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DRA04013239

Doctorate in Education

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A study of children's experiences of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam: Perspectives of children and parents in the first year.

Declaration Page

I, Clair Naomi Draper, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Word Count – 44,934 words

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the children, parents and staff of the British international school in Vietnam where this research took place. Thank you for your willingness to be involved in the study and the way in which you engaged with the research. Thank you to Dr. Lynn Ang and Dr. Sue Rogers, who have supported me throughout the thesis. I sincerely appreciate all of your guidance and encouragement. On a personal note, I would like to thank my family and friends for your encouragement, and my partner, Thomas Matheve, for your endless amounts of love, patience and support.

Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative study that addresses an apparent current gap in the literature regarding children's experiences of transition at non-normative times, in an international context. The research takes place in a British international primary school in Vietnam. Thirty-four children participated in a series of nine semi-structured group interviews with three to five children in each. The children participated in a drawing activity in their group interviews to further reflect on their experiences of transition. Eight parents were interviewed either individually or with their partners, resulting in a total of six semi-structured interviews. School policies and documents were also examined using discourse analysis. A sociocultural and ecological theoretical model was used to analyse the interview responses. The findings highlighted many complexities that created a unique and challenging transition for the children involved. From both children and parents' perspectives, forming new friendships was essential to feeling comfortable and a part of the new school. The children experienced many different emotions during this year, from anxiety to excitement and these feelings were linked both to friendships and also managing academic expectations. Children joined the school having experienced varying educational systems from different countries and part of their transition included learning how to be a pupil in this particular school. While for some children, academic demands were easier, for others it was more difficult. The study concludes with a recommendation that more research could be done in international primary schools to continue this area of work in further exploring children's experiences of transition and how we can best support pupils during the first year of joining a new school.

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Supporting Statement

I began my doctoral journey eight years ago and clearly remember my application form, the registration days, and the first weekend on the Foundations of Professionalism module. I had thoroughly enjoyed my Masters in Early Years education at the Institute of Education (IoE), and taking control of my own professional development outside of what is taught during teacher training and encouraged by OfSTED. I was highly motivated to begin a professional doctorate and the EdD in particular, appealed to me because of its focus on professional learning and reflection. I intended to remain working within schools rather than at university level, and welcomed the opportunity to do some high quality research. With the EdD, I very quickly realised that I had reached a completely new level of challenge. I felt motivated by the reading and by the many subsequent discussions that we had in the weekend workshops, learning as much from my peers as I did from the course leaders. I carried a notebook with me everywhere I went and used it to reflect on the sessions that I attended as well as the reading I had done. Lots of my ideas and thinking stemmed from this academic and professional reflection.

For the optional module I chose to concentrate on Leadership and Learning, primarily because I was working in a senior leadership role. However, as the module progressed, I became far more interested in the learning aspect than I did the leadership side and began to wonder about what young children's conceptions of learning were. I was an early years teacher and assistant head teacher, and became interested in pupil voice, particularly by using the techniques suggested by Clark and Moss' (2001) Mosaic Approach. I found it powerful how, with the right techniques, the youngest children in our school could communicate about important topics. I began to use these techniques in my work, for example, having children communicate their ideas through drawing and taking photographs. I worked in Southwark at the time, and became heavily involved in the borough's 'Listening to Young Children's Voices' project. This was the first time that I could really see the impact that the EdD was beginning to have on my professional life. I was able to think critically and had lots of ideas due to the reading I had done, primarily about involving children in research.

For the assignment, I talked to the children about what they considered learning to be at the age of five, when preparing for their transition from early years into year one. This was the early stage of talking to children about their experiences of starting school. Looking back at my assignment from this module, although I did not use the terminology of sociocultural and ecological theory, I can see how my thinking connects with these ideas.

My interest in involving children actively in research continued into the Methods of Enquiry 1 (MOE1) module. The research proposal that I wrote focused on working with reception children aged four and five, to gain an understanding of their pupil identities. I was influenced by the reading I did about young children's transition into school, such as Brooker (2005; 2006), White and Sharp (2007), Lappalainen (2008), Fisher (2009) and Gustafson (2009). Using these ideas, combined with the reading and work I had been doing regarding pupil voice, I planned to use the children's favourite pieces of work as a starting point for discussion during group interviews. It is highly satisfying to look back on this proposal, since I can clearly see the progress that I have made since then. In this piece of work I discussed Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) primary habitus theory, which is valid, however there is no critical understanding of this in the proposal or true understanding of what it means. Similarly, I intended to do five rounds of data collection, which in retrospect was very naïve and not easily achievable.

The Institution Focused Study (IFS) was a significant learning curve for me and I embraced the challenge to plan and conduct an academic research project that was meaningful both academically and professionally. During this time, I joined a writing study group at the IoE. This group provided me with a forum in which to listen to other people's journeys with the EdD and explore who I was becoming as a student. Through this group, I began to talk more to others, not only about their writing but also about their research, which I found highly supportive. My IFS followed some of the ideas that I explored in the MOE1 course and I decided to focus on interviewing nursery and reception children in groups to explore the development of their pupil identities. It was during this

stage that I learned about sociocultural theory. Up until this point, I had experienced difficulty in relating to and understanding theoretical frameworks, however for the first time I had found something that I not only could grasp, but that also seemed wholly applicable to what I was exploring. It made sense to me to adopt a framework that recognises children's development as being connected to the world in which they live. I began to contemplate critically and theoretically about the ways in which we are a product of our own experiences; that no person lives in isolation. The interviews I did demonstrated how teachers, friends and family influenced the children's learner identities, but also that they had a sense of the wider world and purpose of school. There was an understanding that they came to school to learn and that there were rules in place that they needed to abide by. Within these layers of influence, the children then demonstrated how they internalised their experiences by exploring and playing, and learning independently. I thoroughly enjoyed planning the IFS and interviewing the children. I felt that I was doing something meaningful and really wanted to understand their transition into school and how they adopted the role of pupil. Reflecting on my IFS, there were certainly flaws and I now know of lots more existing literature based on transition that would have benefited the study.

Upon completion of my IFS, I moved to Vietnam and began a new life. It was a strange time for me and it took me a long time to decide what to do next regarding my thesis research proposal. I knew that I still believed in the power of consulting with children, and wanted to explore this further. I also thought that there was more that could be done regarding transition, however there was lots of existing research available regarding children starting school. Moving to Vietnam was my first experience of a big international transition and, even as an adult, I found moving to a completely different country and culture challenging at times. I understood how transition was a process and not an event and it took me a long time to adapt. In many ways, my own experiences are similar to the children's in my study. I began to look more closely at the children who I taught and was fascinated by their life histories and the many different experiences that they had already had. As I began to read more widely, I wanted to find out more

about international transition and how it affects children, because it was obvious to me that this was far more complex than moving schools within the same country. I spoke informally to parents and my ideas grew. There appeared to be a genuine interest about what I was thinking about doing, and it felt important. I looked outside of my early years department and began to consider what changing schools at different points of the primary school was like for the children. Again, there was little qualitative information available. It took me a long time to write my thesis proposal and to have it agreed, but this time was important. I had to personally adjust to my transition, which for me was most certainly a process and not an event, and I had to read widely in order to improve my skills as a researcher.

I lived in Vietnam for two years and shortly after I collected my data, I moved to Belgium, again working in another large British international primary school. I feel my journey has, in part, gone full circle because in my new role as well as being a teacher, I am also a Professional Learning Partner. Looking at the first Foundations of Professionalism module that I did has never been so relevant and I almost wish that I could repeat it, with the skills I have gained and the job that I now have. I am working with a team of people aiming to encourage professional learning through research and collaboration between colleagues on both a local and international level. This is just the beginning of the journey, but I now hope to use the skills I have gained to continue to research children's experiences of international transition. There appears to be limited accounts of this in current literature, and my research aims to contribute to this field. There are international schools in most countries, catering for a wide variety of backgrounds. While my research focuses on a British international primary school, the findings may also be relevant to other styles of international schools, such as American or Australian schools. I would like to connect with other schools and their families, working together to develop our understanding so that we can support children through this period of change, recognising that this is a complex process that begins and ends before the actual move. After eight years of studying, in many ways I am sad that the EdD is finishing because it has been, by far the most rewarding professional development that I could have ever

hoped for. I am now interested to see how my research and professional role develops, and the ways in which I can support my colleagues, under the title of Dr. Draper.

1.0 Introduction

This is a qualitative study that explores children's experiences of transition in the first year of starting a new British international primary school in Vietnam. I use sociocultural and ecological theory to describe these children's experiences, discussing both children and parents' perspectives. In particular, using sociocultural and ecological theory to help explain how children's experiences are shaped by their interactions both with other people and the school environment itself (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 and Rogoff, 1995; 2003). Mayfield's (2003) notion of continuity is also used to understand children's experiences of transition.

1.1   Rationale for the study

The main rationale for this study is to address a niche area in the literature on children's experiences of transition in an international school context and contribute to the field of research into transition. Research into children's transitions at key milestones is widely documented in the literature. For example, Dockett and Perry (2004; 2005; 2007) have undertaken large-scale research projects in Australia regarding children's experiences as they start school, consulting children and parents directly. Their research highlighted the importance of developing friendships and learning the new routines of the school in order to have a successful transition. Similarly, Fabian and Dunlop (2005) explored transitions from preschool to primary school. Their work is useful in highlighting transition as a complex process that requires children to adapt and take on new roles. Meanwhile, Cantin and Boivin (2004) researched into secondary school transition in Canada. Their focus was on the role of peer relationships at this time, and demonstrated the importance of friendships to children as they change schools. All of these studies were based upon movement between schools in one country and each one explores transition as an emotionally volatile time, which is important to understand in order to best support children. The rationale for my study is formed by the international context as I aim to understand this unique form of transition for the children involved. When considering the work of Dockett and Perry (2004; 2005), Fabian

and Dunlop (2005) and Cantin and Boivin (2004), transition is complex for children as they make sense of their new learning environment. However, I aim to explore this with the added dimension of a move to a new country, and therefore contribute to the wider field of research on transition. This rationale is fuelled by my professional practice as I aim to better understand children's transitions so that I can further support both the children and their parents during this time and share my findings with the international school community.

Another niche aspect of my study and further aim is to explore children's experiences of transition outside of key milestones such as nursery, reception and year one, and consider what happens when children move midway through primary school. Where research has been done on changing schools at different times, this is largely quantitative, with connections made between irregular transition and underperformance in school (Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000; Demie, Lewis and Taplin, 2005; Strand and Demie, 2007; Eodanable and Lauchlan, 2011; Gibbons and Telhaj, 2011; and Scherrer, 2013). Hacohen's (2012) research with international school teachers helps to provide some insight, and my research aims to build on this and consider children and parents' accounts of international transition, giving them a voice in the literature. My research moves away from the deficit model previously presented by researchers of unconventional transition, and instead considers what this experience is like for children as they start at a British international primary school in Vietnam at different ages.

1.2   Research aims and questions

The aim of this research is to better understand children's experiences of transition into a British international school in Vietnam. I aim to identify the factors that influence their transition in terms of support or challenges that the children face. To address the research aims and explore children's experiences of this niche area of transition, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

2. What are parents' perspectives of supporting children in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

3. What factors influence children's experiences in their first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis begins with an overview of the existing literature on transition and my theoretical positioning within this field. I argue that transition is a process rather than an event, and is affected by the many interactions that children have with others as they change schools. Transition begins before the children move, and in this research, is further complicated by the international context. Families prepare for the move together and in different ways depending on their previous experiences. Children have to learn to adapt, not only to a new school, but also to a new country and for some, to a new type of schooling. Sociocultural and ecological theory is used in my research to present transition as an active process of engagement between children, families and schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rogoff, 1995, 2003). Furthermore, this framework also helps to understand that children each have their own ecology, making their experiences of transition unique. Although there may be similarities between experiences, the factors surrounding transition such as family background and prior experiences all serve to highlight the personal and individual nature of transition. The methodology chapter is used to describe the methods used and the justification for my approach in answering the research questions. The research design needed to be able to capture children's experiences of transition, and I decided to focus on children and parents' accounts of this. To support this, I also used school policies and documents in order to explore institutional factors surrounding transition and how the school aims to support new families to the school. In the findings chapter, themes in the data are presented and grouped together, which are then analysed in the discussion. This chapter presents these findings in further detail, comparing them to previous research findings and

discussing the complexity involved in international primary school transition. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications for further research and a description of how the findings have helped to address an apparent gap in the field of research on transition.

2.0   Literature Review

Drawing on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979), and influenced by the literature, I argue that transition is conceptualised as a continuous evolving process and one in which children are active participants. It is not a singular event, but rather a process over time (Fabian and Dunlop, 2005; Petriwskyi, Thorpe and Tayler, 2005; Howieson, Croxford and Howat, 2008; Murray, 2014). Children's experiences in a new school are shaped by the interactions they have with others and with the school itself. Prior research is presented which builds an understanding of some of the issues that children face during periods of transition into a new school. When children are directly consulted, friendships feature as an area of major concern (Forster, 1997; Cantin and Boivin, 2004; Fabian and Dunlop, 2005; Evangelou et al, 2008; Benner, 2011; NCSL, 2011; Brown, 2012; Hacohen, 2012; Messiou and Jones, 2015; Adams, 2016). During this process of transition, children experience different emotions and are supported in varying ways by the school and their parents (Cantin and Boivin, 2004; Yeo and Clarke, 2007; Van Der Zee, Ali and Haaksma, 2007; Eodanable and Lauchlan, 2011; Li et al, 2012; Hacohen, 2012; Thao and Boyd, 2014; Messiou and Jones, 2015; Choi, 2017). Sociocultural theory and in particular, the use of Rogoff's (2003) three planes of development and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model are presented as a theoretical framework for the study. Mayfield's (2003) notion of continuity is also used to help theorise this niche area of transition. My research aims to explore children's experiences of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam and the factors that affect this. While a lot of current literature surrounding transition focuses on children's experiences of starting primary school, and also changing schools as an older pupil, children's experiences of transition internationally across schools and countries is less well researched, particularly at non-normative times such as midway through primary school.

