

Appendix

This added material provides a background to the Pedagogies of Educational Transition (POET) international alliance in terms of ongoing research on educational transitions, the genesis of the alliance in the 2010 transition to school invited conference in Australia and the funding of the alliance. Details of the successful bid for funds to the Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES) and individual country schemes are presented. The overall purpose and vision for the POET alliance is explained in terms of the five major aims of the project.

A.1 Background to the POET International Alliance

The POET international alliance was originally developed by six experienced transition to school researchers from the five countries involved: Initial information about the people and countries involved and the early interactions among these researchers is provided in Sect. 1.4 of this book. Further detail concerning the development and activities of POET is provided in the remainder of this Appendix.

A.1.1 Transition to School Conference, Australia, 2010

In October 2010, 14 researchers from eight countries met in Albury, New South Wales (NSW), Australia, to explore current directions in transition research and how their own considerable bodies of research contributed to, and extended, these directions. The six future POET international alliance leaders were integral to this meeting. Funding for this meeting came from a number of sources, including Charles Sturt University, the Ian Potter Foundation, NSW Department of Education

and Training, Victorian Department of Children and Youth Services, South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

The researchers exchanged information with six higher-degree research students who were also investigating specific aspects of transition; 35 policymakers representing local, state and national organisations with direct responsibilities for transition to school; and approximately 100 practitioners, employed in both prior-to-school and early-years-of-school settings. These exchanges included written papers, roundtable discussions, written and oral critiques, informal conversations and input on current research from all participants.

One of the aims of this transition conference was to synthesise the wide range of transition research, policy and practice into a position statement that would, in turn, inform and guide future research, policy and practice in the area of transition to school (Dockett and Perry 2014; Educational Transitions and Change Research Group [ETC] 2011). Another of the aims was to produce an edited volume arising from the papers that the researchers had prepared for the conference (Perry et al. 2014). All of the future POET leaders have a chapter in this volume.

While the conference was held in Australia, the contributions of research participants from Australia, Finland, Hong Kong, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, the UK and the USA ensured that the discussions encompassed issues and approaches that were of international relevance and significance. In addition, the involvement of both practitioners and policymakers promoted a focus not only on the research but also the ways in which it was, and could be, interpreted and applied. The engagement of the policymakers and practitioners meant that the research discussions were tempered through their application to policy and practice. Collaborative involvement offered the opportunity for researchers, policymakers and practitioners to generate a common language around issues related to transition, consider ways in which research could influence policy and practice and create pathways such that issues of transition policy and practice could generate new approaches to research.

At this meeting, some of the European researchers had information about the Marie Curie IRSES (European Commission 2013), and they canvassed the possibility of an ongoing group of researchers continuing to meet to explore issues and challenges in educational transitions, if funds could be won from this scheme. Out of this idea grew the POET international alliance.

A.1.2 Funding the POET Alliance Activities

In 2010 and 2011, POET researchers in each of the member countries were (or were planning to be) involved in a number of high-profile, nationally funded research projects. While the six POET leaders led most of these projects, there were many other educational transition researchers from the five universities, including middle- and early-career researchers and doctoral candidates. The initial purpose of the proposed POET alliance was to bring all of these people together, not to do the research,

but to share, critique, improve and extend the research already being done. To do this, POET needed funding for staff exchanges, and the Marie Curie IRSES seemed appropriate, at least to fund the European researchers to travel to the Antipodes (Australia and New Zealand):

The Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme is an action that aims to strengthen research partnerships through staff exchanges and networking activities between European research organisations and research organisations from countries with which the European Union has an S&T [Science and Technology] agreement or is in the process of negotiating one. (European Commission 2013, p. 5)

