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# **Transition From Home Through Preschool to School**

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## **TRANSITION FROM HOME THROUGH PRESCHOOL TO SCHOOL**

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### **Abstract**

*Studies have shown that successful adjustment of children in preschool is critical in determining their future success in school (Ladd & Price, 1987). Issues relating to preschool adjustment have contributed to many problems faced by the child as well as the family and school (Ladd, 1990). As such a seamless transition from home to school is seen as crucial in ensuring the continuous development of the child cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally. Parent, preschool teachers and headmasters play an important role in easing the transition from home to preschool as well as from preschool to school. This study intends to find out to what extent Malaysian parents, preschool teachers and headmasters are aware of the importance of taking steps to help children in this transition and also their perception of the factors that lead to better and more successful transition. A questionnaire was designed to assess the extent to which parents, teachers and headmasters initiate efforts to cater for the child's transition and to assess their perception of the factors that enhance this transition. This questionnaire was pilot tested and validated before it was administered to randomly selected parents of preschool children in the Klang Valley in Malaysia. Findings from this study are expected to enhance Malaysian parents', preschool teachers' and headmasters' awareness of the need to prepare children for this transition and to better understand the factors that need to be taken into account when they plan for a seamless transition of the children to preschool and school.*

## **Introduction**

Children face considerable adjustment problems when they start preschool or school. These problems are mainly due to the new environment and demands that are imposed on them which require new competencies and abilities that children may be ill prepared for. Numerous studies have shown that these problems can be quite serious and can even have lasting consequences in later life (Ladd & Price, 1987). Hence, it is crucial to understand the factors that contribute to these problems and identify the people in the child's environment who can help the child overcome these drastic changes. This paper explores these factors by studying parents, preschool teachers and principals' efforts and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these factors in facilitating children's transition from home to preschool and school.

## **Rationale**

The increasing delinquency problems in both primary and secondary schools in Malaysia recently highlighted in the mass media and increasing difficulty teachers are facing in stemming this proliferation of indiscipline in schools, indicate the adjustment problems students face in the early years of schooling. The role and perceptions of parents, teachers and administrators may need to be studied to understand better how they can facilitate the adjustment better.

## **Significance of Study**

The findings of this study may throw more light on the problems children in Malaysia are facing in their transition to preschool and school, factors that contribute to these problems and how parents, teachers and principals can work together with the government to help in ensuring a seamless transition. The government spends considerable amount of money to ensure children are ready for preschool and school to ensure success in their academic career.

## **Research Questions**

Based on the issues highlighted above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What do parents do to facilitate their children's transition from
  - a) home to preschool
  - b) preschool to primary school?
2. What factors do parents perceive influence transition?
3. What do preschool teachers do to help in their students' transition from preschool to primary school?
4. What factors do preschool teachers perceive influence transition?
5. What do primary school headmasters do to help preschool children's transition to the primary school?
6. What factors do primary school headmasters perceive influence transition?

## **Review of Literature**

Recent studies on children's transition from home to preschool and school have highlighted several issues that demand attention. Several studies have highlighted the increasing instances of transition problems (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox, 2000) and children's inability to follow directions, work independently and achieve academically. Sudden change in environment, expectations, competencies required and demanded during entry to kindergarten are some of the reasons cited in recent research publications for the maladjustments of children in schools especially among children from low socioeconomic status (Gutman, Sameroff & Cole, 2003; McClellan & Kinsey, 1999; Kinsey, 2000). These maladjustments in the beginning years of formal education have been documented to result in underachievement in later years of schooling. Hence, concerted efforts have to be taken to prepare children through various approaches such as play (Berk & McClellan, 1997), parental involvement (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999) and interactive experiential learning to develop social skills and competence.

Many studies have focused on the factors that contribute to this lack of smooth transition to the preschool as well as school. Among them are parenting behaviors and marital relationships (Cox, 2004), lack of communications between preschool teachers and parents both before and during admission in preschool (BRIEFS, 2002), lack of the necessary home facilities, e.g. video and computer (Hanson, 1999; Rous et al., 1994) and several family characteristics like socio-economic status.

Preschool programs also play a crucial role in enhancing smooth transition of children to primary school. Programs that include parental involvement have been shown to facilitate effective transition. Parents' behaviour and beliefs and quality of marital relationships also appear to aid transition (Cox, 2004). This study intends to investigate further factors that Malaysian parents, preschool teachers and principals perceive from their experience that tend to facilitate transition and achievement during preschool and school.

## **Methodology**

In this study to investigate the factors influencing effective transition from home to preschool to school, a survey research design was employed to gather the necessary data and to answer the research questions formulated.

### **Sample**

The sample comprised parents of preschool children in 18 randomly selected preschools in government aided schools in the Malaysia, including the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. The selection of schools were designed such that both the rural and urban preschools are equally represented. Each preschool was given ten questionnaires titled Parent Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (PTFQ) to be filled out by parents of ten randomly selected preschool children.

