




Voices of change: Principal stakeholder experiences in a participatory approach to educational transitions

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Abstract

The experiences and participation of all individuals involved in educational transitions are key to fully understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder these processes. Furthermore, these experiences can serve as a driving force for the continuous improvement of transition processes and related aspects at both the school and community levels. The aim of this research is to understand and transform educational transition processes using a participatory action research method. The study was conducted in a primary and secondary school in Gipuzkoa over three academic years, involving all children participating in educational transitions, as well as their families and teachers. Data were collected through questionnaires for families, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and participatory techniques to engage the children. The findings from the second research cycle revealed that the design of an action plan to improve transitions created new structures for teacher coordination and led to changes in school culture, emphasising the importance of listening to children and their families when designing improvement actions.

Keywords: educational transitions; students' voices; inclusive education; participatory action research

Resum. *Veus del canvi: experiències dels protagonistes en un enfocament participatiu de les transicions educatives*

Les experiències i la participació de totes les persones implicades en les transicions educatives són essencials per identificar els factors que les faciliten o dificulten, i poden ser un motor de millora contínua en l'àmbit escolar i comunitari. Aquesta recerca té com a objectiu comprendre i transformar els processos de transició educativa mitjançant un mètode de recerca-acció participativa. L'estudi es va dur a terme en un col·legi i un institut públics de Guipúscoa durant tres cursos acadèmics, i es va implicar infants, famílies i professors en els processos transició. Es van recollir dades a través de qüestionaris a les famílies, entrevistes semiestructurades als professors i tècniques participatives amb els infants. En les conclusions del segon cicle de recerca es va destacar que el disseny d'un pla d'acció va crear noves estructures per a la coordinació docent i va provocar canvis en la cultura escolar; també es va subratllar la importància d'escoltar els infants i les famílies en el disseny de millores per als processos de transició.

Paraules clau: transicions educatives; veus dels infants; inclusió educativa; recerca-acció participativa

Resumen. *Voces del cambio: experiencias de los protagonistas en un enfoque participativo de las transiciones educativas*

Las experiencias y la participación de todas las personas implicadas en las transiciones educativas son clave para identificar los factores que las facilitan o dificultan. Además, estas experiencias impulsan la mejora continua tanto en el ámbito escolar como en el comunitario. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo comprender y transformar los procesos de transición educativa mediante el método de investigación-acción participativa. Llevado a cabo en un colegio e instituto públicos de Guipúzcoa durante tres cursos académicos, el estudio involucró al alumnado, a sus familias y al profesorado en los procesos de transición. Se recogieron datos a través de cuestionarios a familias, entrevistas al profesorado y técnicas participativas con el alumnado. Las conclusiones del segundo ciclo de investigación revelaron que el diseño de un plan de acción para mejorar las transiciones creó nuevas estructuras para la coordinación de los profesores y provocó cambios en la cultura escolar; también se puso de relieve la importancia de escuchar al alumnado y a sus familias a la hora de diseñar acciones de mejora.

Palabras clave: transiciones educativas; voces del alumnado; inclusión educativa; investigación-acción participativa

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1. Introduction

Educational transitions are key changes in children's academic journey. They include vertical transitions (early childhood education (ECE) to primary education (PE), and primary education to secondary education (SE)); and horizontal transitions between different educational settings (Dockett et al., 2017). Educational transitions are "multiple and multidimensional" processes, defined as "an ongoing process of psychological, social and educational adaptations due to changes in context, relationships and identity, which can be both exciting and worrying and may require ongoing support" (Jindal-Snape et al., 2021, p. 3).

Individuals may have different needs to ensure their experience is a positive one, so educational transitions require appropriate environments and meaningful relationships for all children and families involved, along with articulate community-level responses (Sierra & Parrilla, 2019). The literature suggests common actions for facilitating transitions and managing children's emotions, including both formal and informal preparatory actions (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008). Authors such as Petriwskyj et al. (2014) and Azorín-Abellán (2018) note the need to address school transitions using an inclusive approach, and to promote consensus and coordinated actions.