2.1   Defining transition

In defining 'transition', Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Tayler (2005) state that transition is an 'ongoing process of mutual adaptations by children, families and

schools to facilitate children moving successfully from home and early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings into the early years of school' (Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Tayler, 2005:56). I argue that this continual process of adaptation that occurs during transition is not limited to children's experiences in starting school, but can also include movement at any age from one school to another, or indeed within one school. This view is supported by Fabian and Dunlop (2005:229) who state that 'the way in which transitions are experienced not only makes a difference to children in the early months of a new transition, but may also have a much longer term impact, because the extent to which they feel successful in the first transition is likely to influence subsequent experiences'. Thus, transition is not something that solely affects children at traditional moments in time such as starting school, but during any further periods of educational change. The process of transition is gradual and complex and successful transition involves the work of children, the school and the parents. As explained by Howieson, Croxford and Howat (2008:17), 'transitions are inherently a longitudinal process'. It is not limited to the physical move itself, but rather the process of change and adaptation linked to this move. Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Tayler (2005) also provide an account of transition into primary school as being a 'multi-year experience' meaning that it can take children more than a year to transition and adjust fully into a new school. In addition, they use the term 'multi-faceted' (Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Taylor, 2005:61) to explain how children's relationships with their peers, families and with the school itself has an impact on their overall experience of transition, thus demonstrating the complexity of this process.

The term 'transition' is often used to describe starting school or moving from one phase of education to the next, such as preschool to primary school and then secondary school (for example, Lam and Pollard, 2006; Lam, 2009; Benner, 2011; Li et al, 2012). When exploring changing schools at times other than at these traditional milestones, the term 'pupil mobility' is also often used (Dobson and Henthorne, 1999; Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000; Demie, Lewis and Taplin, 2005; Strand and Demie, 2007; Eodanable and Lauchlan, 2011; Gibbons and Telhaj, 2011; and Scherrer, 2013). Dobson and Henthorne (1999:5) explain

pupil mobility as 'a child joining or leaving a school at a point other than the normal age at which children start or finish their education at that school, whether or not this involves a move of home'. This explanation is successful in defining the children involved in this study since they are children who have joined school at varying times, rather than the significant milestones of kindergarten/nursery, reception or year one. However, with this label 'pupil mobility', comes a wealth of research examining links between mobility and academic underperformance, thus creating negative connotations that changing schools midway through primary or secondary school is damaging for the pupils involved (for example, Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000; Demie, Lewis and Taplin, 2005; Strand and Demie, 2007; Eodanable and Lauchlan, 2011; Gibbons and Telhaj, 2011; and Scherrer, 2013). In these studies, the term pupil mobility was linked to a deficit model of underperformance and strain on schools. Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000) in their report, wrote about the negative effects that pupil mobility could have on schools, stating that high mobility takes up vast amounts of staff time and resources. Furthermore, their descriptions of mobile pupils do not match the sample in this study. As they describe,

> The intake of high mobility schools, both at normal and non-standard times, generally seems to include greater-than-average numbers of children from poor families, children with special educational needs and/ or children who are not fluent in English. Travellers and children in care are other groups who may also be among their mobile pupils.
>
> (Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000:116)

Strand and Demie (2007) went even further and claimed that there is a 'widespread assumption that pupil mobility is disruptive to education, either directly by disrupting curriculum continuity and progression or indirectly through domestic stress or poor social adjustment (Strand and Demie, 2007:313). I would like to move away from such 'widespread assumptions' and instead contribute to the literature by exploring the experiences of children from their viewpoint, alongside their parents, which is something that has been missing from other studies. Rather than a focus on academic attainment, my study aims to delve deeper into the qualitative side of changing schools midway

through primary school. For this reason, the term 'transition' is used in my research as opposed to 'pupil mobility'. With the wording of 'transition', as defined by Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Tayler (2005) comes an association with a period of settling into a new school rather than looking solely at the act of moving there, as suggested by 'pupil mobility'.

2.2   Theorising transitions using a sociocultural and ecological framework

The literature shows that studies exploring transition often use a sociocultural or ecological framework to discuss the findings (Dockett and Perry, 2004; Griebel and Niesel, 2009; and Loizou, 2011) making this a valid framework for my research. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological approach was used in each of these studies to help explain how transition is multidimensional and not something that is 'done' to the child. The sociocultural aspect of these studies demonstrated that children help to shape the context of the school and the classroom as much as they are influenced by their new school experience. In my study, I suggest that children's transitions are shaped by interpersonal, intrapersonal and institutional factors. This argument is drawn from Vygotsky (1978), Rogoff (1995), Lave and Wenger (1991), and Claxton and Wells (2002) who all seek to demonstrate that children develop through their experiences with those around them, in the context of their social and cultural surroundings.

Rogoff's (2003) account of sociocultural theory is used to explore how children develop according to three planes of development (the interpersonal, intrapersonal and institutional). The diagram below illustrates my conceptualisation of the three planes of development.
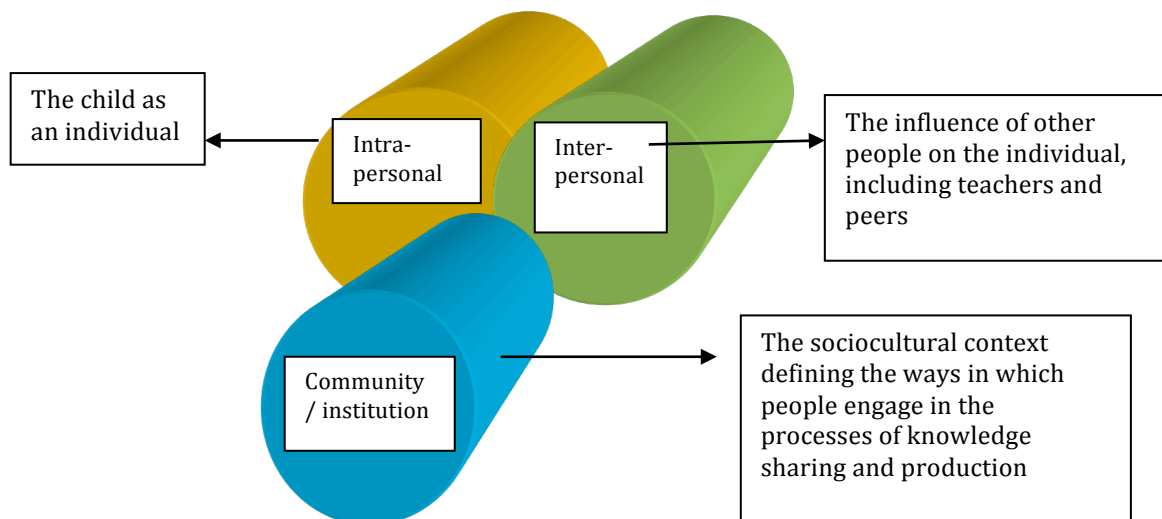
Figure 1: My conceptualisation of Rogoff's (2003) three planes of development

This model could be useful in the context of transition and children's experiences since it may help to understand how children develop during this time. Intrapersonal factors such as personal feelings and personal attitudes towards school, account for children's individual and internalised responses to this period of change. It acknowledges that all children are unique and while schools can work to support them through systems such as the buddy approach, children will respond in different ways. Considerations of children's feelings in particular, may stem from the intrapersonal plane of development and this plane of development helps to acknowledge the effect of other people on children's experiences. When viewed from this approach, children will be affected by their interactions with others, for example by the acceptance of new friends and inclusion into new friendship groups. Teachers will also be important as well as their parents, in preparing children for their move and supporting them in their new school. The final, community/institution plane provides a different perspective and acknowledges the impact of the actual school the child has moved into. It cannot be assumed that transition into all schools is the same. The approach of the school, its ethos and attitude towards new pupils will all contribute to how a child settles in and adapts. In the context of my research, an international component is also prevalent here and the concept of community is extended, taking into account a global perspective.

The understanding that individuals are affected by the world around them is further explained by using ecological theory, which was developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) who provides this explanation:

> The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.
>
> Bronfenbrenner (1979:21)

Such theory is particularly useful for my study since it acknowledges the vast impact of external factors on the individual. In the case of international transition, the concept of 'changing properties of immediate settings' is paramount. Thus, children undergoing this period of change will be affected by the physical move itself of living in a new country (Vietnam) with their family and attending a British international school, for the first time in some cases. This move is done with a family making it therefore impossible to discount parents from the study. Locating this research within the context of ecological theory acknowledges the child as an active participant in this move and a process of adaptation that occurs over a period of time. Each child will experience a multitude of different relationships and roles that they are both affected by and also help to shape. Such relationships include being a student, a friend, a son or daughter and a sibling. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains above, these relationships are located within larger contexts including the school itself, its ethos and philosophical approach to learning, as well as the wider context of Vietnam. Ecological theory also acknowledges the progressive nature of development, supporting the argument that transition is a lifelong process of adaptation, development and change, as opposed to a crude assumption that transition is only relevant for the first weeks of term. It is a longitudinal experience that takes place over a period of time (Petriwskyi, Thorpe and Taylor, 2005; Fabian and Dunlop, 2005; Howieson, Croxford and Howat, 2008; Murray, 2014). Fabian and Dunlop (2005) consider the complexity of transition and how it can affect individuals in different ways depending on their previous

experiences, highlighting that for some, frequent movement is 'a way of life' (Fabian and Dunlop, 2005:232), however the ability to cope and adapt is different for all children, even within the same family. In acknowledging transition as progressive, Fabian and Dunlop (2005:233) argue that 'more emphasis is needed on transition as a process rather than transition as an event'.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes his ecological theory model as 'a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3). While Bronfenbrenner (1979) himself does not provide a visual picture of this, Rogoff (2003:47), created a diagram, which serves as a useful aide in helping to understand this theoretical model. This is shown in Figure 2:
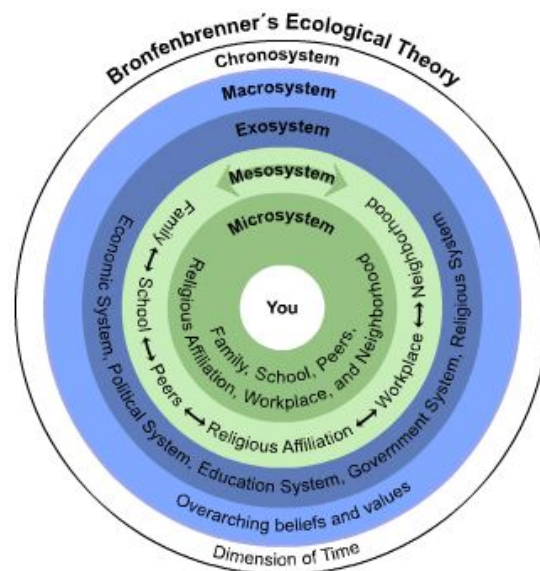

Figure 2: Rogoff's interpretation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory model (2003:47)

Within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nests, the individual lies at the centre, thus acknowledging, like Rogoff (2003) and Vygotsky (1978), internal processes of mutual adaptation. The next layer is referred to as a microsystem, which is 'a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). The concept of a microsystem acknowledges the role that individuals have in any given situation and the interactions that may occur. Development is on going and acknowledges the

impact of the immediate setting on the individual, but also how the individual helps to shape their environment. Such roles are located within a wider network, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes as a mesosystem. This 'comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighbourhood peer group)' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). In the context of my research, this stresses the importance of considering the complexity of relationships in a period of change for the children involved. As they move internationally, the only constant part of the mesosystem is the relationships that exist within the home. Part of transition therefore also means negotiating new relationships at school and in the wider community. Building new relationships has been widely documented as a significant aspect of transition (Forster, 1997; Cantin and Boivin, 2004; Fabian and Dunlop, 2005; Benner, 2011; Brown 2012; Hacohen; 2012; Messiou and Jones, 2015; Adams, 2016). Building a relationship with teachers is potentially even more prevalent in the context of an international school, according to Hacohen (2012) since these students may be feeling particularly anxious and parents less emotionally available due to their own transitions into a new country and workplace.

The concept of a mesosystem acknowledges that within any given setting, roles and relationships are interlinked. The exosystem meanwhile 'refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). This could refer to the activities of the school itself outside of the immediate environment of the classroom, while the macrosystem refers to underlying subcultures, cultures and belief systems, in this context within the school environment. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains, classrooms and schools may all look largely similar within one particular country, but they all operate differently. In each school setting therefore, there will be an ideology and ethos that helps to shape its culture, thus creating a unique environment. Hence, one aspect of transition is learning to adapt and understand the new school environment. Research by Hacohen (2012) explored the shifting and 'flexible

group culture' unique to international schools due to large levels of transition amongst both staff and children (Hacohen, 2012:122). Nurturing newcomers and respecting previous experiences were key elements of the international school culture that Hacohen (2012) describes. Since 'the norm is a flux of change' in international schools, the school in Hacohen's (2012) study was particularly welcoming to both children and staff, and worked actively to build cohesion and shared beliefs in school ethos and curriculum, developing a sense of trust and empowerment (Hacohen, 2012:122). Furthermore, as opposed to some schools elsewhere who have negative associations with 'pupil mobility' (Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000; Demie, Lewis and Taplin, 2005; Strand and Demie, 2007; Eodanable and Lauchlan, 2011; Gibbons and Telhaj, 2011; and Scherrer, 2013); the school culture that Hacohen (2012) describes thrived on change and having an inclusive approach based on understanding children's transitions. By accepting that children changing schools would be anxious and have to work to fit in, this in itself became part of the school's ideology, therefore easing and supporting transition for newcomers.