Two preschool teachers were also administered a questionnaire called Preschool Teacher Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (PTTFQ) which comprised items relating to activities carried out by the teachers and the preschool to facilitate transition to primary school and their perception on the effectiveness of these activities.

Another questionnaire called Headmaster / Principal Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (HTFQ) was designed for preschool principals or headmasters to elicit information on how programs and activities were organized that facilitate transition. All respondents were also asked on their perceptions of factors that they think facilitate transition and also their opinion on whether their programs have been successful in facilitating transition.

### **Instruments**

A pilot study was carried out using two schools – one urban and one rural - to refine the instruments especially in relation to the suitability and the clarity of the items. The three instruments, namely, Parent Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (PTFQ), Preschool Teacher Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (PTTFQ) and Headmaster / Principal Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (HTFQ) were given to each preschool headmaster to be distributed to the relevant parties. Based on the feedback obtained, several items were rewritten to improve on clarity.

The resulting edited version of all three instruments were then sent to one urban and one rural school in the North, East, West and South zones in the Peninsula Malaysia and to the Eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak. A total of 177 completed questionnaires from parents, 45 from preschool teachers and 18 from primary school headmasters were received.

## Results and Discussion

Factors facilitating children’s transition from home to preschool and from preschool to primary school are explored from the perspective of parents, preschool teachers and primary school headmasters. Initial analyses involve analyses of what parents, preschool teachers and primary school headmaster do to facilitate children’s transition. These are explored in various areas, namely, materials provided, infrastructure put in place, commitment, and the activities engaged together with the children to familiarize them with the new environment they are going to.

Analyses of the data collected from Malaysian parents, preschool teachers and primary school headmasters were undertaken based on relevant research questions formulated above.

### Research Question 1a:

#### What do parents do to facilitate their children’s transition from home to preschool?

To answer this research question descriptive analyses were undertaken based on items 1 through 10 in Parent Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (PTFQ) (Appendix A). The number and percentages of parents who provide materials that facilitate transition are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Materials provided by parents to facilitate transition

	Freq buy book for child		Freq buy magazine for child		Freq buy educational CD for child		Freq buy comics for child		Freq buy computer software for child		Freq buy toys for child	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.1	12	7.9	5	3.0	30	20.1	9	5.8	10	6.3
Disagree	3	1.7	60	39.5	21	12.8	60	40.3	31	20.1	46	29.1
Agree	64	36.2	56	36.8	82	50.0	42	28.2	75	48.7	75	47.5
Strongly Agree	108	61.0	24	15.8	56	34.1	17	11.4	39	25.3	27	17.1
Total	177	100.0	152	100.0	164	100.0	149	100.0	154	100.0	158	100.0

To facilitate discussion, the counts and percentages for Strongly Disagree and Disagree are grouped together to indicate disagreement of the items presented in the questionnaire. The same is done for counts and percentages for Strongly Agree and Agree to indicate agreement of the items in the questionnaire. The results indicate that the majority of

Malaysian parents tend to provide books (97.2 %) followed by educational compact discs (84.1 %), computer software (74.0 %), educational toys (64.6 %) and magazines (52.6 %). The least commonly aid used are comics where only 39.6 % of the respondents use to help with enhancing their children’s transition.

Table 2 shows the infrastructure or facilities provided by Malaysian parents to facilitate transition of their children from home to preschool. The majority of the parents (98.3 %) tend to provide the necessary stationary required by their children to help in the transition. Almost an equal percentage feel that making books available (85.7%), providing space for their children to work in (84.9 %) and suitable furniture (82.1 %) will also facilitate transition. Although less parents feel that computer (77.5 %) and mini library (76.2 %) will help their children’s transition, the high percentage indicate that computer and a mini library are in fact perceived as contributing to their children’s transition.

Table 2: Materials provided by parents to facilitate transition

	Make computer available for child		Make books available for child		Make stationary available for child		Make mini library available for child		Make suitable furniture available for child		Make space available for child to learn	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	9	6.0	5	3.1	1	.6	5	3.4	3	1.9	2	1.3
Disagree	25	16.6	19	11.8	2	1.2	30	20.4	26	16.0	22	13.8
Agree	61	40.4	94	58.4	93	53.8	75	51.0	86	53.1	67	42.1
Strongly Agree	56	37.1	43	26.7	77	44.5	37	25.2	47	29.0	68	42.8
Total	151	100.0	161	100.0	173	100.0	147	100.0	162	100.0	159	100.0

Table 3 shows the commitment shown by Malaysian parents to facilitate transition of their children. The percentages indicate that most parents teach their children to write (100.0%), read (99.5%) and count (98.2%) with the hope that this will aid smooth transition from home to preschool. An equally high percentage of the parents (97.4 %) feel that spending more time with the child is a good way of facilitating transition. Others feel that choosing the right kindergarten (86.4 %) and watching over the child during transition and understanding its needs (71.9 %) are important ways of helping the transition

