
<td>“Always approachable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other strengths</td>
<td>6, % = 6</td>
<td>“They communicate with the teacher who is responsible for the child, ensuring the communication is targeted at the appropriate person”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>5, % = 5</td>
<td>“Informal chats”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>4, % = 4</td>
<td>“We have an understanding”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 4.6 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strengths</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working together</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please see below explanation of this theme as a strength on p.116*
Communication during visits and meetings’ was the strength most commonly reported by preschool educators. Preschool educators were particularly positive about the times when school staff visited the preschool for informal conversations or formal meetings. Preschool educators identified strengths in communication when schools showed appreciation for the information they provided, or otherwise communicated a value for their work. These responses comprised the category of ‘valuing’. Reflecting the importance of feeling valued, preschool educator 29 noted that “They listen to us”. Having “dialogue”, particularly about children, was mentioned by 17 preschool educators as a strength of communication. Often in these responses the channel of communication, such as phone or face-to-face contact, was noted. The openness of school educators and their willingness to communicate with preschool educators was also listed as a strength by 10 preschool educators. Comments referring to school staff as keen, responsive and available to communicate with preschool educators, as well being “open” or “honest” in their communication were included in this category.

In response to this particular question in the questionnaire, several preschool educators wrote about aspects of school educator’s communication that seem to be weaknesses, rather than strengths. Twelve preschool educator’s responses were coded into the category of ‘lack of communication’, for example, preschool educator 76 wrote that “There is very minimal communication from the school”. Four preschool educators responded to this part of the questionnaire by saying that there were no strengths of school educators’ communication with them.

4.5.2 Strengths in preschool educators’ communication with schools.

The strengths identified by school educators regarding preschool educators’ communication with them are outlined in Table 4.7.
Table 4.7: Main strengths in the way preschool staff communicate with school educators (N= 72)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness and willingness to</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Open and willing to share information about the children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicate</td>
<td>n 27</td>
<td>“Open door policy. Will help me however they can”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 38</td>
<td>“They are willing to answer questions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and information</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Their knowledge of the student and family”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 19</td>
<td>“They make us aware of any educational/social/behavioural problems”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 26</td>
<td>“They know their children very well and can tell you all the bits and pieces that a teacher needs to know”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Staff are open and honest”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 8</td>
<td>“Frank exchange of valuable information”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
<td>n 7 10</td>
<td>“Verbal information to school staff regarding student strengths and needs”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Talking face-to-face”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication*</td>
<td>7 10</td>
<td>“Staff in preschools have very little communication with us”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“No communication other than when we initiate communication in Term 3”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>5 7</td>
<td>“Friendliness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>4 5</td>
<td>“Information is given informally”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>“Readily available to communicate”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 4.7 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-focused</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other strengths</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please see below explanation of this theme as a strength on p.120*
The data outlined in Table 4.7 indicate that preschool educators’ ‘openness and willingness to communicate’ was regarded as a strength in the way they communicated with school educators. This was reflected in the use of terms such as “eager”, “happy”, “willing” and “readily available” by school educators. Preschool educators’ knowledge and information, particularly about the children making the transition to school was also regarded as a strength by school educators. For example, school educator 71 commented that preschool educators: “know their children very well and can tell you all the bits and pieces that a teacher needs to know”. The honesty of preschool educators’ communication was identified as a strength by eight school educators (11%). Distinct from the category of ‘willingness and openness’, the ‘honesty’ category included responses where the school educator explicitly used words ‘honest’ or ’frank’ to describe communication strengths. Verbal channels of communication, particularly “face-to-face” contact was identified as a strength in the way preschool staff communicate by seven school educators (10%).

Similar to preschool educator’s responses, school educator’s responses to this particular question included those in the category of ‘lack of communication’. This would appear to be a weakness of preschool educators’ communication with schools, rather than a strength. For example, school educator 31 wrote, “Staff in preschools have very little communication with us”.

4.5.3 Weaknesses in school educators’ communication with preschools.

Preschool educators listed a range of weaknesses in the way school staff communicated with them. The results are outlined in Table 4.8.
Table 4.8: Main weaknesses in the way school staff communicate with preschool educators (N= 89)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>36   40</td>
<td>“Some schools don't ask anything about the children at all”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“If we have no concerns about the children attending we don't hear from them again”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“No one from either the Catholic School or local Public School has ever approached us”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>10   11</td>
<td>“I feel that school staff are not particularly interested in the information we have and see it as largely irrelevant to what will happen with the child at school”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The biggest weakness is definitely from schools who are not keen to communicate with us at all, who only pay the transition process lip service”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response to communications</td>
<td>9     10</td>
<td>“Lack of feedback about our transition reports particularly if we have indicated that we would like to speak to them”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“[not] calling back”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 4.8 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not valuing</td>
<td>n = 9, % = 10</td>
<td>“They often don't respect our judgement about whether a child is ready for school or not”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Not all teachers recognise the amazing learning that occurs in preschools”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time issues</td>
<td>8, 9</td>
<td>“Too busy to meet with us.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Lack of time for school staff to meet with preschool staff.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other weaknesses</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>“It is more about gaining information from us as preschool staff rather than developing mutual understandings around curriculum and how children learn best.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No weaknesses</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>“We have a great relationship with both the primary schools and I can see no weakness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td>“Schools not creating a partnership with the preschool staff.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“We often feel that schools are trying to increase their numbers (i.e. get bums on seats) and not think about an individual child's development”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit views</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Some schools just want to know [children’s] weaknesses, not strengths”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No knowledge of preschools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Some teachers do not have an understanding of what happens in childcare and talk down to staff.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most frequently reported weakness in the way in which school staff communicate with preschool educators was insufficient communication, described in terms such as “lack of”, “minimal” or “not enough” communication from schools. Several preschool educators described limited, often irregular communication, as in the comment from one educator: “If we have no concerns about the children attending we don't hear from them again”. Ten preschool educators (11%) reported a lack of interest among school staff in communicating with preschool educators, or a lack of interest in the information preschool educators could provide about children. In these situations, the level of interest demonstrated by school educators was considered to be a weakness of the communication. This was articulated by preschool educator 1: “I feel that school staff are not particularly interested in the information we have and see it as largely irrelevant to what will happen with the child at school”.

Nine preschool educators (10%) noted that they did not receive responses to their communications and regarded this as a weakness in communication. Lack of response was often couched as “lack of feedback”. Nine preschool educators (10%) also commented that school educators did not seem to value their opinions, or regard early childhood services as educational. Further, there were some comments that school educators did not seem to value smooth transitions for children. All of these views were reported as weaknesses of communication.

4.5.4 Weaknesses in preschool educators’ communication with schools.

School educators identified a range of weaknesses in the way that preschool educators communicated with them. The results are outlined in Table 4.9.
Table 4.9: Main weakness in the way preschool staff communicate with school educators (N= 70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>16 23</td>
<td>“We don't receive all transition statements”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is no face-to-face communication and no other communication other than a 2 page profile”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Not enough communication between schools and preschools with regards to transition, students at risk and transition statements”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time issues</td>
<td>14 20</td>
<td>“Finding a suitable time for both parties to get together and discuss issues”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It all happens at a rush at the end of the year”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Time constraints are an issue both ways.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication is always initiated by the school</td>
<td>12 17</td>
<td>“Always need approaching by the school. Do not volunteer information without a request”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Usually we have to seek them out”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with the information provided</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>“Parents read [transition statements] so preschool teachers word them in a round about way. There is lots of reading between the lines needed”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The information is often based on observations and lacking detail”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No weaknesses</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>“Nothing comes to mind”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I don't think there is a weakness.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel chosen</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Transition statements alone”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Usually face-to-face, which can be time consuming. No use of email, phone calls etc.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other weaknesses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“The number of preschools and childcare centres from which children come.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misconceptions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Misconceptions about school environment/routines”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“There has been a lack of interest in communicating”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most frequently reported weakness of preschool educators’ communication with schools was the absence, or inadequacy, of communication. Examples of particular inadequacies referred to the channel of communication: “There is no face-to-face communication and no other communication other than a 2 page profile”; missing documentation: “We don't receive all transition statements”; or information about specific groups of children: “There are not enough meetings or communication to discuss children at risk”. The second most prevalently reported weakness was time issues including that “It all happens at a rush at the end of the year” and that there is a lack of time for communication. From the responses in this category it seems that this weakness is better described as a barrier to communication that can exist for both the preschool and school, for example: “Time constraints are an issue both ways”.

Twelve school educators (17%) regarded the need to initiate communication with preschools as a weakness. Problems with the information received from preschool educators were also documented by 12 school educators (17%). These related to the written information about children received from preschool educators, noting that it required “reading between the lines”, was “not explicit enough”, “very general”, “cut and pasted” and not “totally honest”. Ten (14%) school educators wrote that there were no weaknesses in preschool educators’ communication with them.

4.5.5 Summary: Strengths and weaknesses.

Educators reported a range of strengths and weaknesses of their intersetting communication. Preschool educators identified sharing dialogue, being valued, openness and willingness to communicate, and communication in person as strengths in the way that school educators communicate with them. Lack of communication, lack of interest, non-response and not being valued, were identified as weaknesses in school educator communication. School educators listed openness and willingness to communicate, sharing their knowledge and information about children, honesty and verbal communication as strengths of preschool educators’ communication with them. Lack of communication was also identified as a
weakness in the way that preschool educators communicate with schools. Time-related issues, schools having to initiate communication and problems with the information provided were also identified as weaknesses of preschool educator communication with schools. The strengths and weaknesses identified by educators in this study provide an important indication of particular attitudes, behaviours, channels and responses that impact on preschool-school relationships.

4.6 Current levels of intersetting communication: Topics, channels and sources.

Educators were asked about levels of information sent from preschools and received by schools, and sent by schools and received by preschools. Specifically, they were asked to rate how much information they sent or received for each item on a list of information topics. Educators were also asked to rate how much information was received about children’s transition to school through a list of channels and sources. The items were rated on a five-point scale: 1 = very little, 2 = little, 3 = some, 4 = great, 5 = very great. These five ratings were re-coded to indicate either a ‘high level’ of information sent/received reflected by a rating of 4 or 5, or a ‘low level’ of information sent/received, reflected by a rating of 3 or below. Numbers and percentages of educators reporting low and high levels of information sent or received are reported in Tables 4.10-4.15. Mean ratings of information sent or received (M) were calculated from responses to the original 5-point scale. The items in each Table are presented in rank order from highest to lowest mean reported by the ‘sending’ educator group. The number of educators who rated each item is indicated by ‘N’, as this varied slightly through the survey.

4.6.1 Topics.

Educators were asked to rate ten topics relating to information sent to and received by schools from preschools, and 11 topics relating to information sent to and received by preschools from schools. These two lists were targeted to each group of educators and were generated from recommendations in existing literature regarding transitions practice. Results for these parts of the questionnaire are set out in Tables 4.10-4.11.
Table 4.10: Levels of information sent to and received by schools from preschools on 10 topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preschool educators: amount of information sent to schools</th>
<th>School educators: amount of information received from preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual children’s social development</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas of children’s development</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual children’s literacy and numeracy development</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How our service prepares children for school</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs/curriculum</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about my preschool/preschools</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool philosophy</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of these topics, the two reported by the greatest number of preschool educators to be the subject of high levels of communication with schools related to children’s development. With means of 3.15 for ‘individual children’s social development’ and 3.14 for ‘other areas of children’s development’, overall between ‘some’ and ‘great’ amounts of information were reported to be sent to schools by preschool educators on these topics. However, for these two topics, the majority of preschool and school educators also reported correspondingly low levels of information sent/received.

Of the ten listed topics, the two topics about which the greatest number of preschool educators reported low levels of information sent to schools were ‘preschool philosophy’ and ‘promotional information about my preschool’. With means of 2.28 and 2.30 respectively, overall between ‘little’ and ‘some’ information was reported to be sent to schools on these topics. A large number of school educators also reported the receipt of low levels of information about ‘preschool philosophy’, ‘promotional information about preschools’ as well as ‘programs/curriculum’. With a mean of 2.0, school educators reported that ‘little’ information was received from preschools about their programs and curriculum.

Some preschool and school educators gave explanations for their ratings. Preschool educator 2, explained her ‘very little’ and ‘some’ ratings for information sent to schools: “I have never felt that the above information would be welcomed and have definitely never been asked for it”. Preschool educator 5 wrote: “Schools are not interested in receiving this information – I have offered and they don’t want it or if you send it, it ends up in the bin”. Several school educators commented that the amount of information received from preschools depended on the individual preschool. Some educators also commented that the information was only received when it was requested. School educator 9 commented, “I feel like we have to prise the information from the preschool by continually asking questions. Information on the preschool students does not easily flow from their direction”.
Table 4.11: Levels of information sent to and received by preschools from schools on 11 topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transitioning/orientation program details</th>
<th>transition/orientation program details</th>
<th>Promotional information about my school/schools</th>
<th>School’s expectations of children starting school</th>
<th>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</th>
<th>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</th>
<th>School programs/curriculum</th>
<th>Who the children’s teacher will be</th>
<th>Developing continuity of teaching/learning for children</th>
<th>School philosophy</th>
<th>Feedback about child records sent to school</th>
<th>How the children have settled into school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of these topics, the two reported by the greatest number of school educators to be the subject of high levels of communication to preschools related to transition/orientation programs and marketing information. Approximately one-third of preschool educators reported receiving high levels of information from schools about these topics. However, the majority of preschool educators reported low levels of information received on these topics.

Eighty-six percent (59) of school educators indicated that they sent low levels of information about ‘How the children have settled into school’ to preschool educators. Low levels of information also were reportedly sent about the topics ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’ ‘how the children have settled into school’ ($M = 2.42$) and ‘feedback about child records sent to school’ ($M = 2.56$). A high proportion of preschool educators reported low levels of information received from schools for the four topics: ‘how the children have settled into school’, ‘school philosophy’, ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’ and ‘feedback about child records sent to school’. All of these topics had means of 2.0 or below, suggesting that between ‘little’ or ‘very little’ information was received by preschools from schools.

Some preschool and school educators provided further detail to support their ratings. School educator 67 added to her ‘very little’ rating for ‘how the children have settled into school’, with the comment that “If preschool educators are keen to catch-up with students, and approach the school they are welcome to visit, but we do not explicitly invite them to the school. Have found that this is not beneficial for some children”. School educator 48 reflected that the survey question had caused her to think about the direction of information: “Oops! I visit the preschools and get a lot of information about the children coming into school but just realised I don't send them much information”. Several preschool educators noted that the information they received varied greatly from school to school. In this regard, some preschool educators made reference to specific schools: “These comments only apply to the one school that is interactive with our centre. While efforts have been made to involve the other school (private), no cooperation has been forthcoming”.

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4.6.2 Sources.

Preschool and school educators were asked about the sources of information – the particular people from whom they received information about children’s transition to school and the levels of information they provided. The results are presented in Tables 4.12 and 4.13.

Table 4.12: Levels of information from sources that preschool educators receive about children’s transition to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teachers</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School principals</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other school staff</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, preschool educators reported receiving limited information about children’s transition to school. Where high levels of information were received, much of it came indirectly from parents rather than from school staff. By way of explaining her rating, preschool educator 16 commented: “This is the area we are most frustrated about. The schools want all the information we have, but there is no feedback once the child starts school. We rely on parents to let us know how their children are going”.

Table 4.13: Levels of information from particular sources that school educators receive about children’s transition to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool teachers</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool directors</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other preschool staff</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As for their preschool counterparts, school educators reported receiving limited information related to children’s transition to school. Approximately one-third of school educators (30% and 33% respectively) indicated that they received high levels of information from preschool teachers and preschool directors. School educator 37 commented: “I mostly ask the Director and therefore receive most information this way. I have direct contact with one preschool aide and therefore receive a lot of information from her regularly”.

4.6.3 Channels.

Channels of communication – the means by which information is sent/received between preschools and schools – were canvassed in the questionnaires. Preschool and school educators were asked how much information they received about children’s transition to school from the other settings (preschool/school) through four generally described channels: face-to-face contact, telephone, electronic communication and paper-based communication. In addition, an earlier question asked educators about the amount of information they sent and received through newsletters; a specific communication channel. Table 4.14 outlines the results for the general channels of communication surveyed and Table 4.15 shows the results for newsletters.
Table 4.14: Levels of information about children’s transition to school received through four channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Preschool educators – amount of information received from school staff</th>
<th>School educators – amount of information received from preschool staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face contact</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic communication e.g. email</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.15: Levels of information sent and received by preschool and school educators through newsletters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>School educators: information sent to preschools</th>
<th>Preschool educators: information received from schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool newsletters</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Face-to-face contact was the channel through which most educators received communication. The channel most often associated with low levels of communication was paper-based for school to preschool and electronic communication for preschool to school, each reported by 90% of receiving educators. Amongst the small number of additional comments provided by preschool and school educators in this section of the questionnaire, school educator 70 provided detail of the face-to-face contact she had with preschools: “We visit preschools to make contact with teachers and observe children. We also attended the transition statement handover afternoon which was a great opportunity to chat to the preschool teachers”. However, overall preschool and school educators reported low levels of information received through all four channels. This pattern was also evident when newsletters were considered (Table 4.15).

### 4.6.4 Summary: Current levels of intersetting communication.

Response to the questionnaires indicated that there are low levels of information sent and received between preschools and schools regarding most surveyed topics, through four channels and from particular source persons. Additionally, the amount of information reported as received by both preschool and school educators was always lower than the amount reported as sent for each of the surveyed topics.

Topics for which the greatest percentage of educators reported low levels of information exchange related to information about preschools and schools and about ‘how the children have settled into school’, ‘feedback about child records sent to schools’ and ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’. High levels of information were reported by both preschool and school educators about topics related to individual children, in particular their social development. High percentages of school educators reported sending high levels of information about school transition/orientation programs, and marketing information to preschools.

Face-to-face communication was the channel through which most educators reported they received high levels of information. Conversely, electronic communication was the channel reported to have the lowest levels of use.
The majority of preschool and school educators reported low levels of information received from persons in the other setting. Preschool educators received more information about children’s transition to school from children’s parents than they did from school principals or teachers. ‘Other preschool staff’ and ‘other school staff’ were the sources from which school and preschool educators respectively, received the lowest mean amounts of information about children’s transition.

4.7 Information needs of educators

In addition to asking how much information was sent or received, educators were asked to rate their information needs – how much information they felt they needed to send or receive; as well as their preferred channels and sources of communication. The topics, channels and sources listed in these questions were the same as those surveyed for current levels of information. Educators rated their information needs on the same five-point scale used to rate current levels of information: 1 = very little, 2 = little, 3 = some, 4 = great, 5 = very great. These five ratings were re-coded to indicate either a high level of information needed to be sent/received, reflected by a rating of 4 or 5, or a ‘low level’ of information, reflected by a rating of 3 or below. Results of ratings for each of these areas are reported in the Tables in this section. Mean ratings of information needed to be sent or received (M) were calculated. The items in each Table are presented in rank order from highest to lowest mean reported by the ‘sending’ educator group. The number of educators who rated each item is indicated by ‘N’.

4.7.1 Topics.

Preschool educators were asked to rate the amount of information they felt they needed to send to schools, in relation to ten listed topics. Similarly, school educators were asked to rate the amount of information they felt they needed to receive from preschools in relation to these same topics. The results from the two questionnaires are presented in Tables 4.16 and 4.17.
Table 4.16: Levels of information needed to be sent to and received by schools from preschools regarding 10 topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preschool educators: Amount of information needed to be sent to schools</th>
<th>School educators: Amount of information needed to be received from preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual children’s social development</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas of children’s development</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How preschool prepares children for school</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual children’s literacy and numeracy</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs/curriculum</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about my preschool/preschools</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool philosophy</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A majority of preschool and school educators considered that high levels of information about ‘individual children’s social development’ should be sent and received. Indeed, across almost all of the topics listed, both groups of educators indicated that high levels of communication were required. The exceptions were ‘promotional information about preschools’ and ‘preschool philosophy’, where 60% (52) of preschool and 79% (54) of school educators reported that low levels of information only were needed.

Explanatory comments from educators included those from preschool educator 83: “I feel if a child did not go to preschool and only came to long day care then I would have to do transitions and would need to provide the school with the developmental information on that particular child” and school educator 67: “I feel we probably do not need a huge amount of information about each child – the most important details are those of any particular or significant needs a child may have”.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>School educators: Amount of information that needs to be sent to preschools</th>
<th>Preschool educators: Amount of information that needs to be received from schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level n</td>
<td>Low level %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition/orientation program details</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School’s expectations of children starting school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about schools</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of teaching/learning for children</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback about child records sent to school</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School programs/curriculum</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the children have settled into school</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School philosophy</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who the children’s teacher will be</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A majority of school educators (86% and 82% respectively) reported that high levels of information about ‘transition/orientation program details’ and ‘schools expectations of children starting school’ should be sent to preschools. Similarly the majority of preschool educators (80 and 83%) reported that high levels of information about these two topics needed to be received from schools. Consistent ratings were reported across groups, with the majority of educators, regardless of their setting, rating high levels of communication as necessary for the majority of topics listed. Exceptions are noted with the majority of school teachers (54%) indicating that they did not regard it necessary to share information with preschool educators about ‘who the children’s teacher will be’, and the majority of preschool educators (52%) reporting that they did not require high levels of information related to ‘promotional information about schools’.

### 4.7.2 Sources.

Preschool and school educators were asked how much information about children’s transition to school they felt they need to receive from particular sources. The results are presented in Tables 4.18 and 4.19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School teachers</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School principals</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other school staff</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the four sources listed, the greatest percentage of preschool educators indicated that a high level of information about children’s transition to school was needed from school teachers. Most preschool educators reported that a low level of information was needed from ‘other school staff’. Few educators provided additional comments at this point in the questionnaires. However, preschool educator 23 wrote: “Any feedback we can get is always helpful and constructive”.

143
Table 4.19: Levels of information from particular sources that school educators feel they need receive about children’s transition to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Person</th>
<th>Low level n</th>
<th>Low level %</th>
<th>High level n</th>
<th>High level %</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool directors</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other preschool staff</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The greatest percentage of school educators indicated that a high level of information about children’s transitions was needed from preschool teachers. The mean of 4.31 indicated that, on average, more than a ‘great’ amount of information was required from this source. Forty-three (68%) school educators reported that low levels of information were needed from ‘other preschool staff’. Few school educators commented on this survey question. However, school educator 74 explained that “as much information as possible is valuable to place children in classes to have a smooth transition into the school”.

4.7.3 Channels.

Preschool and school educators were asked how much information they needed to receive about children’s transition to school through four generally described channels: face- to-face contact, telephone, electronic communication and paper-based communication. In addition, educators were asked earlier in the survey about the amount of information they needed to send and receive through newsletters. Results are presented in Table 4.20.
Table 4.20: Levels of information about children’s transitions to preschool and school educators feel they need to receive through four channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Preschool educators: Amount of information needed to be received from school staff</th>
<th>School educators: Amount of information needed to be received from preschool staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic communication e.g. email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of preschool and school educators indicated that, of the
four channels listed, they felt they needed to receive high levels of
information through face-to-face contact with staff in the other setting.
Large numbers of preschool (56, 61%) and school (33, 49%) educators
reported that they preferred to receive low levels of information through
paper-based communication.

4.7.4 Summary: Information needs of educators.

The information needs of preschool and school educators reported in
this chapter indicate that for the majority of topics, sources and channels a
high level of information is needed to be sent and received. Whilst ratings
were consistent across the two groups for most of the surveyed items, there
were a few exceptions, indicating that the information needs of preschool
and school educators differ in respect to some aspects of their intersetting
communication.

4.8 Action taken on information sent

Preschool educators were asked to rate the amount of action that was
taken on the information they sent to schools. Likewise, school educators
were asked about the amount of action taken on the information they sent to
preschools. Ratings from the same five-point scale were used to calculate
either a ‘high level’ of action taken (rating of 4 or 5), or a ‘low level’ of
action taken, (rating of 3 or below). Numbers and percentages of educators
reporting low levels and high levels of action taken are reported in Tables
4.21 and 4.22.
Table 4.21: Action taken on information sent to preschools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action taken on information sent to preschools</th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.22: Action taken on information sent to schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action taken on information sent to schools</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of preschool and school educators reported low levels of action taken as a result of information they sent to the other setting. This section elicited a number of comments that elaborated on these ratings. For example, preschool educator 7 indicated that any follow-up action was “an unknown” and preschool educator 60 explained, “At the time of meeting with [school] teachers to discuss information, they are very interested and respectful but I cannot comment on the amount of action which is taken”. Some educators mentioned not receiving “feedback”, “hearing back” or a “response” to the information they had sent. School educator 9 commented, “We assume information is passed on to parents but we do not receive any feedback”, and preschool educator 16 wrote “I am not really sure what information is used – there is no feedback”.

One school educator relied on future enrolments, and on the basis that these had not changed, assumed that the information provided to the preschool had not been passed on to parents. Some educators indicated that follow-up action depended on the particulars of the preschool or school: “The preschool seems to appreciate whatever I send however the childcare centre never reply” (school educator 32).
4.9 Timeliness of information

Preschool educators were asked about the extent to which information from schools was received in a timely manner. Similarly, school educators were asked about the timeliness of information received from preschools. Timeliness was defined as ‘information is received when you most need it’. A similar five-point scale (1 = never at the right time, 2 = rarely at the right time, 3 = sometimes at the right time, 4 = mostly at the right time, 5 = always at the right time) was provided. Results are reported in Tables 4.23 and 4.24.

Table 4.23: Timeliness of information received from schools rated by preschool educators (N=89)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information received from schools</th>
<th>Never at the right time</th>
<th>Rarely at the right time</th>
<th>Sometimes at the right time</th>
<th>Mostly at the right time</th>
<th>Always at the right time</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.24: Timeliness of information received from preschools rated by school educators (N = 67)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information received from preschools</th>
<th>Never at the right time</th>
<th>Rarely at the right time</th>
<th>Sometimes at the right time</th>
<th>Mostly at the right time</th>
<th>Always at the right time</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost half (32, 48%) of school educators reported that information from preschools was received ‘mostly at the right time’. The greatest number of preschool educators (35, 39%), indicated that information from schools was received ‘sometimes at the right time’, closely followed by ‘mostly at the right time’ (33, 37%). Comments from school educators included: “Always at the right time because when I need information I make an appointment in advance and ask the relevant questions” (school educator
32), and “Need to receive all transition statements at the beginning of December to assist with grade allocations and funding applications” (school educator 69).

4.10 Trust

Preschool and school educators were asked to rate their trust of others with whom they worked at times of children’s transition to school. A five-point scale was used (1 = very little, 2 = little, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always). These five ratings were re-coded to indicate either a ‘high level’ of trust reflected by a rating of 4 or 5, or a ‘low level’ of trust reflected by a rating of 3 or below. Numbers of educators reporting high and low levels of trust are reported in Tables 4.25 and 4.26. An average rating for trust \( (M) \) was calculated. The number of educators who rated each item is indicated by ‘N’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues in own workplace</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professionals e.g. speech, OTs, paediatricians</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Directors</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department workers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion workers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of school educators have a high level of trust for all groups of people on the list provided.
Table 4.26: Preschool educator trust for others with whom they work at times of children’s transition to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues in own workplace</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professionals e.g. speech, OTs, paediatricians</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion workers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other early childhood staff</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teachers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department workers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School principals</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of preschool educators surveyed had a high level of trust for all of the groups of people on the list provided. However, 36 preschool educators (41%) reported a low level of trust for school principals and 26 (30%) for school teachers. Preschool educators commented that their trust for school personnel depended on their relationships with them. For example, preschool educator 96 wrote that she trusts: “the ones I feel most comfortable with, have already worked with and established relationships with”. Preschool educator 44 explained the ‘sometimes’ rating she gave for trust of school teachers and school principals: “… these people listen to information, seem to care but we NEVER hear back from them with requests for more info etc. Are we giving enough information or don't they value what we have learnt about the children?”
4.11 Intersetting communication experiences

Preschool and school educators were asked to describe one specific intersetting communication experience (ICE). Before providing the description, educators answered a dichotomous question regarding whether the intersetting communication described was ‘effective’ or ‘not effective’. Results from this question are set out in Table 4.27. Educators were then asked to describe the ICE, including the consequences of it for themselves and for others. The ICEs were coded for the outcomes of the communication described by the educators and their perceptions of the outcomes for other educators, children and parents. Not all educators responded to the questions in this section of the survey and not all ICEs contained a description of the outcome of the communication.

4.11.1 Effective and ineffective intersetting communication experiences.

Numbers of preschool and school educators reporting effective and ineffective intersetting communication experiences are presented in Table 4.27.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School educators</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of preschool and school educators reported an effective intersetting communication experience. Two examples of effective ICEs are reproduced here in full:

Spoke to school teacher about child starting at school. We provided a school readiness checklist on the child's development and also discussed any other issues concerning that child. The teacher discussed what they would be doing at school and also said whether the child would be ready for school or not. This process was effective as both carer and the teacher could talk one-on-one and
discuss issues and areas needed about the child. (preschool educator 79)

I needed to know further information about a special needs child who was enrolling at our school. We organised a preschool visit so I could observe the child. Having the preschool teacher explain and talk about the child and his progress while I observed was extremely beneficial. It enabled us to make sure the transition process from preschool to school was smooth and effective. (school educator 35)

Some educators described ineffective ICEs. Examples included the following:

As we are situated with a school, we asked the principal if we could take our preschoolers over to use their library as an excursion and get them used to the system. He said he would look into it and we have never heard anything back and that was nearly a year ago. (preschool educator 52)

I was asked by some parents at what age children are able to enrol in school and I told them that students could enrol at the beginning of the year if they turn 5 years on or before 31 July of that year. When the director of one of the local pre-schools heard about this she became very agitated and insisted that I attend the pre-school one afternoon after the children had gone and explain myself. I told the assembled throng that turning 5 years on or before 31 July in the year of enrolment was department policy and, in fact, legislated, but this was not believed. They countered that primary teachers did not have the knowledge or experience to teach 4-year-olds. Nothing I said could sway them. I offered to bring a copy of the legislation for them to look at, I stated that I had two teachers on the K-2 staff who were qualified and practised pre-school teachers, all to no avail. We eventually parted company agreeing to disagree. Future attempts at communication were rejected. (school educator 6)

**4.11.2 Outcomes of interseting communication experiences.**

Sixty-six school educators and 79 preschool educators described a specific interseting communication experience. Of these, 52 school educators and 61 preschool educators included a description of the consequences of the communication. These consequences were coded into three main categories of outcomes for educators, children and families. Outcomes for educators included data relating to the educator themselves, as well as their perceptions of the outcomes for other educators. The other two categories included data regarding educators’ perceptions of the outcomes of the communication for children and families. Interrogation of these
categories identified several subcategories (Table 4.28). Where appropriate, educator responses have been included in more than one category or subcategory.

Table 4.28: Outcomes of preschool educators’ (N=61) and school educators’ (N=52) integsetting communication experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and subcategories</th>
<th>Preschool educators</th>
<th>School educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOMES FOR EDUCATORS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship outcomes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- positive</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- negative</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting ready for children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages to parents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown outcomes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-achievement of intended outcome</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersetting knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow of communication</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing practice in the other setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outcomes for educators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected settings</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive transition experiences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor transition experiences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful for families</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems for families</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.11.2.1 Outcomes for educators.

Educators detailed a range of outcomes of their reported ICE. These included relationship outcomes, both positive and negative. Positive relationship outcomes were reported when preschool and school educators described working together as a result of their communication. School educator 54 noted:

Establishing a town Early Years Network allowed the dissemination of information between the schools and the preschool throughout the year, not just at the end of year with transition. It has allowed us to work collaboratively on a number of projects.
Preschool educator 68 commented: “Having a meeting once a term allows all present to share ideas, exchange information and plan events together”.

Preschool and school educators reported feeling valued, appreciated or included by the communication experience they described: “The [preschool] staff make us feel very welcome” (school educator 30); “The school staff member appeared interested in each child, in what information I had to offer, and how the school could use this information” (preschool educator 103).

Most relationship outcomes were described as positive: “Because of our network, I always feel I have positive relationships with my preschool colleagues. We have developed a healthy positive respect for each other” (school educator 76); “Having these information nights and the collaboration that is required when organising has enabled all involved to develop a positive working relationship” (preschool educator 42).

However, several negative relationship outcomes were described as a result of the ICEs. These encompassed feelings of disappointment and frustration, and resulted in strained relationships. Comments included:

I was disappointed that she [school educator] didn't ask my opinion after I had this child at our centre since the beginning of the year. (preschool educator 54)

Disappointing and frustrating. (preschool educator 88)

It's frustrating for me and for other early childhood professionals when our professional opinions are so undervalued. (preschool educator 1).