Recognising the complexity of belonging to a school community demonstrates that each school is unique and therefore, pupils are likely to experience some form of discontinuity when changing schools. Work by Mayfield (2003) focuses on continuity throughout transition, arguing that this is a highly complex issue particularly within the context of international movement. Mayfield's (2003) work builds on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework as she explains that 'philosophical continuity is foundational and refers to underlying philosophies of early childhood programs, including the purpose of early education, concepts of childhood, and methods for teaching children' (Mayfield, 2003:239). Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework alongside this, philosophical continuity could therefore refer to continuity in a macrosystem as children move schools. In the context of international transition therefore, there is no guarantee of philosophical continuity since approaches to education may vary depending on the school system that the child has experienced. Studies that have explored transition within one country have found that understanding the rules and routines either when starting school or changing schools is a

significant aspect of this experience (Forster, 1997; Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000; Brooker, 2003; Fabian and Dunlop, 2005; Lam, 2009; Griebel and Niesel, 2009; Nguyen and Yang, 2015; Tanu, 2016). Mayfield (2003) acknowledges this as she describes debates between child-centred and academic teaching philosophy. In the context of my research, children previously attending British international schools in other countries are arguably more likely to achieve philosophical continuity than those who have experienced more formal education systems elsewhere. Although schools do not have to follow a British curriculum in its entirety, there is a shared philosophy for schools that are considered to be 'British'.

Curricular continuity when changing schools may also be an issue according to Mayfield (2003). Curricular continuity 'refers to the continuity of curriculum across levels and programs' (Mayfield, 2003:240). Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, philosophy and curriculum are inextricably linked and help to form part of the macrosystem in a school. One cannot exist without the other since the philosophy helps to form the curriculum. Where there are differences in philosophy, arguably there will also be differences in curriculum, which will inevitably affect transition, particularly in a global context. The uniqueness of my research is in its consideration of these aspects of transition. Ordinarily, within one country the overarching philosophy and curriculum of a school will be predetermined to a large extent by government, meaning that the curriculum provided by schools is broadly similar. For some of the families involved in my research, they have experienced a different philosophical and curricular approach having attended local schools in Vietnam, South Korea, India and Singapore. For these families, transition is arguably more complex due to such changes, which is an issue raised by Fabian and Dunlop (2005) as they discuss the significance of philosophical discontinuity for children moving internationally having experienced a different pedagogical approach (see also Brooker, 2003 and Einarsdottir, 2011). Similarly, Hacohen's (2012) work with international school teachers, highlighted understanding children's previous experiences of school as a challenge for staff, and that cultural differences and a lack of curricular continuity for some students causes anxiety.

In addition to Rogoff's (2003) intrapersonal plane and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) central 'You' aspect of his ecological framework, Mayfield (2003) also adds developmental continuity as an aspect of transition, explaining that this 'addresses how to foster continuity for individual children' (Mayfield, 2003:240). Understanding and acknowledging each child, as an individual in transition is a key aspect of helping a child feel welcome (Hacohen, 2012). This aspect is further complicated in my research due to language barriers. It is arguably more difficult to understand a new child as an individual if the teacher and other members of the class cannot communicate effectively in the same language. Other aspects of continuity in transition are linked to physical, organisational and administrative aspects of schooling. During transition, children will experience changes in the physical environment of schools and resources used as well as the length of the school day, the size of the class and adult-child ratios.

Thus, the use of sociocultural theory and in particular, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model in past research based on children's experiences of transition, makes this a valid theoretical framework to this study. Furthermore, it shows how children and parents' perspectives of transition during the first year of joining a new international school can be understood within a sociocultural framework. Sociocultural and ecological theory is an important framing for my study since it helps to position children as active participants in their transition. The inclusion of Mayfield's (2003) concept of continuity in the wider literature is highly relevant since it acknowledges the impact of discontinuity in philosophy, curriculum, and school structures such as organisational, physical and administrative factors, which could be more pertinent in a move to a British international school abroad. It is important in my study to understand children's perspectives and the factors that influence their experiences in the first year of transition into a new British international primary school, thus acknowledging them as active participants in this process (Murray, 2014). This framework helps to view transition as multi-dimensional and acknowledges the myriad of relationships and societal factors that affect this.

2.3   Researching transition

There have been a number of large-scale research projects internationally on transition, most commonly exploring children's experiences moving from kindergarten into primary school. For example, Dockett and Perry's (2004; 2005; 2007) large-scale research in Australia sought children's perspectives of their experiences of starting school at the age of five. Einarsdottir's (2011) research with five year olds in Iceland meanwhile looked into children's views of differences between early childhood settings and primary school. Using a quantitative approach, Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) surveyed teachers in the United States of America asking questions based on how successful they felt transition into kindergarten and first grade was for children aged five and six. A wide range of smaller research projects have contributed to the body of scholarship on transition, again with a focus on children's experiences from preschool to primary school. For example, Griebel and Niesel (2009) looked at transition when starting school from a family perspective in Germany, while Brooker, (2003) and Shields' (2009) studies in England, and O'Farrelly and Hennessy's (2014) research in Ireland all focused on understanding parents' experiences of transition from nursery into primary school and within early childhood centres. Yeo and Clarke (2007) highlighted children's views of transition entering primary school in Singapore, while Loizou (2011) used conversational interviews to help fifty-five children, aged six to reflect on their transitions from kindergarten into elementary school in Cyprus. Lam and Pollard (2006) used a sociocultural framework to demonstrate how children are active participants in the transition between home and kindergarten. Karila and Rantavuori (2014) explored how preschools and schools in Finland worked together using joint lessons to support effective transition. Combined with this is some longitudinal research. Pollard and Filer (1996) in England, and Corsaro and Molinari (2005) in Italy both followed the lives of a group of children throughout their entire time at primary school, creating vignettes following their journey as they made transitions each year. Other studies, meanwhile, have used discourse analysis to explore school policies surrounding transition. For example, Schulting, Malone and Dodge (2005) examined the effect of school-based kindergarten transition policies and practices on child academic outcomes

in the United States of America. They found that kindergarten transition policies have a positive effect on students' academic achievement and parental involvement, thus emphasising their importance.

While these studies are all important in gaining an insight into the experiences of children as they change schools or enter a new phase of transition, the key aspect that makes my research unique is the international context. All of these studies, while taking place in a range of different countries, have not included international transition as a factor. However, these studies can be used as a starting point for exploring some of the issues that affect children experiencing transition regardless of the context. In particular, understanding transition through a sociocultural and ecological framework is significant. Each of the studies highlighted demonstrates the complexity of transition as a process of adaptation and understanding through the development of relationships between the child, family and school.

Fabian and Dunlop (2005) specialised in preschool to primary transition and although their work is with younger children, their findings and proposals could be relevant to all types of transition. Working from an ecological perspective, they assert that 'the interconnections between home and preschool and school, and between the various phases of school, and the interaction between the person and the environment, will affect the developmental outcomes of children in transition (Fabian and Dunlop, 2005:232). This proposal helps support the view of transition as a lifelong process that is experienced as a community and network of different relationships. These in turn have an affect on how well a child is able to perform in the new learning environment. From this perspective, success therefore is partially dependent on building successful connections. Fabian and Dunlop (2005) go on to explain some of the challenges that children face during periods of transition, including social challenges of establishing a role and identity within the new learning context and establishing meaningful friendships there. Furthermore, in order to become a successful participant in the new school or class, the child needs to be able to 'read social situations and have a social understanding, in order to become a member of the school society'

(Fabian and Dunlop, 2005:233). In the context of a British international school in Vietnam, this could be especially challenging since the child will not only be in a new school but also living within a new country and culture. A key aspect of transition therefore, is learning how to successfully participate in this new environment.

Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) surveyed 3,595 teachers in the United States of America, exploring problems in the transition to kindergarten. The findings state that sixteen percent of the children were perceived as experiencing serious problems such as difficulties in communicating, following instructions, and limited social skills. Furthermore, forty-six percent of teachers reported that half their class had specific problems in a number of different areas. It is important to note, however, that the study only includes the perspectives of teachers and does not include the opinions of the children themselves or their parents. A key element of my study is the inclusion of children's voices, which cannot occur when a quantitative survey design is used. Furthermore, in adopting a sociocultural framework, my study acknowledges the impact of different relationships as well as the school structure on transition and individual experience. By omitting this perspective from their research, Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) have been unable to gain a complete picture of early childhood transition.

By contrast, Einarsdottir's (2011) research in Iceland involved children and teachers as co-researchers. The study aimed to find out more about children's experiences during transition from playschool to primary school and emphasises that children can and should be involved in discussions surrounding their transitions. Einarsdottir's (2011) qualitative study focused on two different schools in Reykjavik, involving forty children in a drawing activity and three playschool teachers in focus group interviews. The main differences that the children discussed were focused around academic learning and teaching methods, as well as 'changes in their own status and responsibilities' (Einarsdottir, 2011:752), linking to Mayfield's (2003) concept of continuity in transition. The strength of Einarsdottir's (2011) study lies in its design, allowing

time for both children and teachers to work together, thus acknowledging Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concept of microsystems and mesosystems and developing an understanding of how the relationships that children and school staff develop affects a child's experience of school.

Einarsdottir's (2011) findings correlate with other research, such as Brooker's (2003) small-scale ethnographic study of sixteen English four year olds of English and Bangladeshi origin starting school. Similarly to Einarsdottir's (2011) work, Brooker (2003) also found issues regarding experiences of curriculum. Family members prepared their children for primary school in differing ways and 'beliefs about children's learning' were uncovered in the study (Brooker, 2003:122). While the Anglo parents talked about the role of play and language development, the Bangladeshi parents emphasised the need to learn to 'listen, learn and, above all, remember in order to do well at school' (Brooker, 2003:125). These findings suggest that family and the home culture influence experiences of transition and that movement into more structured learning contexts has an impact on children. This is linked to Mayfield's (2003) theory of continuity as affecting transition. From this perspective, in Brooker's (2003) study, the children from the Anglo families experienced greater levels of philosophical continuity since preparation at home matched the philosophical approach of the school. My research has a unique setting, which is a British international primary school, which calls into question how parents will prepare their children for transition and whether they will achieve philosophical continuity between home and school.

As Griebel and Niesel (2009) argue, transition cannot be explored fully without considering the home environment. They describe how children are supported in varying ways by their parents as they seek to put coping mechanisms into place such as stressing the positive sides of the change and building new routines. However, they also remark that 'if the transition to primary school occurs at the same time as other familial transitions, such as changes in parents' employment, the transition is further complicated for the school child' (Griebel and Niesel, 2009:61). This is particularly relevant for my research since it

highlights the additional complexities that may arise when transition is combined with changes in the home environment, which helps to further validate this as being an important aspect of transition to research.

2.4   The importance of friendships in periods of transition

Working from a sociocultural and ecological theoretical framework, it is important to acknowledge the impact of other people during periods of transition. While Griebel and Niesel (2009), Einarsdottir (2011), Brooker (2003) all noted the influence of the home environment and the teachers on transition, Fabian and Dunlop (2005) argue that the formation of friendships is also key. More specifically, 'a child is less likely to learn well and profit from school without the support of friends but there are complex social skills involved in making and maintaining friends' (Fabian and Dunlop, 2005:233). These complexities link back to ecological theory and understanding the social rules of the classroom, as well as other existing group dynamics within the class. Such adaptation may involve a shift in identity for the individual involved as they learn to become a fully accepted member of the group.

Arguably, children's peers may be highly significant in influencing children's experiences. Cantin and Boivin (2004) researched specifically into children's peer networks during the transition between elementary school and Junior High School (JHS) in Canada. Over the course of two years, two hundred children were interviewed four times in this longitudinal study. Children's social networks were undoubtedly affected during this period of change as 'New JHS students must also integrate into a new, larger, and more complex social environment, and form satisfying social relationships with new friends while coping with the loss of some of their elementary school friends' (Cantin and Boivin, 2004:561). Although the children in this study had not moved internationally, the process of changing schools unraveled their social networks and friendship support groups. There was a period of mourning and loss for old friends who had moved to different high schools. However, this did not have a lasting impact on the children involved, and the effects of this largely diminished throughout the first

year of the new school. Initially, the researchers noted a drop in self-esteem, however they found that this was only temporary. For the students involved, the role of new friends in JHS was an important aspect of settling in, since 'school friends may help in dealing with new school requirements. They may also be a source of comfort in the face of stressful experiences related to the school transition' (Cantin and Boivin, 2004:562). The new students were able to form a bond since they were going through similar experiences, with some children regarding the opportunity as "a new beginning" (Cantin and Boivin, 2004:567). In this sense, the process of leaving friends behind and establishing new support networks had different effects on the children involved. While the loss of friendships was inevitably a sad experience, the opportunity to create 'a new beginning' was exciting and reflected the changes the children were going through. They were able to establish links with new friends with whom they felt a connection to, and who were able to support them in their new school surroundings. Benner's (2011) review of research into transitions into high school in the United States of America also supports the view that while changing schools can be challenging, support systems in the form of friendships helps to facilitate successful transition experiences.

Likewise, research conducted in England by Messiou and Jones (2015) found similar concerns by students around the issue of friendships and peer social networks. This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews with twelve students aged between twelve and fifteen years old, involving them as student researchers. The research was primarily concerned with listening to the pupils' voices and understanding their experiences of transition into different entry points into secondary school. The biggest concern arising from these interviews was in making friends and also being accepted by their peers. There were also particular issues surrounding changing schools at an unconventional time:

> Feelings of loneliness and uncertainty at the beginning seemed to
> be common. Given that the students in our study had started a
> new school at a non-normative time, these comments highlight a
> particularly heightened sense of being separate and isolated from
> their peers, who have had had time to form friendships.

(Messiou and Jones, 2015:258)

This research suggests a particular set of issues for students who have experienced transition at unusual points, and these concerns may be different or more strongly felt than at other points of traditional transition. The authors themselves note that this is 'an evolving area for research' (Messiou and Jones, 2015:256) and that little has been done to explore the qualitative side effects that such students experience. While the students in the Cantin and Boivin (2004) study had a shared experience of being new together at the start of JHS, the students in this research expressed greater feelings of isolation that were not evident in the other findings. Arguably, trying to find a friendship network amongst already established groups is a more daunting task than arriving as a new year group together.