Table 3: Commitment shown by parents to facilitate transition

	Watch over child		Help child count		Help child write		Help child read		Spend time with child		Choose best kindergarten for child	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	8	5.2%	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	.6%	2	1.2%
Disagree	35	22.9%	3	1.8%	0	.0%	1	.6%	3	1.8%	20	12.3%
Agree	82	53.6%	64	37.4%	64	37.0%	56	32.4%	85	50.0%	81	50.0%
Strongly Agree	28	18.3%	104	60.8%	109	63.0%	116	67.1%	81	47.6%	59	36.4%
Total	153	100.0%	171	100.0%	173	100.0%	173	100.0%	170	100.0%	162	100.0%

Table 4 shows the activities engaged by parents and their children that they hope will facilitate transition. Most parents (93.5 %) take their children to bookshops to help them familiarize themselves with books and the learning environment. About 87.4% take their children to exhibitions to expose their children to books and other related activities. A similar percentage (86.0%) tend to take their children to the playground to help their children get used to other children and to facilitate the development of social and communicational skills. A similar percentage of parents prefer to take their children to the public library (83.0%). However, less parents tend to see visits to the museums (71.7 %) and zoo (63.6 %) as equally important in facilitating transition from home to preschool.

Table 4: Common activities undertaken by parents with their children to aid transition

	Take child to zoo		Take child to muzium		Take child to book shop		Take child to book exhibition		Take child to playground		Take child to public library	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	7	4.5%	6	3.9%	1	.6%	1	.6%	3	1.8%	4	2.6%
Disagree	49	31.8%	37	24.3%	10	6.0%	19	11.9%	20	12.2%	22	14.4%
Agree	77	50.0%	88	57.9%	89	53.0%	95	59.7%	112	68.3%	88	57.5%
Strongly Agree	21	13.6%	21	13.8%	68	40.5%	44	27.7%	29	17.7%	39	25.5%
Total	154	100.0%	152	100.0%	168	100.0%	159	100.0%	164	100.0%	153	100.0%

The above findings indicate that Malaysian parents tend to provide books, stationary and take their children to bookshops and exhibitions to help their children ease into the preschool environment. They also read to their children, and teach them the basic writing and reading skills to help facilitate this transition.

**Research Question 1b:**

**What do parents do to facilitate their children’s transition from preschool to primary school?**

To answer this research question, similar descriptive statistical analyses were also undertaken. The results are shown in Tables 5 through 8.

Table 5 shows that in preparation for Year One at the primary school, 99.4 % of Malaysian parents tend to get the necessary books for their children to facilitate transition than other things. They also tend to get educational CDs (84.9 %) and other relevant computer softwares (79.6 %) that the child may use to familiarize itself with the teaching and learning situation in the classroom. Parents tend to use less educational toys (60.5 %), magazines (58.0 %) and children comic books (41.8 %) in their children’s familiarization process

Table 5: Materials parents provide to aid transition to primary school

	Make book available for child		Make magazine available for child		Make educational CD available for child		Make comics available for child		Make computer software available for child		Make toys available for child	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	9	5.7%	4	2.5%	26	17.2%	5	3.2%	16	10.5%
Disagree	1	.6%	57	36.3%	20	12.6%	62	41.1%	27	17.2%	44	28.9%
Agree	56	32.2%	67	42.7%	77	48.4%	46	30.5%	76	48.4%	68	44.7%
Strongly Agree	117	67.2%	24	15.3%	58	36.5%	17	11.3%	49	31.2%	24	15.8%
Total	174	100.0%	157	100.0%	159	100.0%	151	100.0%	157	100.0%	152	100.0%

As for infrastructure that parents provide to facilitate transition from preschool to primary school, the descriptive analyses undertaken (Table 6) shows that the majority of the parents tend to provide their children with the relevant stationary (98.6 %). They feel that providing space for their children to work in (89.5 %), relevant books (86.7 %) and furniture (84.0 %) are also equally important. Just for the transition from home to preschool, parents also think computers (76.2 %) and mini library (75.5 %) are also important for transition from preschool to school.

Table 6: Infrastructure parents provide to facilitate their children's transition to primary school

	Make computers available for child		Make books available for child		Make stationary available for child		Make mini library available for child		Make furniture available for child		Make space for learning activities for child	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	7	4.6%	1	.6%	0	.0%	3	2.0%	1	.6%	1	.6%
Disagree	29	19.2%	20	12.7%	2	1.2%	34	22.5%	25	15.3%	16	9.9%
Agree	49	32.5%	91	58.0%	91	53.2%	69	45.7%	84	51.5%	74	45.7%
Strongly Agree	66	43.7%	45	28.7%	78	45.6%	45	29.8%	53	32.5%	71	43.8%
Total	151	100.0%	157	100.0%	171	100.0%	151	100.0%	163	100.0%	162	100.0%

With respect to commitment shown by Malaysian parents in aiding transition from preschool to primary school, the results show that the majority of the parents studied tend to check their children's work (98.8 %) or get the older siblings to help the child adapt to the new environment (95.7 %). Almost an equal percentage tend to choose good schools (92.1 %) that have many facilities (98.2 %) and located near their homes (95.7 %). Next on their priority list appears to be schools where the older siblings are also schooling (86.8 %) and school which has a suitable kindergarten (84.3 %). Choosing a school where the parents know the teachers (72.4 %) also appears to quite important for these parents. At the bottom of their list appears to be schools where the child has many friends (68.3 %).