A result … was a breakdown of trust between the school and the preschool. (school educator 44)

It certainly affects our relationship with this school which is unfortunate. (preschool educator 30)

Fifteen percent and 19% of preschool and school educators respectively, indicated that the ICE resulted in assisting schools to get ready for their new children. In particular, the experiences recorded were described as helping school educators get to know children. Comments from educators included: “I found this experience really helpful as it helped ‘fill in the picture’ for me about these new children” (school educator 61), and “From this meeting, teachers then have a broad background understanding
of the children and how they will adapt to a more formal learning environment” (preschool educator 60). Several educators noted more specifically that their intersetting communication experience had helped to place children into classes. Examples of these responses included:

Sally [school educator] came to our service and spoke to Helen, [teacher in charge], in relation to all the children going into her class...The information gained helped group the children into appropriate classes as they were going into composite classes. (preschool educator 33)

The [first-year-of-school] teachers had a meeting with the [preschool] teacher at the end of the year to discuss the students that would be attending our school the following year…This helped us with planning the grades for the next year. (school educator 36)

Some educators (8% preschool, 19% school) reported that their intersetting communication experience had assisted in communicating messages or information to parents. One school educator described an experience which helped him promote the school to prospective parents:

We had falling numbers at the preschool so I developed a plan with the preschool staff to increase numbers. We spoke on a personal level, brainstormed some ideas and put these into place. We agreed to undertake certain tasks. Numbers have almost doubled. (school educator 50)

A school principal responsible for a co-located preschool described how the preschool director had contacted him for help in communicating with an individual parent:

The preschool director contacted me by phone one morning to say that despite suggesting to a parent that their child was too unwell to be at preschool, the parent had still left the child at the centre. The child's health had not improved and the preschool director asked that I, as school principal, contact the parent directly and request that they come and collect their child. Thanks to this effective communication the issue was quickly resolved. (school educator 23)

The ICE described by preschool educator 15 was described as effective as it resulted in a consistent message being given to a parent;

I told the [school] teacher what I could about the child's development and said that I felt the child needed another year before entering school to build confidence and work on social skills. The parent of the child was quite anxious to be told that we felt the child was ready for school. After we had given the parent our opinion, she had asked the [school] teacher what she thought. The [school] teacher wanted
us to agree on whether the child was or was not ready for school so that we were both giving the same message to the parent, which worked really well, as it was clear to the [school] teacher as well as the preschool staff that the child would struggle to cope with school at that stage. The result of these discussions was that the parent didn't receive conflicting or confusing opinions about the child's school readiness.

Several ICEs referred to general outcomes for educators. Terms such as “extremely beneficial”, “very helpful” and “very successful” were used, but responses did not include specific information about outcomes. For example:

At the end of each year we have a transition form that comes from the preschool. It is a detailed report about each child. It contains very valuable information and is very helpful and informative. (school educator 63)

Our [transition] statements at the end of 2010 were very detailed and we were contacted by a number of teachers to say how helpful they were. In addition we also provided school teachers with a copy of our curriculum, so they could see where the learning outcomes came from. Teachers said this was very valuable. (preschool educator 7)

Some educators indicated that they did not achieve what had been intended through their intersetting communication experience. School educator 32 explained that she asked a preschool to: “put a section at the bottom of their enrolment form that allows parents to tick a box to consent to information to be given to schools in reference to transition ... but this has not been followed up”.

Preschool educator 6 also indicated that her intentions were not met by her communication with a school:

I had a child who was transitioning to school and who had additional needs. I spoke with the kindergarten teacher and invited her to come and visit our preschool to observe the child in the preschool environment. She did not visit our service.

Preschool educator 5 tried to share records with a school, but this was not achieved: “When I spoke about our developmental records and sharing this I was told they weren't interested because they spend the first week of term testing the children”.
Three preschool and three school educators commented in their ICEs that the outcome of the communication had been that they had gained knowledge about the other setting (coded as intersetting knowledge). An example came from school educator 64, who told of how communication between preschool and school educators at her local network meeting was where “collaborative understandings of each other’s field are built”. Preschool educator 47 described a communication experience with a school leading to her learning about a particular school program:

At this meeting, one principal was telling me about a new literacy program being trialled in that school, 3L - Language, Learning and Literacy. She invited me to observe this program in action… I visited both kinder classes, observing the sessions in action.

Educators described implications for the flow of communication between settings from their communication experiences. Six preschool and four school educators reported that particular interactions led to more communication, or that the experience resulted in future communications being reduced or ceasing all together. Preschool educator 103 noted a positive outcome from her communication experience which involved a conversation with a school educator regarding children going to school: “As a consequence there have continued to be positive exchanges of information with this school”.

Some school and preschool educators described having an influence on practice in the other setting, as a result of their communication experiences. For example, preschool educator 16 reported that feedback she gave to a school regarding their transition program had resulted in a change in practice:

I was asked how the programme was running and when I mentioned the ‘colouring-in activities’ and that ‘the children found them uninteresting’ they changed the way they offered the art/craft activity. They offered more ‘open-ended’ activities.

School educator 53 perceived that there had been a change in practice in the preschool after her communication with them: “Following Best Start Assessment at start of the year, information regarding student areas of strength and weakness was shared with the preschool Director. She took this on board and has adjusted her teaching programs accordingly”.

157
4.11.2.2 Outcomes for children.

In their descriptions of their interseting communication experiences, some educators included their perceptions of outcomes of the communication for children. These descriptions were coded into four subcategories: connected settings; positive transition experiences; exclusion; and poor transition experiences.

Preschool and school educators reported that their interseting communication experiences had resulted in interconnections for children between preschool and school settings. These interconnections, often described as transition activities, were reported by educators as having benefits for children’s transition to school. Many of the transition activities which were outcomes of communication provided children with what Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes as ‘multi-setting participation’. These activities included groups of preschool children visiting schools with their preschool educators and school educators visiting preschools to meet children. Educators reported that preschool children were able to become familiar with their school educators as a result of the interseting communication which had organised the visits:

The school teacher would make herself available to the children and get to know their names and they would get to know hers and that she would be their teacher. (preschool educator 18)

Visiting the preschool to meet the children who will be attending our school the next year…the children know who I am and that they will be seeing me soon in a different setting. (school educator 9)

Two preschool and four school educators reported perceptions that children had experienced a positive transition to school as an outcome of their interseting communication. Preschool educator 44 commented that, as a result of her communications with a school regarding a child described as being “very shy” and who had “trouble…separating from dad”, a special transition program had been established for the child. As a result, the child was reported by the educator to be “happy and comfortable” at school. School educator 48 reported a positive transition to school for a child at the centre of her conversations with a preschool:

The [preschool] teacher discussed the child with me and informed me of strategies that were successful for her with this child. We also
organised a time for me to go in and join in activities with this child so the child became familiar with me. That child was then put into my class on starting school. The child made a smooth transition and settled in more easily and quickly than expected.

Three preschool and two school educators reported that children had been excluded from a school or preschool program as the result of their intersetting communication experience. The exclusion outcomes for the children were that they were: ‘kept back’ in preschool for another year; ‘sent back’ to preschool from school once they had started; or sent home from preschool. In the description of her communication experience, preschool educator 41 explained:

A child was not ready for school. We informed the parents. Parents sent child anyway. Teacher phoned school six weeks into Term 1, and the school liaised with us. Child sent back to us for another year of preschool.

School educator 17 described what happened after a visit to a preschool to observe a child and discuss the child with the preschool director:

In one case last year, after such observations, we were able to support/advise the delay of the student's start date until 2012. Age was a major factor. This was also supporting the advice given by the preschool director [to the child’s parents].

Five preschool educators provided examples of children who experienced poor transitions as a result of the intersetting communication experience they described. No school educators reported such outcomes related to children. Some of the outcomes for children were described by preschool educators as “stress to the child” and “experienced problems”. Preschool educator 49 described her communication experience and the outcome for a child:

Transition report sent to a school about a high needs child, report contained comprehensive strategies to ease child's stress, triggers which set child off. When child went to school during his orientation a trigger set him off and he acted aggressively, and was made sit outside the room with one of the helpers. Child's mother complained to principal, and explained that support plan was ignored. Teacher responded by saying she doesn't have time to read the reports. First time at school was a very traumatic time for this boy.
4.11.2.3 Outcomes for families.

Eleven preschool educators reported their perceptions of outcomes for families resulting from intersetting communications. These outcomes were either in some way helpful for families or caused problems for them.

Helpful outcomes for the families of children making the transition to school included organised information sessions for families presented by school educators, often at the preschool. It was commented that these were “incredibly beneficial” for families and further that the “families’ transition the next year was very pleasant” (preschool educator 43).

Other communication experiences described involved helpful outcomes for individual families. Preschool educator 96 described the outcome of a meeting which involved a family, the preschool educator, school educators and other support services: “The outcome was positive – the family became more comfortable with the school system through this meeting and gained some confidence with the support her child would receive at school”.

Four preschool educators included their perceptions of some of the difficulties for families which had resulted from their particular intersetting communication experience. Preschool educator 88 reported the following outcomes for families resulting from the educator’s communication with a school regarding children’s class placement:

Every year, they promise they will heed our advice and put it into practice - particularly with keeping children together so they have peer support, yet, every year we have irate parents coming back to us, upset that their child knows no-one else in their class.

It is evident in this example that there are some unintended consequences of preschool-school communication that result in difficulties for families.

4.12 Chapter summary

Questionnaire responses have provided a general picture of intersetting communication. Educators reported engaging in intersetting communication, albeit for different reasons, at different levels and with varying outcomes.

The main communication motives were identified as control, helping, duty, and inclusion. Educators from both settings reported
communicating in order to influence transition experiences. Communication to build relationships was the least reported motive.

The aspects of communication identified as strengths and weaknesses by educators in this study provide an important indication of particular attitudes, behaviours, channels and responses that contribute to positive and negative communicative relationships. Both preschool and school educators identified an openness and willingness to communicate as a strength of the other’s communication with them. Other frequently reported strengths of school educators’ communication with preschools include: sharing dialogue, valuing the opinion of preschool educators and communication in person during meetings and visits. School educators listed preschool educators sharing their knowledge and information about children, honesty and verbal communication as strengths of preschool educators’ communication with them.

Lack of communication was identified by both groups of educators as a weakness in communication. School educators also identified time issues, having to initiate communications and problems with the information provided as weaknesses of preschool educator communication. Preschool educators identified lack of interest, non-response and not being valued, as weaknesses of school educators’ communication with them.

The majority of educators reported low levels of communication in regards to the topics surveyed. The topics for which the greatest percentage of educators reported low levels of information exchange related to information about preschools and schools and ‘how the children have settled into school’, ‘feedback about child records sent to schools’ and ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’. The topics for which the greatest proportion of educators reported high levels of communication were about individual children: ‘children’s social development’ and ‘other areas of children’s development’; information about school transition/orientation programs, and marketing information about schools.

The majority of preschool and school educators report low levels of information received from source persons in the other setting. In particular it is noted that preschool educators receive more information about children’s transition to school from parents than they do from school educators. The majority of educators report low levels of communication from ‘Other
preschool staff” and ‘other school staff’.

Questionnaire responses indicated the beliefs of preschool and school educators about what information needs to be exchanged around children’s transition to school. There is consistency across the two groups of educators in regards to their information needs for most of the surveyed topics, channels and sources: a high level of information is needed to be sent/received. Exceptions to this are the topics of ‘promotional information about preschools’ and ‘preschool philosophy’, with the majority of educators in both groups reporting that low levels of information were needed. The greatest percentage of both groups of educators indicated that they needed to send and receive a high level of information about children’s social development. The majority of preschool educators and school educators need to send/receive a high level of information about children’s literacy and numeracy development.

There was inconsistency in the information needs of preschool and school educators in regards to two topics: ‘who the children’s teacher will be’ and ‘promotional information about schools’. One group reported a need to send/receive a high level and the other group a low level. This is an indication that the information needs of preschool and school educators differ on at least these two topics.

Face-to-face communication was the channel through which most educators reported they sent and received high levels of communication. It is also the channel that both preschool and school educators indicated a preference for in relation to their information needs. Educators identified that it was teachers in the other setting with whom they need to have high levels of communication.

Educators in both groups report a low level of action taken on information they send to the other setting. However, additional comments included that preschool educators do not know what happens with the information they send due to a lack of feedback from schools. The majority of both groups of educators reported that information from the other setting is not always received at the right time, providing an indication that the timing of information exchange presents a challenge to intersetting communication.

The majority of school educators have a high level of trust for
preschool educators and preschool directors. Similarly the majority of preschool educators have a high level of trust for school teachers and school principals. However, a notable proportion of preschool educators (30% and 41% respectively) indicated a low level of trust for school teachers and school principals.

The results presented in this chapter have highlighted that there are a diverse range of outcomes of intersetting communication. Outcomes relate to three particular groups: educators, families and children. In relation to these three groups outcomes for educators include both positive and negative impacts on relationships; for children; positive and poor transition experiences; and for families, intersetting communication can be helpful or cause problems.

The results of the two questionnaires have provided a general picture of preschool-school communication in relation to whether educators engage in intersetting communication (research question 1), their reasons for communicating (research question 1) the nature of intersetting communication (research question 2) and some of its outcomes (research question 3). The next chapter presents the analysis of the questionnaire and adds to the results presented in this chapter by providing indications of important influences on intersetting communication (research question 3) and knowledge regarding one specific outcome of communication (research question 4): communication satisfaction.
Chapter Five: Questionnaire Analysis

This chapter reports the data analysis of the *Preschool-school* and *School-preschool Communication Surveys*. These analyses inform the research questions related to influences on intersetting communication (research question 4) and outcomes (research question 3). Educator’s communication satisfaction is reported in this chapter as an outcome of intersetting communication. Three variables and their impact on intersetting communication - type of preschool service, educator qualifications, and amount of information educators receive about children’s transition to school – are also presented.

5.1 Educators’ communication satisfaction

Based on educators’ responses to questionnaire items which asked them to rate the amount of information received (a), and the amount of information they needed to receive (b), a measure of communication satisfaction was calculated. From these responses, the difference (b-a) was calculated for each item, providing difference scores ranging from -4 to 4. A difference score of 0 indicated that the educator reported receiving enough information on the topic, or through the channel or source. In this instance, educators were described as being ‘satisfied’ by the current level of communication. Any difference score above or below zero was considered to indicate a level of ‘dissatisfaction’: dissatisfaction either with receiving ‘too much information’ (indicated with a negative score) or ‘too little information’ (indicated with a positive score).

Positive and negative difference scores give an indication of the degree of dissatisfaction, that is, the higher or lower the score above or below zero, the greater the degree of dissatisfaction. For example, a difference score of 1 indicated a mild dissatisfaction with too little information, whereas a difference score of 4 indicated a high level of dissatisfaction with the receipt of too little information on a particular topic or through a particular source or channel. Difference scores were first calculated for each educator who completed the questionnaire. The mean difference scores for the two respondent groups of preschool and school
educators (M) were then calculated from absolute values of the difference scores of all educators in the group (N). Difference scores ranging from -4 to 4 were re-coded into three variables: 0 = satisfied, 1 = dissatisfied: too much information (difference scores of -1 to -4), and 2 = dissatisfied: too little information (difference scores of 1 to 4) (Tables 5.1-5.2).

Educators’ communication satisfaction with information sent from schools and received by preschools was calculated (Table 5.1). The items in Tables 5.1-5.2 are presented in rank order from lowest to highest mean reported by the ‘sending’ educator group.
Table 5.1: Educators’ communication satisfaction with amount of information sent from schools and received by preschools regarding 11 topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preschool educators – information received from schools</th>
<th>School educators – information sent to preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( M ) Communication satisfaction ( N ) ( M ) Communication Satisfaction ( N )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied ( n ) % Dissatisfied: Too much information ( n ) % Dissatisfied: Too little information ( n ) %</td>
<td>Satisfied ( n ) % Dissatisfied: Too much information ( n ) % Dissatisfied: Too little information ( n ) %</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about schools</td>
<td>0.98 36 39 15 16 42 45 93 0.83 24 37 5 8 36 55 65</td>
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<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<td>School programs/curriculum</td>
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<th>School educators – information sent to preschools</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>Communication satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Dissatisfied: Too much information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School’s expectations of children starting school</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School philosophy</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the children have settled into school</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of teaching/learning for children</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback about child records sent to school</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of preschool educators were dissatisfied with the amount of information they received about the topics surveyed. The dissatisfaction was two way, with most school educators generally dissatisfied with the amount of information they sent to preschools about these topics. There was one topic for which there was a notable difference in the satisfaction of preschool and school educators: ‘who the children’s teacher will be’. In this instance, a large proportion of school educators (52%) were satisfied with the amount of information they sent to preschools. However, a much smaller percentage (18%) of preschool educators was satisfied with the amount of information received on this topic from schools.

While a large proportion (45%) of preschool educators indicated that they received too little ‘promotional information about schools’, 15 educators (16%) reported that they received too much information. This is the greatest proportion of preschool educators who reported too much information received, for any of the 11 surveyed topics. Eight percent (5) of school educators also indicated that they sent too much information on this topic – the greatest proportion of school educators reporting ‘too much information’ for any of the 11 surveyed topics.

Recognising that the higher the mean score, the greater the overall dissatisfaction reported, preschool educators were generally dissatisfied with the amount of information from schools related to ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’, and ‘how the children have settled into school’ (M = 2.30 and 2.11 respectively). In relation to percentages of preschool educators reporting dissatisfaction, a large proportion (85% and 87 % respectively) of preschool educators were dissatisfied with too little information being received from schools about these two topics School educators indicated general dissatisfaction with ‘feedback about child records sent to schools’. The pattern of mean scores suggests that, at least for the topics surveyed, there was a deal of dissatisfaction associated with interseting communications.

Educators’ communication satisfaction with information sent from preschools and received by schools was calculated (Table 5.2).
Table 5.2: Educators’ communication satisfaction with amount of information sent from preschools and received by schools regarding 10 topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preschool educators – information sent to schools</th>
<th>School educators – information received from preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M Communication Satisfaction</td>
<td>N M Communication Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual children’s literacy and numeracy development</td>
<td>0.83 47 54</td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas of children’s development</td>
<td>0.93 47 53</td>
<td>5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual children’s social development</td>
<td>0.95 47 53</td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
<td>0.95 31 36</td>
<td>5 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
<td>1.10 32 36</td>
<td>4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preschool educators – information sent to schools</th>
<th>School educators – information received from preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$N$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too much information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service philosophy</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs/curriculum</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about my service/preschools</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How our service prepares children for school</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A large proportion of preschool educators (between 53 and 54%) were satisfied with the amount of information they sent to schools regarding three of the eleven topics: ‘individual children’s social development’, ‘individual children’s literacy and numeracy development’, and ‘other areas of children’s development’. However, a much smaller percentage (between 7 and 35%) of school educators were satisfied with the amount of information received about these and the other seven topics surveyed, with the majority of school educators reporting that too little information was received from preschools.

The topic for which school educators were most dissatisfied (based on the higher mean score), was ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’; also the topic for which many preschool educators expressed dissatisfaction. This same topic generated dissatisfaction for the amount of information preschools shared with schools (Table 5.1). Taken together, these results indicate that the topic of developing continuity between preschool and school has the potential to be problematic, with educators in both sectors dissatisfied with the information received.

The following Tables (5.3-5.4) indicate patterns of dissatisfaction among both groups of educators, related to the receipt of too little information from particular source persons. The items in each Table are presented in rank order from lowest to highest mean reported.
Table 5.3: Preschool educators’ satisfaction with amount of information received about children’s transitions to school from source persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source person</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Communication Satisfaction</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too much information</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too little information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other school staff</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School principals</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teachers</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4: School educators’ satisfaction with amount of information received about children’s transition to school from source persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source person</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Communication Satisfaction</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too much information</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too little information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other preschool staff</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool directors</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool teachers</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A large proportion of preschool and school educators were dissatisfied with the amount of information they received regarding children’s transitions from the four listed source persons. Preschool educators reported the greatest dissatisfaction with the amount of information they received from school teachers. School educators were most dissatisfied with the amount of information received from preschool teachers. For both groups of educators, the majority of educators indicated that they were dissatisfied with ‘too little information’ from all source persons.

The following Tables (5.5-5.7) indicate patterns of dissatisfaction among both groups of educators, related to the receipt of too little information through particular channels. The items in Table 5.5 are presented in rank order from lowest to highest mean reported by the preschool educator group.
Table 5.5: Educators’ satisfaction with amount of information received about children’s transition to school through four channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Preschool educators – information received from schools</th>
<th>School educators – information received from preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>Communication Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too much information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to- face</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic communication e.g. email</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.6: Educators’ satisfaction with amount of information sent and received through preschool newsletters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preschool educators – information sent to schools</th>
<th>School educators – information received from preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication Satisfaction</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too much information</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too little information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service/preschool newsletter</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.7: Educators’ satisfaction with amount of information sent and received through school newsletters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preschool educators – information received from schools</th>
<th>School educators – information sent to preschools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>Communication Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied: Too much information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of preschool and school educators were dissatisfied with the amount of information received through all four general channels surveyed (Table 5.5), indicating their view that there was ‘too little information received’. Greatest dissatisfaction was reported in the use of electronic communication – both sent and received. When asked about the amount of information received through the specific channel of newsletters (Tables 5.6-5.7), the majority of educators indicated that this was also a source of dissatisfaction, with too little information received through this channel.

5.1.1 Summary: Communication satisfaction.

Overall educators indicated dissatisfaction with existing levels of communication. For most surveyed topics, all channels and all source persons, the majority of educators reported that too little information was sent and received. There are a couple of notable exceptions to this. The first relates to the topic of ‘who the children’s teacher will be’ where the majority of school educators were satisfied with the amount of information they sent to preschools, whereas the majority of preschool educators were dissatisfied with the information provided. The greatest proportion of educators who reported too much information received, for any of the surveyed topics, was for ‘promotional information about schools’. The topic of developing continuity between preschool and school was identified as one topic which has the potential to generate difficulties, because both preschool and school educators are most dissatisfied with the information sent/received on this topic.

5.2 Variables and their impact on interseting communication

Differences in interseting communication can be related to some background and contextual variables, including the type of preschool service, educator qualifications and the amount of information educators receive about children’s transition.
5.2.1 Type of preschool.

To investigate the relationship between the variables of preschool educators’ ‘type of preschool’ and responses to the question: ‘Do you communicate with primary schools in regards to children’s transition to school?’, the five types of preschool services listed in the questionnaire were re-coded into two variables: Group 1: long day care, family day care, mobile children’s service, multi-project children’s service, and Group 2: ‘Preschool (NSW) and kindergarten (VIC)’. The groups were categorised on the basis of whether the educator identified the service as a ‘preschool (NSW) or kindergarten (VIC)’ (Group 2), or another type of children’s service (Group 1). Although the exact details of funding for each educator’s preschool service is not known, generally Group 1 preschools receive funding from the federal government and are commonly known as ‘child care’ services. Group 2 preschools are typically funded by the state government and are widely identified as ‘preschool’ services.

Analysis of the Preschool-school Communication Survey indicates that a greater percentage of preschool educators in Group 2 reported communicating with schools, than preschool educators in Group 1 (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8: Preschool educators: Type of preschool and engagement in communication with schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of preschool</th>
<th>Do you communicate with primary schools in regards to children's transition to school?</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A bi-variate relationship test (chi-square) identified a statistically significant relationship between type of preschool and preschool educators’
engagement in communication with schools ($\chi^2 = 14.20$, df = 1, 
p < 0.05). Whilst the numbers of educators in the cells for this analysis are small, this result provides an indication that educators working in a Group 2 preschool are more likely than their counterparts in different preschool settings, to engage in intersetting communication with schools.

Twelve of the 13 educators in Group 1 who indicated that they did not communicate with schools provided their main reason for not communicating. Nine of these reasons related to the type of service in which they worked. These included comments which suggest that communication about transition was the responsibility of other educators and/or other services: “Most children attending our centre that are going to start school also attend a preschool”; “Children go to the preschool which is located next door”; “All our children attend the 4 year old preschool in our building. They do the transition to school”; “Preschool teacher in other service has more communication”.

These data suggest that the type of preschool service influences intersetting communication.

5.2.2 Qualifications.

Statistically significant relationships were identified between the qualifications of preschool educators and a range of aspects of their intersetting communication. For this analysis, the five levels of qualifications listed in the questionnaire were re-coded into Group 1: Bachelor degree/postgraduate qualification, and Group 2: Diploma/certificate/no qualifications. Amounts of information sent/received were also re-coded from the original 5 point scale, to two variables: 1 (low level), 2 (high level).

Analysis of the Preschool-school Communication Survey indicated that a greater proportion of preschool educators who had a Group 1 qualification reported communicating with schools than educators with only a Group 2 qualification (Table 5.9).
Table 5.9: Preschool educators: Qualifications and engagement with intersetting communication with schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Do you communicate with schools?</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes: n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between Group 1 and Group 2 preschool educators was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 10.19, df = 1, p<0.05$). No significant relationship was identified between the qualifications of school educators and their reports of communication with preschools.

The qualifications of preschool educators also seemed to influence the amount and topic of information communicated to schools related to transition. A greater proportion of educators with a Group 1 qualification reported sending high levels of information about the topics of ‘children’s literacy and numeracy development’ and preschool ‘programs/curriculum’ than did educators with a Group 2 qualification (Table 5.10 and 5.11).

Table 5.10: Preschool educators: Qualifications and level of information sent to schools regarding children’s literacy and numeracy development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Level of information sent to schools regarding children’s literacy and numeracy development</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level: n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.11: Preschool Educators: Qualifications and level of information sent to schools regarding preschool programs and curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Amount of information sent to schools regarding preschool programs and curriculum</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences between the two groups were significant (for Table 5.10, $\chi^2 = 4.01$, df = 1, p<0.05, for Table 5.11, $\chi^2 = 6.58$, df = 1, p<0.05). No such relationships were identified between the qualifications of school educators and the information sent to preschools.

The qualifications of preschool educators influence their interseting communication.

5.2.3 Amount of information received.

Analysis of the Preschool-school Communication Survey indicated that all preschool educators who reported a low level of trust for school principals also reported receiving a low level of information about children’s transition to school from school principals (Table 5.12). This relationship was significant ($\chi^2 = 10.00$, df = 1, p<0.05).

Table 5.12: Preschool educators: Level of information received from school principals and level of trust for school principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of trust for school principals</th>
<th>Amount of information received about children’s transitions from school principals</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

182
A similar pattern was evident in responses from preschool educators (Table 5.13): 96% of those who reported a low level of trust for school teachers also reported receiving a low level of information about children’s transition to school from them ($\chi^2 = 5.50$, df = 1, $p<0.05$). These data suggest that low levels of trust and low levels of information are correlated.
Table 5.13: Preschool educators: Level of information received from school teachers and level of trust for school teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of trust for school teachers</th>
<th>Amount of information received about children’s transitions from school teachers</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no significant association between the level of information school educators reported receiving from preschool teachers or directors about children’s transition to school and their level of trust for these source persons.

There was a significant connection between the level of information preschool educators received about children’s transitions from school principals and teachers, and their communication satisfaction regarding this aspect of preschool-school communication. For this analysis the difference scores of individual preschool educators were re-coded into two variables: satisfied (difference scores of 0) or dissatisfied (either with too much or too little information, differences scores of -4 to -1 and 1 to 4). This re-coding resulted in a dichotomous variable indicating that educators were either satisfied or dissatisfied with the amount of information they received.

Analysis of the *Preschool-school Communication Survey* indicated that 92% (67) of preschool educators who had a low level of communication with school teachers, were also dissatisfied with the amount of information about children’s transition to school received from them (Table 5.14). This result is statistically significant (\( \chi^2 = 31.09, \text{df} = 1, p<0.05 \)).
Table 5.14: Preschool educators: Level of information about children’s transition received from school teachers and communication satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication satisfaction with amount of information received from school teachers about children’s transition to school</th>
<th>Amount of information received about children’s transitions from school teachers</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety-four percent (67) of preschool educators who reported a low level of communication with school principals, were also dissatisfied with the amount of information received about children’s transitions from them (Table 5.15). This result is statistically significant. ($\chi^2=21.13$, df= 1, p<0.05). Again, while the directionality is unclear, it is evident that low levels of communication and dissatisfaction were correlated.

Table 5.15: Preschool educators: Level of information about children’s transition received from school teachers and communication satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication satisfaction with amount of information received from school principals about children’s transition to school</th>
<th>Amount of information received about children’s transitions from school principals</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the School-preschool Communication Survey indicated that the majority of school educators who reported a low level of communication with preschool teachers (89%) were also dissatisfied with the amount of information about children’s transition to school received.
from them (Table 5.16). This relationship was significant ($\chi^2 = 33.88$, df = 1, p<0.05).

Table 5.16: School educators: Level of information about children’s transitions received from preschool teachers and communication satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication satisfaction with amount of information received from preschool teachers about children’s transition to school</th>
<th>Amount of information received about children’s transitions from preschool teachers</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflecting a similar pattern, the majority of school educators who had a low level of communication with preschool directors (87%), were also dissatisfied with the amount of information about children’s transition to school received from them (Table 5.17). This relationship was also significant ($\chi^2 = 24.67$, df = 1, p<0.05).

Table 5.17: School educators: Level of information about children’s transitions received from preschool directors and communication satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication satisfaction with amount of information received from preschool directors about children’s transition to school</th>
<th>Amount of information received about children’s transitions from preschool directors</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.3.1 Summary: Amount of information received.

The amount of information received about children’s transition to school is statistically significantly related to two outcomes of intersetting communication: trust, and communication satisfaction. The amount of information that preschool educators receive from school principals and teachers is related to their levels of trust for these two source persons. Amount of information received is also related to preschool educator’s communication satisfaction with these two source persons. For school educators, amount of information received from preschool directors and teachers, is related to their communication satisfaction with these source persons.

5.3 Chapter summary

Data from the questionnaire analysis has provided information about the outcomes of, and influences on, intersetting communication.

As an outcome of communication, educators overall were dissatisfied with existing levels of intersetting communication. The majority of educators reported that too little information was sent and received for most of the surveyed topics, all of the channels and all source persons. The topic of ‘who the children’s teacher will be’, was an exception to this, as the majority of school educators were satisfied with the amount of information they sent to preschools on this topic, but preschool educators were dissatisfied with the amount of information received from schools on this topic. The topic for which the greatest proportion of educators reported too much information received was ‘promotional information about schools’. Continuity between preschools and schools was identified as the topic educators are most dissatisfied about and hence is a potential source of communication difficulties between settings.

Three variables have a statistically significant relationship with various aspects of intersetting communication: type of preschool, qualifications and amount of information received. Key results include that for preschool educators these three variables are related to aspects of their intersetting communication. The amount of information received about children’s transition to school is related to outcomes of communication:
preschool educator’s trust for school principals and teachers, and the communication satisfaction of both groups of educators.

In the next chapter a range of outcomes of, and influences on, intersetting communication are explored further in the results of two focus groups.
Chapter Six: Focus Group Results

Two focus groups were conducted to explore perspectives of preschool-school communication. One focus group was conducted with a small group of preschool educators (n=3) and another with a small group of school educators (n=5). Educators were invited to participate in a focus group on the basis that the participants identified themselves as having a major role in children’s transition to school and an interest in intersetting communication. As outlined in section 3.4, the sampling for the focus groups was purposive to reflect a range of preschool and school settings and involve educators from both NSW and Victoria. Although all the educators in the two focus groups were from schools and preschools located in the same geographical region, specific connections between the schools and preschools were not particularly sought in the recruitment of participants. Eight school educators and six preschool educators indicated an interest in attending the focus groups. Only three preschool and five school educators were able to participate on the days of the focus group interviews. Demographic details for the participants are summarised in Tables 6.1-6.2. Two participants from the preschool group, Niamh and Monica, and two from the school group, Adrienne and Carly, were already acquainted through local transition to school networks. The other educators were not known to each other.
Table 6.1: Preschool educator focus group participant details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Type of preschool</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Role in preschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC)</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Teacher/Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niamh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BTeach (Birth to 5 years)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BTeach/B Speech and Hearing Science</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Long day care centre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.2: School educator focus group participant details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Role in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adrienne</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transition coordinator and primary grade classroom teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>DipEd</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Assistant principal and first year of school classroom teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC) GradDip (RE) (Primary)</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Relieving assistant principal and first-year of school classroom teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>CertEd and studying BEd (EC and Primary)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Prep transition coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As outlined in Chapter 3, an interview guide provided the starting points for discussion (Appendix 2). However, the semi-structured nature of the interactions meant that participants influenced the content and direction of the discussions. Content analysis was used to analyse transcripts of the focus group interviews. The interview guide was informed by the preliminary analysis of the questionnaires. The analysis of the focus group data was informed by the results and analysis of the questionnaires presented in Chapters Four and Five. This chapter outlines the themes generated from this analysis. Several common themes were identified across the two focus groups. These, as well as the unique themes for each group are detailed in Table 6.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Preschool educator focus group</th>
<th>School educator focus group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control motives</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about children</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about families</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of what school educators want to know</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information needs of school educators</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with written communication</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles to communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for children</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for educators</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1 Preschool educator focus group results

Discussion within this group was coded into seven major categories: ‘control motives’, ‘information about children’, ‘organising’, ‘perceptions of what school educators want to know’, ‘problems with written communication’, ‘outcomes for children’ and ‘outcomes for educators’.

6.1.1 Control motives.

Katia, Niamh and Monica outlined their reasons for communicating with schools. All three educators provided reasons related to control motives, that is, having personal influence over an aspect of children’s transition. Katia and Monica described their aim of “ensuring a smooth transition” and wanting to “make sure it’s successful”. Extending this, Katia added that her communication with schools was underpinned by the aim of: “just ensuring that, everyone’s on the same page, us, the teachers, the schools. Everyone knows what’s going on”. Niamh and Monica also indicated that their communication motives included the desire to give particular information to school educators, and contribute to their knowledge of individual children. Niamh described this as providing school educators with a “holistic view” of the child. Overall, the motives of the three preschool educators related to influencing an aspect of transition.

6.1.2 Information about children.

The three preschool educators talked about the content of the information shared with schools. Much of the content of their communication was about children, in particular, children’s abilities and dispositions. Niamh described this as writing about “what the child can do”. Katia explained that in relation to her conversations with school educators “I tend to focus a lot on [children’s] social and emotional development”. Monica gave examples of the sorts of comments she might share about a child, including: “they are developing their problem solving or they’re visual learners”.