At the root of all these actions lies continuity, defined as 'experiences and learning building on what has gone before' (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 133) and considered a key element in the process. Ensuring developmental, contextual and structural continuity is usually challenging due to cultural, organisational and philosophical differences between settings (Boyle et al., 2021). For this reason, prioritising coordination and meaningful relationships between stakeholders and ensuring clear communication and information are considered essential (Packer et al., 2021; Strand, 2019).

Studies show that even very young children are reliable informants about their own experiences during educational transitions (Stiehl et al., 2023). However, students' voices remain largely absent from both research and practice in this area (van Rens et al., 2018). Listening to children is essential, not only to gain context-specific insights but also to support their agency and rights (Bagnall & Jindal-Snape, 2023; Lundy, 2007). Acknowledging children as active participants should not exclude adult perspectives but rather challenge adult-centric approaches (González-Moreira et al., 2023).

Likewise, family insights play a key role, shaping children's social and emotional development, although families often experience greater anxiety regarding school transitions than children do, which influences their perceptions (Puccioni et al., 2020). Teacher perspectives are similarly essential, as teachers are well-positioned to identify factors that support or hinder school transitions (Strand, 2019).

School transitions are fundamentally characterized by change (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). As Sagardia-Iturria (2025, p. 30) notes, school transitions involve various external changes that occur between different phases of compulsory education (Table 1).

Table 1. External changes between educational phases

	Early Childhood Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education
Curriculum (objectives, skills, contents, methodologies and evaluation system)	Global and based on play	Work-based curriculum	Specialised curriculum Subject-specific learning
Pedagogical approach	Holistic Globalised Active	Less play and more instrumental skill development	Expository methodologies
Organization	Flexible	More rigid and structured	Rigid Larger schools and more impersonal environment
Peer relationships	Begin to explore relationships	Peer relationships start to be significant	Significant relationships with their peers
Relationship with teachers	Close and intimate Motivating role	Close relationship with their teacher	More impersonal relationships. One teacher for each subject
Family-teacher relationship	Close and frequent	Direct contact but less frequent	More distant relationship

Source: Sagardia-Iturria (2025).

The literature also notes that school transitions involve internal changes. Contextual differences bring new relationships, roles and identities, requiring children to adapt (Ackesjö, 2019). These transitions are critical periods that can impact children’s academic, social and emotional well-being, with both short- and long-term effects. However, the characteristics of each stage can influence these outcomes (Evans et al., 2018; González-Moreira et al., 2023; Bagnall & Jindal-Snape, 2023).

The changes involved in educational transitions particularly prevent the most vulnerable students from participating fully in common spaces and in the curriculum without difficulty during educational transitions (Minnie, 2023; Pitt et al., 2021; Strnadová et al., 2023). While research has explored school transitions between educational phases, there is little focus on transitions within primary education (Packer et al., 2021). To fully capture children’s experiences, it is essential to listen to the voices of the children, families and teachers involved. Moreover, there is limited research focused on actively transforming school transition processes through collaboration with key stakeholders (Krammer et al., 2023; Matiti, 2022; McLeod & Anderson, 2020; Sierra & Parrilla, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to understand and transform educational transitions in a public primary and secondary school in Gipuzkoa through a collaborative process involving stakeholders.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative methodology because, as Bagnall et al. (2020) argue, much of the existing research on educational transitions relies on quantitative, survey-based designs. Such closed-question surveys often fail to capture the complexity of transitions and the influence of individual and environmental factors. In contrast, qualitative methods offer deeper and more genuine insights, which are especially valuable when exploring such personal and context-dependent processes.