The initial application to IRSES was made by the five organisations in the 2011 round. It sought funding over a 4-year period (2011–2015) for biannual exchanges among the POET members, firstly each year, in either Australia or New Zealand, and, later, around the time of the EECERA conference in one of the European partner countries. This initial proposal to IRSES was unsuccessful. However, useful feedback from the assessors and from each of the five universities gave the POET leaders enough confidence to try again in the 2012 round. After a great deal of work by all the leaders throughout 2011 and an intensive week in Glasgow in January, 2012, a new proposal was created. The statement of aims was expanded and sharpened since the previous proposal:

The five overarching project aims for POET are:

- To facilitate the development of diverse research skills and expertise among the researchers;
- To promote collaboration among early-career and established researchers around the topic of pedagogies of educational transition;
- To build sustainable research collaborations between the universities that will be maintained and extended, leading to proposals for major international research projects around early years education and educational transitions;
- To expand knowledge and understanding of the significance of educational transition for young children, their families and communities in national and international contexts; and
- To generate knowledge transfer among and between researchers, educators, other professionals and policymakers involved in educational transitions. (European Commission 2015)

The research projects being conducted in each of the five countries were to provide the content and context on which the exchanges would rely. They were drawn together through the placemat of themes shown in Fig. A.1.

The 2012 POET application was successful, and €222 600 became available to fund four exchanges, between 2013 and 2016, by the European POET members to either Australia or New Zealand. However, the project as approved required another four exchanges in Europe, for which IRSES could not be used. Additionally, there were requirements on the Australian and New Zealand POET members for ‘equivalent exchange quantum’ in Europe and for travel to each other’s exchanges over the 4 years.

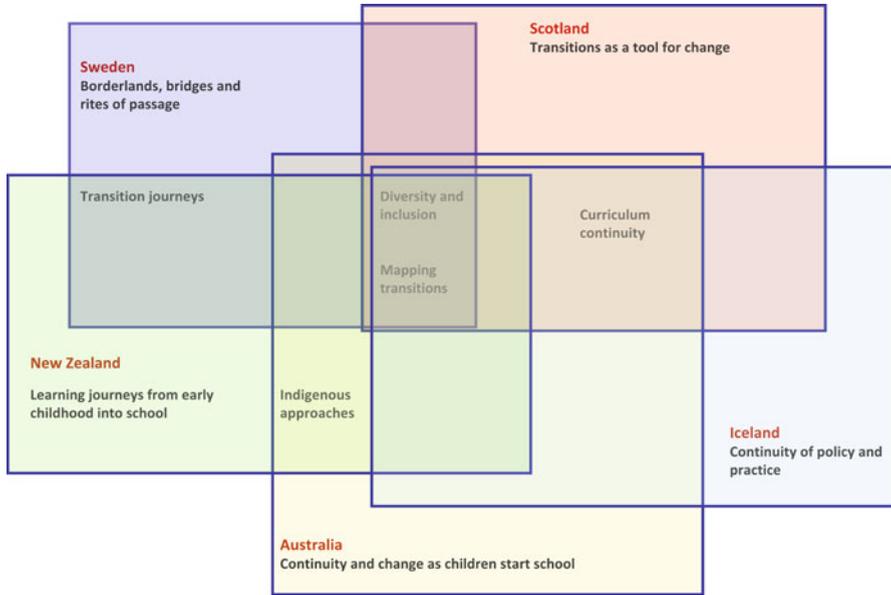


Fig. A.1 Themes guiding the POET work packages (European Commission 2015)

The New Zealand POET group was successful in gaining funding from the Royal Society of New Zealand. No such funding was available to the Australian group, so they have paid for their involvement in the POET exchanges through some support from the Charles Sturt University Global Alliance fund, along with judicious use of research funds. For each country, what is not covered by IRSES and other funds has been met from personal resources, sometimes requiring substantial supplementation. At the time of writing this book, the POET international alliance is nearing the completion of its funded exchange programme.

A.2 POET International Alliance Vision and Purpose

POET was built around detailed planning for each of the work packages (exchanges), with work between these work packages supplementing the intensive exchange periods (see Table A.1).