The group indicated that children’s needs were the subject of much communication with schools. Monica described communicating with
schools about “what special things [children] needed to help them out”. This was particularly the case for children with additional needs, or children about whom the preschool educators had “concerns”. Niamh commented: “It’s generally the children that don’t sort of sit in the norm that you are probably communicating more about”. Monica reiterated the focus on children about whom she had concerns, noting that she communicated most in relation to “those you have the little worry about, in the back of your head” concluding that “if you are going to make that special phone call [to a school] it is always about that one that you are that little bit worried about”. The predominant topics of interseting communication for these educators related to children’s abilities and development.

6.1.3 Organising.

Much of the content of their communication with schools described by Katia, Niamh and Monica related to organising joint preschool-school activities. Most of these activities were familiarisation activities for the children where school staff and/or children visited preschools so that children became familiar with the people in schools. Katia described receiving invitations to attend various events at schools, but generally not taking these up. She explained that the reason for this was twofold: firstly, taking her small preschool group to join in an event with a few hundred children at the school she described as being “too overwhelming” for the children, and secondly, “logistically, excursions are getting quite difficult to do”. Instead, Katia invited schools to participate in joint activities at the preschool. A further organisational reason for communicating with schools noted by Niamh and Monica, related to providing information – often filling out forms – to assist schools with applications for funding for children with additional needs. The preschool educators identified organising joint activities as a topic of communication with schools.

6.1.4 Perceptions of what school educators want to know.

When discussing what information they provided to schools about children, two of the preschool educators referred to what they thought school educators wanted to know about children. Monica expressed this as: “Well I think the schools are very focused on what help [children]
need…they want to find out about all the negative things, be it behaviour or attention or those sorts of things”. Niamh sensed that the information schools wanted was different from the information she wanted to communicate: “we write the positive aspects of the child, what the child can do, whereas school teachers are sometimes asking ‘but we want to know if the child can’t do…””. Monica and Niamh both described an emphasis on providing information about children’s social and emotional development and believed that this had changed the expectations of school teachers:

Niamh: I think schools are starting to value that [social and emotional information] more and more. Um, and like you said, we are starting I think slowly to shift away from the ‘are they able to cut with their scissors, can they hold their pencil’.

Monica: ‘Can they write their name?’

Niamh: We are starting to slowly move away from that probably because we are communicating a lot of the other things, the social-emotional experiences or where the children are at in different ways other than just that academic stuff.

In contrast, Katia shared her view that sometimes no information at all was desired by the schools, “I’ve had quite a large local school tell me ‘we don’t want to know anything about the children, we’ll worry about them when we get them’”.

Two of the preschool educators perceived that school educators wanted to know particular information about children: their needs, problems, what they could not do and their social and emotional development.

6.1.5 Problems with written communication.

The two Victorian preschool educators, Niamh and Monica, described some issues with the written information they were required to provide for children starting school using the Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statements (DEECD, 2009b). One issue highlighted tensions between the information preschool educators provided and their perceptions of what school educators wanted to know. Both preschool educators noted that they provided information that was “very much written
in a positive light”, yet Niamh’s experience was that school educators were not familiar with the preschool curriculum document on which the statements were based and instead “want[ed] to know what children can’t do”. As a consequence, she reported that school educators “weren’t understanding a lot of them. So we tried to educate them a little bit in like ‘well read between the lines, if you want the deficit stuff, we’re not going to write it’”. Niamh also reported receiving some negative feedback from school educators who described the statements as: “all just written the same. They were all just a generic of each other”.

Partly accepting this criticism, Niamh noted that the written documentation was often not sufficient; sometimes it was necessary for school educators to ask for clarification from her about what was written in the statements. While the issue was couched in terms of school educators not understanding the positive focus of transition statements, Niamh’s comments also reflect an underlying sense that the positive focus in the statements was not all the information she regarded as important – but to go further than that, the statement required personal communication from school educators. Part of the challenge for preschool educators was described as providing positive, yet meaningful, information for school educators that was also acceptable for parents, as any information could only be shared with schools with parental consent.

While these comments referred to the Victorian statements, Katia’s NSW experience reflected similar concerns around the nature of the written documentation –portfolios – that she prepared for each child and encouraged parents to pass on to schools. She explained that these were: “all written very positively because it’s for the parents”.

The preschool educators also identified concerns about what happened to the information forwarded to schools, noting that there was no feedback provided from schools. Monica explained that after she posted the forms to the schools she was left wondering if “my hard work has gone to the right person”. Katia wondered if information “sat in an office in a school, or on a desk and stop[ped] just there”. Niamh gave examples of feedback she had received about the written statements when a school educator “sort of brushed them off as if they weren’t, as if they didn’t have any relevance to what she needed to know” and “some prep teachers [first-
year-of school educators] said they didn’t even see them”.

When asked about the use of email to communicate with schools, the preschool educators described it as problematic. Katia and Niamh warned that email could be “missed”, that is, left unopened in someone’s inbox. Niamh said that it could be “misinterpreted” as she explained: “Sometimes it’s hard to portray what you want in an email”. Katia was concerned about the confidentiality of emails, as they could be accessed by anyone at a school.

When discussing the difficulties with written communication some of the problems were contrasted with other, more preferred means of communication. Niamh, Monica and Katia spoke a lot of the benefits of verbal communication with school educators, through phone or face-to-face channels and why they preferred these channels to written communication. Niamh said that she preferred talking on the phone to schools, rather than using email because: “It gives them the opportunity to clarify anything or to ask questions that, maybe that you can’t cover in an email”. When talking on the phone to school educators Katia said “I know who I am talking to and I do feel a bit better about that in terms of confidentiality”.

The preschool educators described constraints in their use of written communication, and expressed a clear preference for verbal communication. Further, they highlighted the importance of face-to-face channels.

6.1.6 Outcomes for children.

Outcomes of the preschool educators’ communication with schools included children being connected to school settings through visits and providing continuity of experiences. Niamh spoke of a particular communication experience which had a positive outcome for a child: “his teacher came out to meet him in our environment because it was safe and secure and all of those things for him, to support him, so he knew, he already knew a face”. Katia related the positive transition to school of one child that resulted from her extensive communications with a school over several months:

He made a very good transition to school and they [the school] have been, they have worked with a lot of what we spoke about, what we talked to them about and they have implemented a lot of the strategies that we were implementing to keep it very similar for him.
6.1.7 Outcomes for educators.

The preschool educators spoke about some positive outcomes for themselves as a result of their communication experiences with schools, including feeling “valued”. Monica described being pleased when she received letters from schools saying “thank-you for the transition statements, we really valued them”. Katia mentioned that when she received an invitation to visit a school to see how her former preschool children were going, “it show[ed] that they really value you”.

Enhanced professional respect was also reported as a result of communication with schools. Monica reported that communicating with schools through the preparation of the transition statements has helped to “validate with the parents” her long day care program.

In addition to the positives, Katia and Niamh reported some negative outcomes for themselves as a result of communications with schools. Katia reported a particular communication experience with a school where her efforts to share information were rebuffed, with the explanation that school educators did not want to know any information about children: “So that really gave me a different opinion of that school. And I was very disappointed because we really, you know, we were trying so very hard to work with the schools and I was really disappointed with that reaction”. Niamh described as “really heartbreaking” her experience when schools expressed disinterest in the transition statements she had written about children. Both positive and negative impacts on relationships were described by the preschool educators, as outcomes of their intersetting communications with schools.

6.1.8 Summary: Preschool educator focus group.

Preschool educators Monica, Niamh and Katia described communicating with schools in order to influence children’s transition experiences. The content of their communication included information about children’s abilities and development, and often focussed on the organisation of joint activities with schools. The preschool educators’ perceived that school educators wanted to know about children’s needs,
problems, what they could not do and their social and emotional
development. Several constraints with written communication were
detailed, and these impacted on their communication with schools. A strong
preference for verbal interseting communication was described. The
preschool educators gave examples of positive outcomes for children as a
result of interseting communications and both positive and negative
impacts on preschool-school relationships.

6.2 School educator focus group results

School educators – Adrienne, Carly, Patricia, Suzette and Erica –
described their experiences communicating with preschools around
children’s transition to school. Discussion with this group was coded into
eight major categories: ‘information about children’, ‘information about
families’, ‘organising’, ‘information needs of school educators’, ‘problems
with written communication’, ‘obstacles to communication’, ‘outcomes for
children’, and ‘outcomes for educators’.

6.2.1 Information about children.

A great deal of the content of the discussion among this group of
school educators related to information about children, in particular,
children’s needs. Carly, Suzette and Erica all mentioned talking to
preschools to determine whether or not any children who would be
attending their school had additional needs, so that they could arrange for
completing assessments, applying for funding and employing a teacher’s
aide before the child started school. Erica explained:

I like to ask the preschool what has worked for them. It’s usually
Asperger’s children, because they are so unpredictable, you need to
know what works for that particular child. What are the problems,
what sets him off. Those sorts of things.

The school educators also spoke of finding out about children’s
social and emotional dispositions from preschool educators. Adrienne
reported asking preschool educators the following questions about children:
“how do they approach learning, how do they take on new tasks, how do
they cope when something doesn’t go right and they can’t do something?”
6.2.2 Information about families.

In describing particular communication experiences, Patricia, Adrienne and Erica described talking to preschool educators about children’s families. Erica related a communication experience which included information given to her regarding “how mum was feeling” about the possibility of her child being identified as having additional behavioural needs. Erica explained that the preschool educator relayed her position of being “really concerned about the child but we can’t convince mum”. Patricia described communication experiences where preschool educators had shared with her advice that they had provided to families about children’s readiness for school, particularly situations where families had been advised against sending a child to school because “they’re too young to start”.

6.2.3 Organising.

The school educators indicated that some of the content of their communication related to organising various transition activities. These activities included inviting preschools to participate in special events at the school, organising to visit the children at the preschool and collaboratively organising a schedule of transition activities. Carly indicated that her role involved communication with preschools related to “organising to go out and see the kids and visit them”.

6.2.4 Information needs of school educators.

The school educators described the information they would like to receive from preschools. Most noted that this was not what they received. Patricia said that she would like to know:

what children’s interests are and what they’ve been doing previously, like, if they’ve done projects on a particular thing because they have all been interested, so letting us know those sorts of things so we can either build on it or, you know, extend upon it or do something totally different because we don’t want to do the same thing over and over and get them bored, if you don’t know where they’ve come from.
Patricia also suggested that it would be “good to know” what preschool educators had advised parents regarding their child’s additional needs, particularly if any referrals had been made. Erica explained that she wanted to know this because:

you can follow up with them and ask ‘how did you go with the paediatrician?’ That would be really powerful information because I know I’ve had that conversation a few times with parents and they often come back and say ‘oh the preschool said this’.

Regarding children with additional needs, Suzette commented:

we’d like to know if children have any special needs so that we can ensure that we have an aide in the classroom, um, that we have funding for that child. Sometimes that information doesn’t come and we find out six months later, into Term 3 and you are starting to realise ‘oh the child has some special needs, we should have had something in place’, so that information would be very valuable.

This group of school educators provided mixed responses when asked if they would like to receive information about children’s literacy and numeracy. Two issues were relevant here: on the one hand, school educators did not believe that preschool educators were capable of providing such information; on the other hand the information itself was not regarded as important as information about children’s dispositions. Patricia said that she would like to know about children who are reading so that when she tested them herself she could “probe them a bit more” if they did not read in the test. Carly explained that she did not think preschools had the kinds of information about children’s literacy and numeracy she would need: “I would imagine that they are not formally testing that sort of thing”.

Adrienne did not think that this information was particularly needed from preschools because:

that [literacy and numeracy] stuff will come….that’s what they [children] are at school to do. I want to know their social and emotional wellbeing and how they are going to settle, everything else will come once they are happy in that school setting. And we do have such comprehensive testing.

To this, Suzette added:

It’s more important to know, as you said Adrienne, the social and emotional well being of them because then if they are happy then they are going to learn. So that’s, I guess that’s what we really want to know, if they settle into preschool, if they know how to make friends, they’ve got those social skills, that’s something that can be
built on. But if they come to school without it, gee you are starting from way back.

Carly replied that the literacy and numeracy education is the role of the school educator: “…it's our job to do that formal teaching”.

The school educators’ information needs related to specific information about children: their interests, additional needs, social and emotional development and advice about them that may have been given to their parents by preschool educators. Some of the school educators in this group did not see a need to receive information about children’s literacy and numeracy development.

6.2.5 Problems with written communication.

This group of school educators highlighted several problems with the written communication they received from preschools. In particular, the Victorian educators – Adrienne, Carly and Suzette – referred to the Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statements (transition statements) (DEECD, 2009b). One concern related to the need for parental consent in order for these statements to be shared with the school. The school educators argued that this meant that preschool educators would only report information that was positive or palatable for parents. Specific concerns about the information reported in the statements included:

- the information about children had to be written in a particular way by preschool educators;
- the accuracy of the information in the statement was time limited;
- possible delays in receiving the statement while the preschool educator tried to secure signed consent; and
- the parent could refuse to sign consent, resulting in the school not receiving the statement at all.

Referring to the writing ‘style’ used by preschool educators, Adrienne noted that there were things preschool educators “can’t report in those documents because they have to be worded positively”. Carly added “they’re very positive”, and both she and Adrienne explained what they had done to overcome this perceived problem. Adrienne reported asking
families to “say yes you can go and speak to the preschool educator” so she can then “get further information” about the child. Carly said that, as a consequence of the positive wording of the statements, she visited and observed children herself: “nothing replaces going out and seeing the child actually in their preschool setting”, and made phone calls to parents directly to ask for information about children. Suzette commented that school educators have to “read very well between the lines” to glean the information they needed from the written statements.

The difficulty of not receiving statements from preschools because of the need to gain parent consent was detailed in the following excerpt from the discussion between Victorian and NSW educators.

Carly: Yeah we actually had one family that refused to hand over the transition statement to the school because it was too positive.

Suzette: That’s rather odd.

Erica: Did they not think it was true?

Carly: No.

Erica: Right.

Problems regarding the accuracy of the information in the written statements were highlighted by Adrienne who explained that there was a time gap between when the written information was recorded by preschool educators and when the school educator might use the information as the child starts school: “you know what they [the child] may be showing in December the year before, a lot can happen in that eight weeks. So then it becomes, it's great to read about, but it becomes void”. Adrienne and Carly also talked about the timing of the arrival of the transition statements not being ideal:

Carly: Well because we didn’t get them, ’til what?

Adrienne: Early December.

Carly: Early December. So basically I rely on my visits to preschools and conversations with their educators when I am placing kids into classes…”

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The school educators described a range of problems with the written information that they receive from preschools. The problems described resulted in limitations to how the information could be used and precipitated the need for alternative strategies for finding out information about children.

6.2.6 Obstacles to communication.

The school educators described some obstacles to communication with preschools. The number of preschools from which children come to their school was identified as one obstacle. Suzette commented: “There’s just so many. It’s not possible to get around”. As well as the large number of preschools, in some schools, the particular preschools children came from were not known from year to year: “we don’t have feeder preschools”. Carly noted that her “only issue would be time” in practicing interseting communication with preschools. Adrienne elaborated on why time was an obstacle to her communication with schools:

relationships are a big part of it, what could make it difficult, the longer and the better relationships you can establish the easier that communication is and when there are new [preschool] staff, and I find that challenging that there is such a change over of staff so much that you then lose that relationship that’s built up that you've got with someone…yeah and just the sheer size and time, having time to make those connections.

6.2.7 Outcomes for children.

The main outcome for children that followed from school communication with preschools was the facilitation of transition activities that promoted preschool children’s familiarisation with school. Erica talked about the visits paid to her school by preschool children. These were organised throughout the year through communication with educators at two local preschools. As well as familiarising children with the school’s facilities such as the canteen and the library, Erica reported preschool children’s enjoyment at participation in events such as school assemblies. Suzette reported assisting children to become familiar with school by visiting their preschool and “talking to them about school”.

Patricia described a communication experience with a preschool where a child’s skills were able to be built upon in the school program. She described receiving written information about a child from his preschool
that reported he could read. Based on this she was able to “start him straight away” on the appropriate level of reading material. However, she also reported another, not so positive outcome for this child. When she conducted her own assessment of the child’s reading, he “just shut down” and did not read the material in the test. This official test result was then entered into the departmental database and, as a result, he did not qualify for a gifted and talented program at the school. While the information from the preschool was considered important by Patricia, and she drew on this in her planning for the child, the information did not have the same authority as an official test result.

Helping children to become familiar with school and building upon children’s skills at school were two outcomes for children identified by the school educators.

6.2.8 Outcomes for educators.

This group of school educators indicated that communication with preschool educators helped them in two key ways: preparing for the children making the transition to school; and in communicating with parents. Erica described a communication experience that had assisted in making preparations at the school for a child with additional needs, where “it really helped that the preschool told us the background” so that they could proceed through the process of applying for funding much more quickly than usual. Erica also reported using information from the preschool to support her class organisation, noting that she used information about children’s readiness to group children together who were considered, by preschool educators, to be “too young to start school”. Adrienne reported that the first-year of school educators at her school used the information from the transition statements received from preschools to inform their curriculum: “They used them to plan for the developmental curriculum program we implement because they [transition statements] gave children’s interests, and so they [first year of school educators] were able to develop centres to be able to help children”.

Adrienne and Carly described how communication with preschool educators helped them to communicate with parents. Adrienne commented that the information in the transition statements informed “parent-teacher
interviews at the start of the year”. Together with Carly, Adrienne explained to the other members of the focus group the outcome of a collaboratively developed transition to school pamphlet for families that had involved communication between preschool and school educators. The pamphlet meant that “the parents are getting the same message from both settings” about “getting ready for school” …“rather than conflicting messages”. Adrienne also commented that visits to preschools helped her to “ensure that everyone gets a pamphlet”.

Outcomes for the school educators of their intersetting communication included being assisted in making preparations for children to start school and communicating with parents.

6.2.9 Summary: School educator focus group.
The school educators reported that the content of their communication with preschools included information about children: their needs and dispositions, as well as the organisation of transition activities and information about families. Their information needs related to children’s interests, additional needs, social and emotional development and advice given to parents by preschool educators. Problems with written communication were described, as well as strategies the school educators used to overcome them. Barriers to communication were identified as time to develop relationships and the many preschools that children attend. The school educators gave examples of positive outcomes for children and for themselves as a result of intersetting communications.

6.3 Chapter Summary
Results of the focus groups provided information about educators’ experiences of intersetting communication: motives, content, outcomes and influences. The preschool educator group described motives for communicating related to influencing transition. Their reports of intersetting communication focussed on information about children and organising transition activities. These same topics were reported in the communications of the school educator group. School educators also described communicating about children’s families.
Preschool educators’ perceptions of the information needed by school educators were consistent with the topics nominated by school educators. In other words, preschool educators had a good idea of what information was sought by school educators. One school educator reported wanting to know about children’s interests and two reported advice given to parents by preschool educators. Some of the school educators indicated that they did not need to receive information from preschools about children’s literacy and numeracy development.

Both groups described problems with written intersetting communications. The school educators described limitations to the utility of written information received from preschools. Both groups identified restrictions to the information that can be exchanged through written channels. A preference for verbal intersetting communication was described by the preschool educators, and school educators described other methods of finding out information about children to overcome the limitations of written communication.

The school educator group identified that lack of time was a barrier to communication with preschools, in particular in developing relationships. Another barrier was the vast number of preschools that children attend.

The preschool educator group reported positive transition experiences for children and impacts on educator relationships as outcomes of their intersetting communications. School educators described positive outcomes related to children becoming familiar with school and building upon children’s skills. Outcomes for educators included opportunities for enhanced preparation for children and communication with parents.

The following chapter builds upon data collected and analysed through the questionnaires and focus groups to consider intersetting communication in five specific contexts.
Chapter Seven: Case Results

This chapter describes the five cases of preschool-school communication that were developed as the third level of data generation. As the aim of developing the cases was to provide examples of preschool-school communication and to examine the nature of this in specific contexts, the particulars of each case are described before the themes identified for each case are explored. Analyses of the case data were informed by the results and analyses of the questionnaires and focus groups. An overview of the themes in each of the five cases is presented in Table 7.1.
## Table 7.1: Overview of themes from the cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Case 1: Nora Park</th>
<th>Case 2: Brantwood</th>
<th>Case 3: Enoral-Swifton</th>
<th>Case 4: Sanville</th>
<th>Case 5: Oxlough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duty motives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control motives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about children</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about preschools and schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational communication</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersetting knowledge/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlapping fields of experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with written communication</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect channels of communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing discourse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School assessments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for children</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for educators</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In relation to the Communication Diary Logs (CDLs) completed in each case, school principals/preschool directors at the case sites nominated the educators who would complete a CDL. Therefore, the number of educators completing a CDL varies in each case. Every educator completing a CDL recorded their perspectives of the effectiveness of each communicative episode by rating it using a scale ranging from 1 (totally ineffective) to 7 (totally effective). The CDLs were used as a stimulus for interviews with educators. The ratings and data within them are reported in the cases when they related to one of the important themes in that case. Most of the communications recorded in the CDLs received ratings of 5 and above, but none-the-less they were an important source of information about challenging aspects of interseting communication, as well as positive aspects of communication practices.

7.1 Case 1: Nora Park

The Nora Park case consists of two sites: Nora Park Primary School (Nora Park PS) and its co-located Nora Park Preschool. The school and preschool are located in Carlyle, a large Victorian regional centre with a Local Government Area (LGA) population of around 60,000. Nora Park PS is a non-government school with a student population of 290 and two first-year-of-school classes. In 2012, 48 children started school at Nora Park PS, 30 of whom attended Nora Park Preschool in 2011. The other 18 children who started school at Nora Park PS, attended a number of other preschools in the Carlyle area. The remaining children in the Nora Park Preschool group started school at eight different schools in the Carlyle area. Nora Park Preschool is situated on the Nora Park PS grounds and is managed by the school.

Two educators from Nora Park PS and one from Nora Park Preschool were involved in the case: Arnold, Stella and Isabel. Background information for these educators is detailed in Table 7.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>School/ preschool</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role in transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnold</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>DipEd (Primary) BEd MEd (Student Wellbeing)</td>
<td>Nora Park Primary School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>“I help coordinate and plan transition sessions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC) GradDip (Ed Studies)</td>
<td>Nora Park Primary School</td>
<td>13 : 11 in preschool settings, 2 in school settings</td>
<td>First-year-of-school classroom teacher</td>
<td>“Speaking to parents at school information night, orientation of children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cert. Applied Soc Sc Dip SocSc BEC Studies</td>
<td>Nora Park Preschool</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>“Information sharing and transition reports”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prior to gaining employment at Nora Park PS, Stella held the position of director at Nora Park Preschool. During Arnold’s time as principal at Nora Park, he has guided the introduction of a play-based curriculum in the first-year of school classrooms. Arnold’s own children previously attended Nora Park Preschool. The Nora Park case was identified through self-nomination. The researcher attended an educator network meeting in Carlyle where she provided information about the research and invited educators to participate. At this meeting the researcher met Stella, who communicated her interest in being involved in the research. Stella described the relationship and communication between her school and their co-located preschool as being very positive. A follow-up meeting was organised with Arnold, the school principal and Nora Park was selected as a case site. The data sources for the Nora Park case are summarised in Table 7.3. These consisted of individual interviews, CDLs, and documents proffered by the site that related to transition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Communication Diary Logs (CDL)</th>
<th>Documents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>Arnold (3)</td>
<td>Arnold (3)</td>
<td>Arnold (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(number of sources)</td>
<td>Stella (3)</td>
<td>Stella (3)</td>
<td>Isabel (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isabel (3)</td>
<td>Isabel (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three transition statements, one email ‘staff bulletin’, and one letter of invitation.

The themes identified in this case were coded into seven major categories: ‘information about children’, ‘information about preschools and schools’, ‘relational communication’, ‘interseting knowledge/overlapping fields of experience’, ‘problems with written communication’, ‘outcomes for children’, and ‘outcomes for educators’.

7.1.1 Information about children.

Analysis of both interview data and documents indicated that the focus of interseting communication in this site was the children who were
about to start school. This was exemplified in the transition statements Isabel prepared for each of the children starting school. For example, one transition statement shared by Isabel included the following:

Caitlin is able to colour match, participate in simple number sequencing/counting, recognise her own name (and the names of some others) and concentrate for up to 15 minutes in a large group setting.
She shows leadership abilities by including others in her play situations in a respectful manner.
She has developed basic motor skills such as running, balancing and jumping.
She has age appropriate verbal oral language skills and is easy to understand.

Arnold indicated that communication varied according to the preschool involved. While noting a great deal of communication with Nora Park Preschool, his interactions with other preschools were most likely a result of concerns about a specific child’s needs: “there’s minimal stuff apart from if we are having an issue or a concern [about a child], we would contact them”. As one example, Arnold recounted his experience of talking to a preschool educator about a child he described as having “specific learning needs” and told of how the preschool educator had made a recommendation for the child to be placed in a class with another child.

Stella recounted speaking to a preschool educator about a child who had recently had a diagnostic screening. Stella also recorded in her CDL an hour long conversation with a preschool educator at Nora Park Preschool, where the topics of the conversation included children with additional needs. Isabel described a conversation where a school educator had asked her about strategies she had used to support children’s needs. Questions about the children asked by the school educator included: “how do we gain their interest, how to we get eye contact?”. In compiling transition statements, Isabel referred to children’s needs and the assistance that best supported these. For example:

Jason would benefit from learning the classroom routine and being forewarned if something different will be occurring.
He benefits from a solitary activity where he can go and ‘recharge’…
He…sometimes needs reminding what the group is talking about.

The content of communication in this case included information about children: their development and support needs.
7.1.2 Information about preschools and schools.

Some of the content of communications between Nora Park Preschool and Nora Park PS related to information about the preschool and the school. For example, the transition statements standard form provided by the DEECD (2009b), included a section titled “Philosophy of the learning environment”. In the statements prepared by Isabel and sent to Nora Park PS, this section contained information about session times, the number of children, beliefs and values.

Philosophy of the learning environment:
We believe that each child is a unique individual with a right to self expression in a safe and secure environment that is interesting and stimulating.

The program is play based and embraces three major influences on the children’s learning which are themselves (the children), adults (both families and staff) and the environment. The program is delivered over three sessions that are 3hrs and 35 min in length and cover both morning and afternoon timeslots. There are 24 children enrolled in each session.

Arnold sent information to Nora Park Preschool about the school within an emailed “staff bulletin”. One bulletin, collected for this case, contained information about events at the school.

Staff Bulletin Term Three, Week Seven 2011
At our meeting on Thursday the board has endorsed our implementation of 1 to 1 laptops.

This week:
Monday: Stella’s class will be taken by Arnold.
Thursday: Happy Birthday Annabel. Celeste is away: Trisha replacing
Friday: Fathers Day Stall, Literacy Numeracy Week Activities

The content of communication in this case included information about the preschool’s philosophy and general information about what was happening at the school.

7.1.3 Relational communication.

Both Arnold and Isabel reported relational communication – intended to build their professional relationship. Several entries in Arnold’s CDL were titled “general banter and catch up”, or “general greeting”. Arnold explained that these communications with the preschool staff were
not just informational but were meant to develop relationships: “I make a
conscious effort to go over to see Isabel and the other educators over there
just to make that contact”. Isabel recognised the relationship building focus
of this communication: “He’ll come in every Monday morning and just say
‘How are you going? How was your weekend?’ that sort of thing…that’s
just relationship building stuff. It’s all that personal stuff that Arnold’s
really good at”.

7.1.4 Intersetting knowledge/Overlapping fields of experience.

Arnold, Isabel and Stella all indicated a range of intersetting
knowledge and experience which they saw as impacting positively on their
communication and relationships. Stella, who used to be the Director of
Nora Park Preschool, said that because of her experiences communicating
with schools herself as a preschool educator, she had a high regard for the
information about children that preschool educators have: “I just think
when you’re at preschool, when you have seen the children for two
years…and you have known the families, you have an understanding about
the children”. Stella also expressed a desire to maintain links with the
preschool sector and was actively engaged in a local transition network.

Arnold described a particular experience of Nora Park Preschool he
had had as a father which impacted on his perception of the preschool:

…my eldest came to school, after about four or five weeks he said to
me ‘Dad I want to go back to preschool’. ‘Why do you want to go
back to preschool?’ ‘Cause at preschool we could play and do things
and we didn’t have to always sit down’, and you know that
structure. And I thought ‘oh, okay’.

Arnold indicated that this experience had, in part, initiated a change
in curriculum in the first-year-of-school classes, with the aim of making
them more like Nora Park Preschool. Arnold went on to say that: “I think it
enhanced and developed our relationship because it was really saying, you
know, ‘this is an extension of the preschool’”.

Isabel reported that communication with school educators at Nora
Park PS had helped her to know about their work and change her
perspectives of what happened at school. She now knew of some of the
pressures faced by school staff and said this made a difference to their
relationship: “I guess it’s of benefit because I can better understand where the educators are coming from and how constricted they are, and how bound by the curriculum and timeframes that they are”. For Isabel, communication with the school had helped in “building that relationship with them and understanding what they have on their plates”.

Preschool educators at Nora Park were regarded as members of the school staff. This was reflected in Arnold’s communication with them and his expectations of them:

The preschool here we regard as part of the [school]…it is ‘Nora Park’ and not just ‘Nora Park School’, it is ‘Nora Park’ and the preschool is encompassed in that. So the communication is ongoing and, the expectation is that the staff members of the preschool are staff members of Nora Park…it’s really trying to develop community and relationships and acknowledge the fact that we work together. So for us the preschool staff are a part of our school and who we are.

Stella, Isabel and Arnold reported that the relationship between the school and its co-located preschool had not always been positive. The school and preschool have been located on the same site since the 1960s, but Arnold explained that previously there had been a “lack of connection” between the preschool and school. Arnold believed co-location provided an opportunity to develop relationships and his vision for developing a school community included the preschool. Arnold aimed for all people in his school community, including preschool educators, to feel “welcome” and “acceptance” at the school. Isabel agreed that the relationship between the preschool and school had improved dramatically in recent years. She attributed past difficulties to particular “personalities” and was positive about recent acknowledgements of the preschool as part of the school. She noted that this had not always been the case:

They saw the preschool as very separate to the school and I think it probably happened from both sides. Whereas my relationship with Arnold is a lot closer than that and we see it as one body and there’s now things that have been put in place to actually make that one body thing more evident in the community.

The preschool and school educators at Nora Park had a knowledge and appreciation of the ‘other’ setting and were all regarded as being part of the same organisation. The educators perceived that this intersetting
knowledge and overlapping fields of experience had a positive impact on their communication and relationships.

7.1.5 Problems with written communication.

The educators at Nora Park told of some of the problems associated with written channels of communication, while at the same time noting the advantages of face-to-face channels. Arnold explained that he rated his email communications with Nora Park Preschool as a six (very effective) but not a seven (totally effective) in his CDLs because, “I don’t really get any feedback” and it is a disadvantage not knowing “once it’s sent…that the person at the other end actually has received it”. Arnold noted that checking email was time consuming, classroom educators cannot access it in the classroom, and that he has to “sift through and throw out a lot of it”. When comparing the ratings he had given to communications in his CDL, Arnold expressed that he preferred the face-to-face interactions he termed “general greetings” because

you can actually have a discussion and issues do come up, whereas on a piece of paper you know, sometimes, well it is black and white and it’s only me conveying a message whereas the other is two-way and I’m getting feedback.

Stella commented positively about email, noting that “It’s time saving and it’s direct” but that it is not as good as face-to-face communications, as these interactions can “lead to other conversations”. Isabel also expressed a preference for conversations rather than written statements: “I would much prefer to have a verbal conversation with someone than having to write it down. I write it down because I have to”.

Some challenges with the Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statements (transition statements) (DEECD, 2009b) were identified in the Nora Park case. Arnold described two problems related to time. The first was that after a particular time, he considered the transition statements to be “dysfunctional”:

I think the reality of it is that they are very valuable for that ‘get to know you’ in the beginning and probably their use by date, if I can say that, I would say…by the end of term one they don’t really have a use. They’re great and they’re informative but you know, um, what, six, seven, eight weeks later…these kids have grown…and we know our kids fairly well.
Arnold also explained problems with the timing of the receipt of transition statements from preschools. Their arrival late in the year meant that the information they contained could not be used for class arrangements. He noted that his conversations with Isabel, rather than information in the transition statements, had contributed to decisions about class composition. Isabel also described problems with the timing of transition statements. She believed that they would be more effective for school educators to receive at the beginning of the school year:

At the end of the year they’re still thinking about ‘we’ve got Christmas stuff to do and we’ve got reports to write’ and all things like that. They don’t want to hear, I don’t think, about the children that they’re going to have for next year. That’s six weeks away, so I think their head’s probably not in the right space to receive that information, which is understandable.

Two other challenges of transition statements related to their length and the validity of the information. Stella said that she uses information in the transition statements to help her get to know children, but also stated:

One thing I haven’t liked about the transition statements is that it appears that a lot of [preschool] teachers just cut and paste, drag and drop, and to me it’s just the same old repetition… just really lengthy and a lot to get through.

In her third and last interview, after she had read and used the transition statements in the first term of the school year, Stella added: “they’re a bit dry and just very heavy going, user unfriendly I would say”. Arnold explained that he didn’t have time to read the written transition statements, “I do have a quick peruse through and see if there’s anything that might be outstanding” before he hands them on to the classroom educators.

Isabel reported being less restricted about the information she shared in verbal, rather than written, communication. In this interview excerpt Isabel describes what she talked about with school educators when she provided them with the transition statements in 2011:

You talk about things that you can’t write. You talk about….where their [children’s] weaknesses are. I tend not to write that sort of thing. I would rather write their strengths. Some background information [can be shared], because that’s not in the transition report.
Several problems with written communication were identified by educators in the Nora Park case. The educators described a preference for verbal communications and that this can overcome the constraints of written communication.