Contributing to understanding issues surrounding the role of friendships, teachers' perspectives of pupil transitions in an international school context were sought by Hacohen (2012). Hacohen (2012) conducted a series of eight semi-structured interviews in four different international primary schools in the UK to explore the effects of high pupil turnover. The teachers in the study discussed the importance of their pastoral role and that students' transition into school at different points in the school year required particular care and attention. In particular, it was noted that children might lose their sense of belonging and the process of adjustment to the new school results in feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. New arrivals need to establish their role and their place within already organised classroom structures and friendship groups, which is paramount to their survival in school. Added to this is a wealth of different emotions that students experience as they make these transitions, whether as a group when starting a new phase of schooling or on their own at different points of the school year.

Working from an international perspective, Adams (2016) highlights the need for more research with young international children as they move countries and attempt to form new friendships. Her research aims to contribute to this field.

Adams' (2016) study took place in Malaysia where she worked with five families, with a total of thirteen children. Each family had experienced multiple international moves with their children. She used video data comprising of semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers and principals as well as still images and field notes. Reports from the parents in this study placed the emphasis on them in supporting their children to form friendships early on in their arrival by organising play dates with other expatriate children. The adults in the study had to interact with other parents from the school community in order to support their children and were active participants in the friendship forming process. While these findings are of interest to my study, children's personal accounts of international transition are missing from this study. My research therefore attempts to delve further into the area of international transition but also includes children's perspectives in order to gain a fuller understanding of their personal experiences.

In accordance with sociocultural theory, the studies by Cantin and Boivin (2004), Messiou and Jones (2015), Brown (2012) and Hacohen (2012) all highlight the importance of peer support for children who are undergoing transition, particularly during uncommon periods. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework highlights the importance of a microsystem, namely the impact of peers on personal development and growth during periods of transition. Children make sense of their new world with the support of those around them, and as these studies have shown, friends are a key aspect of this. Mayfield's (2003) notion of continuity meanwhile also helps to understand why leaving friends behind and having to make new ones adds an increased complexity to transition. The severing of existing friendship networks from the previous school were significant for the pupils involved in these studies and as such, building new peer support networks was of paramount importance to them. Messiou and Jones (2015) in particular have suggested that there is a need for greater research in this area, especially regarding the qualitative experiences of pupils undergoing transition. The issues highlighted in these studies may be amplified when children experience an international move, and so my research aims to add an original insight by exploring this further, in a British international

school context. This is in accordance with Adams' (2016) research with expatriate children where the role of parents in supporting and encouraging new friendships was an essential aspect of moving and settling into a new country.

2.5   Managing transition in an international context and at unconventional times

It could be argued that children's transition in an international context and global transition is a pertinent area. Global transition in this instance is far more complex than regular transitions into school because of the added complication of moving to a different country. Ordinarily a child when starting school would be doing this from their usual home environment and the new school would be the only element of change. However, for the children in this study, almost every element of their lives is in a state of change. As highlighted by Mayfield (2003), a key element of transition lies in continuity, and for children moving internationally; there lies a risk of big levels of discontinuity in the structure of the new school. The majority of the children will be learning to live in a new country, and some will also be managing a move into a British international school for the first time. For many of the children involved, the only source of stability will be the family itself.

Van Der Zee, Ali and Haaksma (2007) looked into effective coping strategies among expatriate children and adolescents. Questionnaires were used with 104 Dutch expatriate children aged between eight and eighteen, living in thirty-seven different countries. According to their study, seventy percent of expatriates have children and the process of change and adaptation can be stressful. In particular, leaving a familiar environment, and adapting to new schools and new people as well as learning a new language in some cases, can be difficult for all involved. However, positive aspects of global transition were reported as well as challenges. Most notably, children from 'highly cohesive families' experienced much better adjustments and were able to form friendships more easily, thus settling into their new lives (Van Der Zee, Ali and Haaksma, 2007:41). Similarly, children who were emotionally stable and whose parents were happy in their

new host countries also adapted well. This highlights the significance of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model and the impact of relationships and home life on development and transition. Parents' levels of contentment affected the children in Van Der Zee, Ali and Haaksma's (2007) study and happiness at home had an impact on the child as an individual and their ability to transition effectively into their new school. Despite discontinuity in schooling and having to adapt to new systems, these children were able to successfully adjust. My study intends to build on these findings by talking to both the children and their parents directly in order to gain a more qualitative insight into their experiences. The context of a British international school in Vietnam creates a unique opportunity to better understand the experiences of children when arriving in a new country.

In addition to Van Der Zee, Ali and Haaksma's (2007) work, Gardner (2012) highlights that there is very limited research based on transnational disaporic children, and that little consideration has been given to their experiences, thus demonstrating a need for more studies in this area. The issue of stress arose in Cantin and Boivin's (2004) study as well. However, some children were found to be happier in their new schools as this provided them with an opportunity to have a fresh start and "a new beginning" (Cantin and Boivin, 2004:567). For these children, while the process of moving itself may have been stressful, their levels of happiness increased during the course of their transition. Hacohen's (2012) works adds to this picture as the teachers in her doctoral study discuss their role in supporting not just the students but also the parents through international transitions. Hacohen's (2012) data collection involved individual semi-structured interviews with eight primary school teachers in four different international schools. Her research questions focused on ascertaining teachers' views of their experiences of working with internationally relocated children. She was primarily interested in teachers describing what the children's main needs were during transition and how they, as teachers, supported these needs. One of the teachers described this turbulent time as a "roller-coaster" of emotions, most notably 'rejection, anger, excitement, frustration and acceptance' (Hacohen, 2012:119). There was an acceptance amongst teachers that the

students would experience a plethora of emotions and it was their responsibility to provide pastoral care during this time. However, it was also noted that such students develop resilience along this journey and accept that 'the norm is a flux of change' (Hachohen, 2012:120). While this period of transition can be uncomfortable and generate negative feelings as well as those positive aspects of excitement, emotions did settle and adjust to their new surroundings. It would have been interesting to strengthen this data with children's own accounts of their transition and also include parental opinions in order to gain a fuller picture, which is something that my research aims to do in order to add to this body of literature.

Li et al's (2012) research in Hong Kong found that academic expectations and high levels of attainment are more of a concern than the emotional and psychological experiences of children during periods of transition. This highlights a need for greater levels of awareness and research into how children feel about their transitions and a better understanding into what they experience on a more personal level than simply considering academic success. My research aims to take this into consideration by talking to the children directly both about how they feel and also the academic demands of the British international school in Vietnam. Lam (2009) also researched into transition from home to kindergarten in Hong Kong using the sociocultural perspective that children are active participants in transition. Lam (2009) states that her research 'brings into sharp focus the confusion of aims, expectations and approaches offered by parents and teachers within Hong Kong at this time of fast-moving social and cultural change' (Lam, 2009:142). While there has been progression regarding a play-based approach to early years education, this is in stark contrast to the traditional views of formal academic schooling. This coincides with Mayfield's (2003) work on continuity during transition. In the context of Lam (2009), discontinuity between an academic approach and a play-based curriculum led to confusion as children started school. This further highlights the need to explore home attitudes towards schooling and previous experiences of school as factors affecting transition and expectations of the new school.

Research in England by Eodanable and Lauchlan (2011) focused primarily on supporting the emotional health of children during periods of transition. They worked in a small primary school, which had high levels of pupil transition, largely due to the presence of armed forces families attending the school. Likewise, they also made the connection between prior research on unconventional transition as linked to findings about underachievement and argue that 'its effect on social and emotional development is less specific' (Eodanable and Lauchlan, 2011:23). The research that was conducted here aimed to increase children's levels of emotional literacy and support them through this period of change. They found positive effects on the children involved and suggest that more needs to be done to understand both parental and children's experiences, as well as the behavioural and emotional difficulties that these children face as a result of being highly mobile.

Messiou and Jones (2015) also argue that children's emotional experiences have been overlooked in prior research based on transition and their work, which aimed to promote listening to pupils' voices, highlighted the many different feelings that pupils faced during this period of change. They found that 'feelings of worry, loneliness and uncertainty at the beginning were common' and pupils felt 'separated and isolated from their peers' (Messiou and Jones, 2015:258). These concerns were specifically linked to transition midway through a phase of schooling and, as highlighted above, angst surrounding friendship was the main source of concern. My research aims to help address this gap in current literature by consulting children directly about managing transition in an international context and acknowledging the feelings they have experienced during this time.

With this acknowledgement that transition can cause some emotional upheaval for the pupils involved, some studies have reported on strategies used by schools and teachers to help to alleviate some of these difficulties and minimise disruption, both to the pupils involved and the classes that they enter. Buddy systems are reported by Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000), and Demie, Lewis and Taplin (2005) and Scherrer (2013) as one way in which schools work to

support the needs of new arrivals. The buddy is responsible for showing the newcomer around the school and helping them to understand and follow school routines. Scherrer (2013) argues that these systems, while well intentioned, are limited in their ability to fully alleviate the effects of transition. This contrasts with Demie, Lewis and Taplin's (2005) questionnaire findings where headteachers reported that buddy systems were an effective system both for new pupils and their parents. It was reported that the teachers in Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas' (2000) project went to great lengths to plan suitable buddies for children, considering their home language and whom they thought would be friendly and welcoming. However, none of these studies consulted the children themselves. Arguably they are the ones who could truly say whether the buddy system they experienced helped them to deal with their initial anxieties. In particular, some of the teachers in Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas' (2000) findings reported that at times, new arrivals simply did not 'fit in' and 'more seriously, there were sometimes new children whose presence was disruptive and difficult to manage, to the detriment of the whole class' (Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000:88). This highlights an even greater need to understand these pupils better since it suggests that they are experiencing emotional angst and stress during this period of transition. In adopting a sociocultural and ecological framework, my research accepts the view that children's experiences and attitudes are a direct result of their interactions both with other people in the school environment, preparation for school at home and the school structures themselves.

2.6   Understanding the new school environment in transition

As acknowledged by Mayfield's (2003) notion of continuity, opposing views regarding school philosophy and subsequent academic expectation can have an impact on transition, particularly in a global context (Forster, 1997; Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000; Brooker, 2003; Fabian and Dunlop, 2005; Lam, 2009; Griebel and Niesel, 2009; Nguyen and Yang, 2015; Tanu, 2016). Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework demonstrates how education systems form an exosystem that affects the ways in which people interact in a

school environment, relationships within school and ultimately, the individual within this system. Using this theoretical framework as a way of understanding transition consequently means that consideration must be made to the role of academic expectations and understanding the new school environment in transition. Furthermore, the context of the British international primary school in Vietnam may add further complexities in understanding how the new school works since this will involve a change of education system for some of the children involved, as well as a different country.

In the existing literature, both children and parents have described how school can become more academically demanding when starting a new school or phase of learning, such as moving from kindergarten into school or primary into secondary school (Evangelou et al, 2008). The children and their parents report this both positively and negatively. For example, the six year olds in Loizou's (2011) study regarded themselves as older and more independent now that they were learning to read and complete mathematical problems. Contrastingly, worries about academic demands for the American middle school pupils in Duchesne, Ratelle and Roy's (2012) research led to less well-adjusted transition overall when compared to pupils who did not share these concerns. Likewise, some of the six year olds in Yeo and Clarke's (2007) study in Singapore felt nervous and apprehensive about more demanding academic expectations at school. Attitudes towards academic challenge are particularly apparent in research based on starting school and children's understandings of a movement away from *playing* to *learning* in school. Similarly, changes in rules and routines are discussed as well as the formation of new friendship groups and in becoming 'big schoolkids' (Griebel and Niesel, 2009:11). However, most studies focus on children's transition from one phase to another (e.g. from preschool to primary when aged five), but there is much less research on transition within the same phase of education, for example in year three at age seven or year five, at age nine. Despite this, the inclusion of children's voices does help to gain a more detailed and qualitative insight into how it feels for children experiencing a change in schooling, which is useful in the context of my research.

Work in New Zealand by Hattie (2009), claims that transition at unconventional times during the middle of a period of education (such as primary school) has a negative effect on student achievement, which highlights a need to examine this further. Hattie's large-scale research in New Zealand calculated the effect sizes of 138 different influences on student achievement and states that changing schools has the most negative effect on achievement. Similarly, research in the United States of America by Scherrer (2013) explored the negative effects of transition for fifth grade students in twenty-one different elementary schools. This was a quantitative study, which focused on collating and comparing reading test results. Scherrer argues that students who move schools have a lack of 'school connectedness' (Scherrer, 2013:2), meaning that they relate less well to teachers, peers and also the school; another example of the discontinuity that Mayfield (2003) describes. Scherrer (2013) claims that such transitions have a negative effect on achievement even when moves are 'strategic', which 'refers to proactive school change in pursuit of better schooling' (Scherrer, 2013:2). While the quantitative element of analysing reading scores could not test such claims, Scherrer did find that students, who were mobile, performed less well in reading tests. Strand and Demie (2007) also found a negative link between academic performance and transition at non-normative times. Again, their study was purely quantitative and looked only at pupil outcomes at age sixteen, in one Inner London borough. However, the study also acknowledges that other factors may well have contributed to these pupils' poor attainment, such as deprivation. They state clearly in their discussion that a 'change of school will not necessarily result in poor attainment; the reason for the move of school will be an important mediating factor' (Strand and Demie, 2007:328). I argue that the pupils in this study are not representative of the pupils in my study due to differences in home background and reasons for moving schools. My study aims to add a qualitative element to existing literature on pupil transition midway through primary school and therefore contribute a contrasting way of viewing this experience.