Table 7a: Commitment shown by parents to help facilitate their children's transition to primary school

	Choose school near home		Choose good school for child		Choose school with teachers I know		Choose school with siblings		Choose school with many child's friends	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	1	.6	1	.6	4	2.6	1	.7	4	2.8
Disagree	6	3.7	12	7.3	38	25.0	19	12.5	42	29.0
Agree	69	42.6	73	44.5	74	48.7	85	55.9	77	53.1
Strongly Agree	86	53.1	78	47.6	36	23.7	47	30.9	22	15.2
Total	162	100.0	164	100.0	152	100.0	152	100.0	145	100.0

Table 7b: Commitment shown by parents to help facilitate their children's transition to primary school

	Choose school with many facilities		Choose school with suitable kindergarten		Encourage older sibling to help child		Always check my child's work	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	3	1.8	23	15.6	7	4.3	2	1.2
Agree	86	52.8	79	53.7	49	30.1	63	38.4
Strongly Agree	74	45.4	45	30.6	107	65.6	99	60.4
Total	163	100.0	147	100.0	163	100.0	164	100.0

Parents were also surveyed on the activities that they engage in to facilitate their children's transition from preschool to school (Table 8). The descriptive analyses indicate that parents tend to take their children to bookshops (94.5 %), exhibition (86.8 %), public library (85.7 %) and playground (83.1 %) to familiarize their children with the school environment. The less preferred activity appears to be taking the child to the museum (70.6 %) and zoo (62.0 %).

Table 8: Activities parents engage in with their children to facilitate their children's transition to primary school

	Take child to zoo		Take child to muzium		Take child to book shop		Take child to book exhibition		Take child to play ground		Take child to public library	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	8	5.5%	6	4.0%	2	1.2%	3	1.9%	3	1.9%	4	2.6%
Disagree	47	32.4%	38	25.3%	7	4.3%	18	11.3%	24	15.1%	18	11.7%
Agree	75	51.7%	86	57.3%	89	54.6%	86	54.1%	106	66.7%	81	52.6%
Strongly Agree	15	10.3%	20	13.3%	65	39.9%	52	32.7%	26	16.4%	51	33.1%
Total	145	100.0%	150	100.0%	163	100.0%	159	100.0%	159	100.0%	154	100.0%

## Research Question 2:

### What factors do parents perceive influence transition?

To answer this research question, the results obtained in Tables 1 through 8 were analyzed. Based on the assumption that parents tend to do what they perceive as most effective in helping their children's transition, it appears that Malaysian parents perceive that providing the appropriate and relevant books and stationary help children adapt better in their preschool environment. Based on the high percentage of parents involved in reading to their children and teaching their children how to write, it appears that

Malaysian parents perceive that this will ease transition and also give an edge to their children when it comes to understanding the lessons taught at the preschool.

The parents also perceive that taking their children to bookshops and exhibitions tend to help their children adapt to the learning environment when they enter preschool.

**Research Question 3:**

**What do preschool teachers do to help in their students’ transition from preschool to primary school?**

To answer this research question, items relating to the efforts undertaken by preschool teachers in helping students’ transition were analyzed descriptively. The first section of the questionnaire elicits information on how preschool teachers interact to facilitate transition (Tables 9a & 9b). The second set of items relate to curriculum implementation by teachers (Tables 10a & 10b) while the third set of items concern preschool teachers’ organization of social activities (Table 11). The following set of items relate to efforts undertaken by preschool teachers to facilitate emotional stability of the children during transition. The last item in this section relates to efforts undertaken by preschool teachers to enhance the level of communication in their teaching and learning processes.

Tables 9a and 9b show that preschool teachers tend to engage in a number of activities that are aimed at ensuring children’s transition from preschool to primary school. These activities where almost all teachers appear to do are striving hard to achieve the kindergarten’s objective of offering total development to every child (100.0 %), cooperate with other staff (100.0 %), understand students problems and challenges (100.0 %), evaluate children’s level of adaptation (100.0 %) and strategize for children’s adaptation (100.0 %). Slightly less in percentages but equally important activities are cooperating with parents (97.8 %), resource persons (97.8 %) and community (93.3 %)

Table 9a: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ preparation for transition

	Achieve Objective Kindergarten		Cooperate with staff		Cooperate with parents		Cooperate with community	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	0	.0	0	.0	1	2.2	3	6.7
Agree	16	35.6	9	20.0	13	28.9	27	60.0
Strongly Agree	29	64.4	36	80.0	31	68.9	15	33.3
Total	45	100.0	45	100.0	45	100.0	45	100.0

Table 9b: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ preparation for transition