While intensive work was planned, instigated, undertaken and sometimes completed during the staff exchanges to each university, much was expected to happen between these exchanges:

The work packages included a series of reciprocal staff exchanges, each for periods of 1–3 months. Each work package involves experienced, early-career researchers and doctoral candidates from each of the partner institutions in:

Table A.1 Details of work packages (WP)

	Title	Host organisation	Period
WP1	Introduction	University of Strathclyde	July–October, 2012
WP2	Mapping transition research and practice	Charles Sturt University	March–June, 2013
WP3	Diversity and inclusion	Mälardalen University	July–October, 2013
WP4	Indigenous approaches	University of Waikato	March–June, 2014
WP5	Curriculum continuity	University of Iceland	July–October, 2014
WP6	Transition journeys	University of Waikato	March–June, 2015
WP7	Transitions as a tool for change	University of Strathclyde	July–October, 2015
WP8	Into the future	Charles Sturt University	February–April, 2016

- preliminary work on each country project as well as readings and specific activities to be shared during the staff exchange;
- staff exchanges including: research symposia reporting country projects; identification and discussion of issues; intensive skills development workshops around identified themes/processes; collaborative writing; reflection; theorising; and opportunities to engage with local practitioners, researchers and policymakers to promote both knowledge transfer and understanding of the local contexts of educational transitions; and
- follow-up work including: finalising projects from the work package/staff exchange; preparation and planning for the following work package; and collaborative writing. (European Commission 2015)

The overall vision and purpose for the POET alliance are represented through two underlying components: relational aspects and engagement with knowledge and understandings about educational transitions. These components interact with and complement each other, and within these lie the possibilities for sustainable research in this field.

Relational aspects of the POET collaboration are powerful in that they move beyond the momentary networking opportunities that can occur at traditional academic conferences or symposia. The biannual POET exchanges offer consistent and regular opportunities to build robust and meaningful relationships within and between country groups, at both professional and personal levels. One distinctive feature of the alliance was the bringing together of early-career and experienced researchers, which resulted in unique mentoring opportunities and sharing of expertise. As is common for any long-term project, the 4-year exchange programme also coincided with significant personal life changes for some participants, including doctorate completions, promotions, births and the loss of loved ones. The bond formed among the POET participants through these personal events over the exchange period has served to strengthen the collaboration overall.

Another important relational aspect of the POET alliance is purposeful networking and partnering with other stakeholders. Educational practitioners, policymakers and other professionals participated in various seminars, presentations and discussions with the POET country teams at each exchange. This provided significant opportunities to learn from and share with one another in an ongoing way. While

each country team has core members who participated in the majority of the POET exchanges, a benefit of meeting in a different location for each exchange was that peripheral researchers and students, who may have been unable to travel elsewhere, could also participate in POET activities in their respective universities.

The second underlying component of the vision and purpose for the POET alliance is engagement with knowledge and understandings about educational transitions. In many ways, this component occurred in a more focused manner because of the strength of the existing relationships between the alliance's team leaders and the establishment of solid relationships between the participants early in the exchange programme. The initial exchanges focused on becoming familiar with each country's context, the existing country projects and individual projects related to educational transitions. This sharing of rationales and ways of working, and the ensuing workshops and discussions, undoubtedly contributed to the development of diverse research skills and expertise among the POET exchange participants.

One of the benefits of the POET alliance has been having a wider, international foundation of expertise to provide input into country-based projects. This input includes critique and interrogation of individual work, as well as the capacity to pose and address questions at comparative level. Approximately halfway through the 4-year exchange programme, there was a distinct shift in focus, when it became evident that a depth of bonding and rigorous exploration of research projects had occurred. At this point, more substantial plans about moving collective knowledge and understandings about educational transitions forwards began to unfold, and this book comes as a result of this.

It is intended that ongoing networking and collaborative work in the area of educational transitions will continue among POET participants after the 4-year exchange programme is completed. The final chapter of this book, written by the POET country team leaders, outlines their vision for future directions for research in the area of educational transitions.

References

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