

# *Developing a School System Governance Framework to Promote Quality for Transitions: Key Issues to Consider for a Differentiated, Holistic Strategy for Transitions*

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# ***Differentiated Functions/Purposes of System Governance Responses to Transition***

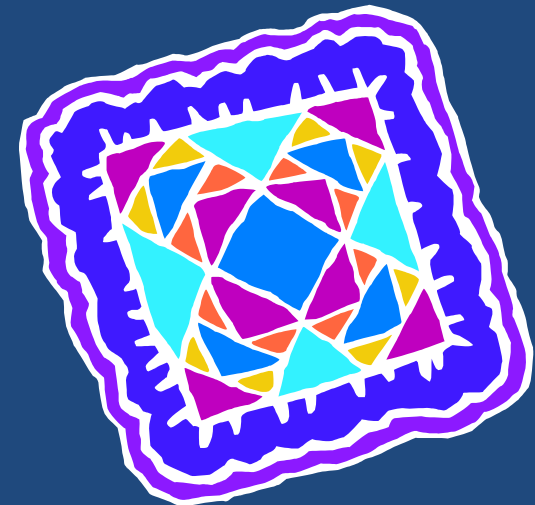
*Purpose 1. Transition as Derivative Problem from a More Fundamental Problematic System Area of School Climate or Environment*

*Purpose 2. Transition as System Mismatch between 2 WellFunctioning Areas*

*Purpose 3. Differentiated Strategy in Place for Meeting **Individual** Needs at Different Levels of Need/Risk*

*Purpose 4. Transition Intervention as Early Warning System Addressing Complexity and Fragmentation*

*Purpose 5. Transition as Derivative Problem from a More Fundamental Problematic Area of Society/Macrosystem*

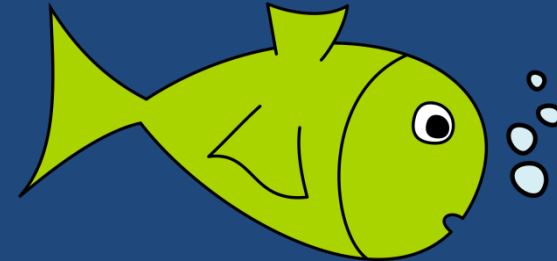


## *Transition and Continuity 6 Transition Steps*

- 1. Preschool to Primary*
- 2. Primary to Secondary*
- 3. Middle to Upper Secondary*
- 4. Migrants*
- 5. Suspension/Expulsion*
- 6. VET work placements*



*Purpose 1 Transition as Derivative Problem from a More Fundamental Problematic System Area of School Climate or Environment*



Fish out of Water – or Polluted River ?

Is the Transition the Problem or is it the School Environment ?

Systems framework of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995) –  
overlooks system blockage (Downes 2014)

Grade 1 Drop Out Due to Overcrowding and Poor School  
Conditions in Developing Countries

Authoritarian School Climate

Bullying Environment

Poor Working Conditions for VET Placements (Cedefop 2016)



## *Transition as Derivative Problem from a More Fundamental Problematic Area of School Climate*

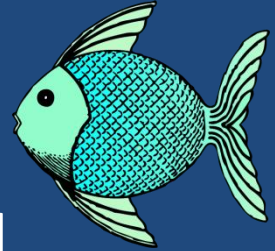
Recent concern with **school climate as key to transition** to secondary school (Madjar & Cohen-Malayev 2016, Smyth 2016) and central to preschool-primary transition (Cadimaa et al. 2015)

West et al. (2010) study of over 200 Scottish pupils – students with lower ability and lower self-esteem had more negative school transition experiences which led to lower levels of attainment and higher levels of depression. Also anxious students *experienced bullying*

Gniewosz et al. (2011) L'a lot of structural changes' in transition to secondary school – *a stronger emphasis on teacher authority*, ability grouping, less autonomy – which 'do not fit the developmental changes starting around puberty, namely the intensified need for autonomy...'



# Western Cognitive Bias: Individual Foreground Perception Neglects Background System



Masuda and Nisbett (2001) presented realistic animated scenes of fish and other underwater objects to Japanese and Americans and asked them to report what they had seen.