A participatory action research (PAR) approach was employed to understand and improve educational transitions, with the goal of fostering positive change for children and their families (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009). Unlike traditional qualitative studies, which often involve limited or unclear samples, participatory action research serves as a powerful tool for promoting real, sustainable transformations. Its strength lies in empowering the educational community, challenging traditional hierarchies by validating the experiential knowledge of those directly affected – including children's voices (Krammer et al., 2023; Matiti, 2022) – generating context-specific changes and fostering collective ownership of the project. Through cycles of research, action and reflection, the study addressed the complexities of transitions and encouraged collaborative improvement.

To facilitate this process, two groups were formed, an action group and a monitoring group:

- *Action group*: A voluntary group of five teachers, three families and three researchers met every two weeks for two-hour sessions. The purpose was to gather first-hand information, identify potential networks and actively engage in the research process. Information-sharing and progression through different phases were considered integral to the co-creation of the process (Lenette, 2022). The group primarily focused on designing, evaluating and refining the action plan, called the *ElkarZaintza* [MutualCare] plan, based on stakeholders' experiences and suggestions.
- *Monitoring group*: Members were identified and selected by the action group, based on the need to strengthen support for horizontal transitions. The monitoring group included community stakeholders such as the municipal education technician, CEAR association, Txaloka playgroup, municipal welfare services, school sports, *Oinherri*, institute members, the nature school, the library, school families and teachers. They were informed of the methodology and objectives and served as external support networks to improve school transitions.

2.1. Participants

The study was conducted in a public school in the Basque Country (Spain). The school is spread across two buildings, one for early childhood education (ages 2 to 6) and primary education (ages 6 to 12), and the other for secondary educa-

tion (ages 12 to16). The study focused on four key educational transitions: from early childhood education to primary, from primary to secondary, and between the three internal stages of primary education, each of two years, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The school's education system and codes

Child's Age	Academic Year	Stage	Educational Phase
0-6			Early childhood education
6-7	Year 1 (Y1)	Stage 1 (P1)	Primary education
7-8	Year 2 (Y2)		
8-9	Year 3 (Y3)	Stage 2 (P2)	
9-10	Year 4 (Y4)		
10-11	Year 5 (Y5)	Stage 3 (P3)	
11-12	Year 6 (Y6)		
12-16			Secondary education

Source: Own elaboration.

All the children, families, and teachers involved in educational transitions participated at the end of the 2021–2022 academic year (in ECE, Y2, Y4, and Y6) and at the beginning of the 2022–2023 academic year (in Y1, Y3, Y5, and SE). The selection criteria were inclusive, with all participants undergoing the evaluation. Total numbers of participants are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants in the research

	Children (CH)	Families (Fml)	Teachers (Tch)
ECE	31	4	2
Y1	28	24	2
Y2	37	3	2
Y3	37	19	2
Y4	41	2	2
Y5	40	21	2
Y6	31	5	2
SE	32	6	2
SENCO			1
Principal			1

Source: Own elaboration.

2.2. Data collection

For the evaluation phase, as the children were unfamiliar with the researcher, they were put into small groups of five children, to provide a safe and comfort-

able environment for them. To understand the transition experiences of all the children, both as a group and individually, participatory techniques were employed for interviews with children undergoing educational transitions, including 'Message in a Bottle' (Messiou, 2012), 'Feelings Dice' (Messiou, 2012), and 'Photo-elicitation' (Shaw et al., 2021).

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school principal, teachers involved in educational transitions and SENCO to gather their experiences of school transitions and identify areas for improvement (Flick, 2015). These interviews aimed to understand the entire process, the action plan and the experiences of various stakeholders.

To gather a wide range of opinions, families were given open-ended questionnaires. These were used to assess the process, action plan, experiences, and areas for improvement.