### 7.1.6 Outcomes for children.

Each of the educators reported that interseting communication had beneficial outcomes for children. Stella described how she used the information in a particular child’s transition statement to program activities which linked to interests. Isabel received feedback from children that they were pleased that they had been placed in the same school class together, as suggested in Isabel’s communications with the school. However, Isabel also noted that schools other than Nora Park PS provided no feedback about the utility, or otherwise, of her communication, which meant that she had no indication of any outcomes for children.

### 7.1.7 Outcomes for educators.

Arnold believed that the communication between the school and preschool educators at Nora Park had led them to working together to produce collaborative documents and “bouncing ideas off each other”. While communication with other preschools was much more limited, Arnold did indicate that information about children with additional needs had given him prior notice that they would be coming to his school, helped to complete funding applications and assisted with preparations for supporting the children once at school. On at least one occasion this communication confirmed his suspicions that a child would need additional support.

Stella reported using the information provided in the transition statements in her planning for play-based curriculum. In addition, she described using the transition statements as a measure of the progress made by children with additional needs since starting school. For Stella, further positive outcomes of interseting communication included being able to borrow resources from Nora Park Preschool and share ideas.

Isabel described both positive and negative outcomes of her
communications with schools. In one communication experience, Isabel provided a listening ear as a school educator expressed her frustrations regarding the challenging behaviour of a child: “it was beneficial to her, for the educator, to be able to express some of her concerns and for me to understand them purely because I have had the child before”. Another positive outcome included being able to visit her former preschool children at Nora Park PS on their first day of school.

For Isabel, negative outcomes included frustration at the lack of response of school educators, outside Nora Park PS, to her attempts to communicate. One effort included the following invitation:

The children and educators of Nora Park Preschool would like to invite the 2012 teachers and/or the principal to come and meet the children who will be attending your school in 2012. Please come to visit us any time during October.

However, Isabel had only received a response from Nora Park PS, which she expected anyway “because we’re co-located”. She also described her annoyance at other non-responses: “when I have done my transition statements and I have indicated on the majority of them that I would like to have conversations with them [school educators] and I get nothing back. That frustrates me.”

Communications in this case helped the school educators get ready for the children starting school, support school educators experiencing difficulties and maintain relationships between Isabel and the preschool children, once they had started school. Isabel also reported frustration as an outcome of failed intersetting communications with schools beyond Nora Park.

7.1.8 Summary: Case 1.

The Nora Park case has provided detailed information about intersetting communications in this specific context, particularly in regards to the content of, influences on and outcomes of communication. Communication in this case consisted of information about children and about the preschool and the school. Relational communication was a feature of this case, that is, the educators reported communication that developed relationships. Educators’ intersetting knowledge and overlapping fields of
experience were important influences on communication at Nora Park. These influences had a positive impact on communication and relationships between Arnold, Stella and Isabel. The educators in this case described a preference for verbal communications and reported several problems with written communication. Positive outcomes of interseting communication were reported for both children and educators at Nora Park. Whilst positive outcomes were reported as a result of interseting communications between Nora Park educators, frustration was reported by Isabel as an outcome of failed interseting communications with other schools.

7.2 Case 2: Brantwood

The Brantwood case consists of two sites: Brantwood Primary School (Brantwood PS) and Brantwood Preschool. Brantwood is a small rural town in Victoria with a population of just over 2000. Brantwood PS is a government school with a student population of 190 and one first-year of school class. Brantwood Preschool is a parent-managed, stand-alone sessional preschool located a short distance from Brantwood PS. Most children who attended Brantwood PS also attended Brantwood Preschool in the year before school. During the research, only two of the 25 children who started school at Brantwood PS had not attended Brantwood Preschool. In this same period, 25 other children who had also attended Brantwood Preschool, started school at a non-government school, the only other school in Brantwood.

Two educators from the school and one from the preschool were involved in this case: John, Anna and Yvette. The educators’ background information is detailed in Table 7.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>School/ preschool</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role in transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Brantwood PS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>“To oversee that it’s happening smoothly, a face and a point of contact for new parents”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd GradDip EC Ed</td>
<td>Brantwood PS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>First-year-of-school classroom teacher and Assistant Principal</td>
<td>“Organise and implement the program, produce transition kits, run information sessions for parents”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvette</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC)</td>
<td>Brantwood Preschool</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>“Supporting children and families through transition”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The educators in this case had known each other for some time: Anna had been the Director at Brantwood Preschool before gaining employment at the school and John’s own child had previously attended Brantwood Preschool. Anna and Yvette had known each other for 12 years and, at the time of the research, were both on two community committees together.

Children from Brantwood Preschool who enrol at Brantwood PS attend four transition sessions with their preschool educators, including Yvette, at Brantwood PS during November each year. At these times Yvette and Anna have the opportunity to talk to each other when the children are engaged in the transition activities. The Brantwood case was initially identified by a Victorian DEECD Regional Network Leader, who described Brantwood Primary School as having a strong relationship with Brantwood Preschool. The data sources for Case 2 are summarised in Table 7.5. In addition to the data sources used in Case 1, recordings of communicative interactions were also utilised in this case.

Table 7.5: Brantwood case data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Communication Diary Logs</th>
<th>Documents*</th>
<th>Recordings of Communicative Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators (number of sources)</td>
<td>John (1)</td>
<td>Anna (1)</td>
<td>Anna (3)</td>
<td>Anna and Yvette (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anna (3)</td>
<td>Yvette (1)</td>
<td>Yvette (5)</td>
<td>Yvette (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*An enrolments flyer, a written transition program, and six transition statements

The themes identified in this case were coded into eight major categories: ‘information about children’, ‘information about preschools and schools’, ‘feedback’, ‘relational communication’, ‘intersetting knowledge/overlapping fields of experience’ ‘problems with written communication’, ‘outcomes for children’ and ‘outcomes for educators’.
7.2.1 Information about children.

The content of Anna and Yvette’s communication with each other included information about children. In particular, children’s abilities and dispositions, their friends, interests and needs were written and spoken about by Anna and Yvette in their self-reports of communication, their CDLs and interviews, and in the actual communication texts collected. For example, in an informal meeting in November, 2011, the educators spoke about a range of topics related to children. Extracts taken from the transcript of this meeting are noted in Table 7.6.
Table 7.6: Information about children communicated in a meeting between Anna and Yvette on 15 November 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informational Topic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Abilities and dispositions | • Yvette: Britney’s writing her name  
   • Yvette: Clyde is the type of boy who will join in when he wants to then he’ll wander off and do his own thing.  
   • Yvette: Jay…he’s very intelligent…very curious.  
   • Yvette: He’s marvellous with construction |
| Friends | • Yvette: Clyde sometimes plays with Will too. They’re pals.  
   • Anna: Tilda: who’s her main friend?  
   • Anna: Now are there any children who particularly clash with each other, not a good combination?  
   • Anna: …who should I be aware of whose main friends have gone to another school? Who might be a bit lonely? |
| Children with additional needs | • Anna: So Tristan goes to speech?  
   Yvette: Tristan does and Will does. Tristan apparently doesn’t go to the sessions very often.  
   • Yvette: Connor has…just very weak, spidery drawing and very loose grip….he could need extra OT [occupational therapy]. |
| Allergies | • Anna: What about food allergies? We do a fair bit of cooking, anybody I need to be aware of? |
| Family backgrounds | • Anna: Now is there anyone I need to be aware of with a tricky family background as in, mum and dad recently separated, or sick parents or sick siblings? |
Information about children was also the focus of the transition statements Yvette prepared for children starting school at Brantwood PS. Usually, this included details of children’s interests, for example:

Tristan enjoys making up imaginary games that have exciting themes. He likes construction type activities - blocks, construction sets, clay, and wood work. He enjoys books, puzzles. Physical activity in any form – running, jumping, climbing, obstacle course. Star Wars.

7.2.2 Information about preschools and schools.

Some of the content of communication between Brantwood PS and Brantwood Preschool was promotional in nature. Documents that were sent to the preschool by the school included information about the school’s transition program and open day. A flyer informed families that enrolments were open:

Enrolments are now being taken for students wishing to enrol at Brantwood Primary School for 2012. Please complete an enrolment form, available at the Brantwood Primary School office and bring along a 'proof of age' and a current immunisation certificate. For further details contact: Anna

Anna explained that these documents were “basically an advertising campaign”, aimed at promoting the school to prospective parents via the preschool. John articulated that the content of his communication with preschools was about “selling the great things that we do”.

7.2.3 Feedback.

The content of communications between Anna and Yvette included requests for, and receipt of, feedback about how children were settling in at school, the content of transition statements and practice at the preschool. In their meeting, Yvette asked questions of Anna about what she would like to see in the transition statements she was preparing. Yvette asked Anna: “So is there anything that you think I need to put in from what you remember of last year?” and “there are children who would benefit from sitting at the front [of the class] who are very easily distracted. So do you want me to put things like that in them?” In an interview, Anna told of how she had given feedback to Yvette:

I’ve discussed with Yvette, we’ve had an issue with the kids coming
to the school with just writing in uppercase letters because they’re a lot easier to do and I have suggested at preschool perhaps they could concentrate on lowercase as well so the kids aren’t solely using uppercase because it’s really hard to then break them out of that habit into using lowercase letters as well.

Anna also told of feedback she gave Yvette in their communications in early 2012, after children started school. Yvette had been concerned that a particular child “would struggle”, but Anna gave her feedback that he was doing fine and also told her about specialist help she had obtained for children Yvette had suggested would need assistance.

7.2.4 Relational communication.

Some of the content of communication between educators in this case was relational. For example, Yvette described how Anna “pops down” to the preschool early in the year, “just to make contact”. Yvette described particular words that had been spoken by John to her as “supportive” and “appreciative”, and also described a communication with a school educator who was “really worried because she was very new at teaching” regarding the implementation of a play-based curriculum at the school. In this case, Yvette felt she was well positioned to provide professional support. A sense of professional exchange was also noted by Anna when Yvette offered to help with resourcing:

when we were setting up our play-based curriculum program last year, a fair bit of money [was] required and Yvette was terrific, she said: ‘if you ever want to borrow anything down at the preschool, just come down and borrow’.

7.2.5 Intersetting knowledge/Overlapping fields of experience.

Particular shared attributes of individuals were identified by Anna and John as impacting on the relationship and communications between the preschool and school. Anna indicated that her background and experiences as a preschool educator were helpful in her relationship and communication with Yvette. In addition, serving on committees together provided opportunities for communication “outside of transition”:

I used to teach at the preschool. I’m preschool trained as well so I have a good relationship there with Yvette, she took over when I came back to work at the school and Yvette and I are on a couple of committees…so we have a little bit of swapping information as the
year progresses.

When asked about the reasons underpinning the positive relationship between the preschool and the school, John mentioned that Anna had “really got a good understanding of where the kids come from” due to her previous experience as the preschool director. He also indicated that both Yvette and Anna were very committed to supporting children’s transition to school and work well together: “they are just people who work really comfortably together and want the best for the kids”.

As well as personal attributes impacting on their relationship, Anna spoke about how the curriculum in her classroom influenced communication with the preschool. In her meeting with Yvette, Anna explained how having a play-based curriculum shaped her use of the information regarding children’s interests in Yvette’s transition statements:

It’s nice when you have put their interests in there so in the first few days I can make sure I’ve got something out that really takes their fancy. So particularly with developmental curriculum where we put the children’s activities out to cater for their interests, I will skim through what you’ve put down and make sure over the first period of time everybody has something they’re keen on.

Anna also promoted curriculum connections in a later interview, where she noted the importance of preschool and school working from the same curriculum documents and using the same language in talking about their curriculum and pedagogy: “It’s better if we’re all talking the same thing, it’s far, far better for the kids”.

### 7.2.6 Problems with written communication.

Yvette and Anna reported some challenges with written communication, particularly around the transition statements. Both educators described the statements as being somewhat redundant because they had such regular communications about children prior to them starting school, and school educators got to know children during transition sessions. Yvette explained that in 2011, when she told Brantwood PS that her statements would be arriving later than the Department deadline in November, the school “was not concerned because of their great transition program they have so much information about the children”. Anna
suggested that the transition statements were a lot of unnecessary work for Yvette, as the content of them was already covered in their verbal communications. Further, Anna indicated that by the time she received the statements, the information within them was “stuff I already knew”. When discussing the rating of six (very effective) she gave in her CDL for the receiving of the transition statements from Yvette, Anna said that the statements did have a use, but because of the presence of ongoing, lengthy conversations about children during the transition visits in the month of November, that: “we could actually get by without transition statements”.

The utility of particular content, the length, and waiting for families to return transition statements were also identified as problematic by educators in this case. Anna indicated that she used her own assessments, rather than information in the transitions statements, to ascertain “academic information” about children because: “Yvette’s information is probably less academic, more social and more activity-based, what the kids like to do”. Yvette’s comments were complementary, noting that she did not provide great detail of children’s literacy and numeracy understandings, beyond comments such as that the child “has an awareness of numbers” and commented that the school “do[es] their own checks early in the year” on children’s literacy and numeracy.

Yvette was concerned about the length of the transition statements particularly as they had replaced the brief information sheet she used to write for school educators:

Well I always used to do a written statement myself… it was just a quick little snapshot for the school teacher…and I think [school educators] got a lot out of that. I wonder whether these statements are far too lengthy.

Yvette spoke of being discontented with what she writes about children in the statements: “You know, sometimes I’ve read the statement through and okay, that’s all quite true what I’d written about the child, but I’ve thought, well, it doesn’t really capture that child’s sort of personality”. This was also reflected in Yvette’s preference for a conversation with Anna about children in context, that is, when they were observing the children together at the transition sessions. Yvette described delays as some families took time to return the transition statements or provide consent for them to
be forwarded to schools. She provided one example where a parent was reluctant to complete the “parent section” of her child’s statement. She explained that:

I’ve got one parent this year who I’ve heard on the grapevine, isn’t going to complete her statement so I’ve got to discuss that tomorrow with her just to see why and just reassure her that it’s just, you know, really good information, background information to pass onto the teacher about the child’s interests, so I hope she will do that.

Yvette and Anna used email to communicate with each other and identified some advantages with this channel. However, this did not take away from their preference for phone or face-to-face contact. Yvette described emails as “quick and easy”, with the advantage of contacting school educators when they were “difficult to catch”. In her CDL, Yvette recorded two email communications in December 2011: one sent to, and one received from, Anna regarding organising a visit to the preschool of the children’s “buddies” from the school. In an interview Anna also mentioned that she had received an email from Yvette with a picture of a child reading to the preschool group after Yvette had mentioned to Anna during a transition visit that the child was already reading.

Several problems with written communications were identified in this case. These included that the written information in transition statements is: redundant, unnecessarily lengthy, inaccurate and time delayed. A clear preference for phone and face-to-face communications was reported.

7.2.7 Outcomes for children.

Yvette and Anna reported their perceptions of the outcomes of their communication for children. In an interview which was conducted after children had started school, Anna described having received information verbally and via email from Yvette about a child who was already reading, which had resulted in the child being put on the appropriate reading level. Anna also explained that information provided by Yvette had helped her foster social relationships for another child:

one little boy, his two closest friends went to the other school and that is in the transition statement and that was really handy because I then made a concerted effort to pal him up with some other children because I knew that he was probably feeling a bit lonely.
Yvette and Anna also reported communications which resulted in the children who started school at Brantwood PS in 2012, coming back to visit the preschool in Term 1 – promoting both enjoyment and reflection from the children.

7.2.8 Outcomes for educators.

The communications described in this case resulted in a range of outcomes for educators. These included the provision of information for Anna that helped her prepare for the children starting school. For example, information from Yvette’s transition statements had identified that a particular child needed assistance with toileting, so Anna was aware of this and was able to “straight away” organise support for him. In another example, Yvette described influencing the choice of days for the school’s transition program and its content through her communications with Anna. Anna reported that she had noticed “a little bit of a difference” in the children’s writing as a result of communicating with Yvette about the teaching of writing at the preschool. Additionally, by communicating with the preschool, John and Anna had been able to access families and promote the school.

7.2.9 Summary: Case 2.

Case 2 has provided information about the content of, influences on and outcomes of intersetting communication in the specific context of Brantwood. Communication in this case consisted of information about children, the preschool and the school and also featured feedback about children, preschool practices and the content of transition statements. Relational communication was reported in this case with educators describing particular conversations which developed relationships between the preschool and the school. The educators had intersetting knowledge and overlapping fields of experience which influenced intersetting communications as they shared experiences, personal attributes and backgrounds. The educators in this case described a preference for face-to-face communications and the ongoing nature of these interactions between the preschool and school contributed to written transition statements being
seen to be redundant. Positive outcomes of intersetting communication were reported for both children and educators at Brantwood.

7.3 Case 3: Enoral-Swifton

Three research sites contributed to the Enoral-Swifton case: Enoral Public School (Enoral PS), Swifton Preschool and Swifton Childcare Centre (Swifton CC). Enoral is located in rural NSW and has a population of approximately 1,200. Enoral is situated just outside of Waketon, a large regional centre with a LGA population of approximately 50,000. Swifton is a suburb of Waketon and is a short distance from Enoral. Enoral PS is a small school with a student population of 67 students and one composite first-year-of-school class. No preschools are located in Enoral; the nearest are located in Swifton. In 2012, 13 children started school at Enoral PS. Across the children who attended preschool in this group, nine different preschools were represented. Three of the children starting school at Enoral PS had attended Swifton Preschool and/or Swifton CC. Swifton Preschool is a community-based, parent-managed preschool. Swifton CC is a long day care centre managed by a not-for-profit organisation. Children attending these two preschools go on to start school at a range of schools in Waketon and surrounding communities.

Eight educators contributed to the Enoral-Swifton case: Janet and Patrick from Enoral PS, Deborah and Kelly from Swifton Preschool, Kasey and Leesa from Swifton CC, and two other itinerant educators, Robyn and Heather, who were employed by the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) to support children in the area who were starting school and had been identified as having additional needs. The educators’ background details are summarised in Table 7.7.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role in transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>DipEd</td>
<td>Enoral Public School</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>“Overseer – be available to talk to parents, ensure classroom teacher is properly assisted”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>DipTeach</td>
<td>Enoral Public School</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>First-year-of-school teacher</td>
<td>“Organise and run it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasey</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dip and studying BTeach (Birth to 5 years)</td>
<td>Swifton Childcare Centre</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Preschool teacher and as of Dec. 2012, director.</td>
<td>“To assist the children in being ready for school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leesa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC)</td>
<td>Swifton Childcare Centre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preschool teacher</td>
<td>“Assist children to transition to school during their last year of care”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role in transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC)</td>
<td>Swifton</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Preschool director and teacher</td>
<td>“Facilitator – with parents, children and staff. Support, information provider”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>B. Teach (Birth to 5 years)</td>
<td>Swifton Preschool</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Preschool teacher</td>
<td>“Supporting children and families, providing information for families, working with the school and preparing children for school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robyn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dip. Teaching and B. Ed</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Regional support officer</td>
<td>“Observe students, collect information and strategies used in preschools, liaise with families, transfer information to school learning support teams/teachers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dip. Teaching and B.Ed. (Special Education)</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Regional support officer</td>
<td>“Co-ordinate transfer of information [from preschools to schools], identification of resource needs for students moving from preschool to school”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enoral PS was identified through the suggestion of the local DEC Director of Schools, on the basis that communication with preschools was both important and potentially challenging in this site, because of the lack of preschool services in the immediate area. Despite the lack of preschool services in Enoral, during the research Heather and Robyn were involved with Enoral PS and Swifton CC regarding a child with additional needs who started school in 2012 and attended Swifton CC in 2011. The child, Paul, had been identified to the DEC by Kasey at Swifton CC, using the DEC standard form to request support for children starting school. The data sources for the Enoral-Swifton case are summarised in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8: Enoral-Swifton case data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Documents*</th>
<th>Recordings of Communicative Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Diary Logs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>Patrick (1)</td>
<td>Janet (1)</td>
<td>Janet (1)</td>
<td>Janet and Kasey (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(number</td>
<td>Janet (3)</td>
<td>Kasey (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of sources)</td>
<td>Deborah (2)</td>
<td>Deborah (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kelly (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kasey (2)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leesa (2)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robyn (1)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heather (1)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A child profile
* * Interviewed together (Kasey and Leesa interviewed once together, Robyn and Heather interviewed once together).

The themes identified in this case were coded into nine major categories: ‘duty motives’, ‘information about children’, ‘information about families’, ‘information about preschools and schools’, ‘relational communication’, ‘problems with written communication’, ‘indirect channels of communication’, ‘barriers to communication’, and ‘outcomes for educators’.

7.3.1 Duty motives.

A focus on duty indicated that a number of educators regarded intersetting communication as part of their professional responsibility. For example, Kasey felt that it was her responsibility to communicate with
schools to ensure that the children at her preschool were “ready for school”. She related a communication experience where a school educator had discussed children in her classroom who were “not ready” for school. Kasey’s reaction was to focus on making sure ‘her’ children were ready:

I like to do a good job and I want to know...if they are not ready, then what, what do I have to do because I would like for the children in my care to go off to school and be ready.

Janet indicated that it was part of her job to communicate with preschools when a child starting school was identified as having additional needs. Indeed, such intersetting communication was required in order for the school to apply for funding to support the child at school. In further examples of the duty motive, Deborah reported that she communicated with schools because “that’s part of our whole early childhood philosophy in following up the children’s needs and interests”, and Heather and Robyn described how facilitating communication between preschools and schools was part of their defined roles within the DEC. Motives for communicating related to duty in this case.

7.3.2 Information about children.

The topics of communication in this case included information about children’s abilities, dispositions, interests and needs. These were the focus of actual communications between Enoral PS and Swifton CC captured in this case. As part of this communication, Janet and Kasey met formally at Swifton CC in November 2011, to discuss one child in particular, Paul, who was described as having multiple physical and emotional difficulties. The conversation included Kasey outlining the strategies the preschool staff had used to manage Paul’s needs and challenges. This and other topics covered in the meeting and examples are provided in Table 7.9. Prior to this meeting, Janet had observed Paul at the school’s orientation to school sessions and had received written information about Paul from Robyn at the DEC. This information included a form completed by Kasey, originally for the referral to the DEC, which contained information about Paul’s needs, perceived problems, abilities and dispositions. An extract from this form is included in Table 7.10.
Table 7.9: The content of communication between Janet and Kasey in their meeting on 10 November 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s needs</td>
<td>• Janet: So he doesn’t get tired?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kasey: No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Janet: How often do you change his nappy during the day?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kasey: We do three to four changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kasey: [He needs] things, that are bigger and brighter and that are easy for him to manipulate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to manage or support Paul</td>
<td>• Kasey: I always give him two choices... so he doesn’t get to go off and do what he wants. He has to choose from one of those.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s interests and likes</td>
<td>• Kasey: He really likes [at rest time], he asks me to rub his back. I rub my hands down his back on the mat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kasey: He likes affection, likes cuddles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Janet: So I was just interested to know what his interests were. I’m going to get a tricycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kasey: Loves bikes. Loves tricycles yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kasey: He loves sensory activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s interests and likes</td>
<td>• Kasey: He really likes [at rest time], he asks me to rub his back. I rub my hands down his back on the mat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kasey: He likes affection, likes cuddles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Janet: So I was just interested to know what his interests were. I’m going to get a tricycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kasey: Loves bikes. Loves tricycles yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kasey: He loves sensory activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s abilities and dispositions</td>
<td>• Kasey: He’s actually pretty good with mobilo, like smaller things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kasey: He’s really persistent in trying to do what he wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kasey: He gets attached to people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived problems</td>
<td>• Kasey: He doesn’t sit for long enough to complete anything</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.10: Content of referral document completed by Kasey and received by Janet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s needs and perceived problems</td>
<td>“Needs assistance to complete challenging puzzles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Unable to identify most colours”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Needs assistance and direction in most activities”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Needs reminding to use a spoon/fork”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Poor fine motor skills”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Needs regular nappy changes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s abilities and dispositions</td>
<td>“Can recognise own name”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Will have tantrums”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Will mouth inappropriate items”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Good gross motor skills, able to run, jump, climb, balance”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about children’s needs, perceived problems, interests, likes, abilities and dispositions were present in the actual communications in this case.

7.3.3 Information about families.
During the meeting with Kasey, and in other instances, Janet indicated that the content of some communication with preschools related to families. Part of the rationale for this was to validate the information provided by families, particularly about children’s school readiness, as “sometimes what the preschool teacher has told Mum, isn’t what Mum is telling me so I’ll usually do my own research there if I’ve got a Mum who’s anxious about it”. In their meeting, Janet and Kasey both spoke about Paul’s mother and her anxiety about Paul starting school:

Janet:  She’s really anxious.
Kasey:  Yeah.
Janet:  She’s really worried about him starting....
Kasey: She is yeah.

Janet: ...and she wouldn’t, I couldn’t get her to leave him the last time she came...

7.3.4 Information about preschools and schools.

In both self-reports and the documented communicative interaction, educators shared information about preschools and schools. For example, Janet reported conversations with a preschool educator about a classroom program. Deborah described the exchange of information between herself and her local school regarding future events. In an interview, Deborah also provided details about a communication with a school educator which was reported in her CDL. This conversation occurred when the school educator brought some school children to visit the preschool, and concerned the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) and changes to the school’s transition program.

In another example of communication content related to information about preschools and schools, during Janet’s meeting with Kasey, Janet talked about aspects of her classroom and shared some of her challenging experiences as an educator. Among the things Janet communicated to Kasey were the difficulties of working in a school classroom with many children with additional needs. The following is an extract from the meeting:

Janet: Well I’ve got, um, five kids with special needs next year.

Kasey: Oh wow.

Janet: Yeah. I’ve got Paul and then I’ve got an autistic girl. I’ve got a boy with a syndrome...

Kasey: Really?

Janet: I’ve got, um, who else have I got? And I’ve got two children with cerebral palsy. One with no language and one with language but with physical difficulties.

Kasey: Is this just in your class?

Janet: This is just in my twenty.

Kasey: How many aides do you have?
Janet: [Paul’s] the only one that comes with an aide.

Kasey: Gee. That’s a tough job.

7.3.5 Relational communication.
Some of the content of Janet’s communication with preschools was relational. For example, after receiving written information from Swifton CC regarding a child, Janet made contact with them by phone “to thank them for it”. She also showed appreciation for Kasey at the end of their meeting: “So thank you so much for having me and it’s just so nice of you to have me. I wish I could do it more often”.

7.3.6 Problems with written communication.
Educators contributing to this case expressed a preference for verbal communication between preschools and schools, partly because of the challenges they described with written communication. Deborah’s preference was for school educators to visit children at the preschool, rather than sending schools written profiles about children. Her rationale was that verbal interaction allowed her to share information about children’s challenging behaviour that she would not commit to in writing. Deborah described children’s written portfolios as presented “in a positive way”, and contrasted this to verbal communication, where: “it’s a bit easier when they are here and you can show them examples of it happening [rather than] having it written down”. Janet explained her preference for verbal communications with preschools:

Written documents are really good but, face-to-face or even on the phone, the conversations go in places even you haven’t thought of. So you might send them a written thing or they send you a written thing and then that’s it. But when you’re talking to someone, it will bring something up and your conversation can head off into different places.

School educators described some written documents from preschools as overly lengthy and noted that these were less useful than more concise versions. Robyn described collecting a lot of information from preschools about children, but noted that classroom teachers “don’t need all that paperwork” so she “condens[ed] it down into something that’s really quick
and accessible”. Deborah articulated the potential dangers of written communication about children leading to preconceived ideas, due to the different languages preschool and school educators used to describe behaviour. She cautioned that written information could be misinterpreted: sometimes school educators like to start afresh and to learn about those children too. It’s a really fine line because you don’t want to give too much information, particularly if it may be a negative situation, like, if we find the child doesn’t settle and needs a lot of support at group time. There’s a real balance of ‘do you share all that information?’ because you don’t want that child to be earmarked already before they go [to school] and, we have totally different terminology. You hear the [school] teachers saying ‘oh, naughty children’ and, words and terminology that we just don’t use in the early childhood environment.

Several problems with written communication were identified by the educators in this case. Verbal or face-to-face communications were the preferred channels of communication.

### 7.3.7 Indirect channels of communication.

In this case, Robyn and Heather had specific roles that promoted communication between preschools and schools regarding children with additional needs. Kasey explained in an interview after her meeting with Janet that, previously, her communication with schools about specific children with additional needs had been done “through Robyn”, and had involved completing the written referral form and relaying of strategies, rather than direct conversations with school educators. Other educators in this case also noted that the usual procedure for communicating with preschools/schools about children with additional needs was through DEC personnel. Robyn explained that it was often hard for preschool educators to attend meetings in person at schools where the support needs of children are discussed and where the discussion focused on “profiling” of children in relation to funding applications. Robyn commented that it is more common for her to act as an intermediary, and to relay information gained from preschool educators at these meetings. Indirect channels of communication between the preschools and schools, that is, where information is passed on from one person to the next, were evident in this case.
7.3.8 **Barriers to communication.**

Educators in this case reported that the attributes of specific schools and preschools could make communication more difficult. Robyn and Heather differentiated between preschools and schools in terms of the relationships with schools and with themselves as support educators. In this case, the DEC staff referred to difficulty forming relationships with staff in private childcare centres, noting that “they have such a huge turnover of staff”, with the consequence that it was difficult to build up a relationship with the service. This concern was evident in a number of comments, including Heather’s statement that: “There are some schools that work really closely with their preschools and particularly the community preschools, but, the private childcare providers, I don’t see them as having a similar kind of relationship” and Robyn’s comment that “It’s been harder to get a foot in the door” at these centres. While the comments identified concerns, it is unclear whether these relate to the nature of the services, the staff, the differences in jurisdiction, or other factors.

Preschool educators in this case also identified aspects of schools which impacted on communication. Leesa, Kasey and Deborah recounted attempts to communicate with a local non-government school to organise transition visits. The reason for the lack of success in these attempts was identified as the school having its own transition program, specifically for children who would be attending the school. A number of barriers to communication were identified in this case.

7.3.9 **Outcomes for children.**

Educators involved in this case reported their perceptions of outcomes for children as a result of intersetting communication. Deborah reported that, after extensive conversations with a school, a child with additional vision needs received support at the school that accorded with the strategies the preschool had been using: “We told them how we had been working with this child within the preschool and then it flowed through there”. Deborah also reported the results of another communication experience with a school where a child’s school “buddy” had visited the preschool, with positive consequences for the child starting school: “she was really quite a timid child so that was really good for her when she went
along [to school] she knew that person by name already”. Janet reported visiting Paul in his preschool classroom after her meeting with Kasey and, from this, reported: “it’s made a really good relationship with Paul”, who was excited to see her at orientation sessions: “he runs straight in: ‘oh Miss Carson!’”. Positive outcomes for children as a result of intersetting communications were reported in this case.

7.3.10 Outcomes for educators.

Outcomes reported by educators as a result of their intersetting communications included the development of intersetting knowledge and validation of preschool practice. Deborah reported that she felt that her practice at the preschool had been “confirmed” by her communication with schools after children had started school, particularly when she received “really good feedback” about how the children had settled in and their skill levels: “They’ve said ‘… the children are all really good’…and that’s really confirmed what we are doing…so we are really happy with that”. Similar validation of preschool practice was reported by Kasey after her meeting with Janet:

she said what I was doing was great and they were the sort of things that she would be doing as well, [it] makes me know that, to keep using those strategies in the future with the preschool children, knowing that a school teacher...thinks that they’re good strategies so they’re things that we can keep doing in the future.

Janet also described enhanced knowledge and appreciation of preschool environments after visiting Swifton Childcare Centre: “I love the stations, that’s what I love...I mean they just have these marvellous rooms”.

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of intersetting communication, preschool educators in this case reported a general lack of feedback from schools about information that had been shared. In particular, they commented that they were not aware of any outcomes that had resulted from their communications with schools and were unable to judge whether or not their intended outcome had been achieved. In one example, Deborah described a conversation with a school educator where she provided information about children. This communication was recorded in Deborah’s CDL. When she elaborated on the rating that she had allocated to this experience, she explained that it was not rated at the highest rating of seven
Because: “I don’t know how [the information is] used at the other end so therefore I don’t know. How do you gauge that then?” In other examples, Deborah and Leesa reported not being able to take their children on an excursion to a local non-government school after their suggestion was turned down. Deborah reported that after preparing portfolios for children and sending them to schools she got “feedback from the teachers that they didn’t read them anyway”.

In an example that suggested that lack of feedback was experienced by educators in both preschool and school, Janet reported providing Swifton CC with her email address for further communications, “but nothing happened”.

Some positive outcomes for educators were reported in this case as a consequence of their intersetting communications. The educators also described that some of their intended outcomes had not been achieved and some of the outcomes are not known due to lack of feedback from educators in the other setting.

7.3.11 Summary: Case 3.

Case 3 has provided information about the duty motives of educators, the content of self-reported and actual communications, influences on and outcomes of intersetting communications between the schools and preschools in Enoral-Swifton.

Motives related to duty are evident in this case: the educators felt it was their responsibility to engage in intersetting communications. The content of communication included information about: children, families, preschools and schools. In particular in this case, much of the intersetting communication was about a child with additional needs and the support that he required in the new school setting. Some of the content of communications was also relational.

As well as providing information about several problems with written communication, and barriers to communication, Case 3 has highlighted that there were indirect channels of communication that operated between preschools and schools. That is, information was relayed between settings by the DEC staff.

Whilst positive outcomes for educators were reported in this case as
a consequence of their interseting communications, educators described that sometimes their intended outcomes weren’t achieved, and often the outcomes of their interseting communications are not known due to lack of feedback from the other setting.