Research undertaken by Yeo and Clarke (2007) in Singapore and by Thao and Boyd (2014) in Vietnam both highlight education in these countries as being very structured, using a traditional education system. Yeo and Clarke (2007) state

that 'academic pressure' begins in the first year of formal schooling, 'as schools tend to put heavy emphasis on academic adjustment in an examination-oriented education system' (Yeo and Clarke, 2007:56). Therefore in this system, a good transition is regarded as when children are able to cope with the heavy homework load and understand how to function in 'a serious place of learning' (Yeo and Clarke, 2007:56). The perspectives of teachers were sought in this study and showed that they equated positive adjustment to the development of good academic skills. Thao and Boyd's (2014) research was part of a government led initiative in Vietnam to transform early childhood education through using more child-centred and play based approaches. They found that teachers held very structured views about their role in providing early childhood education and that their primary role was to prepare children for the 'highly performance-oriented, structured learning environment they would experience at the primary level by ensuring that children achieved formal literacy and numeracy skills through direct instruction' (Thao and Boyd, 2014:7). In redeveloping early childhood education, one of the biggest challenges was in changing the attitudes of teachers and rethinking their role in preparing children for school. From a sociocultural perspective, parents and the children themselves could be included in this argument, and their attitudes and expectations may also need to be shifted. My study includes children who have previously attended local schools in Vietnam and so this insight into the local education system is invaluable in better understanding the children's previous experiences before attending a British international school. As Mayfield (2003) highlights, continuity in expectations and philosophy of education is a key aspect of transition, and subsequently there will be differing levels of continuity based on the children's previous experiences of school and education.

The studies highlighted in this section have demonstrated how changes in academic expectations during transition can affect the children involved. This supports the ecological and sociocultural view that as individuals, children will internalise their experiences at school and be affected by them, and this includes the academic and philosophical approach of the school. While the children in Loizou's (2011) study were excited about tackling more demanding tasks when

starting school, other studies such as those by Thao and Boyd (2014) and Yeo and Clarke (2007) have shown that academic demands and a structured education system can be stressful for children. This is further added to by research by Hattie (2009) and Scherrer (2013) about the negative effects of changing schools on academic performance. My research aims to explore children's experiences of transition in a qualitative way and part of this will include, where applicable, talking to the children and their parents about how they have coped with any changes in academic expectations. The context of Vietnam may become relevant when talking to children who are Vietnamese and whose parents may share the traditional views of education as outlined by Thao and Boyd (2014). For these children, a move into a British international school system may require learning to be a pupil in a less structured school and my study explores how children handle such change.

Language, and in particular, a lack of English skills when starting a new school, can have an impact on how children settle in to school and can serve as a barrier to understanding English based school systems. Choi's (2017) study into children's narratives of educational transition and learner identity explores this in detail. Choi (2017) worked with three undergraduate students at a university in Hong Kong. The students were each asked to write an autobiography, detailing their secondary school transitions, with particular reference to transition and learner identity. All of the students regarded their new schools as prestigious. While one of the students felt at ease and confident in this new environment, the other two students struggled, stating that their lack of English marked them as different to the other students and unable to fit in so well. Furthermore, they felt 'alienated', 'lost', 'confused' and 'inferior' (Choi, 2017:173). One student, having seen that she did not fit in, decided to study other students who performed well in school so that she would know what type of student she was expected to be in her new school. This desire to adapt was echoed by the other students in the study as well and 'the drive for self-improvement and the power of adaptation to differential English demands are common dispositions of the three students' (Choi, 2017:175). The three students did not like being different from the others, and for them, language and culture

were barriers to adaptation. However, the students' hard work and determination proved to be successful, and their autobiographies revealed them to feel empowered and enjoying academic success as well as eventual enjoyment of school, leading on to gaining university places.

Tanu's (2016) research into the lives of expatriate children attending an international school in Indonesia, found that children tended to 'group together based on their preferred language of friendship… The English-speaking groups most closely reflected the dominant culture of the teachers and the school as an institution' (Tanu, 2016:436). As identified in Section 2.4 above, the formation of new friendship groups is of primary importance to children experiencing transition. It is understandable that children seek out those whom they can best communicate with to form friendships with. However, arguably those children who speak English and are from English speaking backgrounds are better equipped to understand the new school systems. Furthermore, Tanu's (2016) research places the international school as the hub of the local international community. The members of this school community grouped together in predominantly English speaking groups. The social lives of the children and to some extent the parents, revolved around the school and participation in clubs, notably sports clubs. In this way, socialising for both parents and children stemmed from participation and membership of the school community. Understanding these systems therefore, and gaining access to them were key indicators of successful transition. In this instance, reliance on the school and participation was of greater importance than forging links with the local community. The use of sociocultural and ecological theory is particularly useful in better understanding these findings. It acknowledges the impact of relationships and the school community itself on individual adaptation to school. Use of the international school context is wholly relevant to my work as well, and demonstrates the extreme importance of the international primary school to families when moving internationally.

The findings of Tanu (2016) and Choi (2017) are significant to my project since the sample also includes children who are learning English and who belong to an

international school context. The uniqueness of my study is in its British international school location and understanding that international transition is multi-faceted as demonstrated by the use of sociocultural and ecological theory. These findings highlight that language, as well as culture, may affect the overall school experience. Being unable to access the language of the school may result in anxiety and an inability to understand what type of learner they are expected to be in this new environment. Furthermore, language may act as a barrier to school engagement on a wider level including access to and full participation in friendship groups, clubs and the wider social life of the school from a complete family perspective.

Nguyen and Yang (2015) also researched into experiences of learner identity in second language classrooms. They draw on Lave and Wenger (1991) and claim that when learners aspire to be part of the learning community, they invest in learning to understand the cultural nuances that this entails. This is in accordance with Rogoff's (2003) institutional plane of development and acknowledgement that the rules and systems within the school itself are important and affect both relationships within school and also on an individual level. Adopting a new learner identity that is culturally relevant is a complex task that takes time. Nguyen and Yang (2015) used a case study approach, selecting one South Korean student who had travelled to Hawaii to pursue her language learning in a new country as a young adult. The student self-positioned herself as lazy when she made mistakes, but also revealed how she became a very skilled second language learner and also learned how to operate successfully in her new learning environment. Although Nguyen and Yang's (2015) study could be regarded as limited due to its focus on just one student, it is effective in highlighting individual experience. My sample includes students who have moved from South Korea and who are learning English as an additional language. This study has helped to ensure that I remain sensitive to the participants in my study for such students since embarrassment at making mistakes may lead to a feeling by them that they are not adapting well to their new school.

A further aspect of understanding the new school environment in transition is to consider how the school presents itself to new families and how it has shaped itself through the development of school policies. My study uses discourse analysis of school policies and documents to provide a representation of the school and, specifically, how it approaches transition. School policies are ordinarily informed by government decisions and incentives (Levinson, Sutton and Winstead, 2009; Zoch, 2017), however in the context of my research, there are no overarching policy makers and the school itself writes the policies based on their own educational values and beliefs. This may in turn, lead to greater levels of buy-in from the teachers in the school, since 'While policy is intended to be a sort of operating manual for how teaching and learning are to be played out in schools, the reality of what happens on a day-to-day basis depends on what the local actors—the teachers and staff members—choose to do' (Zoch, 2017:24). The use of school policies in my research is complemented by other school documents such as presentations to parents and written guides, in order to create a fuller picture of how the school operates and welcomes new arrivals. It is useful to look at school policies to provide an insight into a school's beliefs, but more specifically to look and see how policy is put into practice and adopted and negotiated through processes of appropriation (Levinson, Sutton and Winstead, 2009). From a sociocultural perspective, processes of appropriation involve all stakeholders, and so while the senior leaders of a school write the policies, it is the school community itself that puts this into practice, therefore shaping the culture of the school. Thus, new members of the school community, as well as working to understand the new school environment and its policies, will also be an active part in putting them into practice.

2.7   Role of parents and preparation for transition

As Gardner (2012) suggests, children perceive the world much differently to adults and furthermore, rarely see things in the same way as their parents. In the context of global mobility, Gardner (2012) states that 'as they move between different domains, children may have greater or lesser control over how they are placed and may in turn participate in different forms of compliance, resistance or

subversion' (Gardner, 2012:897). While parents can prepare their children for moving in different ways, they cannot manage how the child will actually cope with this transition, or what their initial experiences might be. For some children, behaviour may change, as Gardner (2012) suggests, as an attempt to regain some form of control over the situation. This may take the form of compliance and politeness, or the opposite. An important aspect of my research therefore is in talking directly to the children and using their language to report on their experiences.

Van Der Zee, Ali, and Haaksma's (2007) research with Dutch expatriate children revealed that the time leading up to the move, and the initial months after moving can be a very uncertain period of time for children. Their findings demonstrate explicitly the role of parents in supporting their child for moving internationally. Children sense how their parents feel about moving to a new country and are heavily influenced by this. Using sociocultural theory helps to examine how the relationships within the family and cohesion between family members were important in ensuring a smooth transition and adapting to life in a new cultural context. Furthermore, for children who move regularly due to parental work demands, the parents are the only source of constant permanence. Other relationships, for example with friends, can be broken by distance. Cantin and Boivin (2004) also share this view, stating that 'relationships with parents may provide support that promotes attachment security and autonomy development' (Cantin and Boivin, 2004:563). The attachments that children form with their parents can help them to feel more secure when moving and confident to make new attachments with future friends. Using Mayfield's (2003) concept of continuity helps to explain the importance of this, and continuity in relationships will arguably support transition. In Forster's (1997) research on the experiences of expatriate workers, he found that from a parental perspective, 'one in five parents reported that their children had experienced problems either in adapting to their new schools or in making friends' (Forster, 1997:425). To counteract this, parents had to establish new social networks in the local area, primarily with other expatriate families in order to support the development of friendship networks at school. Formation of such networks supported both the

children and the parents. This highlights the importance of my research in gaining the perspectives of both children and their parents in order to form a well-rounded picture of transition for children as they start at their new British international primary school in Vietnam.

In Finland, a team of researchers led by Ahtola (2016) worked on a longitudinal study based on transition, the First Steps Study: Interactive Learning in the Child-Parent-Teacher Triangle. In total, 2,662 parents completed questionnaires alongside 230 preschool teachers and 131 elementary school teachers. Questions were based on perceptions of school transition practices with the participants ranking each item on a scale of importance. For the parents, familiarisation to the new school and a personal meeting with the teacher before school starts were the most important transition practices. Arguably, the parents could better support their children through transition if they understood what the school expectations were and knew who the teacher was going to be, which again links to Mayfield's (2003) concept of continuity. Understanding the approach of the school and having continuity between home and school would support transition. From an ecological perspective, the relationship between home and school is part of the mesosystem that Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes and strengthening this link would invariably support the child in this process. My research intends to build on these quantitative findings by including a qualitative aspect, which Ahtola et al's (2016) research is lacking. Similarly, although the title of the project refers to a 'Child-Parent-Teacher Triangle', the perspectives of children are not included in the methodology, however the findings provide a starting point for exploring how parents perceive school transition practices.

2.8   Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed some of the key theoretical and empirical dimensions as informed by the existing literature. In the context of my research, transition refers to an ongoing process of individual adaptation for both the child and the school, and ensuring continuity is a particularly complex issue in international

transition (Mayfield, 2003). Parents have an important role in transition as they work to support their children both before and after the move. Children themselves are active in this process and the use of sociocultural and ecological frameworks is helpful in understanding how children develop both individually and as part of a group and school community. This process is one that evolves over a period of time through a series of interactions on many levels, as displayed through the use of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory model. Prior research has shown that friendships are very important to children during this period of change. Children experience a wide range of emotions during transition and have to learn how to cope with feelings such as stress and anxiety as well as excitement. There are often changes in academic expectations, which also affects how children feel about their new school and parents help support their children through these transitions in varying ways.

The use of sociocultural and ecological theory is further explored in the next chapter, where the methodology is explained within this theoretical framework. The research questions are also presented as well as an outline of how the study was designed and executed.

3.0   Methodology

This chapter presents a detailed account of the methodology and research design. This is a qualitative and interpretative study that draws on sociocultural and ecological theory. Three research questions were formulated in order to find out more about children's experiences during the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. A sample of thirty-four children was interviewed in nine groups with between three and five children in each. During the interviews, they drew pictures to represent their experiences, while eight parents participated in semi-structured interviews either individually or with their partner. Discourse analysis was used to explore school documents and policies in order to gain an insight into the school's approach to transition and in turn how this affects the children's experiences of transition. Ethical considerations were fully explored and I adhered to the professional code of ethics as outlined by the ERIC project (2013). All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. They were then analysed through a system of coding through themes identified by carefully reading the transcripts and establishing links between them. Crosschecking the accuracy of the transcripts and going through the coding process several times assured validity and reliability, which was crucial to the research findings.

3.1   The research questions

This study aimed to address an under researched aspect of transition. While the notion of transition has been well documented in existing research such as Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), Fabian and Dunlop (2005), Dockett and Perry (2007), Griebel and Niesel (2009) and Einarsdottir (2011), the uniqueness of this study is in its context, examining children's experiences as they start at a new British international primary school in different year groups. Using an ecological and sociocultural approach also meant including parents and children into discussions since children's experiences are a result of their interactions with those around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rogoff, 2003). The research questions were as follows:

1. What are children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

2. What are parents' perspectives of supporting children in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

3. What factors influence children's experiences in their first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

Drawing on the work and recommendations of Messiou and Jones (2015), it was important to empower the children directly involved in transition by recording their views. This has also been a key feature in other research projects including Cantin and Boivin (2004); Yeo and Clarke (2007); Dockett and Perry (2007); Einarsdottir (2011); Loizou (2011); Brown (2012); and Hacochen (2012). Prior research has also shown that parents can provide a further insight into how children cope with change and their comments help to build a clear picture of the entire process of transition, which begins before joining the new school (for example see Brooker, 2003; Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003; Shields, 2009; Griebel and Niesel, 2009; O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014). Furthermore, from a sociocultural and ecological perspective, children's experiences of transition are shaped in the context of their relationships with both the school and their families (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rogoff, 2003). The three research questions therefore have been planned to elicit the views of both children and their parents, and analyse their responses to explore what factors have been influential in the first year of their transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam.