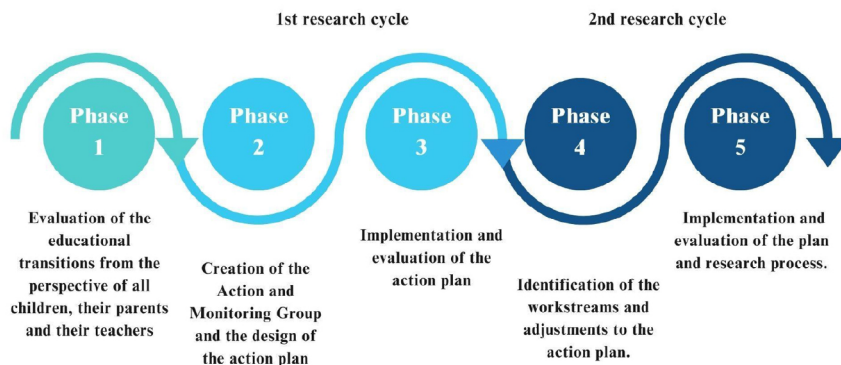
2.3. Ethical consideration

Written informed consent from the school's governing body, teachers and parents of all children involved in school transitions was obtained. All children were also explicitly asked if they wanted to participate, and participation was made voluntary. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and of the objectives and benefits of their participation.

2.4. Process

The research was carried out in five phases across two participatory action research (PAR) cycles (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Participatory action research (PAR) phases



Source: Own elaboration.

Data for the evaluation in the final phase was collected between the end of one academic year and the beginning of the new one (June to December 2022).

2.5. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted using a combined inductive-deductive approach (Braun et al., 2019). Codes were generated from interviews, questionnaires and group discussions. Through iterative coding using MAXQDA, initial themes were refined into two overarching categories: interventions and experiences relating to educational transitions. However, in this article, the results are presented according to the different workstreams, to highlight the specific changes and experiences associated with each one. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement (2020-2022), which fostered trust and cultural immersion via biweekly interactions. Triangulation, both of data sources and analysts, and member checking enhanced the accuracy of the findings. Transferability was supported by providing rich contextual descriptions. Dependability and confirmability were achieved through audit trails, reflexive practices and systematic documentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3. Results

This section presents the findings from Phase 4 and 5 of the second cycle of research, organised by workstreams to showcase the changes and experiences in each area.

3.1. Ensuring continuity and providing learning opportunities for all children by avoiding disruptions

Children's experiences revealed that, for some, the adjustment process was perceived as manageable and gradual. As one child said, "The transition wasn't difficult because we began slowly and calmly" (Ch_Y5), while another said, "The change has been smooth so far, as it has been gentle and feels manageable to me" (Ch_SE). However, for some children, the transition was more challenging, with some reporting difficulties that negatively affected their overall experience: "It's a bit hard because I'm separated from my friends" (Ch_Y5) or "We have many teachers here, and everything is planned, which can be boring and overwhelming. In Y6, they improvise more. Our pace used to be slower and more relaxed. Here, it's sometimes hard to follow..." (Ch_SE). Children's experiences of transitions are shaped by their individual differences, including their interests and self-confidence.

At the school level, reflections on this workstream and on the needs of the children – such as "There is no quiet corner or space for autonomous movement" (Ch_Y3) – led to the decision that activities such as circle time, autonomous movement, reading and writing techniques and manipulative mathematics should continue from ECE to PE and be maintained until Y3 to ensure pedagogical continuity.

As far as their relationships are concerned, being happy with teachers and peers was important during all school transitions. The teacher's characteristics, such as kindness, patience and effective communication, were considered essential for the children. Strict or easily angered teachers were undesirable. Y4 students hoped for a better year after having a challenging teacher in Y3, and as they wanted to ensure continuity with their friends in their new class groups, they suggested that: "They should ask us who we wanted to be with on a piece of paper to ensure that at least we are with some friends" (Ch_Y4). After the transition, the children said that ensuring continuity in relationships was also important, as some felt that their experience worsened due to the absence of familiar, secure bonds: "What I liked least are the classrooms because I am separated from my friends" (Ch_Y5).