	Cooperate with resource person		Understand students challenges		Evaluate Children adaptation		Strategize for children adaptation	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	1	2.2	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Agree	23	51.1	20	44.4	20	44.4	18	40.0
Strongly Agree	21	46.7	25	55.6	25	55.6	27	60.0
Total	45	100.0	45	100.0	45	100.0	45	100.0

On efforts taken by preschool teachers in relation to curriculum implementation (Table 10a and 10b), the descriptive analyses indicate that all preschool teachers tend to avoid placing any form of stress on the children (100.0 %), by giving positive experiences (100.0 %) and conducting child centered lessons (100.0 %). All preschool teachers also tend to measure children’s potential and interest (100.0 %) and design their instruction based on the developmentally sound practices (100.0 %). These preschool teachers also tend to tailor their lessons based on culture and experiences (95.4 %) and also try their best to structure the lessons quite similar to primary school curriculum (88.6 %). About 78.5 % of these teachers also indicate that they try not to teach materials that these children will learn in their primary school so as to avoid boredom (78.5 %).

Table 10a: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ curriculum implementation to aid transition

	Based on Primary curriculum		No overlap with KBSR tadika		No stress on children		Measure children potential and interest	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	2	4.5	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Disagree	3	6.8	9	21.4	0	.0	0	.0
Agree	24	54.5	19	45.2	14	31.8	12	28.6
Strongly Agree	15	34.1	14	33.3	30	68.2	30	71.4
Total	44	100.0	42	100.0	44	100.0	42	100.0

Table 10b: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ curriculum implementation to aid transition

	Based on development based practices		Child centered		Based on culture and experience		Give positif experience	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	0	.0	0	.0	2	4.5	0	.0
Agree	9	20.0	14	31.8	18	40.9	10	22.7
Strongly Agree	36	80.0	30	68.2	24	54.5	34	77.3
Total	45	100.0	44	100.0	44	100.0	44	100.0

Preschool teachers also engage in and organize social activities to facilitate their students’ transition to primary school. Table 11 shows that all teachers organize religious events (100.0 %) and the majority of them organize cultural events (95.6 %), national events like Merdeka or Teachers’ Day celebrations (95.5 %), sports (95.5 %), Art competition (95.4 %) and study tours (95.1 %).

Table 11: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ social activity organization to aid transition

	Organize study tours		Organize sports		Organize arts competition		Organize cultural events		Organize national events		Organize religious events	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	2	4.9	2	4.5	2	4.5	2	4.4	2	4.5		
Agree	25	61.0	19	43.2	17	38.6	26	57.8	12	27.3	16	36.4
Strongly Agree	14	34.1	23	52.3	25	56.8	17	37.8	30	68.2	28	63.6
Total	41	100.0	44	100.0	44	100.0	45	100.0	44	100.0	44	100.0

In relation to ensuring emotional stability and adaptation to the new environment, preschool teachers also undertake several measures as shown in Table 12. All teachers tend to interact with the children in such a way so as to ensure emotional stability among the preschoolers in the classroom, field and library (100.0 %). Toilet facilities and accessibility are also placed in areas that facilitate children’s development (97.7 %). Study tours were also conducted to facilitate emotional maturity (96.6 %). Other areas where children are taught how to react emotionally include the canteen (95.4 %) where children are exposed to situations where they need to understand other children’s emotions and feelings.

Table 12: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ efforts to ensure children’s emotional stability during transition

	Ensure emotion via studytour		Ensure emotion classroom environment		Ensure emotion canteen environment		Ensure emotion field		Ensure emotion toilet		Ensure emotion library	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	1	2.3	0	.0	2	4.5	0	.0	1	2.3	0	.0
Agree	21	48.8	13	28.9	18	40.9	20	45.5	18	40.9	20	45.5
Strongly Agree	21	48.8	32	71.1	24	54.5	24	54.5	25	56.8	24	54.5
Total	43	100.0	45	100.0	44	100.0	44	100.0	44	100.0	44	100.0

Preschool teachers also emphasize on enhancing communication during the teaching and learning processes in their lessons. Table 13 shows that 93.3 % of the Malaysian preschool teachers surveyed indicate that there is greater emphasis on communication within the teaching and learning environment to facilitate the transition process. This is seen a way of alleviating any potential problems relating to transition that may arise.

Table 13: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ efforts to enhance communication with the teaching and learning process in primary school

	Emphasise communication skills	
	Count	%
Disagree	3	6.7
Agree	19	42.2
Strongly Agree	23	51.1
Total	45	100.0