7.4 Case 4: Sanville

The Sanville case is comprised of two research sites: Sanville Public School (Sanville PS) and Sanville long day care centre (Sanville LDC). Sanville is a small rural town in NSW with a population of approximately 2,000. Three schools and three preschools are located in Sanville. In addition to the long day care centre, a state-funded preschool and a family day care service operate in Sanville. Sanville LDC is a privately-owned, 39-place long day care centre. Children who attended this preschool in 2011 started school in 2012 at three different schools in the area. In 2012, Sanville PS had a student population of 84 students. When children started school they entered a Kindergarten-Year 1 composite class. In 2012, 16 children started school at Sanville PS, some of whom attended Sanville LDC in 2011.

Three educators contributed to the Sanville case: Fern, Lauren and Olivia (Table 7.11).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>School/ preschool</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role in transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fern</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>DipTeach (2-8 years) BEd</td>
<td>Sanville Public School</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>School Principal</td>
<td>“Coordinator for our school. Facilitator. Link between preschools and school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd(Primary)</td>
<td>Sanville Public School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>First-year-of-school classroom teacher</td>
<td>“Welcome children and parents to school, get to know children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BTeach (EC)</td>
<td>Sanville Long Day Care Centre</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Director and preschool teacher</td>
<td>“Working with the children to develop strengths to commence school. Promoting partnerships and support for families who have children starting school”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sanville was identified as a potential case by a preschool educator in another NSW community, who reported that good relationships existed between preschools and schools based around a transition to school network. Olivia had been involved in this network for several years. The group organised community-based activities for children and families focused on starting school. In addition, Olivia had worked collaboratively with educators at the other preschool services in Sanville to develop a written profile about children (child profiles) to be sent to the schools in Sanville during children’s transition to school. Table 7.12 details the sources of data for this case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Communication Diary Logs</th>
<th>Documents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators (number of sources)</td>
<td>Fern (2)</td>
<td>Fern (1)</td>
<td>Olivia (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lauren (2)</td>
<td>Olivia (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Olivia (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Two child profiles and three emails

The themes identified in this case were coded into eight major categories: ‘information about children’, ‘information about preschools and schools’, ‘feedback’, ‘nature of the setting’, ‘beliefs and values’, ‘problems with written communication’, ‘outcomes for children’ and ‘outcomes for educators’.

**7.4.1 Information about children.**

In this case, interview, CDL and document data indicated that communication between preschool and school often focused on information about children’s needs and perceived problems. Olivia’s CDL recorded the topics of a conversation she had with a school educator in October, 2011. These included attention to “any special needs” of children. This was consistent with the information she provided in the written child profiles she prepared and sent to Sanville PS. In one profile, Olivia noted “Lucas may need some support with separation and becoming resilient in the social setting”. Addressing the same topic, Fern reported a conversation with a
preschool educator regarding “the nature of some problems for the students that were coming into the school and how we might best go about addressing those problems”. Lauren also sought information from preschool educators about any potential issues for children, noting that she “wasn’t so concerned about who was writing their name, who was counting to ten or anything like that” but rather about “any behaviours that they could tell me or could give me heads up on who might have teething problems”.

Information about children’s abilities, dispositions and interests was also shared in written documents collected in this case. This was evident in the child profiles prepared by Olivia for schools. The following excerpt from one child’s profile provides an example.

- Ivy has great fine motor skills and is able to stay on task.
- She has peers she prefers to mix with and is able to participate in this play.
- Ivy catches the bus to centre and does this with confidence.
- Ivy is able to follow room rules.
- Ivy has good receptive and expressive language skills.
- Ivy can identify everyday signs such as simple road signs.

7.4.2 Information about preschools and schools.

Some of the information sent by schools to Sanville LDC related to promotion. As recorded in Olivia’s CDL, she received the transition program dates from two schools, one via email and the other on a flyer delivered in person. Fern recorded in her log that she took promotional school brochures to two preschools.

7.4.3 Feedback.

Some of Olivia’s communication with schools related to requests for feedback on information sent to schools. This included asking school educators for feedback on previous child profiles, requests to organise meetings to discuss feedback on the newly developed profiles, and email correspondence with requests for feedback on a draft profile attached to the email. For example, in an email to Sanville PS, Olivia asked for feedback about what information was preferred by schools: “We are seeking information from our local schools and the [first-year-of-school] staff on what they would like to receive”. Olivia described a phone conversation with a school principal where she asked about profiles she had previously
sent to the school. She asked specifically, “Do you want this information, do you find it useful?”.

**7.4.4 Barriers to communication.**

Educators in this case identified a number of issues that impacted on communication between preschools and schools. Some of these related to the organisation of schools, including their processes and systems. A consistent issue for Olivia was not having any information about who was to be the educator of the first-year-of school class. This meant that she was unable to identify the educator with whom she should communicate directly. After years of experiencing this, Olivia was resigned to the situation, describing it as “a school thing”. Fern explained that the identity of the first-year-of-school educator was often not known at the school, and last minute staff changes sometimes meant that there was no certainty about this “until day one”. This was the situation at the end of 2011, when the regular first-year-of-school educator was on indefinite leave and Fern did not know if she would be returning.

While sharing information was regarded as important, communication from Fern and Lauren to Olivia indicated that they sought information related to specific children. For example, Olivia sent an email to Fern requesting a meeting to discuss the content of the child profiles she was preparing. The following was Fern’s reply:

> We are happy to meet…during early Term 4. Lauren and I will discuss what we think and I'll get back to you re: what information is most helpful and relevant. It would probably be advisable to wait until we have a better idea of exactly who is actually going to turn up at each school before we meet - even though I know you have given me an idea already. This may then determine whether we meet as a large or smaller group.

Fern also articulated “time and teacher release” as challenges to communicating with preschools, noting that if educators could not be released during school hours, “you have got to do it after school”. Lauren indicated that, as a classroom teacher, she had limited contact with preschool educators. Much of her contact was through Fern, who reported “pass[ing] on” information she has gained from conversations with preschool educators.
7.4.5 Beliefs and values.

Some of the issues impacting on preschool-school communication identified in this case related to educators’ beliefs and values. Fern stated that she warned staff wanting to know background information about preschool children coming to school, that sometimes “it’s better not to know a little bit of background and history, things like that because sometimes that can pre-determine ideas about what children are going to be like or what they do”. Lauren followed the same line of thinking when she explained the potential of being “led down the wrong path” by information about children provided by preschools. Lauren also commented that, regarding the content of the preschool profiles she had read, “I was looking at it going ‘but that’s my role. That's stuff I should be teaching, I’m not expecting children to know this’”.

Olivia considered that school educators held different beliefs and values about state-funded ‘preschool’ and long day care settings. Despite providing an educational program within her long day care setting, she indicated that school educators’ perceptions of long day care services impacted on the communication she had with schools. Olivia also reported differences among schools and the value they attributed to transition, and to the information she sent to schools. In general, she indicated that the information provided was not always used to assist children’s transitions as she had intended: “I think we have different visions of what we were trying to do with the information”.

This difference in intent was noted in comments about the written information sent to schools by preschools. Lauren reported that the child profiles were too lengthy and that “just a check sheet” would be much more useful for her. Even when she found some of the information in the profiles “useful”, Lauren stated her preference for using the NSW state-wide school assessment Best Start to inform her teaching. She cited two reasons for this. Firstly, she regarded the information provided in the preschool profiles as invalid, citing the different contexts in which the information was gathered and the time gap between the information being collected and the children starting school. Lauren indicated that she read the child profile information “with a grain of salt because there’s a six week gap and it’s a new
environment, new routines, new structure” at school. Subsequently, Lauren explained that data from Best Start informed her programming, rather than the information in the profiles: “it’s a heads up from those preschool profiles but it’s just a heads up. It’s the Best Start that governs the direction you are going to go”. Lauren’s second reason for supporting Best Start rather than the preschool profiles, stemmed from her belief that the information in the child profiles was incongruous with the information in the Best Start assessment. According to Lauren, the Best Start assessments and preschool child profiles were “totally different pieces of information. It’s also hard to marry those two things together. You can’t really”.

7.4.6 Problems with written communication.

While not always valuing the information provided, school educators did see some merit in receiving information from the preschools. One of the challenges of written communication identified related to the need for parents to return the written profiles to the preschool after reading them and providing permission for them to be sent to the school. Fern commented, if parents are “not happy” it can mean the profiles don’t arrive at the school all.

7.4.7 Outcomes for children.

Reflecting on the outcomes of intersetting communication, educators reported a range of outcomes for children. These included facilitation of a transition activity for preschool children: Fern reported that a group of children from a preschool service had visited the school after she had talked to their educator inviting them to visit. Lauren reported that the preschool children had “thoroughly enjoyed it”.

7.4.8 Outcomes for educators.

Some outcomes for educators of their intersetting communication were also reported in this case. These included that some intended outcomes had not been achieved. For example, a visit from children at Sanville LDC had been suggested by Fern in a face-to-face communication with the preschool staff, but this did not occur due to “issues with transport”. Although Olivia had issued an email invitation to all of the schools in
Sanville to meet and “work together to share information about children that will be starting school”, this meeting did not happen: “in the end we just couldn’t physically all get together”. As a consequence, the profiles were developed without feedback from schools. Lauren reported, after receiving the child profiles, that “nothing really jumped out” as being useful to her as the children’s school educator.

As the one often initiating intersetting communication, Olivia reported a range of frustrations when intended outcomes were not achieved. Olivia described one communication experience where a school educator had made negative comments about long day care centres. Olivia’s frustration was obvious even after the event as she described responding with: “steam coming out of my ears”. She elaborated:

It made us feel like we were very undervalued yeah, with what we do. And I mean, I’ve got a teaching degree, I’m just as qualified as what the preschool educator has to do to teach a preschool program. So, yeah, it’s very insulting.

Olivia reported another instance where she had invited a school principal to send their first-year-of-school educator over to Sanville LDC for morning tea. Olivia explained that the school principal’s response had been: “Oh, we’ve got no money to release that staff member’. So you feel like, you know, sometimes you feel like you are banging your head up against a wall”. Further frustration was noted when Olivia indicated that she did not know exactly how the information in the preschool profiles was used by schools: “We wonder sometimes if it gets used”. Despite these frustrations, Olivia asserted that communication with schools was important, “professionally that’s part of our responsibility” and an important element of changing perceptions of long day care services: “we’ll never break down those stereotypes unless we keep being professional and working through it”. Olivia indicated that she was determined in her continued efforts to communicate with schools in Sanville because “it’s just [about] trying to get those positive things happening for the children”.

7.4.9 Summary: Case 4.

The Sanville case has provided information about topics of, issues that impact on, and outcomes of, intersetting communication in this context.
The content of self-reported and actual communications in this case included information about children, and preschools and schools, as well as feedback. Issues identified in this case as having an influence on communication included barriers to communication, educator’s contrasting beliefs and values, and problems with written communication. Some positive outcomes for children were reported in this case. However, particularly for preschool educator Olivia, her intended outcomes of intersetting communication were not always achieved.

7.5 Case 5: Oxlough

Case 5 consists of Oxlough Public School (Oxlough PS) and two preschools: Harry Mann Preschool and Ruffle Lane Preschool. The three research sites in this case are located in Turton, a large NSW regional centre with a population of approximately 60,000. A large number of schools and preschools are located in Turton. Oxlough PS is a government school with a student population of 355. In 2012, 52 children started school at Oxlough PS including several children from Harry Mann and Ruffle Lane Preschools. In any given year, children starting school at Oxlough PS will have attended 10-15 different preschools. In 2012, there were three classes for first-year-of-school children at Oxlough PS: two single grade classes and one composite Kindergarten –Year 2 class. Harry Mann Preschool is a parent-managed preschool located several kilometres from Oxlough PS. Ruffle Lane Preschool is managed by a not-for-profit organisation and is located in a neighbouring suburb to Oxlough PS.

There were a total of five educators involved in this case: three educators from Oxlough PS and one from each of Ruffle Lane and Harry Mann Preschools. The educators’ background information is detailed in Table 7.13.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>School/ preschool</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role in transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BEd (Primary)</td>
<td>Oxlough Public School</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>“Overseeing the transition process from preschool to school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BA (English), DipEd (K-6)</td>
<td>Oxlough Public School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>First-year-of-school classroom teacher</td>
<td>“Transition coordinator. I organise all activities during this program”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>DipTeach</td>
<td>Oxlough Public School</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>First-year-of-school classroom teacher and Assistant Principal</td>
<td>“Initially I set the program up but now I support Helen”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dip Teach (EC)</td>
<td>Harry Mann Preschool</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Director and teacher</td>
<td>“Communicating with schools about children, developing and implementing transition to school procedures and experiences”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kylie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd (EC)</td>
<td>Ruffle Lane Preschool</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>“To provide a high quality program the year before school”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Oxlough case was chosen as it involves a large school in a large regional centre with many feeder preschools. It was recommended by the researcher’s doctoral supervisor as the principal had a well-regarded transition program at his previous school which included strong connections to the community. In 2011, Helen’s own child attended Harry Mann Preschool and in that year she also held a position on the preschool’s management committee. Table 7.14 details the sources of data for this case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Documents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators (number of sources)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helen (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Samantha (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kylie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One child profile

The themes identified in this case were coded into ten major categories: ‘control motives’, ‘information about children’, ‘information about families’, ‘organising’, ‘relational communication’, ‘problems with written communication’, ‘barriers to communication’, ‘marketing discourse’, ‘school assessments’, and ‘outcomes for educators’.

7.5.1 Control motives.

Motives underlying intersetting communication for educators in the Oxlough case related primarily to control, particularly associated with getting information from, or giving information to, others. For Helen, intersetting communication also served the purpose of gaining “some more information as to what they [preschool educators] had done to help” children with additional needs. In the same vein, David talked at length about gaining information from preschool educators about children’s additional needs “in order to prepare the school for that child’s entry and…to enable the school to accommodate their needs”. The two preschool educators, Kylie and Samantha, reported similar reasons for intersetting
communication, with Kylie noting the importance of providing information to schools about children who were “having difficult[ies] in areas here” and Samantha commenting that “Well, I just think that we have valuable information to share”.

7.5.2 Information about children.

Educators in this case reported communicating about particular abilities, dispositions and needs, and perceived problems of children. Table 7.15 contains topics relating to children that educators self-reported in this case.
Table 7.15: Information about children self-reported by educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informational topic about children</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social abilities and dispositions</td>
<td>“How the child relates… to other people” (Rachel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“How they’ll go in a group situation” (Kylie)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“How do they play with other children….how they go at grouptime” (Samantha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional, coping and settling in</td>
<td>“We talk about their…emotional skills……how they’re going to cope with their transition” (Samantha)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“If they took a long time to settle [at preschool] I tell the teachers that it may happen at school as well” (Samantha)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy and numeracy skills</td>
<td>“Whether they know their numbers or their letters” (Rachel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Can they write their name?” (Samantha)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Do they know their colours?” (Samantha)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine motor skills</td>
<td>“Whether they can cut with scissors properly” (Helen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies to support children</td>
<td>“What they [preschool] had in place to help his behaviour” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>“What did they do, what strategies they used” (Helen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>“How they’re going to go sitting at desks and having to attend and take in information” (Samantha)</td>
</tr>
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(table continues)
Table 7.15 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informational topic about children</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs and perceived problems</td>
<td>“Things that he needs to work on” (Helen)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The things that he wasn’t doing that were negative” (Helen)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If a child was having difficulty in areas” (Kylie)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“This is what they need” (Rachel)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Any overall problems” (Rachel)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[If they need]extra attention in a particular area be it fine motor skills or any or speech or if they are attending speech therapy” (Samantha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes and interests</td>
<td>“[He] really likes building with Lego” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Finding out their interests” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts, talents and strengths</td>
<td>“He’s really bright” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Special strengths or talents” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Particularly gifted in an area” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information</td>
<td>“The things he was doing that were good and positive” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“She’s a good kid” (Helen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What they’re like in the playground” (Samantha)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information about children’s abilities and dispositions was contained in the one document collected in this case. A “profile” developed by Oxlough PS and sent to Ruffle Lane Preschool, contained questions about children’s characteristics and dispositions. The following is an excerpt from the profile document:

- Does [child] show control with fine motor activities? (cutting, pasting, threading)
- Can [child] co-operate with other children?
- Does [child] choose to work alone?
- What social/behavioural skills does [child] have?
- Please describe [child’s] academic development. (Yes or No).
- [child] can…
- Write name:
- Recognise sounds:
- Identify colours:

The profile was distributed to all families of children enrolling at Oxlough Public School to pass on to, and be completed by, the child’s preschool educator. This profile was developed as Oxlough PS’s way of gathering information from the large number of preschools which children attend before starting at the school. Helen explained that the information in the profiles was primarily used to help the school place children into classes and identify children with additional needs.

Preschool and school educators in this case reported conversations about children’s school readiness. For example, Helen used her CDL to record two communications with preschool educators around the topics of “concerned about the readiness of one child” and “readiness for school – about a child”. David reported that teachers from the school spoke to preschool educators about “the maturity of the kids to see whether they were prepared for school”. Samantha told of conversations with school educators regarding children in terms of “are they ready for school?” and gave a specific example of a phone conversation initiated by a school principal to discuss the readiness of a child who had sought enrolment at that school. Samantha explained that the principal was “concerned about that particular child because it was an early February or January birthday and they just wanted to see… whether I thought he was ready to go to school”.

The content of communications in this case included information
about children including their readiness for school, social abilities, skills interests, needs and perceived problems.

7.5.3 Information about families.

Some of the content of intersetting communication reported in this case related to children’s families. Samantha recounted a conversation with a school educator about a child where she “talked about what was going on with their family”. Helen reported a particular instance where a colleague had contacted a preschool because a child’s parent had not disclosed information about her child and the educator rang the preschool to “to find out the truth” and about “how they found her [the parent]”. In another instance, Helen indicated that she had sought advice from preschools about families and “how receptive they would be to us approaching them to have further assessments carried out”.

7.5.4 Organising.

The content of communication between Oxlough PS and preschools included the organisation and delivery of “readiness for school” talks by Helen and Rachel. Helen indicated that her main reason for communicating with preschools was in order to give “readiness for school talks” at the preschools for families. Between June and September 2011, Helen had 17 entries in her CDL which related to the communication topic of “Readiness for school talk organisation”. These talks were primarily for the parents of preschool children and Helen explained that the content of them was about “the expectations of the children starting school”. Samantha had hosted a talk at Harry Mann Preschool and described the content of Helen’s talk in the following way:

She really emphasises it’s not about the academics it’s more about their social and emotional well being and their skills in that area and she talks about the curriculum in the schools and what the parents can expect in terms of things like canteen, school uniform, shops, how classes are arranged, the numbers in classes and things like that, what happens in the playground.
7.5.5 Relational communication.

Some of the content of Helen’s communication with preschools was relational. For example, Helen told of replying to an email from a particular preschool to say thank-you for the information it contained. She also spoke of keeping in touch informally with preschool educators such as through conversations in the supermarket. Helen also logged in her CDL that she attended a celebration at Oxlough Preschool that recognised Samantha’s years of service to the community.

7.5.6 Problems with written communication.

The educators in this case articulated some challenges with written forms of intersetting communication. Describing the profile, Helen explained that some preschools in Turton “refuse to fill in these sheets but they say that they’re happy to do a phone interview with us at any time”. Kylie’s comments affirmed this view. She indicated that she did not like the written forms from schools, and so did not complete them because: “the issue for me is, it’s my work and once it leaves here, I have no control over that”. Kylie commented that she worried about “labelling” children: “I know [the forms] help them out with their numbers, with their arrangement of classes too, but I have this little thing in the back of my mind that says we should take children how we find them”. Kylie added that she was “happy to have a phone conversation” with school educators about children. Samantha explained that while she did complete the forms that schools in Turton send her, she preferred verbal conversations:

and I think that probably is a bit more valuable because I think you tend to talk about the children more as individuals that way rather than filling in a form: it’s quite standardised and it doesn’t tell you a lot about each child.

The preschool educators in this case identified differences in the language used to describe children’s learning and development in the forms they received from schools and the language they used in their own documentation. Samantha noted that she had sent a “portfolio” about the child to the school that is “more meaningful and authentic” than the school forms:

when I look at those forms and go ‘oh they are just so like the old way we used to do things in terms of child development and our
records and things’: ‘can they write their name, can they recognise colours and numbers?’ and I know that’s important for school but I think, you know, oh, there must be a better way of getting the information across about the particular children.

Samantha said that the depth of information in the portfolio she prepared meant that schools “can get a better understanding of that child as an individual”. Kylie described limitations of the forms received from schools, particularly the use of language that reflected developmental views of children. She contrasted this to the language of the EYLF:

I think that Early Years Learning Framework presents not so much, saying ‘fine motor skills’ or ‘gross motor’. It presents it in a different way and it’s almost like learning a different language. These [school profiles] are more, these are very developmental, you know, ‘what can they do’, whereas the Early Years Learning Framework is more, it talks about it in different terms, in broader terms I guess. Yeah, it’s not so much, ‘fine motor, gross motor’.

A further limitation of the information sought by schools was identified by Kylie, who questioned the reliance on the written word alone, when so much good quality preschool documentation used visual material such as photographs.

7.5.7 Barriers to communication.

One issue that impacted on communication between preschools and schools was uncertainty about which schools children would attend. Given the number of schools in Turton, children from each of the preschools made the transition to a number of schools in the area. In Kylie’s words, the children attended schools that were “spread all over Turton”. One consequence was that only small numbers of children from each preschool went to the same schools. Helen attributed the uncertainty over which schools children would attend to parental practices: “a lot of parents will put their [child’s] name down at two or three schools”. Children whose parents enrolled them at Oxlough PS sometimes went to another, preferred school if offered a place. Consequently Oxlough PS did not know exactly which children would be attending their school until the first day of the year. This had implications for intersetting communication. For example, Helen commented that she did not worry too much about whether or not she received profiles for potential students: “there is no point getting too hung
up on them because we don’t know whether [the child will] actually come next year”.

This issue was also raised by Helen in her CDL. Helen logged in her CDL that she had received an email communication from a preschool in 2011. Helen said that she did not follow up on the preschool educator’s invitation to discuss two children who, according to the preschool staff, would be attending Oxlough PS in 2012, because they may not actually attend the school. Helen confirmed in an interview in 2012 that these children did not in fact enrol at Oxlough. This outcome affirmed her decision not to engage in communication with the preschool. Not knowing where children were going to start school was a barrier to preschool-school communication in this case.

7.5.8 Marketing discourse.

Intersetting communication in this case was affected by the perceived promotion of one school over others. Helen explained that she limited her presentation of school readiness talks to preschools which fell within the department-designated zone for enrolments, because:

we do have to be careful that we don’t want other schools to see it that we are…it’s not a recruitment drive… But other schools could perceive it as that and so it’s just, there is a bit of conflict around Turton with kids going to other schools out of zone so we don’t want to stir up the hornet’s nest basically.

Rachel explained that in the talks “we don’t sort of push our own school; it’s more a general talk of what school’s like”. Kylie made a point of saying the talks by Oxlough PS she hosted were not promotion of the school:

Helen was really quite up-front about that, that you know, that this wasn’t, and I never thought for one minute that it was [promotional] and I thought ‘no no no, I don’t think that you are doing that at all, I think you’re just promoting education as an educator which, like, we all should’.

Kylie said that when she received promotional information from schools to give to families she was careful to make it all available: “And we put everything out. We’re not selective, we put everything out”.

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7.5.9 School assessments.

School assessments impacted on what information was sought from preschools and how written information about children was utilised at Oxlough PS. David explained how information provided by preschools about children’s literacy and numeracy was used with the data generated by the state-wide literacy and numeracy assessment, *Best Start*:

Well the preschool data does inform the classroom teacher to an extent, but it’s the *Best Start* data for us which is most important because that’s our formalised assessment procedures and it’s a Department of Education and Communities requirement that has to be done, whereas the information that is coming from the preschool at that stage is not particularly a standardised set of measures, whereas the *Best Start* is, and it gives you benchmarks, it gives you timeframes and also I suppose targets of where the kids should be at in terms of their kindergarten growth and development.

Helen described the information she received from preschools as “useful” when it identified a child as “particularly gifted” or with a “learning difficulty”. However, Helen explained that information about “an average, run of the mill kid … [is] probably not as important because we do the *Best Start* testing at the beginning of the year”. Nonetheless, Helen regarded some information as useful: “*Best Start* doesn’t tell us anything about fine motor activities and gross motor activities and the social side of things. So yes, we certainly still use this even though we do the *Best Start* testing”.

7.5.10 Outcomes for educators.

Educators in this site reported a range of outcomes for themselves that resulted from intersetting communication. Among these was Samantha’s sense of being “not valued” when schools gave advice to families about children’s readiness for school that was contrary to the advice she had given. In an example Samantha provided, she described providing advice to a parent and a school that a child was not ready. Despite this advice, the child was enrolled at the school, on the basis that the school would “lose a teacher if we don’t [accept the enrolment]”. Samantha described her feeling about this experience:

I guess it’s that feeling of being valued as an educator when you have someone that’s going to go to school and you know that they’ll probably benefit from another year at preschool but the [school] educator or the principal has seen them for three minutes and has
said ‘yeah they’ll be fine’, it’s like our opinion’s not valued.

One particular communication experience reported in this case illustrated the non-achievement of the intended outcomes of the educator who initiated the communication. Kylie related a communication experience where she had given advice to a school about the class placement of a particular group of boys she described as “fairly hands-on”: “I mentioned to the teacher that maybe she might like to separate them”. Kylie explained that the school’s response had been “It’s too late; classes have been organised”. The next year Kylie said that she: “heard feedback from the parents that, yeah, they’d been spoken to about it and there had been issues amongst the boys together in the same class”. Kylie expressed some disappointment that her advice had been ignored, but indicated that she had no further knowledge of what had happened at the school: “I don’t know if they did move them or if they, yeah, I don’t know”.

On a number of occasions, intersetting communications enabled Oxlough PS to access parents through a range of preschool services and provided opportunities for consistent messages to be provided to parents about school readiness. David explained that “developing a rapport” with preschools enabled them to “get to know parents early”. The benefits of consistency were also noted by Kylie, who found the Oxlough PS school readiness talks useful, establishing that “what we were saying and what they were saying was consistent” to parents regarding school readiness. Samantha also reported this outcome: “it’s good to hear the information that we give to parents about school readiness is the same as what that particular school is telling the parents”.

Kylie reported that there had been a positive outcome for a parent from Oxlough’s talk: “she said that ‘I found that talk really good’ and she said ‘and it made me realise that I needed to, um, get him [her child] to be a bit more independent’ because I think she realised that school was a different world”. Kylie also reported that the talks had developed her intersetting knowledge, so that she now felt she could inform parents: “it even helped us as educators know what happens when [children] go to that next step so if we do have parents ask us we can give them a little bit of information”.

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While information about specific children did not seem to be used extensively, David did suggest that, at least on a general level, such information helped educators at Oxlough PS to prepare for the next group of children. For example, he indicated that information from preschools was “very informative in forming classes for us in terms of equity, we like to have classes as similar as possible in terms of abilities and in terms of needs”.

Helen reported using information from the preschools to assist her in her classroom organisation:

at the beginning of the year as soon as we’ve got the kids to the school and we’ve got them in their classes…I study them to try and work out groupings straight away for who knows their numbers fairly well, who knows their letters fairly well, pencil grip, cutting, behaviour, what their interests are: all those things.

However, it is important to note that the information used to inform these decisions was that contained in the profile document that Oxlough PS had devised and sent to preschools, rather than the preschool educators’ own documentation.

While it was often difficult to ascertain the outcomes, one communication experience was reported to have had the positive outcome of changing expectations about a particular child. Helen recounted a communication experience with a preschool which resulted in her receiving information that had resulted in her “mindset” about the child being “very much different”. Prior to receiving the information, Helen explained that she had expected the child to be like her siblings who were already attending the school. However, information from the preschool:

changed my expectations of this child because of what they had written there. So yes, I would have gone in there and treated her, well not treated her differently, but had really low expectations for her and expected her behaviour to be atrocious based on the family and it wasn’t.

7.5.11 Summary: Case 5.

The Oxlough case has provided information about intersetting communication: educators’ motives, its content, influences and outcomes. The control motives of educators in this context related to getting or giving information to other educators in their communications. Topics of communication included information about children, families and
organising school readiness talks. Some relational communication was also reported. Several influences on communication were described by educators and in this case, marketing discourse and school assessments impacted on what information was communicated and how it was used. Outcomes for educators included frustration felt by preschool educators, school educators accessing families, preschool and school educators sending consistent messages to parents about school readiness, and changing one school educator’s expectations of a child.

7.6 Chapter summary

The case results provide detailed information about intersetting communication in five specific contexts. Unlike the focus group and questionnaire results, the cases illustrate actual preschool-school communications in the context in which they occurred. These illustrations elaborated upon the self-reports of communication described by educators. Detailed information about the content of intersetting communications has been highlighted in each of the cases. Insight into a wide range of issues which impacted on intersetting communications and in-depth accounts of the outcomes of communication have been presented in the context of the cases. The cases have contributed a richness of data and understanding about particular instances of preschool-school communication.

The next chapter synthesises and discusses the results and analysis of the questionnaires, focus groups and cases.
Chapter Eight: Discussion

This chapter examines the data generated by this research and considers these in relation to relevant literature. The organisers for this chapter are the four research questions for the study:

1. Do preschool and school educators communicate with each other and, if so, what are their motives for communicating?
2. What is the nature of the communication between preschools and schools?
3. What are the outcomes of preschool-school communication?
4. What are the factors that impact upon intersetting communication at the time of transition and how do they influence intersetting communication?

The chapter concludes with an enhanced model of preschool-school communication.

8.1 Research Question 1: Do educators communicate with each other and, if so, what are their motives for communicating?

8.1.1 Educators’ engagement in intersetting communication.

Intersetting communication, that is, “messages transmitted from one setting to the other with the express intent of providing specific information to persons in the other setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 210), is positioned by bioecological perspectives as an important interconnection between children’s preschool and school settings. Evidence from this study indicates that such interconnections exist between many of the preschools and schools involved, with the majority of preschool and school educators indicating that they practiced intersetting communication around children’s transition to school. Previous research has reported low levels of transition practices which involve communication between preschools and schools (Einarsdóttir et al., 2008; Pianta, Cox, et al., 1999) but, in this study, there is evidence of intersetting communication between preschools and schools and of the development of relationships that support children derived from this communication. However, as discussed further in 8.2.2.1 there are low
levels of communication in relation to particular topics and sources of communication.

8.1.2 Intersetting communication motives.

Recent transition initiatives in Victoria have promoted communication between preschools and schools. In particular, intersetting communication has been facilitated by the introduction of the Transition Learning and Development Statements (transition statements) (DEECD, 2009b), two years prior to data collection in this study. The completion of these statements by preschool educators for each child starting school the following year, is linked to the preschool funding agreement with the Victorian state government. Although at the time of this research there was no formal process of accountability for checking that preschool educators were writing and sending the statements to schools, some preschool educators in the study indicated that they communicated with schools because of a perceived mandate. For example, one preschool educator who responded to the questionnaire stated: “we are mandated to do a transition report”, while Isabel, preschool educator at Nora Park, suggested that she completed transition statements “because I have to”. It is likely that one reason so many of the Victorian educators in this study engaged in intersetting communication was linked to the introduction of the transition statements, as they provided an impetus to communicate.

Other reasons for communicating cited by preschool and school educators in the study included those related to control motives: either getting something they did not have (Rubin et al., 1988) or influencing others (Rubin & Martin, 1998). In this study, control motives related to getting or giving information to others, or having personal influence over an aspect of children’s transitions, such as influencing knowledge and practice in the other setting.

Educators’ reasons for practicing intersetting communication regarding children’s transitions often related to power. Foucault (1997, p. 292) asserted that “in human relationships…power is always present” in ways that “one person tries to control the conduct of the other”. Foucault (2000b, p. 337), also wrote that communicating “is always a certain way of acting upon another person”, with the objectives of communication located
“in the realm of power”, as power relations “pass through systems of communication”. The control motives of preschool and school educators are evidence of power in preschool-school relationships. For example, the control motives stated by educators in this study show that the action of preschool educators providing information to schools about children is often an attempt to influence the knowledge and the actions of school educators.

There is evidence in this study that the control motives of school educators are attempts to “control the conduct” (Foucault, 1997, p. 299) of parents, through communicating with preschools to gain access to the parent audience. Control motives listed by school educators in this study related to providing information to parents via preschools, particularly information intended to promote schools. This type of information is designed to influence parents’ decisions about school choice and, as one school educator who responded to the questionnaire put it, “Draw some students to our school”. Other information mentioned as reasons to communicate with preschools were to provide parents with information about school readiness, the school’s expectations of children and general school information, presumably to encourage some form of action from parents in meeting the school’s requirements. The examples in this study meet the definition of control motives as provided by Rubin & Martin (1998), that is, motives to communicate based on the need to influence others.

Educators’ motives for practicing interseting communication also related to helping others, and to their sense of duty. Motives related to helping others included supporting children, families and other educators during transition. Bioecological approaches to transition advocate that children should be supported in order to experience success at this time (Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, et al., 1999), and this is evidenced in educators’ motives to help, guide and support children. Helping motives may also relate to the caring aspect of educators’ roles (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011). There was also a sense of responsibility cited by some educators whose motives related to duty, a motive previously identified in studies of workplace communication (Anderson & Martin, 1995). However, the duty motive was not represented strongly in this study.

Several models of transition assert that relationships are a key factor in children’s success during the transition to school (Dunlop & Fabian,
2002; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000), and guidelines for transition emphasise the importance of establishing positive relationships between educators (Dockett & Perry, 2001a). The recent Transition to School Position Statement (ETC Research Group, 2011) states that transition to school is an opportunity for preschool and school educators “to work together and draw support from each other” (p. 2) and a time when “educators aspire to the development of strong partnerships” (p. 2). However, in this study, the development of relationships was not a strong reason behind the communication of preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school.