3.2 Theoretical approach and research design

This study uses sociocultural and ecological theory to understand children's experiences of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. Other research projects addressing transition have also used this approach since it demonstrates the interconnected nature of transition (Dockett and Perry, 2004; Griebel and Niesel, 2009; and Loizou, 2011). Bronfenbrenner (1979) was used in each of these examples, to explore how children experience a process of

adaptation to the new learning environment that is influenced by those around them and the specific school that they are in. The use of Bronfenbrenner (1979) allows a more complex view of transition to be presented by showing how the immediate experiences and interactions within a microsystem of family, school and peers, all impact upon the individual. The mesosystem that Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes further adds to this, demonstrating, in this context, how relationships exist between different groups such as school, family and peers. Encompassing these elements is the exosystem of the British international primary school and the macrosystem that underpins its overarching beliefs and values. The use of Mayfield (2003), meanwhile acknowledges the impact of continuity in this specific area of transition. A lack of philosophical, curricular and organisational continuity in schooling will affect and potentially disrupt a child's experience of transition. This is particularly relevant in the context of my research since the sample includes children who have moved from a variety of countries with varying educational backgrounds, and are now attending a British international primary school in Vietnam. Use of a sociocultural and ecological model is useful in the context of my research since it helps to understand the many complexities involved in international transition.

Interviews provided a way of capturing participants' perspectives in a qualitative form so that links could be made to the role of relationships and the school environment in transition, and how children internalised these experiences. Notable research studies that have adopted an ecological framework, such as Dockett and Perry, 2004; Griebel and Niesel, 2009; and Loizou, 2011, have included the three perspectives of children, parents and teachers to discuss how children experience transition. While recognising the merits of including these various perspectives, my research takes a distinct approach in focusing primarily on the children and parents' perspectives. This was due to some of the strategic methodological decisions I had to make in relation to my role as insider researcher as discussed in Section 3.8. When engaging with the children and the parents, I was able to operate outside of my department, presenting myself primarily as a researcher in this context as opposed to the school's assistant head teacher. However, this presented significant challenges when considering

teachers. As acknowledged in Tanu's (2016) research, international schools tend to be gated campuses marking themselves by 'separateness from the local environment' (Tanu, 2016:436). As a member of this gated community, I also lived in a gated compound and my only friends were other teachers working at the same school as me. As Cohen (1977) observed, Western expatriates cope with the 'strangeness' of no longer living in the West, by constructing and living within a familiar 'environmental bubble', designed to replicate life at home (Cohen, 1977:16). This raised pertinent ethical issues of the social and personal relationships I had built with the other teachers. I was cautious of what Taylor (2011) describes as 'the grossly undertheorized impact that friendships may have upon the processes of perception and interpretation within and of the field under examination' (Taylor, 2011:6). This particularly relates to role conflict, confusion and feelings of betrayal (Taylor, 2011). As a member of the senior management team, I already felt a large degree of role conflict, as ordinarily, I would retain a strictly professional relationship with my colleagues. However in this context I was reliant on them for friendship as well, and so involving them directly in my research too would have added another layer of complexity, which may potentially askew the research. Pressure to participate would have been a potential difficulty, due to my dual role both as a friend and as a senior leader in school, which meant the risk of performative responses was high. As such, this study recognises the complex insider researcher relationships with teachers and the complications this presents, and focuses instead on the overall ecology of the school environment, its policies, ethos and overarching approach to children and their learning to gain an indepth understanding of transition.

The following sections describe and critically review the design of this study and the decisions taken, along with their limitations in further detail. The research took the form of a qualitative and interpretive design using semi-structured group interviews with pupils and parents. In addition, the children drew pictures during their interviews to help them document their experiences of transition. I targeted the families who were new to the school during the academic year 2014/15, as I was interested in their experiences in first year. The interviews all took place in June 2015. To complement the interview data,

discourse analysis of school policies and documentation was used to examine the community and institutional influence on the children's experience of transitions.

3.3   The Setting

This research took place in a British international primary school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam where I worked as assistant head teacher. The school enrolment statistics indicate ninety-five new children started in the academic year 2014/15 (see Table 2 in Section 3.4). The school has 780 pupils and thirty-nine classroom teachers, with approximately twenty children in each class. The school's 'Admissions Policy' (see **Appendix 8**) provides a context to the school, which indicates that children attend from over fifty different countries (British School, 2013). I led the early years department where children attend between the ages of two and five years' old. The school is a selective, fee-paying school with high academic standards, which was graded as 'Outstanding' by British Overseas Inspectors in 2013. The annual fees for the academic year 2014/15 ranged from £11,600 per year in year one to £12,650 in year six, and hence the children who attend tend to be of a relatively high socio-economic status. Since the school largely caters for expatriate families, there are high levels of mobility throughout the year when parents' work contracts come to an end and they move elsewhere. The school supports new families by providing information and workshops, including the optional 'Settling In Workshop' (British School, 2014), the obligatory 'New Pupil Orientation' (British School, 2014b) and the 'Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City Parents' Guide Book' (British School, 2014c).

The school's pedagogy and practice is based on the English National Curriculum is used and supported by the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) which focuses on topic based inquiry learning. The school encourages investigative work rather than rote learning in areas such as Maths. There is also an emphasis on language and developing the children's speaking and listening skills throughout all areas of the curriculum, which is highlighted in the 'Whole School Language Policy' (British School, 2013, see **Appendix 9**). There is a specialist

Learning Support department that works to support children who are at the beginning stages of learning English.

3.4   Sample and Sampling

When deciding on the sample to use for the study, it was necessary to establish who the target population was (Levy and Lemeshow, 2008). Table 1 provides information regarding the population of potential research participants who were the new pupils and parents throughout the academic year 2014/15. These pupils started at the school at different points throughout the school year and were present in the school in June 2015.

Table 1: The population of new pupils and parents in 2014/15

Year group	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of new pupils	17	18	20	16	13	11	95
Number of new parents	17	18	18	16	13	11	93

All new members of the school during the academic year 2014/15 were invited to participate. I wrote to the entire target population of parents of new pupils and asked for their permission to interview their children in groups during the school day. I also invited the parents to be interviewed individually by me at a time and place that was mutually convenient. Each member of the target population had an equal opportunity to be involved. Once the parents gave informed consent, I sought assent from the children and asked if they would agree to taking part in an activity and talking in a group about their experiences of transition (Ramsden and Jones, 2011). Table 2 shows the final number of people involved in the study. Further details of the participants can be found in **Appendix 4**.

Table 2: Sample of children participants

Year group	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils interviewed	8	9	3	3	7	4	34
Number of interviews	2	2	1	1	2	1	9

In order to analyse the data more fully, it was necessary to establish where the pupils had previously attended school. Details of this are in Table 3. As well as providing information about the previous school, use of the letter 'Y' next to each child's name, indicates which year group they were currently in at school.

Table 3: Previous schools attended by the pupils[1]

Previous School	Pupils	Total
English primary school	Madison (Y1), Alfonso (Y5), Jiovanni (Y6), Lorenzo (Y2)	4
British international primary school (worldwide) (5)	Michael (Y3), Isabella (Y1), Luke (Y5), Jack (Y1), Prisha (Y3)	5
French international primary school (worldwide) (4)	Hugo (Y2), Louis (Y5), Adele (Y5), Theo (Y1)	4
International primary school (worldwide) (6)	Riya (Y3), Edmond (Y2), Bo (Y2), Bai (Y2), Talia (Y3), Jason (Y4)	6
Australian primary school (5)	Samaira (Y2), Jasia (Y1), Che (Y5), Mia (Y4)	4
Vietnamese primary school	Binh (Y1), Minh (Y1), Anh Dung (Y1)	3
South Korean primary school	Se Jun (Y4), Ji Hee (Y2), Candy (Y5), Ji Su (Y6), Katie (Y6), Molly (Y5),	6
Singaporean primary school	Ananya (Y6)	1
Indian primary school	Aarush (Y2)	1

In addition to the thirty-four children interviewed, eight parents were also interviewed as part of the study, and their details are outlined in Table 4:

Table 4: Sample of parent participants[2]

Parent(s)	Child(ren)	Year Group(s)	Child interviewed?	Nationality
Natalie	Madison, Liza	1,2	Madison (Y1)	English
Sarah	Aodhan, Charlotte	1,4	No	Belgian
Steven	Jason	4	Yes	Australian
Cho	Katie	6	Yes	South Korean

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[1] All names are pseudonyms.
[2] All names are pseudonyms.

| Paul, Amanda | Ava | 5 | No | Australian |
| Sofia, Michael | Michael | 3 | Yes | Argentinian |

As Table 4 demonstrates, I interviewed the majority of the parents' children in order to gain a fuller picture of the children's experiences from a family perspective. However, although I interviewed Liza, I was not able to use her interview data because the recording equipment failed (see Section 3.6) and so she was discounted from the study. Sarah did not give her permission for her children, Aodhan and Charlotte to be included in the study. Ava was supposed to be included in the study but was absent from school on that day and the focus group that she was involved in went ahead without her. It seemed unethical to postpone the interview since I had gained permission from the class teachers and did not want to further disrupt their timetables, and I also did not want to interview Ava alone. The decision making process of planning the methods is presented in the following section.

3.5 Methods

This study aimed to explore children's experiences during their first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. The methods used in the study were semi-structured group interviews with children while engaging them in a drawing activity, and semi-structured interviews with parents either individually or with their partners. The methods chosen needed to elicit opinions and dialogue, capturing children's voices in the best possible way. While other research projects have used a survey design to explore children's transitions, this has been on a larger scale and the focus has not been on understanding children's experiences (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000; Demie, Lewis and Taplin, 2005; Duchesne, Ratelle and Roy; 2012). However, other research projects focusing on children's experiences of transition have successfully used informal semi-structured interviews to gather the views of children (Dockett and Perry, 2005; Lam, 2009; Einarsdottir, 2011; Brown, 2012; O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014; Messiou, 2015) and parents (Dockett and Perry, 2005; Lam, 2009, O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014). To complement the interview

data, discourse analysis was used to engage with school policies and give the school a voice in the research. Like any chosen methodology, there are both advantages and limitations to the methods and these will be discussed in more detail below.

3.5.1   Group interviews with children

I conducted nine semi-structured group interviews with between three and five children in each, which helped me to understand the experiences of the participants involved in the study. Clark, McQuail and Moss (2003) recommend the use of group interviews as an effective method of gathering children's views, and this technique features as part of the Mosaic Approach that they developed (see also Clark and Moss, 2001). Researchers have found that in group interviews, children can feel more comfortable and willing to express their ideas in a group context (Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003). Furthermore, any group interview context 'can help participants to clarify, strengthen or change an opinion that had remained uncertain until that point' (Acocella, 2012:1133). The main purpose of using group interviews with children therefore was to establish a rapport so that they are more comfortable to share their ideas. Additionally, the practicalities of the research meant that interviewing in groups was more time efficient and enabled me to interview more participants than if I had interviewed them individually (Stokes and Bergin, 2006; Acocella, 2012).

The timetable of the interviews can be found in **Appendix 4**, showing how many children were in each interview and how many interviews were conducted per year group. Details of the group interview schedule can be found in **Appendix 5**. In planning the interview schedule, I used Gillham's (2000) four stages. This began with an introductory phase to welcome the children and provide an explanation for the research. I checked that they gave their permission to be video recorded and gave them an opportunity to opt out of the research at this stage. The next stage was the opening development where I explained the drawing task, further details of which can be found in Section 3.5.2. The children were then encouraged to talk freely among themselves as a group while they

were drawing and discuss their old and new schools. This section, in accordance with Gillham (2000) was the central core and was where I was able to ask questions and use probes to help continue conversations.

As Newby (2010) writes, 'The flexibility of interviews and their ability to expose issues creates an understanding of processes, events and emotions, all of which makes them particularly suitable in qualitative research' (Newby, 2010:338). This approach enabled me to ask questions and probe for details, while seeking to uncover themes and patterns relating to experiences of international transition. The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews in particular, meant that while there were some standardised questions that were used in all interviews, responses from the participants could be followed up (Robson, 2009). This allowed me to explore themes that I had not considered when conducting the initial literature review and when planning the interview schedule. For example, a standard question that I wanted to ask all groups was, 'Can you talk to each other about what it has been like this year, moving into a new school?' I then had a list of themes generated from the literature that I wanted to probe if mentioned. I also attempted to engage all the children into the interview and try to ensure that no one dominated or interrupted (Goodwin and Happell, 2009). In these instances it was necessary to ask more direct questions to individuals. Table 5 provides an example of this:

Table 5: Example of questioning[3]

Time	Speaker	Comment
4:16	Researcher	Do you remember your first day coming here?
	Prisha	(Nodding) Erm, yeah.
	Researcher	Do you remember yours, Prisha? (Prisha nods). What happened on your first day?
	Prisha	Erm, (Pause)
	Riya	I remember
	Researcher	Okay
4:25	Prisha	I came to my class and I didn't feel so shy and it was break time and I had no one to play with. But Ms Laura at lunch time when it was almost lunch time, she asked if someone wants to take care of me and show me the school and play with me. And there was another Indian girl who left already and she used to play with me.
5:00	Researcher	Okay. So did it help when Ms Laura asked someone if they wouldn't mind playing with you? (Prisha – yeah). Yeah. How about you, Riya? Do you

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[3] All names are pseudonyms.

| | | remember what happened to you on your first day? (Riya nods) (Pause). Or those first weeks? What are the things you remember? |
| 5:11 | Riya | I was shy (Researcher – yeah). And, erm, I forgot. |

Both Prisha and Riya wanted to discuss their first day and so it was important to return to Riya once Prisha had finished talking. However, as shown here, it was sometimes difficult to maintain the flow of natural conversation. It appears as though Riya had forgotten what she wanted to say, but with a little prompting, she was then able to comment. I found that for some groups, conversation did not flow as naturally as I had hoped and in these instances I asked more direct questions and encouraged the children through gestures and utterances such as 'yeah'. As Goodwin and Happell (2009) warn, one of the main disadvantages of using group interviews is in listening to individual voices. At times, more vocal participants may dominate interviews, and so skill is required by the interviewer in order to facilitate and gather individual opinions. It was important to acknowledge the individuals within the group as well as addressing the group as a whole to demonstrate an understanding that the children may have all had different experiences (Acocella, 2012). Added to this is the danger that members of the group may affect each other, with the individual mimicking the opinions of dominant members or succumbing to group pressure, falsely agreeing with what has already been said (Morgan, 1996, Stokes and Bergin, 2006, Acocella, 2012). Avoiding a group consensus of opinion was therefore important in the data analysis stage, discussed further in Section 3.9. While some participants may find the group interview situation a liberating experience, feeling confident to express ideas and opinions they may not disclose in an individual interview, others may remain quiet while privately disagreeing with what has been said (Stokes and Bergin, 2006). Alternatively, in a group interview, what one person has said may trigger a memory or an idea for another member of the group, and the risks of interruption are high (Acocella, 2012). As predicted, interruptions did sometimes occur in the interviews and where possible, I facilitated the group conversations at strategic times by encouraging the children to wait, or I returned to them later, encouraging them to continue the conversation.