\*The first statement by American participants usually referred to the focal fish ('there was what looked like a trout swimming to the right') whereas the first statement by Japanese participants usually referred to background elements ('there was a lake or pond').

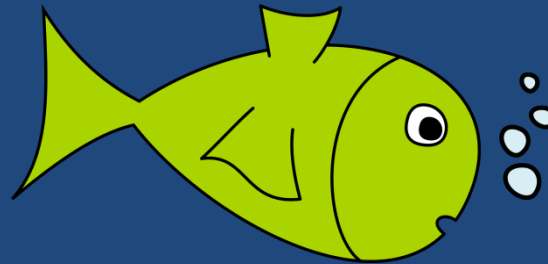
\*Japanese participants made about 70 percent more statements about background aspects of the environment.



\* Masuda and Nisbett (2001) In a subsequent recognition task, Japanese performance was weakened by showing the focal fish with the wrong background, indicating that the perception of the object had been intimately linked with the field in which it had appeared.

\*In contrast, American recognition of the object was unaffected by the wrong background

Foreground – Child  
Background system - School



# Authoritarian Teaching

Downes (2004)

‘Have anger management courses for teachers’  
(Secondary, F, FG)



“The teachers shouting at you. That makes me really really down” (Age 13, F, Q)

“if the teachers didn’t roar at you” (Age 13, F, Q)

- “Have an equal teaching system and sack ignorant snobby teachers...very harsh teachers usually make me stay out of school” (Age 16, M, Q)





Percentage of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students who Agree/Disagree with the Following Statements: School Belonging and Feeling Like an Outsider (PISA 2012)  
PISA (OECD 2012)

| Countries      | I feel like I belong at school, % Agree (S.E) | I feel like an outsider (or left out of things at school), % Disagree (S.E) |
|----------------|---|---|
| Austria        | 82 (1.6)                                      | 89.9 (1.1)  |
| Belgium        | 63.5 (1.6)                                    | 88.4 (1.0)  |
| Czech Republic | 73.6 (1.9)                                    | 80.5 (1.6)  |
| Denmark        | 69.3 (1.6)                                    | 90.3 (1.0)  |
| Estonia        | 78.2 (1.8)                                    | 90.0 (1.3)  |
| Finland        | 80.5 (1.1)                                    | 89.2 (1.0)  |
| France         | 38 (1.7)                                      | 73.2 (1.8)  |
| Germany        | 83.8 (1.6)                                    | 89.7 (1.4)  |
| Greece         | 87.8 (1.2)                                    | 83.9 (1.4)  |
| Hungary        | 83.5 (1.1)                                    | 85.6 (1.6)  |
| Ireland        | 76.7 (1.5)                                    | 91.6 (1.0)  |
| Italy          | 75 (0.9)                                      | 89.3 (0.6)  |
| Luxembourg     | 71.9 (1.7)                                    | 85.9 (1.2)  |
| Netherlands    | 82.4 (1.7)                                    | 89.8 (1.3)  |
| Norway         | 83.5 (1.5)                                    | 89.1 (1.0)  |

|                        |                   |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Poland</b>          | <b>73.2 (1.8)</b> | <b>88.2 (1.3)</b> |
| <b>Portugal</b>        | 87.9 (1.2)        | 87.4 (1.5)        |
| <b>Slovak Republic</b> | 75.4 (1.8)        | 74.0 (2.3)        |
| <b>Slovenia</b>        | <b>83.7 (1.7)</b> | <b>89.0 (1.2)</b> |
| <b>Spain</b>           | 92.1 (0.7)        | 90.1 (1.0)        |
| <b>Sweden</b>          | 74.8 (1.9)        | 87.0 (1.3)        |
| <b>United Kingdom</b>  | 74.9 (1.5)        | 86.9 (1.1)        |
| <b>OECD Average</b>    | 78.1 (0.3)        | 86.2 (0.2)        |

# Marginalised students' voices, transition and classroom climate

Downes, Maunsell & Ivers (2006):



- Approximately 74% of pupils at primary level (6th class) state that they are treated fairly by teachers in school
- Approximately 55% of students at secondary level (first year) state that they are treated fairly by teachers in school-
- Approximately 15% of pupils at primary level (6th class) state that they are not treated fairly by teachers in school-
- Approximately 25% of students at secondary level (first year) state that they are not treated fairly by teachers in school