The literature points to motives being reflected in people’s communication behaviours, including their decisions regarding with whom they communicate, the channels and content of communication, as well as having a bearing on the outcomes of interactions (Rubin & Rubin, 1992). While motives for intersetting communication are important, the content and outcomes of communication provide detail of these motives in action.

8.1.3 Summary of Research Question 1.

Despite previous research indicating that there are low levels of transition practices which involve intersetting communication, in this study the majority of educators reported engaging in the practice. For some educators, the introduction of the Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statements (DEECD, 2009b) has provided an impetus to communicate across preschool and school settings. For other educators, control motives were identified, that is, they communicated with the other setting in order to have a personal influence over an aspect of children’s transition to school. These control motives are evidence of power in preschool-school relationships. Some educators’ motives related to supporting children, families and other educators during transition as well as a sense of responsibility towards these stakeholders. While the transition research literature emphasises communication to develop relationships between educators, this was not a frequently reported reason for intersetting communication in this study.
8.2 Research Question 2: What is the nature of the communication between preschools and schools?

8.2.1 The content of preschool-school communication.

The content of intersetting communication reported in this study involved educators seeking or giving information to others about a broad range of topics. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that intersetting communication should provide “specific information to persons in the other setting” (p. 210) as a means of providing “information, advice and experience relevant to the impending transition” (p. 217). Whilst developing relationships was not a frequently reported reason for communicating, the results of this study provide evidence that there is a relational as well as an informational aspect to the content of preschool-school communication.

8.2.1.1 Information about children.

Transition researchers and policy makers have promoted the sharing of information about children through practices such as the exchange of records and meetings between teachers (Brooker, 2008; Margetts, 2002b), and there is evidence of engagement in such information sharing by Australian educators in previous studies (Einarsdóttir et al., 2008). Information about children is particularly advocated as a topic of preschool-school communications in order to build school programs based on what children know and to provide pedagogical continuity across programs (Kagan & Neuman, 1998). This study has provided detail about the topics of communication between preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school.

Educators in the study reported sharing information about children’s abilities and positive dispositions, focusing on, “what the child can do”. This focus on children’s strengths and abilities is in keeping with the recommendations of transition researchers (Educational Transitions and Change Research Group, 2011; Petriwskyj & Grieshaber, 2011). Abilities and positive dispositions were evident within written documents, such as the Victorian transition statements. These data support the results of previous transition studies where preschool educators provided assessment
information about children to schools (Petriwskyj, 2005) and extend them by providing more information about the content of the communication.

In contrast, other studies have suggested that educators do not exchange information about children and that this information is not used to build effective teaching and learning programs for children at school. For example, in Noel’s (2011) study, although there was communication between preschools and schools, educators did not communicate specific information about children. Timperley et al. (2003) concluded from their study in New Zealand that school educators had very limited information on which to build effective instruction. However, from the results of the present study, some information about children’s abilities and dispositions is being communicated by preschools to schools. This information has the potential to develop suitable programs which “facilitate each child’s development as a capable learner” and “build upon the child’s experiences” (Dockett & Perry, 2001a, p. vi). However, as discussed further in section 8.3 in relation to outcomes of communication, there is limited evidence in this study that information about children’s abilities, strengths and positive dispositions was used to extend children’s experiences in preschool into school.

Information about what educators perceive as children’s “problems” was identified by preschool and school educators as a topic that had particular importance in their communications. Indeed, educators indicated that children’s problems were often predominant in their communications. For example, Arnold, school principal at Nora Park stated that his communications with preschools beyond the school’s co-located preschool were “minimal… apart from if we are having an issue or a concern [about a child], we would contact them”. Helen, school educator at Oxlough, also indicated that she did not communicate much about “run of the mill children”, as this information was not regarded as important as information about children’s problems. The focus on children’s problems was also identified by preschool educators in this study as a weakness in the way school educators communicated with them. For example, in referring to the lack of communication from schools, one preschool educator who responded to the questionnaire remarked “If we have no concerns about the children attending we don’t hear from them [schools] again”. In the preschool focus group the educators confirmed that their communication
was mostly about children with difficulties: “It’s generally the children that don’t sort of sit in the norm that you are probably communicating more about”.

There is evidence from this study that the content of communication about children also includes the communication of information about families. Dockett and Perry (2001a, p. vii) caution that communication between schools and preschools “must be guided by legal as well as ethical considerations as to what information about children and families may be shared”. It is not clear if, or when, families give consent for preschool and school educators to discuss their child, or if this is informed consent to the extent that families are aware that information about them may be discussed. Content of communications relating to families in this study included preschool educators informing school educators about advice they had provided to families about a child’s readiness, their sense of one parent’s separation anxiety, and information about children who have a “tricky family background”.

Communication between educators involved in the study was not only related to what children could do, but also what they could not do, and their perceived problems. Petriwskyj and Grieshaber (2011) note that the way in which characteristics of children are termed frames the way children are viewed during the transition to school and the “deficit image of children” is perpetuated by “needs terminology” (p. 76). Whilst there are calls in the transition literature to “focus on competencies, strengths and achievements of children and families as they make the transition to school” (ETC Research Group, 2011), the results of this study indicate that the content of communication between preschool and school educators includes, among other topics, information about the perceived deficits of children and families.

Children’s readiness for school was another topic of communication between preschool and school educators. Educators at some schools reported making enquiries of preschools regarding children’s readiness. Preschool educators reported providing advice to schools about children considered “not ready” for school, accompanied by recommendations that school entry be delayed. Some of the content of school educator communication with preschools also involved information about children’s
readiness to be delivered to parents, such as the readiness for school talks delivered by school educators at preschools in the Oxlough case. There has been a broadening of focus to include readiness of the school as well as readiness of the child in key policy documents (DEECD, 2008; NEGP, 1998), in the literature (Burke & Burke, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Graue, 2006), and in the practice of educators (Noel, 2010; Petriwskyj, 2005). However, in this study, it is evident that readiness as a child attribute, that is, as a binary construct of ‘ready’ and ‘unready’ (Petriwskyj & Grieshaber, 2011) is reflected in preschool-school communication. Although previous studies have identified that some educators are developing “teacher pedagogy to support transition into school of diverse learners” (Petriwskyj, 2005, p. 39), the readiness content of communication provides evidence that some school educators in this study expected a certain level of competency on entry to school. In other studies, educators have shown a willingness to “accept all children at the… doorstep – no matter their background or characteristics” (Noel, 2010, p. 34). However, the content of communication in this study suggests this may not always be the case.

8.2.1.2 Organising transition activities and processes.

Preschool and school educators communicated with each other in order to schedule and organise various activities and processes involved in children’s transition to school. In particular, educators in this study communicated to organise reciprocal site visits by children and educators. This content is not surprising in light of previous studies which identified visits by preschool children to schools as amongst the most common transition to school practices (Einarsdóttir et al., 2008). However, it is notable that the occurrence of such visits is regarded as a form of preschool-school communication by educators in this study. While visits were regarded as communications, it is not always clear in educators’ responses just what was communicated during these visits. Beyond the communication necessary to organise visits, there are few details of what educators talk about during visits by children to schools.
8.2.1.3 Feedback.

Communication between preschool and school educators in this study included feedback. In particular, preschool educators received feedback about their work through communications with school educators. Examples included preschool educators explicitly seeking feedback about draft child profiles and the content of transition statements. Preschool educators also received feedback about their work through information from schools about how children had settled into school. Other examples included school educators giving feedback to preschools after school assessments had been completed, including in the Brantwood case, school educator Anna’s suggestions to preschool educator Yvette about teaching children to write lower case letters.

From the literature in higher education it is known that feedback information has formative purposes in learning and feedback about a person’s past work can prompt future “work of the type required” (Sadler, 2010, p. 538). In light of this literature, the feedback content in preschool and school educator communication suggests that it may be used by educators as a type of formative assessment of their own, or other educator’s, work. Feedback information may then lead to educators having an influence over practice in the other setting, as suggested by the control motives discussed earlier in this chapter. In other words, feedback may be used by educators to “control to conduct of others” (Foucault, 1997, p. 299) and to control themselves.

8.2.1.4 Information about preschools and schools.

The content of preschool-school communication includes information related to promoting schools, general information in email bulletins about school events, and information about curriculum, including statements of the “philosophy of the learning environment”. Transition researchers have noted that many preschool and school educators do not know much about each other’s professional work (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Since the content of communications in this study included information about preschool and schools, there is potential for school and preschool educators to learn about each other from this communication.
The content of communications from schools to preschools included promotional information, such as school information brochures and advertisements for school transition programs and open days. This information is targeted primarily at families, but is distributed through preschools along with other avenues. Communications containing promotional information are further evidence of the control motives of school educators related to the goal of giving information to families and attempts to “control the conduct of the other” (Foucault, 1997, p. 292) both in terms of parent choices of school and the information that preschool educators provide for families about school.

**8.2.1.5 Coordination of curriculum.**

In this study, coordination of curriculum was mentioned infrequently in communications between preschool and school educators. Yet, any form of curriculum coordination requires communication between educators in the two settings. Although information about preschools and schools was contained in some communications, there was a dearth of evidence about aligning curricula. The exception involved discussion about strategies relating to continuity of care for children with additional needs, for example, in the meeting between Janet and Kasey in the Enoral-Swifton case. Strategies were communicated from preschools to schools in order to support and manage children’s behaviour and physical needs. Apart from this, there was no evidence of discussions of aligning the general curriculum for all children.

Continuity of curriculum has long been recommended as a way of smoothing children’s transitions from preschool to school (Barbour & Seefeldt, 1993), although previous studies have identified that discussions about curriculum coordination are amongst the least reported transition practices (Ahtola et al., 2011; Einarssdöttir et al., 2008; Pianta, Cox, et al., 1999). However, the practice of the cooperative development of curricula between preschool and school educators together with the passing on of children’s written education records from preschool to school are predictors of children’s academic development in the first year of school (Ahtola et al., 2011). Discussions about curricula between preschool and school educators are also associated with children’s positive social competence and behaviour.
at school (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008).

**8.2.1.6 Relational content.**

At least some of the content of preschool-school communication noted in this study was relational. That is, it had a social or supportive element that underpinned the establishment or maintenance of relationships. Positive relationships between people are important at transition (Niesel & Griebel, 2007), and it is through communication that relationships develop (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006; Watzlawick et al., 1968). Transition practices should “acknowledge the central role of relationships in positive transitions and opportunities for those involved [in order] to build and maintain these relationships” (ETC, 2011, p. 4). Relational communication was identified in this study, particularly in the Nora Park case, and included social talk, greetings, expressions of appreciation and thanks, and supportive messages.

**8.2.1.7 Summary of content of communication.**

This study has shown that the information educators regard as being “relevant to the impending transition” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 217) includes information about children as well as families, preschools and schools, information related to the organisation of transition activities, and feedback. When Bronfenbrenner suggested that intersetting communications involved the exchange of information between children’s settings that was “relevant to the impending transition” he did not specify what exactly this information may be. The results of this study provide an indication about what is communicated between preschools and schools at the time of children’s transition to school. This study has also provided evidence that it is not just information that is communicated but that there is also a relational element to the content of communication. This relational content is important as it is occurs between adults in children’s lives “that influence children’s transition to school both directly and indirectly” (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000, p. 492).

**8.2.2 Amount of information.**

Results from the Preschool-school and School-preschool Communication Surveys provide a measure of the amount of information
sent and received between preschools and schools. The questionnaire results indicate that, while the majority of educators engage in some preschoo-school communication, there are low levels of information sent and received regarding most surveyed topics and from particular source persons. A lack of communication was also identified by respondents as a weakness in preschool and school educator communication. Topics and source persons highlighted in the results as having the highest and lowest levels of information sent/received provide important descriptions of the nature of preschool-school communication.

8.2.2.1 Topics.

For all of the ten topics surveyed regarding information sent to and received by schools from preschools, and for nine of the 11 topics surveyed for information sent to and received by preschools from schools, the majority of preschool and school educators reported low levels of communication. These are important results, given the advocacy of interseting communication in relation to children’s transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dockett & Perry, 2001a; Dunlop & Fabian, 2002; Margetts, 2002b; Niesel & Griebel, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). In this study, although the majority of educators engaged in interseting communication, they reported low levels of communication regarding particular informational topics, confirming findings from previous studies (Ahtola et al., 2011; Einarsdóttir et al., 2008; O’Kane & Hayes, 2006).

Topics for which the greatest percentage of educators reported low levels of information exchange, and which had the lowest mean amounts of communication, included ‘preschool philosophy’, ‘promotional information about preschools’, preschool ‘programs/curriculum’, ‘how the children have settled into school’, ‘feedback about child records sent to schools’ and ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’. The first three of these topics relate to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) notion of interseting knowledge, or “information and experience that exists in one setting about the other” (p. 210), which he regarded as an important interconnection between children’s settings. However, the results of this study suggest that there may be a lack of information in each setting about the other and, as a result, weak interconnections related to interseting knowledge. Low levels
of information exchange about aspects of preschools and schools may also restrict the extent to which preschool and school educators have overlapping fields of experience (Adler et al., 2010). In the transactional model of communication, communicators must have some overlap in their personal contexts in order to communicate effectively with each other and to avoid misunderstandings (Adler et al., 2010; Rothwell, 2004; Tyler et al., 2005). Information about the other, as well as experiences of the other, can comprise an overlap in educators’ fields of experience, but there is evidence of a lack of information about the ‘other’ setting in the results of this study.

Particularly low levels of feedback to preschool educators were reported for the topic ‘how the children have settled into school’. This was confirmed by school educators, who reported low levels of information sent to preschools about this topic. These results suggest that preschool educators may not ever know about children’s transition experiences once they leave preschool. Given that there is evidence in this study that preschool educators use information about how children have settled into school to assess their own practice, the low levels of information sent to and received by preschools from schools about this topic is of concern.

Both preschool and school educators reported that low levels of information were sent or received on the topic of ‘feedback about child records sent to schools’. This result suggests that preschool educators may not know about the utility of the information they provide to schools. This result is also reported in other data, including where a “Lack of feedback about our transition reports” was noted by preschool educators. Feedback has important roles in conveying value to communicators (Adler & Rodman, 2012), providing information on which to assess work performance (Sadler, 2010) and to assess and adapt communication to suit the audience (Tyler et al., 2005). The results indicating low levels of information on topics related to feedback suggests that preschool educators may not have sufficient information from schools to undertake these important tasks.

Fifty-five school educators (88%) reported that they sent low levels of information to preschools on the topic of ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’. Developing pedagogical continuity is advocated as an important reason for intersetting communication in order to
“most effectively support children’s learning” (Ashton et al., 2008, p. 16).

Intersetting communication has been framed in transitions research as a way of building continuity between preschools and schools (Petriwskyj et al., 2005) and yet ‘developing continuity of teaching/learning for children’ was reported by many preschool educators in this study as a topic for which they receive low levels of information from schools. This result builds on other studies which have suggested that transition practices related to continuity, such as coordination of curricula, are amongst the least reported practices that school educators engage in, even though having shared meetings to discuss curricula is a ‘good idea’ in theory (Einarsdóttir et al., 2008). The results also support previous studies which have indicated that the information exchanged between preschools and schools is not particularly about building continuity (Noel, 2011). There is some evidence in previous studies that the development of coordinated curricula is a predictor of children’s academic development in the first year of school (Ahtola et al., 2011). Hence, it is significant that the findings of this study include low levels of communication regarding ‘continuity of teaching/learning for children’.

In contrast, high levels of information about two topics, ‘transition/orientation program details’ and ‘promotional information about schools’ were sent to preschools by schools. This result matches other results in this study regarding educators’ intersetting communication motives and the content of preschool-school communication.

High levels of information about ‘children’s social development’ and ‘other areas of children’s development’ have been reported in this study by both preschool and school educators. This result reiterates those previously discussed regarding communication motives and the content of preschool-school communication. For example, sending information about children is related to the preschool educators’ control motives and their goals of giving information to school educators so that children will benefit from a positive transition to school. The questionnaire results provide a quantification of the levels of communication and indicate that these topics are amongst the most communicated in preschool-school interactions.
8.2.2 Sources.

The majority of preschool and school educators reported low levels of information received from persons in the other setting. Indeed, preschool educators reported receiving more information about children’s transitions from children’s parents than they did from school principals or teachers. ‘Other preschool staff’ and ‘other school staff’ were the sources from which school and preschool educators respectively, received the lowest mean amounts of information about children’s transitions, suggesting that educators in positions such as assistants in preschools and teacher aides in schools may have limited involvement in preschool-school communication. The results regarding sources are important given that intersetting communication is espoused as involving the “principal persons with whom young children interact” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 997). Educators such as teacher aides in schools appear to have limited involvement in preschool-school communication, yet they are ‘principal persons with whom young children interact’, who support children in classrooms, particularly children with additional needs (Bourke & Carrington, 2007).

8.2.3 Information needs of educators.

The Preschool-school and School-preschool Communication Surveys, focus groups, and cases all provided data about preschool and school educators’ information needs. Differences were noted in the information sent and received and educators’ perceptions of what was needed.

8.2.3.1 Topics.

Preschool and school educators in this study indicated that they needed to send and receive information about children’s social development. In terms of information sent to, and received by, schools from preschools, the topic of ‘individual children’s social development’ was rated by the greatest number of school and preschool educators as the topic about which they needed to send/receive a high level of information. In the focus group results, preschool educators reported their perception that school
educators needed to know about children’s social development. For example, Monica said that she focused on social and emotional information about children in her communication with schools, while Niamh said that “schools are starting to value that [social and emotional information] more and more”. School educators in the focus group articulated that they wanted to know about children’s social skills. For example, Suzette wanted to know “if they settle into preschool, if they know how to make friends, they’ve got those social skills”. There was consensus between preschool and school educators in this study that information about children’s social development was one of the most important information needs of educators at the time of children’s transition to school. Previous international research has indicated that school and preschool educators regard information about children’s social competence as important knowledge to be exchanged before children start school (Thorsen, Bo, Loge, & Omdal, 2006).

The topics which the greatest proportion of preschool and school educators reported needing low levels of information related to information about preschools and schools. Preschool educators rated ‘preschool philosophy’ as a low level need to be communicated to schools, while school educators had little need for ‘promotional information’ from preschools. As well, preschool educators did not feel much need to receive ‘promotional information about schools’, while school educators felt little need to communicate with preschools about ‘who the children’s teacher will be’. These results indicate that educators felt little need to share these types of information, excluding them from “information, advice, and experience relevant to the impending transition” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 217). Yet, such information may contribute to intersetting knowledge. Previous studies have identified information about children’s local environments as the least important information topics of exchange between preschools and schools (Thorsen et al., 2006). However, professional misunderstandings arising from lack of information about the work of educators in the other setting can be a barrier to communication (Hopps, 2004).

While questionnaire results in this study indicated that 67% of preschool educators indicated the need to send a high level of information, and 81% of school educators indicated the need to receive a high level of information about children’s literacy and numeracy development, focus
group and case results provided contrasting perspectives. In the school focus group, Adrienne explained that she did not think that literacy and numeracy information was particularly needed from preschools, because “that stuff will come … that’s what they are at school to do. I want to know their social and emotional wellbeing and how they are going to settle”. Carly commented that information about children’s literacy and numeracy was not needed from preschools because literacy and numeracy education was the role of the school educator and “I would imagine that they [preschool] are not formally testing that sort of thing.” In previous studies, school educators have indicated that information about children’s skills and knowledge was not particularly needed and cautioned that receiving this information from preschools may disadvantage children in terms of creating self-fulfilling prophecies (Timperley et al., 2003). Previous studies also suggest that school and preschool educators are more focussed on children’s social skills than their academic skills, and that this may be based on notions that children’s development in the preschool years is social rather than academic (Hopps, 2004; Thorsen et al., 2006). The results from the present study confirm these previous findings.

8.2.3.2 Sources.

The greatest percentage of preschool educators identified ‘school teachers’, and school educators identified ‘preschool teachers’ as sources from which they needed to receive high levels of information about children’s transition to school. These are the “principal persons with whom young children interact” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 997). The greatest proportions of preschool and school educators respectively rated ‘other school staff’ and ‘other preschool staff’ as sources with whom they needed little communication.

8.2.3.3 Channels.

Educators expressed certain preferences in terms of channels for communication. The greatest percentage of both preschool and school educators indicated a strong preference for face-to-face contact with staff in the ‘other’ setting, over paper-based communication. Given that there has been a focus, particularly in the state of Victoria on promoting intersetting
communication through the paper-based *Transition Learning and Development Statements* (DEECD, 2009b), this result indicates that there may be a mismatch between policy and practice.

**8.2.4 Timeliness of information received.**

The timeliness of information was identified as an issue in intersetting communication. Questionnaire results indicated that only a very small proportion of preschool and school educators reported receiving information from the other setting ‘always at the right time’. A specific example of the timeliness of information was the comment by a school educator that she needed “to receive all transition statements at the beginning of December to assist with grade allocations and funding applications”. In the Nora Park case, school principal Arnold also had some problems with the timing of the receipt of transition statements from preschools. However, preschool educator Isabel explained that the current expected time for transition statements to arrive at schools was a very busy time of the year. At Brantwood, school educator Anna reported that by the time she received information about children in the transition statements, she already knew these details about children from her verbal conversations with preschool educator Yvette, and that information delivered when she was observing children in context was more appropriately timed. A time gap between information about children being recorded by preschool educators and received by schools was also an issue for school educators in this study.

Data indicated that there were offers to send information from preschools to schools, but if it did not occur at the right time, communication was delayed. For example, in the Sanville case, Fern replied to Olivia’s invitation to meet with her suggesting that they wait until they knew which children were enrolled at the school before they met. It appears that there are challenges with getting the timing right for communications, and that this may have important implications for the ways in which information is used, particularly by schools.

**8.2.5 Action taken on information sent.**

The majority of preschool and school educators in this study believe that low levels of action were taken on the basis of the information they sent to
the other setting. This belief was based on lack of “feedback” or a “response” from the other setting after information was sent. Some communication between settings was one-way, demonstrating a linear model of communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1963). Some educators assessed whether or not action had been taken on the basis of information from other sources. One example is from a school educator’s response to the questionnaire, who suggested that no action had been taken by the preschool on promotional information sent to them, because there was no resulting increase in numbers of children enrolling at the school. Educators in this study have noted that they often did not know what, if any, action was taken and that feedback, an important element in the transactional model of communication (Tyler et al., 2005), was inadequate. Reciprocal communication is promoted in the transition literature (Fleet, Patterson, & Garrett, 2001). However, much intersetting communication appears to be one-way rather than reciprocal.

### 8.2.6 Levels of trust.

Dockett and Perry (2001a, p. vii) promote “a climate of trust” between the adults involved in children’s transitions and suggest that “open communication is likely to develop” between people in such a climate of trust. A good level of trust is an important precursor to professional communication (Hargie & Tourish, 2000) and trust is related to cooperation between people (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2009). Previous studies have identified the importance of trust in collaboration between educators (Johnson, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2011; Musanti & Pence, 2010), and in building and maintaining relationships within organisations (Thomas et al., 2009). Recognising the importance of trust in relationships, it is of concern to note in the questionnaire results that some preschool educators indicated low levels of trust towards school educators.

### 8.2.7 Summary of Research Question 2.

Several characteristics of preschool-school communication have been identified in this study. In relation to the topics of communication, both informational and relational content are reported in preschool-school communication, but informational content is emphasised. In contrast, the
focus in the transition literature is on the development of relationships between people at times of transition. Educators communicate about a wide range of topics; including information about individual children and organising transition activities. However, there is little focus on coordination of curriculum within intersetting communication even though this is often espoused by transition researchers. The perceived problems of children dominate intersetting communications, yet there is a call in the literature to focus on the strengths and capabilities of children at the time of their transition to school.

Information about children’s social development is considered a need by both preschool and school educators. However, overall the information needs of preschool and school educators differ. Educators in both settings reported needing only low levels of information about the other setting. Yet, as discussed in this chapter, the lack of knowledge of the other setting has previously been identified as a barrier to communication and positive relationships.

Two particular aspects of the nature of intersetting communication have been identified in this study which may impact on intersetting communication and relationships: action taken on information sent and trust. Many educators believe that low levels of action are taken as a result of the information sent to the other setting and some preschool educators indicated that they have a low level of trust for school educators. Given the importance of feedback and trust in communication identified in the literature, the negative perception of these particular elements of intersetting communication needs to be addressed to facilitate the development of positive relationships between preschools and schools.

8.3 Research Question 3: What are the outcomes of preschool-school communication?

Where outcomes of preschool-school communication are known, they have the potential to be wide ranging and multifaceted, relating to educators, children and families. In a number of instances, outcomes of communication were reported to be unknown, or unintended.
8.3.1 Outcomes for educators.

Intersetting communication has provided a context for the development of positive relationships between preschool and school educators. Examples are seen in the ways in which educators from different settings have worked together around transition, the development of a “healthy positive respect for each other”, and educators feeling valued, appreciated and included by the educators in the other setting. These results support the literature which argues that intersetting communication should be about developing positive relations between people (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). The elements of communication reported to affect relationships positively included face-to-face communication, dialogue, sharing knowledge and information and verbal communication. When these interactions conveyed a sense of value and were conducted in an open and honest manner, relationships were built and/or maintained.

However, not all relationships were affected positively by intersetting communication. Some intersetting communication resulted in educators feeling disappointed, frustrated, undervalued, resulting in a “breakdown of trust”. Questionnaire data indicate that more preschool than school educators report negative consequences for relationships. These results provide evidence that particular communications can strain relationships. Rimm-Kaufmann and Pianta (2000, p. 501) assert that relationships are a key factor in children’s success during the transition to school in that “The quality of relationships within the transition ecology plays an important role in sustaining the child throughout this period of increased demand and challenge”. There is evidence from this study that the quality of relationships can be affected by particular communications, thus contesting the notion that communication necessarily generates positive relationships (Moutafidou & Sivropoulou, 2010).

Educators reported communication outcomes that helped schools to prepare for new children starting school. Intersetting communication is a way of gathering information about children’s prior learning to assist school educators in constructing teaching and learning programs based on this learning. This can help children become confident and capable learners in the new school setting (Dockett & Perry, 2006; Niesel & Griebel, 2007).
Information about children sent to schools by preschools may assist school educators “to treat and teach the pupils of the new class according to their personal traits and needs” (Ahtola et al., 2011, p. 300). There is some evidence of this in this study, particularly in relation to children’s needs and interests. For example, in the Brantwood case, information from preschool educator Yvette’s transition statements had identified that a particular child needed assistance with toileting, so school educator Anna was able to “straight away” organise support for him. In the Nora Park case, Stella described how she used the information in a particular child’s transition statement to program activities which linked to the child’s interests. School educators reported that information from preschools helped them organise funding applications and helped to place children into class groups. Whilst there is some evidence of the use of information about children’s needs and interests to inform school programs, there is limited evidence in this study about how information about children’s abilities, strengths and positive dispositions are used by school educators to build teaching and learning programs when children start school.

Sending consistent messages to parents, in particular, delivering consistent information about school readiness, was stated by educators as a positive outcome of their interseting communications. For example, in the school educator focus group, Adrienne explained that a collaboratively developed pamphlet meant that “the parents are getting the same message from both settings” about “getting ready for school”, and Carly clarified “rather than conflicting messages”. Similarly, interseting communications enabled Oxlough PS to access parents and share consistent messages about school readiness through their “readiness for school” talks at preschools. Previous studies have identified difficulties for all involved when contradictory advice is provided to families (Dockett et al., 2011). The results of this study highlight the potential for interseting communications to deliver complementary messages to parents. However, it should be noted that not all of the advice provided by educators was consistent or complementary. Where this was the case, relationships between educators suffered.

Some educators reported not knowing the outcomes of their communication and whether their intended outcomes had been achieved.
The resultant uncertainty impacted on the willingness of educators to continue efforts to promote intersetting communication.

Intersetting communications can result in the enhancement of intersetting knowledge. For example, in the Nora Park case, Isabel had come to know about the work of school educators, including some of the pressures they experience, through shared meetings and said this made a difference to her relationships with them. Isabel regarded this knowledge as part of “building that relationship with them and understanding what they have on their plates”. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified the importance of intersetting knowledge within the mesosystem, noting that such knowledge was built through intersetting communications. This study confirms both the importance of intersetting knowledge and the potential for communication to build this.

Data reported in this study indicate that intersetting communications can result in school educators influencing practice in preschools. For example, one school educator who responded to the questionnaire told of the following consequences of her communication: “Following Best Start Assessment at start of year, information regarding student areas of strength and weakness was shared with the preschool Director. She took this on board and has adjusted her teaching programs accordingly”. While it is not clear how the practices in the preschool setting changed as a result of this communication, it is clear that the communication resulted in changed practice. In previous studies, educators have expressed fears about a push-down curriculum and pressure to introduce more formal teaching methods in the early childhood years (Goldstein, 2007; Peters, 2000). Broström (2002) has suggested that preschool teachers’ resistance to collaborating with schools around curriculum is due to a fear of being imposed upon by the school curriculum. It has been asserted that play as an approach to learning in preschools is increasingly under threat because of the pressures coming from the expectations of the school curriculum (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). This one example is not sufficient to support these conclusions, but does point to one potential outcome of intersetting communication – the schoolification (Moss, 2013) of preschool.

Many preschool and school educators reported dissatisfaction with current levels of communication. Across the majority of topics, channels
and sources surveyed, many preschool and school educators reported that they received too little information. Communication satisfaction scores provide an indication of which topics, sources and channels are considered to be problematic (Downs & Adrian, 2004). Hogard and Ellis (2006) suggest that satisfaction scores of 2.0 or greater suggest areas for further consideration. In this study, application of this criterion resulted in the identification of following topics of communication as problematic, when considering the information received by preschools from schools:

- school’s expectations of children starting school;
- invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects;
- developing continuity of teaching/learning for children;
- how the children have settled into school; and
- school philosophy.

While the majority of educators indicated that too little information was being received/sent on these topics, there were two topics for which a substantial number of preschool and school educators indicated that they received too much information. Fifteen percent of preschool educators reported receiving too much ‘promotional information about schools’, and 9% of school educators reported receiving too much ‘promotional information about preschools’. While promotional information can play an important role in intersetting communication, educators in both settings seem to resist the expectation that they are mere distributors of information.

**8.3.2 Outcomes for children and families.**

The most frequently reported outcome for children of preschool-school communications was the planning of familiarisation visits to schools. This result is also seen in previous research (Einarsdóttir et al., 2008). Visits for children and educators are suggested as an effective practice in transition to school support documents (DEECD, 2009b; Families First Riverina Region, 2006). Site visits assist children’s familiarisation with school and are an opportunity for educators to “build links for their children between prior-to-school and school experiences” (ETC Research Group, 2011, p. 2).
Intersetting communication can result in positive transition experiences for individual children although, in this study, only a small number of educators have reported this specifically. Outcomes included that children were “happy and comfortable” at school and “settled in more easily and quickly than expected” as a result of intersetting communications to organise school visits.

However, not all intersetting communication resulted in positive outcomes for children. In this study, only preschool educators provided examples of less than positive outcomes from communication experiences. These included reports that children experienced stress as a result of intersetting communications. For example, one preschool educator who responded to the questionnaire reported sending information to a school to support a child, but indicated that the school educator did not read the information and the suggested support was not provided.

In other instances, communication about children’s readiness resulted in advice to families to delay children’s school start, despite their eligibility for school. Recent debates about readiness have shifted the focus from children’s individual readiness to include consideration of ready schools and ready communities (Dockett & Perry, 2009). Within this broad conceptualisation of readiness, ready schools are held to be receptive to their incoming students, utilise pedagogies that are appropriate for young children and are inclusive of all children (Graue, 2006). In other words, the onus is on schools to accept children as they are and to work in ways to promote learning and engagement for all. However, this study has provided evidence that informal assessments of children’s readiness were used by educators as “permission to delay” (Graue, 2006, p.46) children’s school start. The use of readiness assessments by schools in the U.S. has been criticised in terms of the “equity of requiring a level of performance for admission to free and public education” (Graue, 2006, p. 47). There is evidence in this study that some children eligible to start school, were judged by educators to be “not ready for school” and, consequently, were kept out of school or “sent back” to preschool, and that intersetting communications have been used to facilitate such actions. While the research and policy literature support broad conceptualisations of readiness for school, this focus is not necessarily reflected in practice.
Overall, few educators in this study reported specific examples of intersetting communication that had specific consequences for children. One possible explanation is that intersetting communications are always about something, and it may be difficult to separate the communication from other transition activities and classroom practices. As well, preschool educators reported that they often did not have ongoing communication with schools, making it difficult for them to report what happened for children after the start of the school year. This is reflected in preschool educator Deborah’s comment: “I don’t know how [the information is] used at the other end so therefore I don’t know [about outcomes for children]”. It is not intersetting communication alone that assists children in transition. Actions and relationships which result from the communications are important. Positive outcomes for children are noted when information from preschools is used by school educators to inform expectations and practice.

One consistent result was that outcomes for families were mentioned only rarely in educators’ intersetting communication. Where they were mentioned, it was often in the context of discussions around the requirement to attain parental consent to share information. From the limited data, there were some reports of positive outcomes of intersetting communications when, for example, a preschool educator noted in her response to the questionnaire that, “the family became more comfortable with the school system… and gained some confidence with the support [their] child would receive at school”. Negative outcomes mentioned included the report that some parents were “irate” as a result of breakdowns in intersetting communication. The limited accounts of outcomes for families suggest that this could be an area for further investigation.