**Research Question 4:**

**What factors do preschool teachers perceive influence transition?**

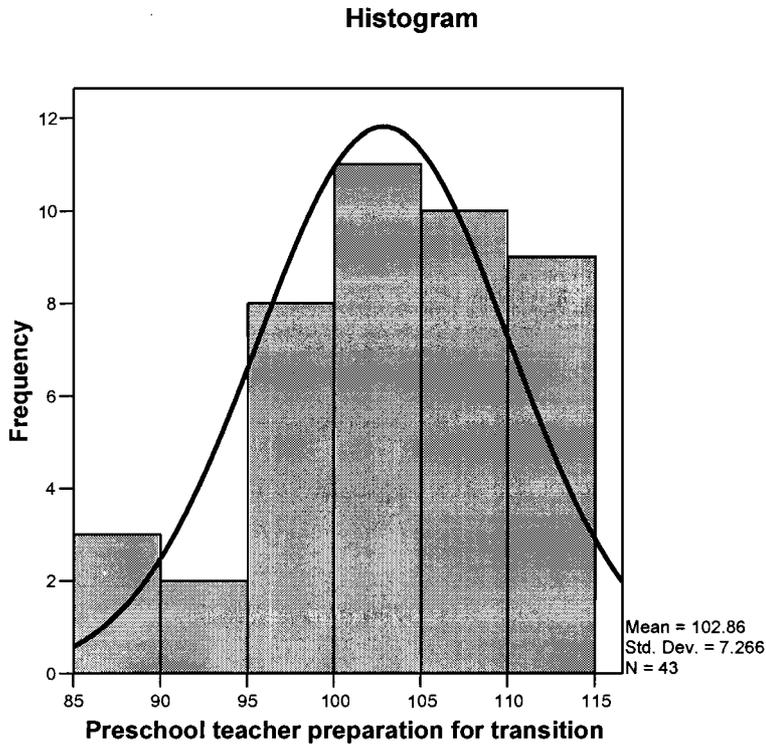
A measure of preschool teacher’s preparedness for facilitating transition was obtained by adding the scores of items relating to what they have done to ensure smooth transition. The items added were items 2 through 13 in the Preschool Teacher Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (PTTFQ).

Table 14: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers’ preparedness in facilitating transition

Preschool teacher preparation for transition		
N	Valid	
		43
Mean		102.86
Std. Deviation		7.266
Skewness		-.667
Std. Error of Skewness		.361
Kurtosis		.099
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.709
Minimum		86
Maximum		115
Percentiles	25	99.00
	50	104.00
	75	107.00

The distribution of the scores obtained for Preschool Teacher Preparedness is shown in Figure 1. The distribution is approximately normal and measures of skewness and kurtosis (Table 14) obtained are within the limits of normality, that is between +2 and -2.

Graph 1: Distribution of scores of preschool teacher preparedness for student transition



Based on the quartile scores obtained (Table 14), the preschool teachers were grouped based on level of preparedness. Preschool teachers with scores above 107 were classified as having high level of preparedness while those with scores between 106 and 100 were classified as having average level and those with scores below 99 are classified as having low level of preparedness. These three groups of preschool teachers were then compared on their perception of the factors that they perceive as contributing most to transition.

Table 15 shows the descriptive statistics of the factors preschool teachers perceive as important in aiding transition. When the percentages of those who strongly agree are compared, it appears that most preschool teachers (85.0 %) generally feel that good relationship between parents and teachers is vital in facilitating transition. This is followed by having good class environment (83.3 %) and good class facilities (82.1 %). The least important factor as perceived by these preschool teachers is having good field or outdoor facilities like the suitable sports equipment and facilities.

Table 15: Descriptive statistics of preschool teachers' perception of factors facilitating transition

	Adapt because good relationship		Adapt because good class environment		Adapt because good field facilities		Adapt because good class facilities	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Agree	6	15.0	6	16.7	15	41.7	7	17.9
Strongly Agree	34	85.0	30	83.3	21	58.3	32	82.1
Total	40	100.0	36	100.0	36	100.0	39	100.0

To answer the research question as to which factors preschool teachers perceive as important in facilitating transition, several factors indicated by preschool teachers were compared among preschool teachers with high, average and low level of preparedness. The aim was to find out what factors preschool teachers who engage most in transition think as important for transition compared to preschool teachers who engage less in facilitating transition.

Since the factors were non-parametric in nature, the non-parametric statistical analysis Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA was used. The results are presented in Tables 16a and 16b.

Table 16a: Mean Ranks of transition facilitating factors as perceived by preschool teachers

		<b>Ranks</b>	
	Grouped based on Preschool	N	Mean Rank
Adapt because good relationship	Low Presch Teacher Preparedness	13	18.12
	Average Presch Teacher Preparedness	19	22.34
	High Presch Teacher Preparedness	11	26.00
	Total	43	
Adapt because good class environment	Low Presch Teacher Preparedness	13	17.31
	Average Presch Teacher Preparedness	19	22.74
	High Presch Teacher Preparedness	11	26.27
	Total	43	
Adapt because good field facilities	Low Presch Teacher Preparedness	13	16.62
	Average Presch Teacher Preparedness	19	22.74
	High Presch Teacher Preparedness	11	27.09
	Total	43	
Adapt because good class facilities	Low Presch Teacher Preparedness	13	14.23
	Average Presch Teacher Preparedness	19	25.16
	High Presch Teacher Preparedness	11	25.73
	Total	43	

Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA comparisons of the factors perceived by preschool teachers as important for transition to occur show that there are significant differences among the three groups of preschool teachers on their perception of good class facilities only ( $\chi^2 = 12.26; p < .05$ ) but not on good relationship, class environment and field facilities (Table 16b). The mean ranks (Table 16a) indicate that preschool teachers who have high and average level of preparedness for transition of their students tend to perceive that good class facilities as vital for facilitating transition compared to preschool teachers with low level preparedness.