# System Mismatch

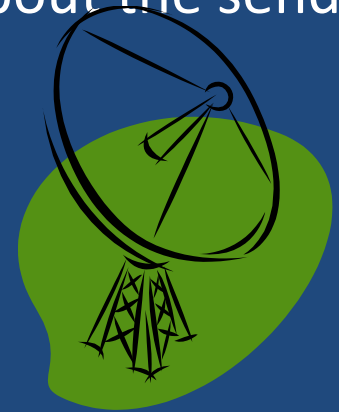
Across the high school transition, adolescents become less involved in extracurricular activities (Barber & Olsen 2004, Seidman et al. 1996) but this may be dependent on the school environment opportunities itself

Malleable system conditions – Bullying, Authoritarian teaching, Extracurricular activities, Transport

## *Purpose 2. Transition as System Mismatch between 2 Well Functioning Areas*

Benner (2011) 'Unfortunately most studies on peer relations across the transition fail to provide adequate information about the sending and receiving contexts...' (p.307)

Middle-Upper Secondary Transition  
Malta – Transport (Cefai & Downes 2014)



Benner (2011) 'if the high school transition, like the transition to middle school, is detrimental for students, district decisions to introduce additional school transitions for K-12 students may need to be reconsidered' (p.315)

## **System Mismatch as Fragmentation between Wellfunctioning Independent Systems**

Hanewald's (2013) international review of transition between primary and postprimary concludes: 'teacher educators need to consider how they can incorporate transition programs and strategies in their courses'

Primary to Secondary, Middle to Upper Secondary -  
Key Governance issue to avoid diffusion of responsibility:  
Is it the sending or receiving school who has responsibility for leading the transition plan for at risk groups ?

How does this work in fragmented pathways to many schools from one school ?

# System Mismatch as Fragmentation between Wellfunctioning Independent Systems

Middle-Upper secondary transition: The role of career guidance in perpetuating labelling and low expectations of marginalised groups

Heckmann (2008) low teachers' expectations towards minority students generally have a negative influence on their performance

Concerns with teachers' expectations and labelling are particularly relevant for career guidance ITE and CPD for working specifically with marginalized groups, so that they do not perpetuate stereotypes and low expectations for the careers of these students.

Career guidance requires a strategic focus on professional development generally – Eurydice (2014) ‘findings from the OECD's TALIS survey showing that around 42 % of European teachers need professional development in student career guidance and counselling’

\*Permeable Flexible Pathways between School Types, including VET (Cedefop 2016a) – more taster courses before learners choose a vocational pathway