8.3.3 Summary of Research Question 3.

The results of this study indicate that the outcomes of preschool and school educators’ intersetting communication are wide-ranging and multifaceted. Both negative and positive outcomes of intersetting communication were reported for educators, children and families. In addition, the potential for unintended or unanticipated outcomes was identified. The outcomes of intersetting communication, as reported, stand in contrast to some of the
results reported for communication motives. Overall, educators did not nominate motives related to relationships as a major reason for communicating, yet outcomes related to relationships were reported more than any other outcome. These contrasting results suggest that the development and maintenance of relationships are not the primary reason for educators’ intersetting communication, but consequences for relationships are one of the most reportable outcomes. Given the assertion in the transition literature that relationships “influence children’s transition to school both directly and indirectly” (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000, p. 492), the results of this study indicate that intersetting communication has important results for relationships between educators; relationships that ultimately impact on children.

8.4 Research Question 4: What are the factors that impact upon intersetting communication at the time of transition and how do they influence intersetting communication?

8.4.1 Type of preschool.

Educators in some preschool settings were more likely than others to engage in intersetting communication with schools. The results of this study indicate that preschool educators employed in long day care and occasional care, family day care, mobile children’s services, and multi-project children’s services were less likely than their counterparts in preschools (NSW) and kindergartens (Victoria) to engage in intersetting communications with schools. The most frequently cited reason for not communicating related to the type of service, notably that children also attended a preschool or kindergarten setting, and transition and intersetting communication were regarded as the responsibilities of educators in that setting.

The pattern of attributing responsibility for intersetting communication to preschools (NSW) and kindergartens (Victoria) was confirmed in comments about the perceived need to send information to schools. One preschool educator in responding to the questionnaire noted: “I feel if a child did not go to preschool and only came to long day care, then I
would have to do transitions and would need to provide the school with the developmental information on that particular child”. Other preschool educators in this study also indicated that the type of service influenced communication with schools. For example, in the Sanville case, Olivia, a preschool educator working in a long day care centre, explained that she perceived there was a different value attributed by school educators to traditional preschools that was not accorded to long day care centres. This, in turn, impacted on intersetting communicating. This was reinforced by one school educator who responded to the questionnaire: “the preschool seems to appreciate whatever I send however the childcare centre never reply”.

The differences between educators in different preschool settings can be explained partly by policy. For example, in Victoria, DEECD (2009a, p. 7) policy clearly identifies the service types in which educators are obligated to communicate with schools through transition statements:

> From 2009, all services offering a funded kindergarten program (whether this is in a long day care service or stand-alone kindergarten) will complete a Transition Learning and Development Statement (‘Transition Statement’) for children starting school in the following year.

This particular mandate excludes preschool educators employed in services that do not receive state funding. However, these educators are “encouraged and supported to offer a transition statement for any child in their care who is starting school in the following year” (DEECD, 2009a, p. 7). It is not surprising that different requirements lead to the enactment of different levels of intersetting communication.

**8.4.2 Structures of schools and preschools.**

For preschool educators, not knowing who the children’s new school educator would be in advance of the children starting school, made interssetting communications difficult. Fundamentally this meant that preschool educators could not communicate directly with the educator who would be the child’s classroom educator. School educators in this study also lamented that they were not in a position to share this information because it was not known until very late in the year. However, even when school educators were privy to this information, there was a noted reluctance to share it. This issue may be of critical importance to preschool-school
communication given that intersetting communication needs to happen between the “principal persons with whom young children interact” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 997).

School educators identified challenges for intersetting communication related to not knowing exactly which children would be attending their school. For example, communications between Sanville Public School and Sanville long day care centre were disrupted when it was unclear which children were moving from the preschool to the school. As a result, a planned a face-to-face meeting was initially postponed and then cancelled. At Oxlough, Helen did not pursue communications initiated by one preschool because she was not convinced that the children concerned would be attending the school. Preschool and school educators emphasised that there was not a one-to-one relationship between preschools and schools, with children in any one preschool cohort attending a great many schools. Engaging in communication with many settings presented challenges for several preschools and schools. Responses to the challenge varied, with some settings communicating only with specific other services, while others opted for more general communication with many settings.

Limitations of time and resources in both schools and preschools impacted on preschool-school communication. In the Mt Enoral-Swifton case, school educator Robyn, who was a Regional support officer working for the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), noted that the lack of time for school educators to read all the information she gathered about children from preschools resulted in what she described as “condensing” information. In the Sanville case, preschool educator Olivia told how a school principal had told her he did not have resources to release staff, with the result that her invitations for school educators to visit her preschool were unsuccessful. School educator Lauren told how, as a busy classroom educator, it was hard for her to be released to go into preschools and, as a result, information is “passed on” to her from the principal. Some of the limitations of time and resources may be overcome if transition and preschool-school communication are established as organisational priorities. Lack of time has been identified previously as an issue in promoting intersetting communication (Hopps, 2004). The results of this study add further detail about the impact of time and resources on communication.
8.4.3 Intersetting knowledge and overlapping fields of experience.

Having knowledge and experience of the ‘other’ setting can impact on communication between preschool and school educators. Knowledge and experience of the other setting or other communicator, are important in the transactional model of communication. In ecological systems theory ‘intersetting knowledge’ is an important interconnection between settings in the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Educators in this study reported that the enhancement of their own knowledge and experience of the other setting, through both formal and professional and informal and personal experience, impacted on a range of aspects of their communication, particularly relationships.

Fields of experience incorporate the personal histories and past experiences of communicators, and include attributes of individuals such as their education, gender, physical location, age, preconceived ideas, world views and assumptions (Tyler et al., 2005). There must be some overlap between people’s fields of experience for effective communication (Adler et al., 2010). As an example, Anna and Stella, first-year of school educators in the study, both held early childhood education qualifications and had previously worked at the preschools with which they were communicating. They told of how their preschool background and experiences impacted on their communication with preschool educators Isabel and Yvette. For example, Anna said her experience teaching at the preschool and training as a preschool teacher was helpful for her relationship with Yvette: “I used to teach at the preschool. I’m preschool trained as well so I have a good relationship there with Yvette”. Stella, who used to be the Director of Nora Park Preschool, said that because of her experience of having to communicate with schools herself as a preschool educator, she had a high regard for the information about children that preschool educators have. Anna and Stella’s fields of experience overlapped with those of Yvette and Isabel, due to their past experiences working in preschools. They also had overlapping fields of experience that came from other shared activities, such as being on committees together and attending staff meetings at the school.
School educators in this study such as Arnold, John and Helen also possessed intersetting knowledge because their own children attended the preschools with which they were communicating. Arnold drew on his own experience with his son wanting to return to preschool in his expectations of the first year of school. John said that it made a difference in Brantwood that first-year-of-school educator Anna “knows where the children have come from”. Knowledge of the other setting seems to matter in terms of developing relationships between educators, confirming other results that an understanding of each other’s work is important in inter-professional communication. For example, Smith and Preston (1996) identified that “a lack of understanding of capabilities, skills and roles” (p. 38) among professionals in a hospital was perceived by the professionals to be “a major factor in hindering good communications” (p.37).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified that the knowledge about one setting of the mesosystem that exists in the other is an important interconnection between children’s settings. However, transition researchers have previously identified that preschool and school educators have little up-to-date knowledge of the ‘other setting’ (Broström, 2000; Dockett & Perry, 2007). In this study it is evident that where intersetting knowledge existed, it had an impact on intersetting communication.

8.4.4 Trust.

This study indicated a connection between the receipt of information and trust. This was evident in reports from preschool educators, where levels of trust for school educators were significantly related to levels of information they received from them. Particular aspects of communication build trust or mistrust. Previous studies have highlighted the complex relationship between trust and communication: lack of communication can reduce trust, and quantity of information is a predictor of trust for management in large organisations (Thomas et al., 2009). In this study, preschool educators who received low levels of information about children’s transition to school from school teachers and principals were more likely to have low levels of trust for these source persons than those who receive high levels of information. Similarly, previous studies have indicated that
quantity of information can impact on trust (Thomas et al., 2009).

This study provides examples of specific communications from schools that can build trust or lead to mistrust. A lack of communication from schools, particularly feedback about information sent to schools, was highlighted in the comments of preschool educators. For example, one preschool educator responding to the questionnaire commented “… these people [school educators] listen to information, seem to care but we NEVER hear back from them with requests for more info etc. Are we giving enough information or don't they value what we have learnt about the children?”. Preschool educators also provided examples of how trust could be developed over time: “The ones I feel most comfortable with, [I] have already worked with and established relationships with”.

Preschool educators listed sharing dialogue, valuing, openness and willingness to communicate, and communication in person during meetings and visits, as strengths in the way that school educators communicated with them. These aspects of communication are likely to be important in building trusting relationships between preschool and school educators. Conversely, lack of communication, lack of interest, non-response and not valuing, which were identified as weaknesses in school educator communication, are indications of aspects which may reduce trust.

Given that “trust is based on beliefs about the other party, which are shaped through information” (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 290), school educators’ perceptions of preschool educators are important in developing or reducing trust. In the questionnaire, school educators elaborated on their trust ratings for preschool educators with comments explaining their low level of trust, such as a perceived bias for one school over another: “Sometimes information is withheld due to a preference in educating children at the Catholic School. Staff at preschool all have their own children at the Catholic School and therefore advise parents to send their children there”. There are also examples of reduced trust as a result of communicating, and not just lack of communication. For example, in the questionnaire a school educator described the outcome of her communication with one preschool as “a breakdown of trust between the school and the preschool”. School educators listed openness and willingness
to communicate, sharing their knowledge and information about children, honesty and verbal communication as strengths of preschool educators’ communication with them and aspects of communication which built trust. These results reinforce the recommendations of previous studies that a culture of trust can be created through open and honest communication (Mitchell et al., 2011).

8.4.5 Beliefs about children.

One of the challenges to preschool-school communication identified in this study related to differing beliefs about children. Preschool educators in this study argued that preschools and schools used “two different languages” to describe children’s learning. Preschool educator Kylie noted that the curriculum document, the EYLF, used a different language to that used by schools on the child profile forms that she was asked to complete: “These [school profiles] are more, these are very developmental, you know, ‘what can they do’, whereas the Early Years Learning Framework is more, it talks about it in different terms”. Preschool and school educators indicated that information about children that was sent from preschools to schools was “written in the positive”. In contrast, as Niamh articulated, schools “want to know what children can’t do”, that is “deficit stuff”. Deborah articulated the difference as,

we have totally different terminology. You hear the [school] teachers saying ‘oh, naughty children’ and, words and terminology that we just don’t use in the early childhood environment.

Social perspectives of children have been reconceptualised in recent decades to focus on the capabilities of children. In 1997 Prout and James described an emerging paradigm which involved “reconstructing childhood in society” (p. 8) where

children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes” (p. 8).

Further, Prout and James argued that there should be a “focus on children, not only as protoadults, future beings, but also on children as beings-in-the-present” (p.245). This emphasis on capabilities is reflected the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009), both in the
title and with several references to the strengths and capabilities of children including the statement that: “In order to engage children actively in learning, educators identify children’s strengths and interests” (p. 9). Advice about assessment for learning suggests that educators “search for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children’s learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings” (p. 17). The DEECD (2012) also promotes a strength-based approach to writing the Victorian transition statements. The belief that children are capable and not just “future beings”, is reflected in what educators in this study describe as “positive” information about children that they pass onto schools.

It has been reported previously that effective collaboration depends upon shared understandings and a common language (Easen et al., 2000; Fraser & Schalley, 2009). In the context of preschool and school communications, differences in the way educators describe children impacted on the way educators used the information exchanged about children. For example, school educator Lauren commented that she had difficulty using the written information that was passed on to her from preschools because the assessment information from preschools and her assessment information are “totally different pieces of information. It’s also hard to marry those two things together. You can’t really”. Preschool educator Niamh explained that information about children that was written “positively” was difficult for school teachers to interpret and, as a consequence, school educators “weren’t understanding a lot of them”. School and preschool educators commented that the positive nature of the information they received about children required them to “read between the lines”.

The importance of preschool and school educators using a shared language about children is recognised in curriculum and support documents, but the results of this study suggest that the shared language is not being used in practice. The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) espouses the provision of a “common language to describe children’s learning” (DEECD, 2009c, p. 8). Support documents for educators writing and reading the Victorian transition statements also promote the VEYLDF as providing “a common understanding of a child’s
learning and development” (DEECD, 2009a, p. 14). However, despite there being documents available to educators which provide the premise for a common language and understanding about children, the results of this study suggest that contrasting preschool and school beliefs about children can result in difficulties in communication.

The results from this study confirm and extend those of previous studies in relation to educators’ differing beliefs about children. Tayler (2006) identified “the difficult territory” (p. 259) that often emerged when educators who worked together held contrasting values and beliefs. This study has provided evidence of such difficult territory at the time of children’s transition to school and the challenges it poses for intersetting communication. The data reflect results previously reported by Cassidy (2005), where some educators sought information about children as ‘learners’, while others sought information about children’s ‘problems’. Cassidy (2005) concluded that this was part of the ‘whole child’ versus ‘whole group’ dichotomy, with the result that school educators found it difficult to use information from preschool educators. Similarly, in this study, the differences between the information preschools provided and the information that schools used has been highlighted. In Wesley and Buysse’s (2003) U.S. study, one educator described her beliefs about teaching young children and the expectations of the education system as “two different worlds” (p. 358), which were difficult to join in the school climate of testing and meeting mandated standards. Data in this study have provided evidence of ‘two different worlds’ of preschool and school that have the potential to make communication difficult. Jarvis and Trodd (2008) write that in order to work well in teams with professionals from a diverse range of disciplinary backgrounds, individuals must be able to articulate their beliefs, knowledge, skills and values to others. The data in this study suggest that preschool and school educators need to be articulate about their beliefs, knowledge, skills and values to communicate these to other educators.

8.4.6 Relations of power.

There is evidence from this study of the privileging of one form of knowledge about children over another. MacNaughton (2005) writes that Foucault’s notion of subjugated knowledge can help develop an
understanding of “how and why early childhood understandings about education, curriculum and the child have been marginalised within mainstream educational discourse” (p. 11). Contradictions in the results regarding communication about children’s literacy and numeracy development suggest subjugation of preschool educator’s knowledge of children. While 67% of preschool educators in the survey indicated the need to send a high level of information about children’s literacy and numeracy development to schools, and 81% of school educators indicated a need to receive a high level of information about this topic, results from the focus group and cases provide contrasting views. For example, school educator Lauren explained that, although she received profiles of information about children starting school, it was the information gained through the state-wide Best Start Kindergarten Assessment, rather than the information she received from preschools, that informed her teaching: “it’s a heads up from those preschool profiles but it’s just a heads up. It’s the Best Start that governs the direction you are going to go”. In the school educator focus group, Patricia told of having received information about a child from a preschool educator that reported the child could read, but the child did not read the material when undertaking the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment. The assessment result was entered into the departmental database as the official record and, as a result, the child did not qualify for a gifted and talented program. This was despite Patricia’s belief that he should have accessed such a program, based on the information received from the preschool.

From these results it is evident that the knowledge of the child produced by the school system’s standardised assessment was privileged over the knowledge of the child provided by preschool educators. There is also evidence that preschool educators’ themselves subordinate their own knowledge of children’s literacy and numeracy to that of school educators. For example, Yvette explained that she did not include much detail of children’s numeracy understandings in the transition statements, on the basis that the school “do[es] their own checks early in the year”.

These data contribute to understandings of relations of power and the ways in which power relations operate between schools and preschools, impacting on communication and transition experiences. Foucault (2000b)
described the importance of identifying how power is exercised in relationships and what happens when power is exerted. Based on Foucault’s work, Gore (1998) identified practices of power in pedagogical interactions in the classroom. There are some similarities between the exclusion practices Gore observed in the classroom and the practices of power evident in preschool-school communication in this study. Gore drew on Foucault’s definition of exclusion as boundaries and zones around what is considered to be normal, and her examples from classrooms referred to the exclusion of particular ways of constructing knowledge. In the present study, there is evidence of the exclusion of preschool educators’ ways of constructing knowledge about the child, including examples of exclusion of the preschool educator’s knowledge of a child’s literacy from the school assessment and exclusion of preschool knowledge about literacy and numeracy from classroom decisions.

These two examples of exclusion both involve a state standardised assessment practice which, in turn, relates to Foucault’s concept of governmentality, “which refers to the global coordination of power at the level of the State as opposed to the micro-physics of power” (Olssen, 1999, p. 29). While there is evidence of practices of power at the level of individual educators, the practice of power is also embedded in an institutional practice. In this instance, the preschool educators’ knowledge has been excluded from the assessment due to an institutional practice which does not provide for the incorporation of other knowledge sources. This study suggests that standardised school assessments are regarded as indicative of the child’s literacy and numeracy. The knowledge produced by the school assessments are an “officially sanctioned truth” (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 33) and “institutionally produced and sanctioned truths govern and regulate us” (p. 23).

Results from the study reinforce the notion that knowledge about the child that is institutionally produced and sanctioned by schools is privileged over the information that preschool educators produce about children and send to schools. From a Foucaultian perspective, school assessments can be regarded as instruments schools use to govern preschools (Foucault, 1997). Governing, Foucault explains is “to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault, 2000b, p. 341). There is evidence in this study that
school assessments serve to restrict the extent to which information from preschools about children’s literacy and numeracy is used to support children’s transition to school. In relation to the examples concerning children’s literacy and numeracy noted previously, the preschool educator’s voice is not heard in children’s transition to school.

Relations of power evident in preschool-school communication are also produced through mandates to communicate. While there is a requirement for preschools to prepare information for schools in Victoria, there is no requirement for school educators to read or use the information, nor to communicate with preschools themselves through any form of communication. In her study of classrooms, Gore (1998) identified the practice of regulation, that is, “controlling by rule” (p. 243). Communication from preschools to schools in Victoria is controlled by a rule and, according to Foucault (1997, p. 292), this could be taken to show how “power relations are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical and allow an extremely limited margin of freedom”. Essentially, some Victorian preschool educators are not what Foucault would deem ‘free’ in terms of deciding whether or not to communicate with schools, as completion of the transition statements are linked, at least in principle, to their preschool’s funding agreement. However, there is no such requirement for schools to communicate with preschools, and so the relations of power are one-way, resembling what Foucault (1997) describes as “states of domination” (p.292).

Data from this study suggest that communications between preschools and schools can be used to “control the conduct” (Foucault, 1997, p. 299) of families. For example, in the communication experience of a school principal reported in the questionnaire results, a request for help was made by a preschool educator in order to get a parent to collect their child from preschool. Here the preschool has drawn upon the school as an institution of power (Foucault, 1997), to control the conduct of the parent. There are other examples of where, together, preschools and schools seek to “send the same message” to parents, for example about a child’s readiness, in order to control the conduct of parents in delaying school entry. As long as a child turns five by a certain date in the year (though a different date in Victoria and NSW), parents are legally able to enrol their child at a public
school in Australia and schools cannot refuse entry to a child who meets the age criteria. Foucault (1997, p. 292) writes that “power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free” and in starting school, parents are free to decide to send their child to a public school if they meet the age entry criterion. Yet, examples in this study show that some parents’ actions have been controlled by the actions of preschool and school educators, through intersetting communications.

8.4.7 Communication channels.

The results of this study establish that the type of communication channel chosen has an impact on what is communicated and how useful the information from preschool educators is in supporting children’s transition to school. In previous studies in other contexts, written forms of communication have been found to be problematic and not supportive of inter-professional communication on their own (Gotlib Conn et al., 2009). The present study builds understanding around why written forms of communication in the context of children’s transition to school present challenges and why there is a preference for face-to-face communication.

Some preschool educators in this study feared that the written information they sent to schools could be “misinterpreted”. For example, preschool educator Deborah conveyed her concern that children may be “ear-marked” by schools if she described children’s challenging behaviour in a particular way that could be misinterpreted as meaning that the child is “naughty”. In contrast, preschool educators explained that verbal conversations provided the opportunities to clarify written information and ask questions. These results reflect those of a previous United Kingdom (U.K.) study (Cassidy, 2005).

Preschool and school educators reported that the content of written communication was constrained because of a need to write about children “positively”. Referring to transition statements, school educator Adrienne stated that there were things that preschool educators “can’t report in those documents because they have to be worded positively”. Preschool educator Isabel explained that when she had the opportunity to talk to school educators she talked about things that could not be written about. Reasons for writing about children positively included the belief of preschool
educators that this was one way to highlight children’s strengths. Another powerful reason related to families, and the requirement that parents provide consent for information to be shared between preschool and school. There was a strong feeling among educators that parents would not consent to the sharing of information about their children that was negative. While this was described as constraining the written information shared, there was no indication that this same constraint applied to verbal communications. One conclusion to be drawn from the study is that, in the context of children’s transition to school, the choice of channel can result in certain restrictions on communication (DeVito, 2009).

School educators highlighted problems with the validity of written information received from preschools. For example, in the school educator focus group, Adrienne explained that the time gap between when the written information was recorded by preschool educators and when the school educator might use the information when the child starts school was problematic: “You know what they [the child] may be showing in December the year before, a lot can happen in that eight weeks. So then it becomes, it's great to read about, but it becomes void”. Other school educators pointed out that the information was time-limited, with Nora Park PS principal Arnold describing a “use by date”. Other issues in relation to validity that were articulated by school educators included Sanville PS educator Lauren’s explanation that she took the information from preschools “with a grain of salt” because “the environments are different. The expectations are different”. Nora Park school educator Stella described the transition statements as “just cut and paste, drag and drop and to me it’s just the same old repetition”. Fern articulated her belief that “it’s better not to know a little bit of background and history, things like that, because sometimes that can pre-determine ideas about what children are going to be like or what they do” and Lauren explained that she might be “led down the wrong path” by information about children given by preschools. Previous studies have indicated that preschool records are sometimes disregarded by schools as school educators do not wish to develop preconceived ideas about children from observations taken in a preschool context (Ashton et al., 2008). This study has confirmed and extended these results.

Verbal communications between preschools and schools were
preferred over written forms of communication by educators in this study. Nora Park preschool educator Isabel stated simply that she regarded herself as a verbal communicator who “would much prefer to have a verbal conversation with someone than having to write it down. I write it down because I have to.” Oxlough preschool educator Kylie said that she did not fill out the child profile sheets schools send to her, but was happy to have a conversation on the phone with school educators instead because “it’s my work and once it leaves here, I have no control over that”. Brantwood school educator Anna explained that the transition statements that preschool educator Yvette prepared were almost redundant because she had ongoing, lengthy conversations about children with her during the transition visits. This preference for face-to-face communication is reflected in the questionnaire results: substantial numbers of preschool and school educators indicated that they received a high level of information about children’s transition to school through ‘face-to-face contact’. Further, the majority of preschool and school educators indicated their preference for receiving information through face-to-face contact with staff in the other setting.

Preschool educators listed communication that occurred during face-to-face visits and meetings as a strength in the way that school educators communicated with them. Similarly, school educators identified verbal communication as strength of preschool educators’ communication. As well as being able to clarify and ask questions, educators in this study pointed out that verbal conversations can “lead to other conversations” or “can head off into different places”. Face-to-face visits to the preschool and associated communications by school principal Arnold, were described as relationship building in the Nora Park case. Previous studies have shown that educators included team building as one of benefits of talking with other educators (Grey, 2011). However, in the present study, educators did not mention other benefits articulated by educators in the New Zealand study, such as “being able to connect teaching philosophy to teaching practice in a meaningful way, and a chance to reflect on and gain fresh insights into teaching practice” (Grey, 2011, p. 28). Communicating with other educators has also been identified as reducing the isolation of teachers working on their own (Johnson, 2003). In the present study, preschool and school educators did not identify these types of benefits, perhaps because these
were not the main reasons for engaging in interssetting communications in the context of children’s transition to school. The communication motives listed by educators in this study related to children, families and other educators more than to the educators themselves.

Educators in this study commented that written communications were often one-way and resulted in little response. For example, in the preschool focus group Monica explained that after she posted transition statements to schools she was left wondering if “my hard work has gone to the right person.” Katia wondered if her written communication “sat in an office in a school, or on a desk and stop just there”. In the Nora Park case school educator Arnold explained that while he used email to communicate with staff, including staff at the preschool, he did not receive direct feedback from these communications and did not know if the emails had been received. Communication scholars assert that channels which allow for the two-way flow of communication provide for immediate interactivity and feedback, compared with written forms of communication where this interactivity and feedback is delayed (DeVito, 2009). There is evidence in this study that written communications between preschools and schools are generally one-way, and lack interactivity and feedback.

Transition initiatives in Victoria have put an increased emphasis on written information about children being communicated from preschools to schools. However, this study suggests that there can be limitations to written forms of communication. While this study indicates preschool and school educators’ preference for face-to-face communications, it and previous studies identified low levels of face-to-face communication such as meetings (Einarsdóttir et al., 2008; Pianta, Cox, et al., 1999). Limitations in time and resources pose a challenge for face-to-face communications between preschools and schools, yet there is a preference for this form of communication. One conclusion from this study is that the channel chosen for preschool-school communication has an influence on what is communicated and how the information is used.

8.4.8 Feedback.
Feedback is an important element of communication. In the transactional model of communication, feedback is a response to a message which provides information to the communicator (Tyler et al., 2005). In this study, educators mentioned feedback when they did not receive a response to their communications. In response to the questionnaire topic ‘feedback about child records sent to schools’, the majority of preschool educators indicated that they received a low level of information, and the majority of school educators indicated that they sent a low level of information. This topic also had the highest mean satisfaction score for school educators which, when interpreted, indicates that it is a source of dissatisfaction within intersetting communications.

Preschool and school educators described feelings of frustration when their attempts to communicate did not generate responses. For example, Nora Park preschool educator Isabel said: “when I have done my transition statements and I have indicated on the majority of them that I would like to have conversations with them [school educators] and I get nothing back. That frustrates me.” Not responding to communications was identified by preschool educators as a weakness in the way that schools communicated with them. Preschool educator Niamh described a “really heartbreaking” feeling when schools expressed disinterest in the transition statements she had written about children.

One of the important functions of feedback in interpersonal relationships is that it conveys value to the sender (Adler & Rodman, 2012). Messages that convey value to the sender are known as confirming messages, as they “show a positive regard for the other” (Dailey, 2006, p. 436). In contrast, disconfirming messages “discount or reject” the other communicator (p. 436). Strengths in communication were noted by preschool educators when schools valued the information shared, reflecting value for preschool educators’ professional opinions. For example, in the preschool educator focus group Monica described being pleased when she received letters from schools saying “thank-you for the transition statements, we really valued them”. Katia mentioned that when she received an invitation to visit a school to see how her former preschool children are going, “it shows that they really value you”.

Disconfirming messages, such as a lack of acknowledgment from the
receiver by ignoring their communications, communicate a lack of valuing of the sender by the receiver (DeVito, 2009; Wood, 2010). There is evidence in this study of such disconfirming messages. For example, preschool educators expressed frustration when they did not hear from schools after children have started school, such as in the following questionnaire response: “This is the area we are most frustrated about. The schools want all the information we have, but there is no feedback once the child starts school”. Preschool educator Niamh gave examples of feedback she had received about her transition statements when a school educator “sort of brushed them off as if they weren’t, as if they didn’t have any relevance to what she needed to know”. Preschool educator Deborah reported that, after preparing portfolios for children and sending them to schools, she got “feedback from the teachers that they didn’t read it anyway”. In her questionnaire response, another preschool educator commented that: “It's frustrating for me and for other early childhood professionals when our professional opinions are so undervalued”.

Examples of confirming and disconfirming messages reflected in the data are important for preschool-school relationships because confirmation theory asserts that “individuals have a fundamental need to be validated by others” (Dailey, 2006, p. 435). In addition, confirming messages encourage further communications:

confirming and disconfirming messages indicate a level of regard and acceptance for another, the amalgam of messages can reflect the overarching emotional tone in the relationship – how the individual feels regarded in the relationship. (Dailey, 2006, p. 437)

As it is the relationships between the adults in children’s lives that are described as having direct and indirect influences on children’s transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000), this study has confirmed that feedback and the types of messages it conveys are crucial in preschool-school communication.

Another function of feedback is that it provides information to the communicator which can be used to adjust future communications (Tyler et al., 2005). Preschool educators described how feedback was useful to them in developing and adjusting their future communications. For example, preschool educator Olivia tried, unsuccessfully, to gather feedback to
develop a child profile that would be useful to schools. Olivia stated that, due to a lack of feedback, she wondered whether the profiles she sent to schools were used at all. Deborah did not know how effective her communication with a school educator about a child had been: “I don’t know how [the information is] used at the other end so therefore I don’t know”. Similarly, a lack of feedback impacted on educators’ responses to the survey question regarding action taken on information sent: some educators’ comments mentioned not receiving “feedback”, “hearing back” or a “response” to information sent as the reason why they did not know what, if any, action had been taken. For example, one school educator commented that “I am not really sure what information is used – there is no feedback”. In the Nora Park case preschool educator Isabel described how many of the outcomes of her communication with schools, other than Nora Park PS, were unknown because she had not ever heard back from the schools, or had contact with the child’s family once the child had started school. At Sanville, preschool educator Olivia asked for feedback on what information about children the school needed and, when this feedback was not received, she developed profiles that the school reported were not particularly useful. Communication scholars assert that “the better our understanding of our audience, the better placed we are to communicate effectively” (Tyler et al., 2005, p. 32). This study has identified that, in the context of children’s transition to school, feedback is important for preschool and school educators so that their future communications with each other can be developed to meet the needs of their respective audiences.

Without feedback, educators are left to wonder if their communications have been received, ignored or whether the information sent has been of any use. In Noel’s (2011) study in Queensland, school educators reported a lack of response from preschools in their attempts to communicate and Timperley et al (2003) described how preschool educators were perturbed at school educators’ lack of response to the information they sent to schools. This study has identified that non-response can be a cause of frustration to educators, impede future communications and impact on relationships.

8.4.9 Summary of Research Question 4.
This study has highlighted a range of factors that influence preschool-school communication as children make the transition to school. These factors shape communication between preschool and school educators, influencing the content and extent of communication. The factors described in this study have also been shown to influence the outcomes of communication as they relate to educators and children’s transitions. The following influences have been identified in this study:

- The type of setting that preschool educators work in influenced whether or not they communicated with schools;
- The structures of preschools and schools such as schools not being able to finalise who would teach the first year of school class far enough in advance, restricted interseting communication;
- Knowing about the work of educators in the other setting was important for the development of positive relationships;
- Trust was an important aspect of preschool-school relationships was influenced by how much information was exchanged between preschools and schools;
- Preschool and school educators’ different beliefs about children impacted on the way educators used the information exchanged about children;
- Power was evident in communication between preschools and schools and resulted in the privileging of school educators’ knowledge about children over preschool educators’ knowledge.
- The type of communication channel impacted on the content of communication and the utility of the information;
- Feedback received by educators on their communications influenced preschool-school relationships positively and negatively.

8.5 An enhanced model of preschool-school communication

Results of this study have confirmed that preschool-school communication is a complex process. To promote effective interseting communication, policies and practices must take into account the nature of
communication, educators’ motives for communicating, the many influences on communication, as well as the consequences of communication. Preschool-school communication is more than the simple transfer of information from educators in one setting to another, such as in linear models of communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1963). Intersetting communication between preschool and schools more closely resembles the transactional model of communication, as depicted in Figure 2. Analysing intersetting communication using the transactional model promotes recognition of the many influences that impact on that communication which have been identified in the study including the importance of overlapping fields of experience, and the significance of feedback in sustaining communication. Combining the results of this study with the transactional model of communication, and drawing on bioecological systems theory, Figure 7 provides a visual representation of an Enhanced Model of Preschool-School Communication.

![Enhanced Model of Preschool-School Communication](image)

Figure 7: Enhanced Model of Preschool-school Communication

This model outlines ways in which preschool-school communication may be enhanced. It is based on the following 10 principles:

- Preschool-school communication is enhanced when educators:
1. know each other, each other’s settings and their work;
2. hold shared beliefs about children;
3. trust each other;
4. convey value and appreciation in their communications;
5. develop relationships that support the exchange of information;
6. have opportunities for face-to-face or verbal communication;
7. reflect upon their intersetting communication and the potential impact of this for other educators, children and families;
8. engage in ongoing, two-way communications;
9. recognise and address relations of power; and
10. are employed by organisations that prioritise communication.

Intersetting knowledge is generated when educators have some understanding of the ‘other’ setting and the role of educators within that setting. This is represented in Figure 7 by the overlapping circles. Intersetting knowledge sets the scene for connections between settings and between educators. It provides the basis for ongoing professional dialogue that could well encompass many of the issues identified by educators as potential facilitators, or inhibitors, of intersetting communication: exploring beliefs about children; developing trust; conveying value and appreciation towards others; developing relationships; providing opportunities for verbal interaction; generating spaces for reflexivity about the effectiveness of intersetting communication; establishing and sustaining on-going two-way communications; recognising and addressing power relations; and building structures and processes that prioritise intersetting communication.

The enhanced model of preschool-school communication provides the basis for the recommendations for practice, policy, teacher education and research that are outlined in the following chapter.
Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate communication between preschool and school educators at the time of children’s transition to school. The study has described the nature of preschool-school communication as well as educators’ motives for engaging in communication, and has provided insight into the outcomes of communication for educators, children and families. The results have highlighted key issues which influence preschool-school communication and the ways in which these shape, limit or promote communication between educators. This chapter outlines the limitations of the study before drawing upon the Enhanced Model of Preschool-School Communication presented in the previous chapter to address implications of the study and provide recommendations for preschool and school educators, policymakers, teacher educators and future research.