To support emotional aspects of school transitions, some actions focused on maintaining academic and relationship continuity. Older students shared their experiences with younger peers to help manage expectations, fears and doubts. Familiarization visits were also organized to explore future learning spaces. In all school transitions, both student groups and tutors change, except in the transition from Year 6 to secondary education, where the student groups remain the same. In the transitions from early childhood education to primary, and from primary to secondary, new teachers (and classmates in the case of early childhood education) were introduced to families and children at the end of the academic year in June, before the start of the following academic year.

In September, the school started the new academic year with planned activities focusing on adaptation for the first month. These included providing spaces for discussing emotions, organising cooperative games to promote group cohesion, arranging trips and establishing collective rules in all grades.

To be honest, we've prioritised fostering team cohesion and relationships. We're currently involved in a small project focused on the emotional and social aspects, especially since our students are newcomers from the five-year-old class. We're working on rules for coexistence, emotions, feelings, and team cohesion through various classroom activities. (Tch_Y1)

3.2. Teacher coordination and project monitoring to keep improving the educational perspective and the necessary groups or structures

To improve educational transitions, stronger communication and teacher coordination was deemed essential. Teachers prioritized enhancing information flow and ensuring continuity, with action group members playing a key role in sharing updates and maintaining teacher commitment. As one teacher noted, proactive information-sharing by the group ensured accurate and timely communication:

Sometimes, even before I went to the faculty meeting, the other teacher [one of the action group members] would share information with me beforehand: 'We had a meeting yesterday and we thought about this.' So I've had pretty accurate information this year. (Tch_ECE)

This shows how efforts were made at school level to communicate key information to teachers. The gradual transfer of this information highlighted the need to create a shared culture around educational transitions. However, some respondents observed that such projects require constant participation, with project ownership being particularly evident among fixed-term contract teachers compared to substitute teachers. This aspect was especially noticeable in secondary school, where teachers felt completely uninformed.

I have been at the school for a second year now, and as a tutor, it's my first year... The information I've received about ElkarZaintza [MutualCare] plan is very little; to speak clearly, hardly any. (Tch_SE)

In response to the findings of the first research cycle, university researchers conducted three inter-stage sessions with primary teachers to establish a shared transition framework and address key workstreams. The participation of secondary teachers was not possible due to scheduling conflicts and being in a different building. The perspectives of the primary teachers varied: while some valued the collective reflective space and decision-making, others complained that the discussions were overly theoretical. Consensus emerged on the need for sustained collaboration, particularly to address pedagogical discontinuities in early school transitions (P1-P2). As one teacher noted:

We need deeper commitment. This plan is vital for ECE or P1. Everything from Y3 becomes more traditional... We need more communication, coordination and agreement at the school level. (Tch_Y1)

Even though the inter-stage meetings were also intended to address specific actions relating to the MutualCare action plan, other formal and informal meetings were used to organise classroom-specific activities. Some teachers used the inter-stage meetings for planning, while others preferred to meet at different times:

While preparing the meeting here, we called them directly. During that call, we set the date and planned each step: when to send our questions and the student video, when we'd receive their responses and video to watch here, and when we'd visit them. (Tch_Y6)

At the end of the school year, after classes with the children conclude, teachers transfer key student information to ensure the next teacher has the necessary details to maintain continuity and provide quality support in the following year:

At the end of the year, we prepare a short report for teachers if there's something important to mention about students. This gives the next teacher an overview of the student's personality and academic progress. If the teacher is not available, we create the report; if they're available, we meet with them. (Tch_Y4)

3.3. Engaging with all families

This workstream focused on strengthening family relationships by addressing their needs and by promoting participation. Families were engaged through personalized strategies, and key information – such as the transition framework, evaluation results and MutualCare plan – was shared. The families involved in the action group helped disseminate this information via a poster at the school gate and leaflets were sent home with children. These efforts highlighted the value of listening to families, and the response was positive:

The children informed us about the activities. The tutors also discussed it at the end-of-year meeting. On school notice boards. [...] The information we received was helpful, as it kept us informed about the ongoing work. (Fml_ECE)

To address the concerns raised by families in the previous evaluation phase, a leaflet was distributed by teachers during individual family meetings at the end of the school year. This leaflet provided information about key changes related to transition moments, particularly focusing on new relationships and new routines. It also included suggestions on how to approach these changes with children. Given that classmates and teachers change at every transition (except classmates between Y6 and SE), families especially valued the opportunity to be informed in advance whenever possible:

Having information in advance gives confidence. (Fml_Y3)

Getting to know their new group members and tutor at the end of the school year, as well as familiarizing themselves with the new space and exchanging information with older students. (Fml_Y1)

While families shared common concerns, their needs and perspectives varied. Teachers valued the relationship between school and families but expressed concern over limited family involvement. They identified language barriers and economic difficulties as key obstacles. In secondary education, the school's communication app further complicated engagement and follow-up at home. Although low participation was often linked to linguistic and socioeconomic factors, teachers also acknowledged less explored issues, such as the type of relationship the school builds with families, or the school's level of openness.

3.4. Peer networks and support between children, families and teachers who may need additional support to fully participate

This workstream aimed to address non-standard transitions, especially for newcomers, both students and teachers, and for students repeating a grade. To foster a sense of belonging for students who joined after the academic year had started, special activities were organised:

We appointed an ambassador or buddy for them [Ukrainian students], created posters that respect their native language, and displayed these in the hallways to honour their culture and language. We also provided opportunities for them to take a central role in projects and daily activities, doing everything possible to integrate them into the school's routines and classroom dynamics. (Tch_Y2)

Teachers also went through educational transitions, particularly those new to the school or teaching different levels. These transitions brought uncertainties, especially in adapting to new pedagogical approaches. Some teachers joined after the school year had already begun, adding further challenges. To ease this process, it was recommended to complement written information with oral explanations and specific school details. Teachers emphasized the importance of mentoring and guidance, suggesting that a formal reception plan could help new staff integrate more smoothly.

Support groups also offered suggestions to address school transitions for those not following the 'standard' path. The aim was to inform classmates who would not continue with their peers and, through cooperative group activities, to help them get to know their new classmates and teachers.

With one student, we used photographs to introduce the new teacher since an in-person experience was not possible. In another case, the student was reluctant to engage in specific activities with her classmates but eagerly joined the next year's classmates. (Tch_SENCO).

3.5. Participation of community stakeholders to facilitate synergies and foster a culture of community involvement in education

In earlier phases, sessions with the monitoring group focused on sharing information and gathering feedback. This phase, however, aimed to actively involve them and foster commitments to improve community-level transitions. These commitments included organising family-friendly guided tours of the town, initiating library programmes that consider local languages, and reducing extracurricular fees for families in vulnerable situations.

4. Discussion and conclusions

This study underscores the essential role of action and monitoring groups within the participatory action research (PAR) process in reshaping participants' understanding and practices around educational transitions. Findings from the second action research cycle show that involving participants in educational transitions led to meaningful shifts in both understanding and practice, reinforcing the importance of stakeholder voices in co-creating action plans and workstreams. These transitions were found to be complex processes involving multiple actors and dimensions, which aligns with the Multiple and Multidimensional Transitions Theory (Jindal-Snape et al., 2021).

By emphasizing key stakeholders' voices, these groups enabled the systematic evaluation and creation of tailored action plans. The participatory approach fostered collaboration, allowing schools to adjust transitions based on real-time needs, resulting in a cultural shift from teacher-dependent to systematized transitions under the *ElkarZaintza* [MutualCare] plan. Educational transitions are now approached holistically at the school level, supporting existing research on the importance of collaborative structures for smoother transitions (Crane & O'Regan, 2010; Sierra & Parrilla, 2019).