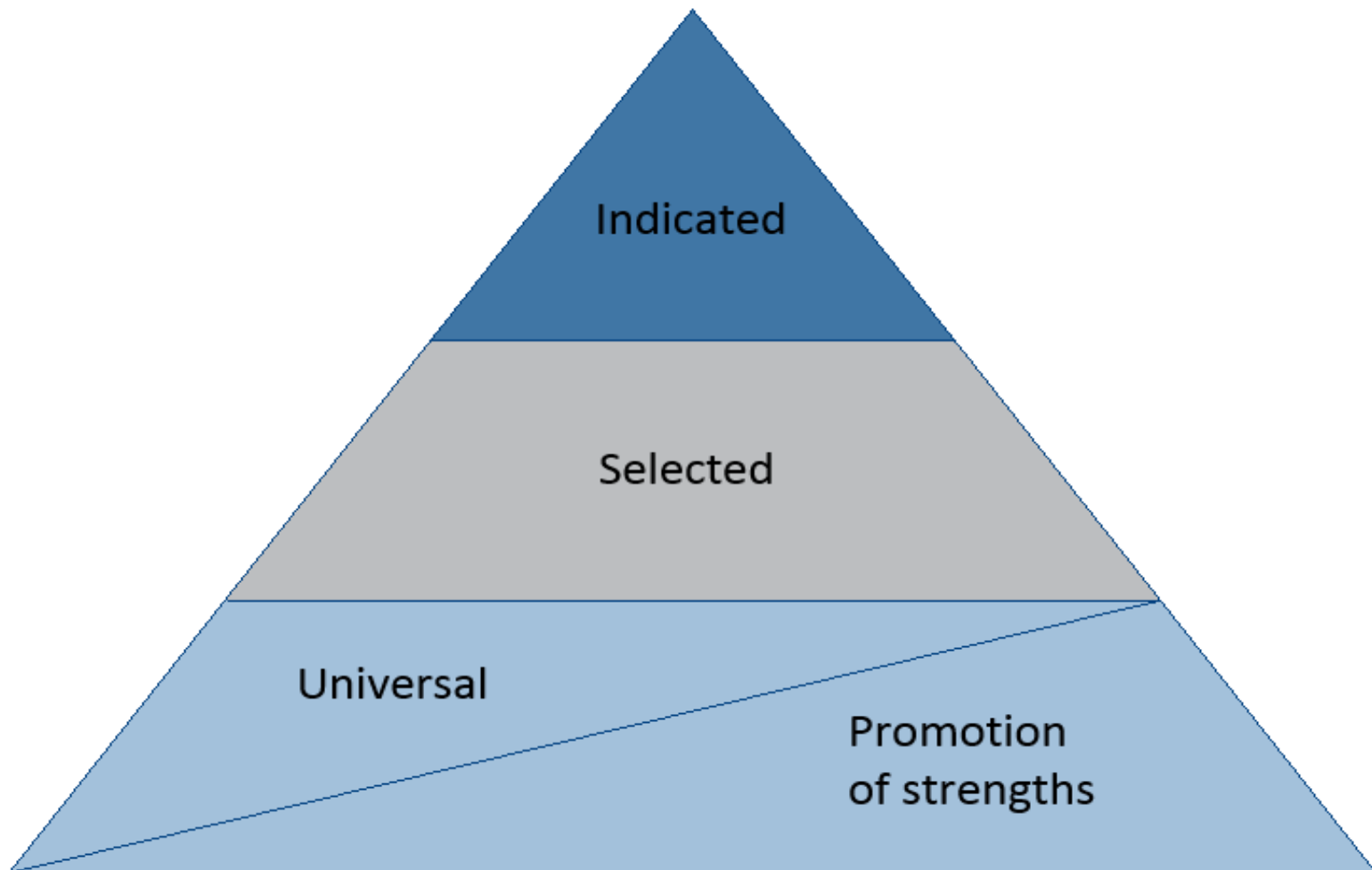


*Purpose 3. Differentiated Strategy in Place for Meeting Individual Needs at Different Levels of Need/Risk for Transition*

*Universal – All,*

*Selected – Some, Groups, Moderate Risk*

*Indicated – Individual, Intensive, Chronic Need*



### *Purpose 3. Differentiated Strategy in Place for Meeting Individual Needs at Different Levels of Need/Risk*

Imperfect Storm – Individual Vulnerability – Deficit Model

Individual Vulnerability to Transition:

- \* Low Academic Attainment – individual supports in place
- \* Special Needs – series of visits to cope with change to structure
- \* Insecure Attachment
- \* Family Difficulties
  - Migrant Needs for Language and Other Supports
  - Experiencing Trauma and Defensive Reaction of Structure
  - Introversion
- \* Sleep

Individual Strengths – Opportunities from transition

Special Needs: Students' perceptions of transition to secondary school (Maunsell, Barrett & Candon 2007)

Anxieties around bullying, timetables, moving around classes, greater amount of academic work

- Individual academic supports
- Student liaison officer for transition suggested
- Enhance partnership with parents

Family Difficulties:

Benner (2011) 'Studies focus fairly little attention on adolescents' changing relationships with parents across the high school transition, perhaps reflecting the assumed stability in the family sociocultural context across this transition' (p.306)

# Sleep



\*Swedish longitudinal study 6693 questionnaires for sample from 6-16 (Holmstrom et al. 2014) explored three school based transitions – from preschool to elementary school (6-10), elementary to junior high school (10-13) and junior high to upper secondary 13-16).

\*association between experiencing positive sleep and feeling comfortable in school and not feeling afraid or worried for all children age 6-10.

Likewise all children age 10-13 years who reported positive health reported positive sleep.