9.1 Limitations of the study

This study presented the experiences of educators who engaged in interseting communication. An immediate limitation is that it does not address the experiences of educators who did not engage in interseting communication. While opportunities for participation were open to a wide range of educators, the majority of educators who did participate indicated that they engaged in interseting communication in some way. It is possible that educators who did not engage in interseting communication chose not to participate in this study, regarding the research as being irrelevant to their experience. During the recruitment processes, a number of educators were encountered who indicated that they did not engage in interseting communication. The researcher indicated that their views were valuable to the research and they were encouraged to complete a questionnaire. However, as the results indicate, many of these educators did not choose to participate any further than agreeing to receive the web link for the questionnaire. Sapford (2007) makes the point that people who decline to take part in survey research “may well have different attitudes and behaviours” (p. 93) from those who do. Therefore the results of the study are limited, for the most part, to the views of educators who did practice
intersetting communication.

The recruitment process also biased the sample towards those educators who did engage in intersetting communication. Many of the educators from Victoria were invited to participate in the study at network meetings attended by preschool and school educators. These educators were engaged in intersetting communication by way of their participation in these networks. Part of the sample was also drawn from two meetings where groups of school and preschool educators met specifically to exchange the Victorian Transition Learning and Development Statements (DEECD, 2009b). Focus group participants were invited to participate in the research because they had experiences in or views on this practice to contribute to the research. For the cases, the presence of intersetting communication was one of the criteria on which the school and preschool sites were chosen. The bias towards recruitment of educators who engaged in intersetting communication was a deliberate strategy to focus on what could be learned from those already engaged in the practice. As a consequence, it is the views and experiences of educators who practice intersetting communications that are represented in this study.

The use of self-report methods in this study produced some limitations to the knowledge that the research has generated about preschool-school communication. In the Preschool-school and School-preschool Communication Surveys, educators were asked to focus on their experiences generally with schools/preschools when answering many of the questions. This is a deviation from the ways in which Hargie and Tourish’s (2009b) original instrument has been used previously. Commonly, communication audit questionnaires are implemented within a single organisation or work group and respondents rate their communication experiences within that context. For educators in this study who communicated with many schools/preschools, generalising their ratings across multiple schools/preschools presented a challenge. As a result, the ratings may represent an overgeneralisation of educators’ experiences. In addressing this limitation, and in recognition that the relationships between individual preschools and schools are unique, quantitative results have been integrated with qualitative data from a range of sources from the questionnaires, focus groups and cases which provide further detail of
educators’ specific communication experiences.

The majority of the data generated in this study are derived from self-reports of preschool-school communication and, as with any study relying upon self-reports of actual behaviour, the results are limited as participants may portray “a falsely positive or negative picture of the situation or themselves” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 344). The range of methods employed has gone some way to address this limitation through the collection of written documents and recordings of two communicative interactions, which provided data in the form of actual communications.

The research was designed to collect and analyse different types of data in order to develop, extend and inform each other. There were limitations to how effectively this was able to be done, particularly in terms of quantitative questionnaire data informing the development of the focus groups and case data collection techniques. For example, as the focus groups were held at a time when questionnaire data collection was still ongoing, the interview guides for the focus groups were only able to be informed by preliminary analysis of the questionnaires. Future studies utilising mixed methods may benefit from separate phases, rather than overlapping levels of data collection so that data from one phase can build upon the results of previous phases.

The study has what Maxwell (2005, p. 115) describes as “internal generalizability”, but has limited “external generalizability”. That is, the results of the study can be generalised within the sample of educators who participated, but the results cannot be generalised to educators beyond the sample. This is because the sample is not representative of all preschool and school educators. The sample was recruited within the boundaries of one region in NSW and one in Victoria. Both of these regions are non-metropolitan, therefore the experiences of the educators in this study are from regional and rural perspectives. The sample was recruited largely based on opportunity and reputational sampling, so is not representative of all educators in the two regions or beyond. While the questionnaire results provide for some breadth of generalisation, it is only to the sample of educators in this research.

Despite some limitations, the results of this study draw on experiences of preschool-school communication to outline a range of
important issues.

9.2 Implications of the study

The results of this study have implications for educators, children and families. After outlining these implications, a number of recommendations are proposed.

While most educators reported participating in interseting communication, several educators who were employed in child care settings – as opposed to state-funded preschools – either did not regard such communication as part of their role, or did not believe that the information they could share was valued. One consequence is that the transition to school of children who attend child care services may be hampered by a lack of communication among educators. A further consequence is that professional respect for these educators is not forthcoming, and their expertise not recognised. Communication between child care, as well as all other preschool services, and schools can help to build interseting knowledge. This, in turn, promotes further communication and collaboration.

There is evidence in this study that interseting knowledge and overlapping fields of experience are important in preschool-school communication. This result suggests that communication difficulties may arise when educators know little of the work of their peers. It has been suggested that effective transition to school programs require the commitment of organisations, as well as individuals (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Strategies to assist educators to develop interseting knowledge require organisations to dedicate time and resources, as well as recognise of the importance of interseting knowledge to transition to school practices.

The study has highlighted a number of limitations and challenges associated with reliance on written communication. Written forms of communication tend to involve one-way exchanges of information and do not encourage feedback or ongoing conversation; they are not particularly effective channels for building relationships between educators. Educators who aim to build positive, trusting and respectful relationships must look to other communication channels. The results of this study suggest that relationships are built over time, through face-to-face communication. Such
relationships take effort, time and resources to maintain. These relationships are most effective when they involve those educators working directly with children. Dialogue between the principal persons with whom the children interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is more effective than communications that are condensed and passed on from others.

The importance of feedback has been emphasised in this research. Feedback conveys value to the other communicator and is crucial in sending positive messages between preschools and schools. Communications which do not convey value leave educators feeling frustrated and disappointed. One means of conveying value and building positive relationships involves the acknowledgement of communications. Expressions of thanks and appreciation are important, as are conversations about how children have settled into school and providing feedback about child records. While sharing information and providing feedback are important, so too is consideration of the potential impact of this communication for people and practice.

The content and nature of communication has a direct impact on the development of positive and trusting relationships between educators. A substantial proportion of the preschool-school communication reported in this study involved promotional material. Several educators reported receiving too much of this information and commented that such information did not necessarily support children’s transitions. Achieving a balance in the nature and content of information sent and received is required to promote positive relationships.

One conclusion from this research is that preschool-school communication impacts on families and children. On this basis, educators must carefully consider the potential impact of their preschool-school communication. This is particularly relevant when issues such as children’s readiness for school are the subject of communications. For example, educational systems are well-placed to interrogate why a certain level of readiness of the child is, albeit unofficially, required by schools and related to this, why first year of school classrooms are considered by preschool and school educators as unsuitable for some children who are age-eligible for school.

The focus of this study has been the communications of educators,
yet this communication often involves, and is about, others – notably children and families. In order to provide a broad overview of communication issues, future research could explore the experiences and views of children and families about preschool-school communication. Seeking families’ views on preschool-school communication, could be considered to be part of educators developing “trusting, respectful and reciprocal relationships” (ETC Research Group, 2011, p. 2) with families during the transition to school. While the results of this study include educators’ perceptions of the outcomes of communication for children and families, the voices of children and families are not within the scope of this research.

With the reconceptualisation of childhood (Prout & James, 1997) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) amongst the key instigators of change, recent years have seen an increasing focus on hearing the perspectives of children in research, including research addressing children’s transition to school (see for example Briggs & Potter, 2003; Dockett & Perry, 2004; Einarsdóttir, 2010; Fisher, 2009). The perspectives of families have been researched widely in the area of transitions (see for example Dockett & Perry, 2004; Sanagavarapu, 2010; Schischka, Rawlinson, & Hamilton, 2012), but families’ views and experiences of preschool-school communication have not been the specific focus of any of these studies. Educators have acknowledged that parental consent must be provided in order for preschool-school communications about individual children. However, it is not clear from this study whether educators have considered family perspectives of this communication, or indeed, family input into such communication.

The primary reason educators provided for communicating was not necessarily related to the development and maintenance of relationships. Yet models of transition emphasise the importance of relationships and their impact on children, “both directly and indirectly” (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000, p. 492). The results of this study indicate that relationship building is an important focus for interseting communication and with much of the most effective communication occurring within the context of positive, trusting and respectful relationships. A broadening of the focus of
transition policy is needed to support the development of these relationships.

Power relations are often unavoidable in human interactions. However, it is important to acknowledge issues of power within preschool-school relationships, in order to address these and focus on supporting children’s transition to school. This study has demonstrated that not only the exchange of information, but also the use to which that information is put, is predicated on issues of knowledge, particularly whose knowledge and what knowledge is valued. As Foucault (2000b) writes, where power relations exist and are damaging, actions must be taken to rectify the situation.

There are two potentially damaging elements of privileging school knowledge over preschool knowledge. The first is that it is impossible to build on children’s competencies if these competencies are unknown. Although school educators conduct their own assessments of children, Brooker (2008) notes that many one-off school assessments “could be regarded as useless but trivial, since they tell teachers so little about children’s real capabilities” (p.136). Secondly, preschool educators in this study described their feelings of frustration and inadequacy when the information they sent to schools was disregarded. This study has shown that disconfirming messages such as these are damaging to preschool-school relationships. Greater balance in communication will also be achieved when the flow of information is reciprocal and two-way. This would mean that requests for information would be matched with expectations of feedback and response.

One strategy to address this apparent mismatch is to promote collaboration around assessment and young children. Such collaboration could promote reflection of current approaches to assessment, as well as the ways in which multiple perspectives could be incorporated into assessments. For example, Brooker (2008), advocates the development of child-friendly assessments which are shared between educators, children and families. Such assessments gather information about children’s learning dispositions and their participation in settings such as the home and preschool, and can be used to inform the development of school learning programs. For such an approach to work effectively, preschool and school educators will need to heighten their awareness of the other setting – that is, enhance their
interseting knowledge. This will be a fruitful area for future research.

9.3 Recommendations

There are several key issues which are evident from the results of this study which can be used to strengthen policy and assist in developing guidelines for future practices around preschool-school communication. Drawing upon the Enhanced Model of Preschool-school Communication outlined in the previous chapter, and implications of the study discussed in the preceding section, the following recommendations are provided for preschool and school educators, policy makers, teacher educators and researchers.

9.3.1 Recommendations for preschool and school educators.

- Irrespective of the type of service in which they work, preschool educators should regard the knowledge that they have about children, and children’s experiences in their setting as valuable and make efforts to communicate this to schools. When there are circumstances where a child attends multiple services it may be possible for the preschool educators in these services to collaborate in providing written information to schools.

- School educators should consider their relationships with all types of preschool services attended by children in their communities, and seek to develop positive, trusting and respectful relationships with educators in these services.

- Preschool and school educators should be encouraged to develop interseting knowledge. Learning about the other setting can be achieved through activities such as reciprocal visits, meetings, shared professional development, membership of networking groups and community committees. Becoming articulate about their own practice is the basis for educators to be able to communicate to others about their work in their setting.

- The primary goal of preschool-school communication should
be the development of relationships. The giving and getting of information in communications may happen at the same time, but should always be done with a view to developing positive, trusting and respectful relationships between educators.

- Wherever possible, opportunities should be created for face-to-face communication between educators.
- Communication should not be limited to the immediate time around children starting school. Preschool-school communications that occur over time are effective in building positive relationships.

To promote intersetting communication, school and preschool administrators should:

- Facilitate opportunities for first-year-of-school and preschool educators to meet and share information.
- Prioritise the identification of the first-year-of-school teacher well in advance of the end of the school year, and share this as appropriate in order to promote communication between those directly engaged with the children starting school.

9.3.2 Recommendations for policy makers.

Future policies regarding preschool-school communication should:

- Be inclusive of all preschool educators, irrespective of the type of funding structure of their service;
- Provide resources and opportunities for educators to build intersetting knowledge and relationships; and
- Address power relations in preschool-school relationships by having similar expectations for the flow of communications between preschools and schools, and providing opportunities for educators across sectors to collaborate.

9.3.3 Recommendations for teacher educators.

Pre-service early childhood and primary teacher education courses should:
• Include content and experiences about both preschool and school settings to promote pre-service teachers’ intersetting knowledge including knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment of children’s learning.

• Develop pre-service educators’ communication skills to promote articulation of their practice and the development of positive relationships with other educators.

• Promote pre-service educators’ skills in making connections between assessment information about children from preschools and schools.

9.3.4 Recommendations for future researchers.

The following areas of preschool-school communication are worthy of more in-depth investigation through research:

• The ways in which intersetting knowledge is used by preschool and school educators in forming connections between settings as proposed, but not detailed by, Bronfenbrenner (1979). This research is needed to provide further understanding of the value and impact of interssetting knowledge in preschool-school communication.

• The content of communication which builds positive relationships between preschools and schools. Further knowledge about relational communication is needed to develop recommendations for practice around how schools and preschools can build positive relationships with each other and for this to feedback into teacher education programs.

• Future research should seek the experiences and views of children and families about preschool-school communication.

• Exploring ways in which preschool and school educators can work together to assess children’s learning and competencies to promote continuity of learning.
9.4 A final word on preschool-school communication

Preschool-school communication is a hot topic – it has been the subject of several recent reforms and initiatives. It is increasingly touted as a solution to problems such as curriculum and learning discontinuity. This thesis has argued that preschool-school communication is complex, shaped by a range of issues and contexts. One corollary is that strategies to support interseting communication will also be complex. It is not a linear or mechanical process.
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Appendix 1: Preschool-school and School-preschool Communication Surveys
Preschool-school Communication Survey

1. Instructions

This survey asks you about your experiences of communicating with schools in regards to children’s transitions to school.

For sections 1 through 9 please respond by thinking about your experiences communicating with schools in general.

In section 10 you are asked for a specific example of communication with a school.
Preschool-school Communication Survey

2. Background information

Your gender
- Male
- Female

Your age group
- Under 25 years
- 26-40 years
- 41-60 years
- 60 years +

Professional group you most identify with
- Early childhood sector
- Primary school sector
- Early childhood and primary school sectors

Role in current setting
- Educator
- Manager/Director/Coordinator
- Educator and Manager
- Family day care coordination unit staff
- Other role
Type of service which best describes the one you are currently employed in
- Long day care or occasional care centre
- Preschool (NSW) or Kindergarten (VIC)
- Family day care
- Mobile Children's Service
- Multi-project Children's Service (more than one of the above)

Is your service co-located with a primary school?
- Yes
- No

Highest level of early childhood qualifications
- Postgraduate
- Bachelor
- Diploma
- Certificate III
- No recognised qualifications

Years of experience in the field
- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 10-20 years
- 20 years +

Geographical location of your service
- NSW
- VIC
3. Section 1: Communication goals

Do you communicate with primary schools in regards to children's transitions to school?

- Yes
- No
Preschool-school Communication Survey

4.

What is your main reason for communicating with schools?

[Input field]

What is your main reason for not communicating with schools?

[Input field]
Preschool-school Communication Survey

5. Section 2: Strengths and weaknesses in communication

What is the main strength in the way staff in schools communicate with you?

What is the main weakness in the way staff in schools communicate with you?
6. Section 3: Amount of information from schools

For each topic listed below please indicate the amount of information you ARE RECEIVING on this topic from schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition/orientation program details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback about child records sent to schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who the children’s teacher will be</td>
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<tr>
<td>School program/curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>School’s expectations of children starting school</td>
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<td>How the children have settled into school</td>
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<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>School philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of learning for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments:

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*354*
# Preschool-school Communication Survey

For each of these same topics, please indicate the amount of information you feel you NEED TO RECEIVE from schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition/orientation program details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback about child records sent to schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who the children’s teacher will be</td>
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<tr>
<td>School program/curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>School’s expectations of children starting school</td>
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<tr>
<td>How the children have settled into school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>School philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

...
## Preschool-school Communication Survey

### 8. Section 4: Amount of information from particular sources

For each source person below, please indicate the amount of information about children’s transitions to school you ARE RECEIVING from these sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School Principals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

...
Preschool-school Communication Survey

9.

For these same sources, please indicate the amount of information about children's transitions to school you feel you NEED TO RECEIVE from each source person:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School Principals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments:

...
### Preschool-school Communication Survey

#### 10. Section 5: Communication channels

For each channel listed below please indicate how much information you ARE RECEIVING through this channel about children’s transitions to school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face contact with school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone calls with school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic communication with school staff, e.g. email</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication with school staff</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments:

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358
Preschool-school Communication Survey

11.

For these same channels, please indicate the amount of information you feel you NEED TO RECEIVE through this channel about children’s transitions to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face contact with school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone calls with school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic communication with school staff e.g. email</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication with school staff</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

...
### Preschool-school Communication Survey

#### 12. Section 6: Information sent to schools

For each topic listed below, please indicate the amount of information you ARE SENDING to schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual children’s literacy and numeracy development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual children’s social development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other areas of children’s development</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program/curriculum</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating continuity of learning/practising for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotional information about my service</td>
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<tr>
<td>How our service prepares children for school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service newsletter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments


### Preschool-school Communication Survey

13. For these same topics, please indicate the amount of information you feel you NEED TO SEND to schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual children's literacy and numeracy development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual children's social development</td>
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<td>Other areas of children's development</td>
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<td>Program/curriculum</td>
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<td>Service philosophy</td>
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<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<td>Creating continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
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<td>Promotional information about my service</td>
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<td>How our service prepares children for school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service newsletter</td>
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</table>

Optional comments
### Preschool-school Communication Survey

#### 14. Section 7: Action taken by schools on information you send

Please indicate the amount of action that is taken on the information you send to schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action taken on information sent to schools</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optional comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Preschool-school Communication Survey

15. Section 8: Timeliness of information from schools

Please indicate the extent to which information from schools is received in a timely manner i.e. received when you most need it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information received from schools</th>
<th>Never at the right time</th>
<th>Rarely at the right time</th>
<th>Sometimes at the right time</th>
<th>Mostly at the right time</th>
<th>Always at the right time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Optional comments

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## Preschool-school Communication Survey

### 18. Section 9: Working relationships

In regards to other adults with whom you work with at times of children's transitions to school, please indicate how much you trust each of the following in terms of working together:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Principals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colleagues in my own workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other professionals eg. speech therapists, OTs, paediatricians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other early childhood staff</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments...
17. Section 10: Communication Experience

Please describe one specific communication experience you have had with a primary school. Please answer the below question and give a brief summary of the experience.

Was the communication experience:

- [ ] Effective
- [ ] Ineffective

Describe the experience, what led up to it, who the other persons involved did that made this an effective or ineffective communication, and the consequences of the communication experience for you/for others. Please do not use the real names of persons or schools.
# School-preschool Communication Survey

## 1. Instructions

This survey asks you about your experiences of communicating with preschools in regards to children's transitions to school.

For the purposes of this survey 'preschool' is an inclusive term that refers to preschools (NSW), kindergartens (VIC), long day care centres, mobile children's services and family day care schemes.

For sections 1 through 9 please respond by thinking about your experiences communicating with preschools in general.

In section 10 you are asked for a specific example of communication with a preschool.
School-preschool Communication Survey

2. Background information

Your gender
- Male
- Female

Your age group
- Under 26 years
- 26-40 years
- 41-60 years
- 60 years +

Professional group you most identify with
- Early childhood sector
- Primary school sector
- Early childhood and primary school sectors

Role in current setting
- Prep teacher (VIC)/Kindergarten teacher (NSW)
- Principal
- Executive staff member
- Teacher and principal
- Other role in the school
Type of service which best describes the one you are currently employed in
- Public School
- Catholic School
- Independent School

Is your school co-located with a preschool?
- Yes
- No

Highest level of teaching qualifications
- Postgraduate
- Bachelor
- Diploma
- Qualifications in other disciplines
- No recognised teaching qualifications

Years of experience in the field
- 0-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- 20 years +

Geographical location of your school
- NSW
- VIC
School-preschool Communication Survey

3. Section 1: Communication goals

Do you communicate with preschools in regards to children’s transitions to school?

- Yes
- No
What is your main reason for communicating with preschools?

What is your main reason for not communicating with preschools?
School-preschool Communication Survey

5. Section 2: Strengths and weaknesses in communication

What is the main strength in the way staff in preschools communicate with you?

What is the main weakness in the way staff in preschools communicate with you?
School-preschool Communication Survey

6. Section 3: Amount of information received from preschools

For each topic listed below please indicate the amount of information you ARE RECEIVING on this topic from preschools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about preschools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual children's literacy and numeracy development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual children's social development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other areas of children's development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool programs/curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool newsletters</td>
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<tr>
<td>How preschools preparing children for school</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

[Text box for comments]
### School-preschool Communication Survey

7.

For each of these same topics, please indicate the amount of information you feel you NEED TO RECEIVE from preschools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about preschools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other areas of children's development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool programs/curriculum</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool newsletters</td>
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<tr>
<td>How preschool is preparing children for school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments:

- [ ]
8. Section 4: Amount of information from particular sources

For each source person below, please indicate the amount of information about children's transitions to school you ARE RECEIVING from these sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Person</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Directors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other preschool staff</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

[Input field for comments]

[Buttons: Previous, Next]
### School-preschool Communication Survey

6. For these same sources, please indicate the amount of information about children's transitions to school you feel you NEED TO RECEIVE from each source person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Directors</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other preschool staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly through parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments: 

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*Exit this survey*
## School-preschool Communication Survey

### 10. Section 5: Communication channels

For each channel listed below please indicate how much information you ARE RECEIVING through this channel about children’s transitions to school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face contact with preschool staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls with preschool staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic communication with preschool staff (e.g. email)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication with school staff</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments:
**School-preschool Communication Survey**

**11.**

For these same channels, please indicate the amount of information you feel you **NEED TO RECEIVE** through this channel about children's transitions to school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face contact with preschool staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls with preschool staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic communication with preschool staff e.g. email</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper-based communication with preschool staff</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments:

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*Optional comments field is provided for any additional remarks.*
## School-preschool Communication Survey

### 12. Section 6: Information sent to preschools

For each topic listed below, please indicate the amount of information you ARE SENDING to preschools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition/orientation program details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback about child records received</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who the children's teacher will be</td>
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<tr>
<td>School programs/curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>School's expectations of children starting school</td>
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<tr>
<td>How the children have settled into school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>School philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

- Existing comments:
  - [Add comments here]

- Feedback:
  - [Add feedback here]
School-preschool Communication Survey

13. For these same topics, please indicate the amount of information you feel you NEED TO SEND to preschools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotional information about my school</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition/orientation program details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback about child records received</td>
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<td>Who the child's teacher will be</td>
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<td>School programs/curriculum</td>
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<td>School's expectations of children starting school</td>
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<td>How the children have settled into school</td>
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<td>Invitations for reciprocal site visits</td>
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<td>School philosophy</td>
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<td>Developing continuity of learning/teaching for children</td>
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<td>Invitations to work collaboratively on transition projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Optional comments

[Input field]
### 14. Section 7: Action taken by preschools on information you send

Please indicate the amount of action that is taken on the information you send to preschools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action taken on information sent to preschools</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Very Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Optional comments**

[Input field for comments]
# School-preschool Communication Survey

## 15. Section 8: Timeliness of information from preschools

Please indicate the extent to which information from preschools is received in a timely manner (i.e., received when you most need it):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information received from preschools</th>
<th>Never at the right time</th>
<th>Rarely at the right time</th>
<th>Sometimes at the right time</th>
<th>Mostly at the right time</th>
<th>Always at the right time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optional comments</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


## School-preschool Communication Survey

### 16. Section 9: Working relationships

In regards to other adults with whom you work with or times of children's transitions to school, please indicate how much you trust each of the following in terms of working together.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Directors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colleagues in my own workplace</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other professionals eg speech therapists, OTs, paediatricians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion workers</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Optional comments**

[Optional comments field]
School-preschool Communication Survey

17. Section 10: Communication Experience

Please describe one specific communication experience you have had with a preschool. Please answer the below question and give a brief summary of the experience.

Was the communication experience:
- Effective
- Ineffective

Describe the experience, what led up to it, what the other persons involved did that made this an ineffective or effective communication, and the consequences of the communication experience for you or others. Please do not use the real names of persons or preschools.
Appendix 2: Focus group interview guides

Preschool focus group interview guide

1. I would like to start by asking each of you to tell us your name, your role at your service and what for you is the best thing about working with children making the transition to school.

2. What have your experiences been communicating with schools?

3. What would you say are your main reasons for communicating with schools?

4. Please tell me of an example of when you believe that communicating with a school has been effective.

5. Please tell me about what sort of contact you have with school principals

6. Please tell me about the different forms of communication with schools – written, face to face, phone calls?

7. What about communication via email?

8. I would like to know what you communicate about with schools.

9. Please tell me about what information you receive from schools – what is their communication about?

10. What aspects of children’s development and learning do you communicate about?

11. I’d like to know how you think the information you provide to schools is used.

12. In my survey preschool educators have given me examples of effective communication with schools which involves their advice and information being ‘taken on board’. Can you give me an example of when your advice has been ‘taken on board’ by a school?

13. Is there anything else on this particular topic that you would like to share? Have we covered what for you are the most
important issues in relation to the topic of communication with schools?

School focus group interview guide

1. I would like to start by asking each of you to tell us your name and your role at your school.
2. Please tell me about transition at your schools.
3. Please tell me about your experiences been communicating with preschools around transition
4. What would you say are your main reasons for communicating with preschools?
5. Please tell me of an example of when you believe that communicating with a preschool has been effective.
6. Please tell me about the different forms of communication you use with preschools – written, face to face, phone calls.
7. What about communication via email?
8. Please tell me about written communication from preschools.
9. What weight do you give the information you receive from preschools versus that which you gather yourselves about children?
10. In my online survey school educators have said that they would like more information from preschool teachers about children? What information would you like more of about children?
11. How do you use the information you gather from preschools?
12. What are some of the challenges of communicating with preschools?
13. Is there anything else on this particular topic that you would like to share? Have we covered what for you are the most important issues in relation to the topic of communication with schools?
Appendix 3: Case interview guides

Example interview guide for initial interview with school educators

1. Please tell me about transition to at Brantwood Primary School?
2. Please tell me about your experiences communicating with preschools around transition?
3. What would you say are your main reasons for communicating with preschools?
4. What information do you seek from preschools and how is this information used?
5. How do you expect that the information you exchange with preschools is used?
6. Can you give me an example of when you think communicating with a preschool has been effective?
7. What impact has the transition statements had on your communication with preschools?
8. What do you think makes the difference here in Brantwood for the relationship between the school and preschooler?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about communicating with preschools?

Example interview guide for initial interview with preschool educators

1. Please tell me about transition to school at Brantwood Preschool.
2. Please tell me about your experiences communicating with schools around transition.
3. What would you say are your main reasons for communicating with schools?
4. What information do you seek from schools and how is this information used?
5. How do you expect that the information you exchange with schools is used?
6. Can you give me an example of when you think communicating with a school has been effective?

7. I understand that you have been communicating with school for years prior to the transition initiative. What impact has the transition statements had on your communication with schools?

8. What do you think makes the difference here in Brantwood for the relationship between the school and preschool?

9. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about communicating with preschools?

Example interview guide for phase 2 interview with school educators

1. Please tell me about the communication that has happened over the past two months since I was here and any planned to occur between now and the end of term.

2. In your meeting with Yvette you talked a lot about children’s friends. What use is made of this information in your classroom?

3. Do you have any children coming from other communities/preschools for 2012, other than Brantwood Preschool? Have you had any communications with their teachers?

4. I understand that much of your communication with Anna is face to face but do you have communication with preschools via email?

5. What is it about face to face communication that makes it preferable over other forms of communication?

6. Communication diary log – lets go through each of the communications you have logged and it would be great if you could tell me some more detail about them.

Example interview guide for phase 2 interview with preschool educators

1. Please tell me about the communication that has happened over the past two months since I was here and any planned to occur between now and the end of term.

2. Do you know who the Prep teachers will be at each of the schools that your children will be attending?
3. I understand with Brantwood PS, much of your communication is face to face but do you have much communication with schools via email?
4. What is it about face to face communication that makes it preferable over other forms of communication?
5. What are your thoughts on providing schools with information about children’s literacy and numeracy understandings?
6. What was your experience with completing the transition statements this year?
7. You mentioned last time that you had invited the school principals to attend your AGM – did that happen, what did they talk about?
8. Communication diary log – lets go through each of the communications you have logged and it would be great if you could tell me some more detail about them.

Example interview guide for phase 3 interview with school educators

1. Could you please start by telling me about how things have gone for yourself and the children starting school this year?
2. How many preps do you have this year? Did anyone turn up you didn’t expect? Did they all go to preschool, any to the long day care centre?
3. In what ways have you used information about children gathered from the preschool? Can you give me a specific example?
4. Tell me about how you use the information in the transition statements? Can you give me a specific example?
5. In the last interview you said that you give Yvette a little bit of feedback about the statements, what was the feedback this year?
6. Information about children’s friends that Yvette gave you in the meeting that I recorded: how did you use that this term?
7. Last time you told me briefly about an email you had received from Yvette about a child with a photo of her reading to the group. How did you use this information?
8. How do you use the information from the different sources in term 1 in your classroom – information from preschool, from parents, your
own notes and observations during transition and your own formal assessments?

9. Is there anything else that we haven’t already covered that you would like to tell me about your experiences communicating with preschools?

Example interview guide for phase 3 interview with preschool educators

1. Could you please start by telling me about how things have gone for yourself and the children that started school this year?

2. How many children were there in total that went to school and how many schools did they go to?

3. Please tell me about communications that you have had with schools since the beginning of this year?

4. Is there anything else that we haven’t already covered that you would like to tell me about your experiences communicating with schools?
Appendix 4: Communication Diary Logs

Communication Diary Log for SCHOOLS – Instructions for completion

- On the sheets attached please record all communications received and sent by your school during weeks ______________, inclusive, with staff in preschools.
- ‘Preschools’ include preschool/kindergartens, childcare centres, family day care services and mobile children’s services.
- Please list each communication in a separate numbered row.
- Give details under each heading as follows:

  **Source** – Identify which preschool the communication involves and who the communication was from/to e.g. a teacher, director, administration staff member or another member of staff. Please do not record the actual name of the preschool or person involved. Use a code such as ‘preschool 1’. Please keep a record of this code for your own reference.

  **Sent/received** – Please tick if the communication was sent (initiated by you) or received

  **Topic** – State the purpose of the communication

  **Channel** – Please tick the category or categories which best describe the communication channel.

  **Length/Duration** – e.g. 2 pages, 5 minutes

  **Feedback** – Please tick whether the communication was one way and you were simply a recipient or sender, or two way in that you were expected to respond with your views or give information.

  **Evaluation** – Please rate how effective you feel each communication episode was from your perspective, using the following ratings:

    7 = Totally effective

    6 = Very effective

    5 = Quite effective

    4 = Neither effective nor ineffective

    3 = Quite ineffective

    2 = Very ineffective

    1 = Totally ineffective
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>ALERTS</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>CHANNEL</th>
<th>Length or Duration</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>eg. Director</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Sent</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>Photo call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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</table>
Communication Diary Log for PRESCHOOLS – Instructions for completion

- On the sheets attached please record all communications received and sent by your preschool during weeks _____________, inclusive, with staff in schools.
- Please list each communication in a separate numbered row.
- Give details under each heading as follows:

  **Source** – Identify which school the communication involves and who the communication was from/to e.g. a teacher, principal, administration staff member or another member of staff. Please do not record the actual name of the school or person involved. Use a code such as ‘school 1’. Please keep a record of this code for your own reference.

  **Sent/received** – Please tick if the communication was sent (initiated by you) or received

  **Topic** – State the purpose of the communication

  **Channel** – Please tick the category or categories which best describe the communication channel.

  **Length/Duration** – e.g. 2 pages, 5 minutes

  **Feedback** – Please tick whether the communication was one way and you were simply a recipient or sender, or two way in that you were expected to respond with your views or give information.

  **Evaluation** – Please rate how effective you feel each communication episode was from your perspective, using the following ratings:

    7 = Totally effective
    6 = Very effective
    5 = Quite effective
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    3 = Quite ineffective
    2 = Very ineffective
    1 = Totally ineffective
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>CHANNEL</th>
<th>Length or Duration</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person eg. Principal</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Sent</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>Phone call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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Appendix 5: Ethics approvals

University

24 February 2011

Kathryn Hopps
MSE

Dear Kathryn,

Thank you for the additional information forwarded in response to a request from the MSE Ethics Committee.

The Committee has now approved your proposal entitled “Inter-setting communication and the transition to school: Using communication audit methods to investigate communication between preschool and school educators” for a twelve month period beginning 24 February 2011. The protocol number issued with respect to the project is 303/2011/02. Please be sure to quote this number when responding to any request made by the Committee.

You must notify the Committee immediately should your research differ in any way from that proposed.

You are also required to complete a Progress Report form, which can be downloaded from www.csu.edu.au/research/forms/ehrc_annrep.doc, and return it on completion of your research or by 24 February 2012 if your research has not been completed by that date.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me by telephone 19413 or email lpiazza@csu.edu.au if you have any enquiries about this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Laura Piazza
Chair
MSE Ethics Committee
Direct Telephone: 19413
Email: lpiazza@csu.edu.au
Dear Miss Hopps   

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in New South Wales government schools entitled *Inter-setting communication and the transition to school: Main study*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. *You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.*

This approval will remain valid until 24/02/2012.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approval expires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn Hopps</td>
<td>03-03-2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in New South Wales government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school’s convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

Yours sincerely

Dr Max Smith  
Senior Manager  
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation  
*June 2011*
2011_001061

Miss Kathryn Hopps
2/93 Phillips Street
WODONGA 3690

Dear Miss Hopps

Thank you for your application of 8 March 2011 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian government schools and/or early childhood settings titled *Inter-setting communication and the transition to school: Main Study.*

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from school principals and/or centre directors and this is to be supported by the DEECD approved documentation and the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for its consideration before you proceed.

4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director.

5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in any publications arising from the research.

6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study’s indicative completion date.