Probes were used throughout each interview and were aimed at understanding more about the children's experiences. They followed what Wellington (2000) describes as 'tell me more' or 'getting clearer' probes (Wellington, 2000:79). It took careful management, however, not to lead the children or force them into certain responses to coincide with the literature. Although, as Gilham (2000) explains, 'in interviewing you start off with a question, the opening shot; where it goes from there may be unpredictable but you have to follow, controlling the direction' (Gillham, 2000:4). In order to maintain validity, each interview ended with a closure section. The children were invited to share their pictures with the group and describe what they had drawn. I then summarised the interviews and checked for understanding of the children's responses. Each interview concluded with thanking the children for their time.

The main disadvantages for conducting group interviews as a lone researcher were time based. I conducted nine semi-structured group interviews with between three and five children in each, with each interview lasting an average of twenty minutes. The result of this approach meant that not only did conducting the interviews take a longer period of time than anticipated; they also resulted in lots of data. Newby (2010) cites data overload as a main disadvantage to using semi structured interviews rather than questionnaires. While questionnaires help to keep responses focused, it became a skill to ensure that the interviews remained on the topic of transition. There are large sections of interview data that were abandoned due to the lack of meaningful and relevant data collected.

3.5.2   Children's drawings

Another method employed in the study is children's drawings, which is an aspect of the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2001; Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003). The Mosaic Approach consists of a bank of different methods that are effective in gaining children's opinions on important topics. This approach also stresses the importance of not limiting research to the spoken word and instead, using other methods to also engage children in the research. I chose to include a drawing

activity since 'listening to children talking about their own drawings can reveal important insights into their understandings' (Clark, McQuail & Moss, 2003:34). The use of drawing was an inclusive approach, particularly since the study included children who spoke English as an additional language and the use of drawing helped these children to express themselves in a different way (Merriman and Guerin, 2006; Messiou and Jones, 2013). The drawings also helped to reinforce what the children had spoken about during the interview (Lam, 2009). Since the introduction of the Mosaic Approach by Clark, McQuail and Moss (2003), other researchers have also experienced the benefits of using participatory techniques such as drawing with children and young people to gain an insight into their experiences of transition (Dockett and Perry, 2005; Lam, 2009; Perry and Dockett, 2011; Messiou and Jones, 2013; O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014; Wang and Hannes, 2014). Giving children a task to do while interviewing them, such as drawing provides them with a focus during the interview and helps to keep them engaged (O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014). Furthermore, drawing is a child-centred technique that allows children to express themselves in a way that is familiar to them (Merriman and Guerin, 2006). However, there were disadvantages to this approach, particularly with regards to interpreting the drawings since researchers may be tempted to apply meaning where there is none (Merriman and Guerin, 2006; McLaughlin and Gauvain, 2016). It also implies that children feel comfortable with drawing and enjoy this type of activity, which is not necessarily true (Hirsch and Philbin, 2016).

Taking into account these limitations, during the opening development phase of the interview, the children were all asked to draw a picture of their old school and their new school on a piece of paper, including any details or information that they thought were relevant. The children were reassured that they could draw anything they wanted and that their drawing skills were not important. They were encouraged to think for themselves. I modeled how I wanted the drawings to be organised:

Me in my old school	Me in my new school

Figure 3: Organisation of the drawing activity

The activity was intended to be open-ended since I did not prescribe to the children exactly what they should draw but instead gave them freedom to express themselves in their own way. Similarly to Einarsdottir's (2011) research on Icelandic children's early transition experiences, emphasis was placed on using the drawings as 'a process rather than a product and on listening to the children's narratives as they drew' (Einarsdottir, 2011:744). Research conducted elsewhere also suggests that activity driven interviews with children are a very efficient approach and support children in sharing their views more openly (Pollard and Filer, 1996; Carr, 2000; Clark and Moss, 2001; Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003; Dockett and Perry, 2005; Lam, 2009; Perry and Dockett, 2011; Messiou and Jones, 2013; O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014; Wang and Hannes, 2014). The drawing activity helped to create an 'informal and unofficial' atmosphere, which is advised by Gollop (2000:21) when attempting to elicit children's views. In some interviews there were periods of silence while the children drew, which gave me time to pause and ask questions. The children were then encouraged to talk about what they had drawn without me asking any questions, thus providing them with greater control over the interview content (O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014). Talking about the pictures once they were completed helped to alleviate potential interpretation difficulties as well (Merriman and Guerin, 2016).

3.5.3   Individual interviews with parents

Individual semi-structured interviews with parents were included as another method in the study to complement the children's data and were aimed at encouraging the parents to talk freely about their children's experiences. As with the interviews with the children, a key advantage of this method was that it allowed flexibility while interviewing, with the opportunity to ask further

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questions in order to better understand the parents points of view (Newby, 2010). Interviewing parents individually allowed them to explore issues in greater depth (Stokes and Bergin, 2006) and give more detailed responses than the children did. Furthermore, in contrast to group interviews, there was no danger of a group consensus and I felt confident that the parents were able to share their experiences without being affected by the opinions of others (Morgan, 1996; Stokes and Bergin, 2006; Goodwin and Happell, 2009). I told the parents explicitly that I was interested in their experiences, and I encouraged them to be open, using empathy and understanding to help to build rapport (Brown and Danaher, 2017). However, it could also be argued that some parents missed out on an opportunity to interact and discuss their ideas in a group context as the children did (Stokes and Bergin, 2006). While the children were able to compare their experiences and some comments helped others to recall similar events, the parents did not have these same opportunities. Two sets of parents were interviewed together (Paul and Amanda; and Sofia and Michael) while the others were interviewed individually, which could have affected the data. A key feature of interviews is that success largely relies on the relationship that develops between the interviewer and the participants, which is not an issue when using a survey design (Potter and Hepburn, 2012; Brown and Danaher, 2017). With this, however, carries a risk, and performative responses could be heightened in an individual interview situation. I tried to therefore manage my responses to what was being said, as displaying a particular interest in one particular response could lead to exaggeration. It was important not to 'prefer' certain comments to others because they were in line with my own thinking (Potter and Hepburn, 2012:568).

In order to maximise the number of participants, interviews with parents were conducted at their convenience in terms of time and location. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in order to establish a rapport with the participants and to achieve a good level of clarity and understanding, which is essential in semi-structured interviews (Galletta, 2013; Brown and Danaher, 2017). Details of the interview schedule can be found in **Appendix 5**. While being careful not to interrupt the flow of the person speaking, I began with an open question and

then listened carefully to what was said in order to ask the next question. The initial question was 'Can you talk a little about your children's experiences during their first year of starting this school?' Probes then followed, which changed focus slightly throughout the course of the interviews once other themes began to emerge. For example, if the parents mentioned something related to the themes I had included in my preliminary literature review, I asked further questions. One such example is when Paul and Amanda were discussing their children leaving their friends behind. Amanda said that they had kept in touch, and I asked for more information, which resulted in a more extended talk about friendships.   Other questions were planned that directly related to the themes and were asked if there was a lull in conversation, however I found that responses were far more detailed and enlightening when they were based on free flowing conversation as opposed to a direct question and answer style. In developing this style, I hoped to achieve what Gillham describes as the 'essential point' of interviewing:

> The essential point, however, is that the interviewer's task is to ask initial questions that allow the interviewee to determine the answers, and to follow up the responses which focus the interviewee and encourage him or her to elaborate where necessary, or cover aspects of the answer that have been omitted.
>
> (Gillham, 2000:42)

Asking open-ended questions at the start allowed the participants to talk freely about their experiences and lead the direction of the interview. The use of probes and supplementary questions meanwhile worked to seek further clarification of points, check understanding and discuss themes that did not naturally arise in conversation. These strategies were key in building connectivity and openness, explicitly demonstrating to the parents that I valued their opinions (Brown and Danaher, 2017).

3.5.4   Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis was used to engage with the school policies and other relevant documents to explore the school as an institution in more depth, specifically at its ethics and values, and how these influence children's

experiences of transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rogoff, 2003). The method of discourse analysis of school policies has been successfully used in other studies. For instance, Mooney Simmie's (2014) research aimed to understand teachers' and school leaders' work practices in curriculum innovation and change. The use of school policies were useful due to their insight into a school's ideology and values:

> Policy documents invariably include ideology, assumptions and values, and are not simply neutral apolitical and amoral texts. They have something profound to say about how the curriculum and the teacher are (re)positioned, and the expected relation in governance between, for instance, the state, the school and the public, as well as being an expression for a specific dominant ideology.
>
> (Mooney Simmie, 2014:189)

The use of critical discourse analysis enabled Mooney Simmie to complete a 'systematic interrogation' of policies (Mooney Simmie, 2014:189). This entailed three levels of analysis: text analysis, interpretation and explanation in relation to practice. Likewise, in my study, the use of discourse analysis enabled me to better understand the positioning of the school with regards to transition, and the practices that are undertaken in order to welcome new students to the school and support them and their families throughout their first year. In another study, Johnson (2011) used discourse analysis in conjunction with ethnography to explore language policy in the United States of America. He states that 'the combination of ethnography and CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) is proposed as a method that reveals the connections between the macro, meso, and micro levels of language policy and between the multiple levels of policy creation, interpretation, and appropriation' (Johnson, 2011: 277). Similarly to Johnson, in my study, discourse analysis of policies provided an insight into the macrosystem of the school, while interviews explored the lived experiences of the children and their parents, demonstrating the microsystems and mesosystems in place (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The main advantage of this approach was that it enabled me to represent the school and acknowledge the impact of the school itself on transition. Research shows discourse analysis can be a powerful tool when analysing how organisations work (Anderson and

Mungal, 2015) and also in understanding them better by making meaning from the language they have chosen to use (Edling, 2014). The key policies used in my study provide a useful insight into the school leaders' perspectives and the overall leadership of the school. However, this approach also has its limitations because it only provide an insight into what the school says it does rather than what actually occurs. Although my approach cannot be described as critical discourse analysis (CDA) since it lacks a political message (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2018), it was useful to explore the literature surrounding CDA and the links between that and my research. As Fairclough and Fairclough (2018:169) describe, 'Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a form of critical social analysis which focuses upon relations between discourse and other aspects of social life'. In my research, this entailed exploring the relationship between school policy and practice; the school's written messages regarding transition compared to the lived experiences of those involved.

I chose to use the policies and documents that were most relevant to the context of transition, and demonstrated how the school supports children who are new to the school. The 'Admissions Policy' (British School, 2013. See **Appendix 8**) provides information about the school context as well as details on new school enrolment, including how the school supports children who have not previously attended an English National Curriculum school, or who need English support. The 'Whole School Language Policy' meanwhile (British School, 2012. See **Appendix 9**) explains the school philosophy and approach to language learning. There are sections detailing how the school supports mother tongue development as well as Vietnamese language and culture. The school hosts a 'Settling In Workshop' every year to support new families, which provides a unique insight into how the school worked with parents to support their children through transition (British School, 2014). Information was given regarding the nationalities of children attending the school, and the school's counselor led a section to explain how children may feel during their transition, with suggestions of what parents can do to support them. The head teacher and deputy head teacher also led parts of the workshop to explain how the school works to support children as well. While the 'Settling In Workshop' was optional

to attend, there was also a 'New Pupil Orientation' that was obligatory for all new parents to attend at the start of the school year (British School, 2014b). The presentation from this was used and explains the school's history and approach to learning. A 'Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City Parents' Guide Book' was issued to all new parents and was written by parents and teachers of the school, offering practical advice and suggestions about life in Vietnam (British School, 2014c). This was used because it demonstrates how the school supports this unique type of transition, acknowledging that arriving in Vietnam and adapting to life there are also aspects of transition. The school prospectus was also used since it acts as a reference point for all parents, providing information about the school (British School, 2014d). Using these policies and documents was powerful since 'texts are meaningful language units, which primarily derive their meaning from their situated use' (Gee, 2011:122). Use of discourse analysis involves 'asking questions about how language at a given time and place, is used' (Gee, 2011:121). By adopting a discourse analysis, my specific focus was on the narratives on how the school approaches the issue of transition, which was then analysed in relation to what the children and parents said during interviews. In so doing, the use of discourse analysis provided an added dimension to the children's experience of transition and directly addressed the third research question on what factors influenced children's experiences in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam.

3.6   Data collection

Audio and video recording were used to collect the data. The group interviews with the children were video recorded in order to easily identify who was speaking in a group situation (Silverman, 2010). I used my MacBook for all recordings since, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, there are a wide variety of computer-based options available that are easy to use and reliable. Using audio and video recording also helped to enhance the validity, as I was able to return to the recordings as often as I needed to verify the transcripts, thus ensuring rigor (Hacohen, 2012). Certain comments were easier to understand when watching the video as well, for example when children spoke about their drawings and

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pointed to different aspects of their pictures. Furthermore, this method of data collection allowed me to talk to the children freely and understand their experiences. Video recording as opposed to note taking was fundamental in capturing the children's perceptions and meanings in exactly the way they described rather than paraphrasing (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Digital recording of interviews is commonplace in research since it allows for all comments to be fully transcribed, thus adding to greater reliability of the findings (Friere et al, 2009; Lam, 2009; Einarsdottir, 2011; Hacohen, 2012; Karila and Rantavuori, 2014).