# Fresh Start Approaches – Building on Strengths

## Transition to Upper Secondary – Opportunity to Change Identity

\*Kinney (1993) identified a group of white students who used the high school transition to reinvent themselves, going from ‘nerds to normals’ - improved self-perceptions following the transition

\*Among adolescents who felt socially isolated during middle school, Weiss & Bearman (2007) reported that the high school transition was accompanied by less involvement in delinquent activities and improvements in school connectedness

\*Langenkamp (2010) low performing middle school students who transitioned to high school with the majority of their peers struggled more academically following the transition than those who transitioned with fewer middle school peers

**What opportunities are there for individuals in the transition process ?**

## Purpose 4. Transition as part of Early Warning Systems Approach – Why a Multidisciplinary Approach is needed to Address Complexity and Fragmentation

### Preschool-Primary Transition

\*McDermott et al. (2016) teachers earliest assessments predictive of eventual classroom adjustment, attendance and with increasing accuracy over time for future sociobehavioural adjustment

\*Jeon et al. (2014) School readiness: Parent who had more family socioeconomic risks and neighbourhood poverty reported more depressive symptoms which suggested children's greater probability of socio-emotional problems

BUT \*Attachment theory complexity – difficulties with soft diagnosis, labelling by teachers

Golding et al. 2013, 2013a – teachers develop strategies based on checklist for different attachment styles – avoidant, ambivalent-anxious, disorganised, secure

\*Children's emotional states may be affected by their going to (pre)school hungry, by trauma unrelated to attachment issues or by loss of sleep on a regular basis (Downes 2013)

- Why a Multidisciplinary Approach is needed to Address Complexity
- Attachment checklist :
  - an intrusive judgment by childcare workers/teachers of parents' parenting skills
  - invites them to make judgments regarding attachment histories which are neither verifiable within the scope of their work nor even, in principle, observable (Downes 2013).
- \* Even if a child displays repeated features of, for example, ambivalence or avoidance, it is a major leap for the childcare worker or teacher to conclude that these features are due to the attachment bonding problems with the child's parents (Downes 2013, 2013a)



## Early Warning System Complexity for Transition

ADHD/Giftedness - Common features may confuse diagnosis (Ryan 2008) including in teacher's perceptions

### ADHD – DSM5

- Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present prior to age 12 years
- Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms are present in two or more settings (e.g. at home, school, or work; with friends or relatives; in other activities)
- There is clear evidence that the symptoms interfere with, or reduce the quality of, social, academic or occupational functioning

## Early Warning System Complexity \*Introversion/Speech and Language

24 classes, 8 schools – high poverty

Language gains for 4-5 years olds but not 6 and 7 year olds from classroom sound field amplification system (Kazmierczak & Downes 2015)

## Early Warning System Fragmentation - Migrants Lacking One Coordinating Case Worker

\*System fragmentation of multiple, diffuse services and territories (PREVENT project -10 European city municipalities Downes 2014a, 2015) - need for clarity of responsibility to ensure that families and young people do not fall through the gaps in support services

-many vulnerable populations may not be in a position to access available supports.

## Early Warning System Fragmentation

Curcic et al. (2014) observe that 'many Roma parents do not have the means to obtain and submit the array of legal documents necessary to navigate the system' (p.261).

- Need a **lead agency** who can guide migrants to the overall picture of services available for them in a given municipality (Downes 2015).
- clear path of responsibility to provide such support and this is clearly communicated to migrants and ethnic minorities.
- A number of the 9 municipality responses did not specify a concrete lead agency who coordinates and builds bridges to other agencies for the support of parents and children as migrants and ethnic minorities (Downes 2015).

## **Early Warning System Complexity of Suspension/Expulsion Transition needs Multidisciplinary Team Approach (Downes 2011; Edwards & Downes 2013)**

The American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement (2013) : ‘the adverse effects of out-of-school suspension and expulsion can be profound’ (e1001);

\*such students are as much as 10 times more likely to leave school early, are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system and ‘there may be no one at home during the day to supervise the student’s activity’ (e1002) if the parents are working.

\* ‘They can also be very superficial if, in using them, school districts avoid dealing with underlying issues affecting the child or the district, such as drug abuse, racial and ethnic tensions, and cultural anomalies associated with violence and bullying’ (American Academy of Pediatrics, e1002).