Several discontinuities were identified, including pedagogical and curricular challenges. In terms of pedagogical discontinuity, participants expressed a desire to retain elements of previous learning approaches, such as autonomous movement and project-based learning, particularly between the educational period of primary education. Consistent with Evans et al. (2018), many students felt their learning rhythms were not accommodated in secondary education, highlighting a mismatch between the primary education experience and the more structured secondary education environment. Despite efforts to create continuity, limited pedagogical exchange between stages was evident, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary education, where structural and cultural differences posed persistent challenges. As Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) note, differences in schedules, spaces and institutional cultures often hinder teaching continuity. Although inter-stage meetings were introduced, these efforts have not fully bridged the gap, underscoring the need for stronger coordination and collaboration, as Sierra and Parrilla (2019) argue.

Gaps in curricular continuity also emerged as a key challenge, as Wilder and Lillvist (2018) observed. The gap in curricular expectations between primary and secondary levels shaped students' transition experiences, as student role and educational demands often differed substantially. These differences expose the limitations of age-based curricula, which tend to reinforce a "normal" developmental trajectory that may disadvantage students with diverse learning needs (Lago, 2019). Other studies similarly call for more flexible and inclusive approaches to support all learners during educational transitions (Minnie, 2023; Pitt et al., 2021; Strnadová et al., 2023). There is also the question of *readiness*, regarding whether it is the child or the school that needs to be ready, in line with McLeod and Anderson (2020).

Relationships were also essential during educational transitions, with children and families noting their importance in providing comfort and a sense of security. Children who felt supported by peers and teachers adapted more easily, supporting research on the role of continuity of relationships (Packer et al., 2021). Families noted the impact of strong school relationships on well-being. For new students and teachers, having a specific person to refer to was seen as essential, reinforcing findings from previous studies (Flitcroft & Kelly, 2016; Greenwood & Kelly, 2020; Messiou & Azaola, 2018).

The MutualCare plan underscored the importance of pedagogical, curricular and social continuity, and of deliberate school-level decisions that foster gradual and responsive educational transitions that balance academic coher-

ence and emotional stability. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the role of continuity in children's well-being (Boyle et al., 2021).

Despite various strategies to engage families, challenges remain, especially in ensuring equitable participation. As Curson et al. (2019) note, family involvement is key to supporting children during educational transitions. In the present study, families appreciated timely information, as it gave them reassurance and confidence. However, language and economic barriers often limited full participation, pointing to deeper structural issues that hinder more inclusive engagement. These findings highlight the need for sustained efforts to include a broader range of voices. Additionally, as Beneyto et al. (2019) suggest, limited participation may also stem from demanding work schedules or unclear expectations around families' roles in school life.

A key limitation of this study is the challenge of engaging secondary schools and families. Despite several strategies and coordination efforts, further research is needed to identify more effective ways to involve stakeholders, especially among teachers, as their involvement is considered a key element in facilitating transitions (Azorín-Abellán, 2018; Packer et al., 2021; Strand, 2019). Additionally, while the study focused on the implementation of the *ElkarZaintza* [MutualCare] plan, it did not address the long-term sustainability of action and monitoring groups, which are essential for fostering a participatory culture. Future research should examine strategies to ensure the continuity of these collaborative structures, particularly in maintaining sustained family and student involvement.

As a qualitative study, generalization of the findings was not the goal. While the findings may be transferable to similar contexts, the sample size limits broader applicability. Further research with larger or more diverse samples is needed to assess the relevance of the findings in different settings. Despite these limitations, the process resulted in significant cultural, political and practical shifts. Culturally, the work of the action and monitoring groups led to a reconceptualization of educational transitions as ongoing, multidimensional processes. Politically, the institutionalization of the MutualCare plan reframed transitions as a collective responsibility. Practically, this shift systematized transition practices through a holistic, community-based approach, replacing previously fragmented or individual initiatives.

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