Table 16b: Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA comparisons of factors perceived as vital for transition by high, average and low level of preschool teachers’ preparedness

	Adapt because good relationship	Adapt because good class environment	Adapt because good field facilities	Adapt because good class facilities
Chi-Square	5.183	4.825	5.093	12.259
df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.075	.090	.078	.002

### Research Question 5:

#### What do primary school headmasters do to help in preschool children’s transition to the primary school?

To answer this research question, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data obtained from the survey involving primary school headmasters. The results are shown in Tables 17a through 17c. The results show that all headmasters tend to organize suitable activities including competitions and cultural activities with the preschool children (100.0 %). All headmasters also use various strategies to contact parents to help with this transition (100.0 %). They engage in discussions with parents (94.4 %), PTA (94.4 %) and preschool principals (94.5 %) to solve the children’s problems. They also organize sports with preschools (94.4 %) to help develop familiarity and smoothen transition. Some headmasters (83.3 %) tend to visit preschools to familiarize themselves of the environment these children come from. They also encourage parents to register their children a week earlier to help children familiarize themselves with the new environment without the older children there to create more anxiety and stress (83.3 %). The results also show that primary school headmaster also tend to involve parents in all activities organized by the primary school, for example, parents are also invited to accompany the children to the zoo (83.4 %).

Table 17a: Primary school headmasters’ activities to facilitate children’s transition

	Visit primary school		Sports with preschool		Competition with presch		Cultural activity with presch	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	1	5.6%	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%
Disagree	2	11.1%	1	5.6%	0	.0%	0	.0%
Agree	7	38.9%	11	61.1%	10	55.6%	10	55.6%
Strongly Agree	8	44.4%	6	33.3%	8	44.4%	8	44.4%
Total	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%

Table 17b: Primary school headmasters’ activities to facilitate children’s transition

	Suitable activities		Discuss problem with parents		Discuss problem with principal		Discuss with PTA		Provide Facilities	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	0	.0%	1	5.6%	1	5.6%	1	5.6%	1	5.6%
Agree	10	55.6%	15	83.3%	12	66.7%	11	61.1%	13	72.2%
Strongly Agree	8	44.4%	2	11.1%	5	27.8%	6	33.3%	4	22.2%
Total	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%

Table 17c: Primary school headmasters’ activities to facilitate children’s transition

	Report a week earlier		Ask parents to help visit zoo		Help parents design activities		Various approaches contact parents		Share information with parents	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	3	16.7%	3	16.7%	2	11.1%	0	.0%	1	5.6%
Agree	8	44.4%	10	55.6%	11	61.1%	11	61.1%	12	66.7%
Strongly Agree	7	38.9%	5	27.8%	5	27.8%	7	38.9%	5	27.8%
Total	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%	18	100.0%

### Research Question 6:

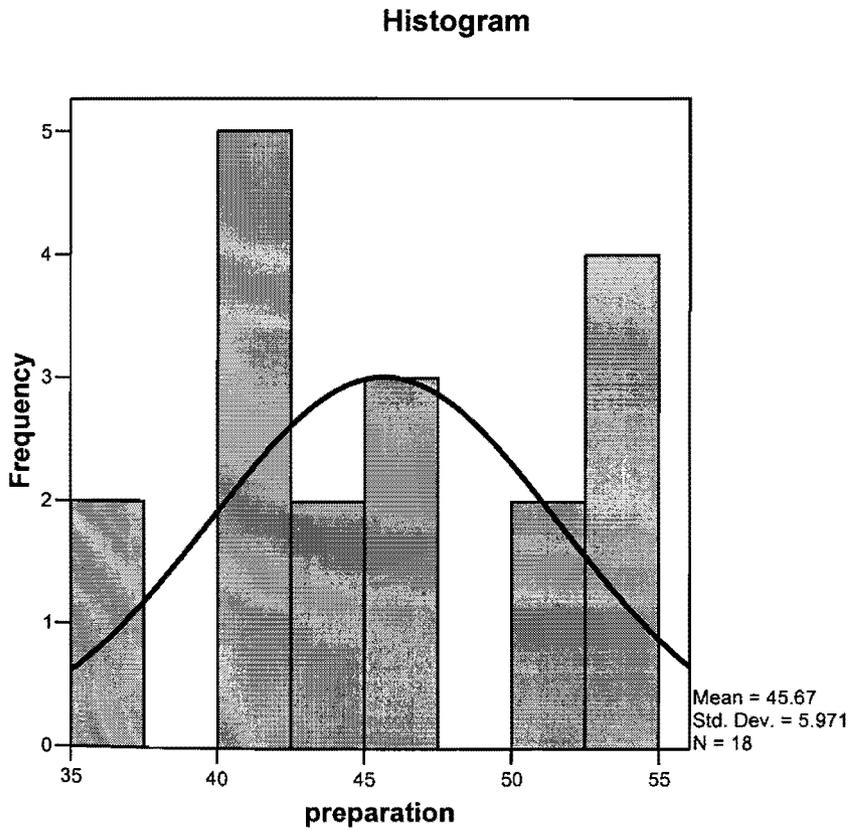
#### What factors do primary school headmasters perceive that influence transition?