*Purpose 5. Transition as Derivative Problem from  
a More Fundamental Problematic Area of  
Society/Macrosystem*

Structure of Society Problem – Surface  
Manifestation

Ethnic Mix Change in Transition for Minority  
Group

Structure of Society Problem – Surface  
Manifestation

If students move from middle school to a high  
school that includes fewer students who are  
ethnically similar to themselves may impact  
negatively on students' school-related affects  
(Benner & Graham 2007)



# Migrant transition

## Societal prejudice concretised as discriminatory bullying –



Elamé's (2013) 10 country European study:

'the fundamental importance' of teacher influence on discriminatory bullying

\*Those immigrant and Roma students who think the teacher exhibits **similar** behaviour towards 'native' and immigrant and Roma children in the class are those bullied **least** in the last 3 months. In contrast, **'those who declare that their teacher favours native children over immigrant/Roma students are more vulnerable to suffer some form of bullying.** (Elamé, 2013).

\*Those immigrant or Roma children who sense an imbalance in the teacher's attitudes to different ethnic groups in their class are also those who have been bullied with the highest frequency during the previous 3 months (Elamé, 2013)

***Equality and NonDiscrimination:*** Article 20 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights establishes equality of persons before the law

Article 23 – the equality of men and women in all areas

Article 21 prohibits discrimination on the basis of 'sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation'.

# Need for Cultural Expression in School Environment and Community Education Contexts

- key principles of equality of esteem and building on strengths  
Heckmann (2008) recommends to integrate elements and symbols of the cultures of origin into school life, in the curriculum, textbooks, and in other school material
- recommends that this be done in consultation with representatives of the new communities.

Yet :

\*community based lifelong learning centres and social support centres in Nantes, Munich, Usti and the Hague (Downes 2015): expression of symbols of the cultures of origin of different ethnic groups and migrants is not yet a feature of these centres or community spaces.



# Transition is an Inclusive Systems Issue: Key Governance Principles for Quality for Inclusive Systems Relevant to Transition

Inclusive Systems in and around Schools: 10 Key Principles (Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite 2016, forthcoming)

1. *System wide focus*
2. *Equality and NonDiscrimination*
3. *Children's Voices, Participation and Other Rights*
4. *Holistic and Learner-Centred approach*
5. *Parental Participation in School, including Marginalised Parents*
6. *Differentiated focus on different levels of need for prevention and early intervention*
7. *Building on strengths*



## *Principle of Children's Voices, Participation*

- *Create responsive systems where children's voices are heard and this can address many transition related issues*
- *Students' voices in school is not only a rights based issue, it contributes to ensuring quality systems in schools*

8. *Multidisciplinarity of stakeholder involvement for complex needs*

9. *Representation and participation of marginalised groups for key stakeholder involvement – Create responsive systems where these groups voices can be heard*

10. *Lifelong Learning and Active (Constructivist) Learning*

*\*Whole school coordinating committee for inclusive systems (early school leaving prevention, school climate, bullying prevention, transition difficulties, students' voices) in every school (Downes & Cefai 2016, Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite 2016)*

*– students and marginalised groups (e.g. NGOs) and parents represented on these committees*

# Summary of Structural Indicators for System Quality on Transition Issues: Implications for School Governance:

Differentiated strategic focus on students needs for transition to include all, some (moderate risk, groups) and individuals (chronic need) YES/NO

Multidisciplinary team in and around school operates for an early warning/ intervention system with a focus on transitions for students of higher need YES/NO

Clarity on whether the sending or receiving school is responsible for the transition plan for individual students of higher need YES/NO

Alternatives to suspension and expulsion are in place YES/NO

Individual learning supports in place for students with SEND YES/NO

A focus on promoting adequate sleep as part of a universal transition strategy YES/NO

Whole school coordinating committee for inclusive systems (early school leaving prevention, school climate, bullying prevention, transition difficulties, students' voices) in every school YES/NO

Students voices heard on the transition experience YES/NO

Students and marginalised groups (e.g. NGOs) and parents represented on these whole school coordinating committees for inclusive systems YES/NO

Supports for teachers in school to develop Relationship Building, Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills YES/NO

Whole school approach addresses discriminatory bullying YES/NO

System supports for individuals to develop fresh start/positive identity from the transition YES/NO

Career guidance professional development to promote high expectations and limit negative stereotyping YES/NO

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