To answer research question 6, the level of preparedness of the primary school headmasters was computed by adding the items relating to efforts taken by these headmasters in facilitating transition. These are items 7 through 12 in the Headmaster Transition Facilitation Questionnaire (HTFQ). The results of descriptive analyses are shown in

Table 18: Descriptive statistics of headmasters' preparedness for children's transition

preparation		
N	Valid	18
Mean		45.67
Std. Deviation		5.971
Skewness		.189
Std. Error of Skewness		.536
Kurtosis		-1.135
Std. Error of Kurtosis		1.038
Minimum		36
Maximum		55
Percentiles	25	41.00
	50	44.00
	75	51.50

Graph 2: Distribution of scores of headmaster preparedness for student transition



To answer this research question, Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA comparisons were undertaken to compare the factors headmasters say contributed to their transition. The perception of high, average and low preparation by headmasters relating to the factors, namely, environment, facilities, relationship and infrastructure were compared. Since the factors were non-parametric in nature, the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA was used. The results are presented in Table18.

The findings indicate that the adaptation to the good environment ( $\chi^2 = 7.15; p < .05$ ) and good facilities in the classroom ( $\chi^2 = 7.15; p < .05$ ) have significantly contributed to their students' transition. The Mean Ranks indicate that headmasters with the high level of preparation tend differ significantly from headmasters with average and low level of preparation in their perception that good environment and facilities contribute to easier transition.

There are no significant differences in headmasters' perception that good relationship between teachers and parents facilitate transition ( $\chi^2 = 5.03; p > .05$ ). All three groups of headmasters feel that good relationship between teachers and parents are equally important for transition.

There are also no significant differences in headmasters' perception that good infrastructure at school such as a field, equipment and effective instruction facilitate transition ( $\chi^2 = 5.51; p > .05$ ). This indicates that all three groups of headmasters feel that good infrastructure at school tend to facilitate transition.

Table 19a: Kruskal Wallis One-way Analysis of factors facilitating transition based on headmasters’ perception

**Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA Comparisons of Headmasters with Low (1), Average (2) and High (3) Preparation of Transition**

	Preparation group	N	Mean Rank
Adapting because good relationship	1	7	9.21
	2	5	6.60
	3	6	12.25
	Total	18	
Adapting because good environment	1	7	8.71
	2	5	6.20
	3	6	13.17
	Total	18	
Adapting because good field	1	7	9.07
	2	5	6.20
	3	6	12.75
	Total	18	
Adapting because good facilities in classroom	1	7	8.71
	2	5	6.20
	3	6	13.17
	Total	18	

Table 19b: Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA Comparisons of Factors Perceived as Vital for Transition by High, Average and Low Level of Headmaster Preparedness

**Kruskal- Wallis One-way Anova Comparisons of Factors Contributing to Transition<sup>a,b</sup>**

	Adapting because good relationship	Adapting because good environment	Adapting because good field	Adapting because good facilities in classroom
Chi-Square	5.028	7.151	5.510	7.151
df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.081	.028	.064	.028

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Preparation group

The findings indicate that headmasters, who make high level of preparations for transition, tend to perceive that good environment and good facilities in the classroom tend to facilitate transition better than good relationships with parents and having good facilities in the school.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that Malaysian parents enhance transition to preschool to school by providing books and stationary for their children to familiarize themselves. Visits to bookshops, playgrounds and exhibitions are seen to facilitate cognitive and socio-emotional development. Parental involvement includes teaching basic reading and teaching skills. Parents perceive taking their children to bookshops and exhibitions tend to help them prepare their children for preschool. Malaysian preschool teachers engage in activities that tend to facilitate children’s adaptation in preschool and smooth transition to school by organizing relevant activities and monitoring children’s progress that also tend to facilitate overall development of the child. Preschool teachers perceive good classroom facilities as an important factor to enhance transition to school compared to good relationship with parents and outdoor facilities. Primary school headmasters show high level of preparedness and also tend to engage in activities that tend to facilitate children’s adaptation in school. However, they perceive good relationship and constant communications with parents, stimulating school environment and better classroom and outdoor facilities as important factors that tend to facilitate transition.

## **Recommendations**

Further investigations are recommended to probe further via indepth interviews other factors relating to parents, preschool teachers and school headmaster that also tend to facilitate transition. Factors like socioeconomic status, parents’ beliefs and marital relationships may also have important effects on children’s transition to preschool and primary school.

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