The disadvantage of using technology to support recording was that it failed on two occasions and did not record any sound. Regardless, the recordings remained a more useful method of data collection than note taking, resulting in far more reliable and valid findings. I did consider pausing subsequent interviews to check that it was working but this would have interrupted the flow and could have made the participants feel less comfortable. While the children enjoyed being filmed, I needed to be more discrete with the parents who felt more self-conscious. Although I gained their approval to record, I did not want to further highlight the presence of recording equipment to them and instead preferred them to forget that it was there. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, video recording equipment can be obtrusive and affect the research setting in a negative way, making computer based options more preferable. Since I used my MacBook rather than any other obvious recording device such as a dictaphone, this was possible.

The younger children in particular needed some time at the start of the interviews to get used to the video recoding equipment (Carr, 2000; Gollop, 2000; Korth, 2007). There were also ethical considerations I needed to adhere to when using the video recording equipment with the children. I explained to the children the purpose of the video and reassured them that I only needed it to help me remember exactly what they had said. I assured them that the videos would not be shown to anyone else in school, and would only be used for research purposes such as transcribing. I used software on my MacBook and the

children could see themselves on the computer screen. This method was beneficial in that I could ensure that all the children were visible during the recording, however, it did distract some of the children involved. For example, during a year one interview, the children initially spent time waving at themselves and making funny faces. Ensuring that the children felt comfortable in the research setting was of upmost importance (Carr, 2000; Gollop, 2000) and so I allowed time for these children to play and was patient when handling their excitement. Allowing this time at the beginning meant that the children then forgot about the recording equipment.

Data was also collected in the form of drawings that the children did while engaged in the focus group interview. Similarly to the coding of the interview responses, the children's drawings were grouped according to themes and coded. These drawings were then used to complement the research findings (see examples in Chapter 4). Both the research methods and data collection techniques were trialed at the beginning of the research project, and the initial interviews with children and parents formed the pilot study.

3.7   The pilot study

The pilot study was built into the initial interviews with parents and children, and served as an opportunity to test the interview schedule and data collection techniques. With regards to improving the research design, I used a 'learn on the job' attitude (Robson, 2009:185), reflecting after each interview and adapting things that were appropriate. The first two group interviews with children took place on the same day, immediately after each other, and these were both used as pilot tests. I found consecutive interviews were ineffective because I needed time to reflect after each interview. The timings of the other interviews were then changed in order to build this in. I also noted that I needed to allow the younger children time to become familiarised with the recording equipment before trying to start the interviews (Carr, 2000; Gollop, 2000; Korth, 2007). As well as the children's interviews, two parent interviews were also planned for the pilot test, on the same day, and again running consecutively. These timings were also insufficient.

After the pilot test, as well as reflecting on practicalities, I also adapted my interview schedule based on the responses I had been given. For example, one of my initial questions to parents was 'Describe your child's coping strategies'. However, my first interview with Ji-Yeon showed that the term 'coping strategies' was ambiguous and she did not know what it meant. I had a similar reaction in the second interview with Sofia and Michael, and so I did not repeat this question again. The pilot studies also reinforced the importance of establishing a rapport with the participants in order to achieve the relaxed approach that I aimed for (Carr, 2000). During the course of the research, while the initial interviews were technically the pilot study, each interview provided an opportunity for reflection and improvement. Consequently, the final interviews flowed more naturally since I had improved my technique and relied less heavily on the written interview schedule in front of me.

3.8   Ethical considerations

Prior to the start of the research, an ethics application was submitted to the Institute of Education research ethics committee (see **Appendix 1**). I also adhered to the professional code of ethics as outlined by the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) project (2013), which is designed for research with children under the age of eighteen. The ERIC project encourages researchers to be reflective and values critical thinking, especially when considering issues such as informed consent, privacy and confidentiality. I also adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (2011), which highlight the importance of providing participants with the opportunity to give informed consent and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. In particular with regards to working with children, the BERA guidelines state that researchers must take into consideration the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, ensuring that children feel as comfortable as possible during each stage of the research process. An important part of this process was gaining informed consent from children's parents, and the assent of the children themselves (Ramsden and Jones, 2011).

I was classified as an insider researcher because I worked within the research setting. According to Workman (2007), the insider researcher 'includes a component of self-interpretation in the change of role relationships with other members of the organisation and a relationship of rapport and trust must develop, together with an understanding of the organisational history and culture in order to understand the context fully' (Workman, 2007:147). Acknowledging this change of role and explaining this to both the children and parents I worked with was a key consideration in the study, particularly with regards to ethics. I had to negotiate the insider power relationship between my role as a senior teacher and researcher with both the parents and children participants. This was simpler with the parents since I could explain that I am studying for a doctorate and the work I am doing for my thesis was linked to my role as a researcher. I did not conduct any research in my department of early years education and this helped with my focus group interviews with the children. Since these children did not know me, I was able to introduce myself primarily as a university student and researcher. None of the children I interviewed questioned this further. I reiterated that their comments would remain anonymous and that I wanted them to speak freely about their feelings and their experiences.

Being an insider researcher was beneficial in that I was 'well positioned to access and explore the phenomenon under examination' (Kim, 2012:264). However, there are a number of ethical issues at stake when conducting insider research, and one main concern is that although pseudonyms are used to rename the school and participants, one can never truly guarantee complete anonymity (Malone, 2003). Steps were taken to safeguard the participants' interests by ensuring that the reporting of the findings was anonymous. Acquiring informed consent was potentially difficult since there could be a perceived power imbalance between the teacher-researcher and pupils involved. Pupils may have felt obliged to participate (Malone, 2003; Farrell, 2005; Kim 2012) or felt as though they are being tested in some way and concerned about giving a 'right answer' (Fisher, 2009:142). As an insider researcher I may have had 'greater

access, stronger rapport, trust and easier cultural understanding' but I also needed to examine this identity in order to try to overcome this power imbalance (Kim, 2012:274). I addressed this issue by assuring the children that they were helping me best by talking about how they honestly felt. I began my introduction to them by telling them that there were no right or wrong answers and encouraged them throughout the interviews. The use of group interviews rather than interviewing children individually helped to alleviate some of these issues. Children can agree to participate but then activate their right to dissent by remaining quiet during the actual interview. MacNaughton and Smith (2005:115) suggest that 'we need to choose ways of working in which children do not feel compelled to share their ideas' which arguably this method does. Parents, meanwhile, provided their consent by replying to my email and agreeing to take part. This email explained the purpose and intentions of the study so that informed consent was possible. I sought ongoing consent throughout the study, not just at the start, for example by checking again at the start of each interview that the participants were still happy to be interviewed. As Langston *et* al (2004) propose, I explained the study and the research methods used with assurances that pseudonyms will be used and they will be fully debriefed at the end of the study. Information leaflets regarding the study were given to all the parents and the children to explain the study in greater detail and gain informed consent (Einarsdottir, 2011). These can be found in **Appendices 2 and 3**.

There were also ethical issues to consider with the use of video and audio recordings. Both parents and children had the right to withdraw at any point, and if they had chosen to, I would have permanently deleted all their data. The use of recording equipment was made explicit to both the children and parents. I explained that the recordings will only be viewed and listened to by my transcribers and me and will be permanently deleted when the study is completed. I employed two transcribers. The first was a professional American audio-typist who had experience of transcribing interview data with both adults and children. The second was a freelance PhD graduate in Vietnam, offering services to doctoral students such as transcribing and proofreading. Both

transcribers agreed that only they would access the recordings, which they accessed via Dropbox. Once the transcripts were completed, the recordings were deleted from Dropbox and the transcribers did not keep copies. All the participants agreed to be recorded in the interviews. The processes of data analysis are explained in Section 3.9.

3.9   Data analysis

Decision-making regarding data analysis is a key part of the research process and the aim is 'to organise specific details into a coherent picture, model, or set of interlocked concepts' (Neuman, 2010:459). Data analysis can be particularly problematic when working with group interview data, as without careful management, data may be lost due to bias, with researchers favouring the opinions of the group rather than the individual, particularly if there are some alternative viewpoints amongst otherwise shared understandings (Stokes and Bergin, 2006; Goodwin and Happell, 2009). Even in individual interviews, there is a risk that people's comments are taken out of context and manipulated to suit the opinions of the researcher (Potter and Hepburn, 2012). In order to avoid this, I transcribed all the data, even when the research participants deviated from the research topic (Roulston, 2014). Although large sections of some interviews were not used in the findings, I had a greater depth of understanding of each interview by reading them thoroughly as a whole. Reading and re-reading each transcript several times is a fundamental first step in learning about qualitative data according to Dey (1993). Transcribing interview data in full has been a process employed by other researchers in the field of transition as an established method of understanding and analysing data (Friere et al, 2009; Lam, 2009; Einarsdottir, 2011; Hacohen, 2012; Karila and Rantavuori, 2014). Furthermore, full transcripts enabled me to report on individuals' opinions, rather than grouping them collectively, thus acknowledging the subtle differences between the participants (Potter and Hepburn, 2012).

When engaging in discourse analysis with the school policies and documents, I used the same coding process that had been developed during the interview

analysis stage. I inputted the documents into NVIVO and analysed them as I did the interview data. A key aspect of this stage was also in noting any differences as well as similarities in the themes in order to engage critically with all the data. Similarly to Einarsdottir (2011), I used the qualitative software, NVIVO to store the interviews and to code them. I began by reading through each interview and coding each subject that the participants mentioned. Table 6 provides an example of how I coded the data.

Table 6: Example of Coding[4]

Speaker and time	Comment	Code
Researcher – 2.06	Do you remember being told the first time you were going to leave—your school, your home, and your country? [Students all agree]	
Luke – 2.11	I felt really sad when I was going to leave all of my best friends that I pretty much ever made. My brother, on the other hand, was a whole different story. He was so sad that he started crying! But, I guess it turned out okay because I made a lot of new friends and—here I am!	Missing friends; sadness; new friends; resilience
Researcher – 2.32	Good! [to Alfonso] Okay?	
Alfonso – 2.34	When my dad told me that we were going to be moving out, I was absolutely amazed. I really wanted to leave London. I hate London!	Excitement
Researcher – 2.45	Okay, tell me why.	
Alfonso – 2.49	I didn't have very many friends anyways, so I wasn't too sad but I was still sad. And, um, everyone in Andrews said it was going to be a really big adventure and all that. And then when I came here, I thought it would be really good—and it IS really good.	New friends; the old school excitement;

While reading, I made notes of things that were mentioned in several interviews and these notes became the basis of my initial codes. Using NVIVO to record the codes was beneficial because I was able to then view all the sections of the transcripts and school documents with each code together. NVIVO offered a medium through which the volume of data could be stored, managed and analysed.

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[4] All names are pseudonyms.

A complete list of the codes is provided in **Appendix 7**. There were initially forty-one codes that were generated when reading through all the interviews and documents for the first time. New codes were created each time I read another interview or document. This also meant re-reading everything again at the end of the process to ensure that all data had been coded using the same set of complete codes. Reading transcripts and documents several times is key in understanding data and exhausting all possible codes (Friere et al, 2009) until 'theoretical saturation' is reached (Hacohen, 2012:116). Once this process was complete, some codes could be disregarded because there were few references made to them. For example, the issue of friendship was the most obvious theme that I noted upon initial reflections after the interviews. One child discussed mixing classes at the end of the year and so this was made a code as well. However, once the coding process had been completed, it had only been mentioned in two interviews and a total of five times, and so this code was the disregarded. This is in contrast to the code 'new friends' that was referenced in every interview, a total of sixty-one times.

The process of inputting the data into NVIVO was the first of four stages recommended by Newby (2010) who refers to this as 'preparing the data' (Newby, 2010:459). Once this process was complete, reading through each interview and document to find common themes as described above, was the second, more in-depth 'organising data' phase. In organising the data, I used the coding techniques described by Roulston (2014):

> By developing the codes through an iterative process involving reading, focused coding, reflection, writing, and rereading, researchers make connections between ideas, collapse codes into larger ideas (variously called themes or categories), and begin to develop assertions concerning the phenomenon of interest.   (Roulston, 2014:305)

Note taking while reading was a crucial part of this coding process and meant re-reading each transcript and document several times once a new potential code had derived (Friere et al, 2009). While some codes were broken down into more

specific codes, others were grouped together as Roulston (2014) describes here. For example, I began by coding each emotion separately under the main headings of 'happiness', 'anxiety', 'excitement', 'nervousness' and 'happiness', however on reflection this worked best as an overall theme of 'managing emotional experiences' (see Table 6). Once all codes had been exhausted and the data had been organised into manageable sections, I moved on to the last stage of data analysis, which was 'interpretation of data' (Newby, 2010:459). Newby argues that this is the most important stage since it is essential in drawing conclusions and understanding the data fully in order to answer the research questions. Silverman (2010) discusses the dangers of 'rushing into explanations of your data', which could lead to bias in an attempt to answer the research questions according to beliefs (Silverman, 2010:248). Neuman (2010) adds to this by warning about 'keeping codes fixed and inflexible' (Neuman, 2010:461). In order to avoid this, I returned to the literature review and research questions and also read more widely in the light of new emerging themes in an effort to better understand my data and discuss the findings in an unbiased way. While interpreting the data, I considered factors such as age, disability, gender and pupil mobility, however ho plausible links could be made within these groups. Rather, it became apparent that transition in this context was highly individualised and so the focus became on reporting children's unique accounts of their experiences.

The drawings that the children made during the interviews were analysed alongside the interview transcripts and documents. I used the same set of codes and looked at each drawing in turn to see if any of them were relevant to the drawings as well or if any new codes could be generated. Some drawings were simply of buildings, which, while interesting, did not lead to any additional insight into the children's experiences of transition. Others, however, added to what was being said during the interviews themselves. For example, Katie in year six chose to focus on drawing about her friends in both pictures, thus emphasising the importance of friendships for her during transition (figure 5, section 4.1). While I acknowledge that 'making a reliable interpretation of a

drawing' can be problematic (Merriman and Guerin, 2006:49), steps were taken to ensure that I did not apply meaning where there was none in order to suit my own biases and opinions (McLaughlin and Gauvain, 2016). I took the drawings at face value, reporting only on what was drawn and what the children had said about them, rather than applying my own interpretations. Furthermore, I emphasised to the children that their level of drawing skill did not matter since not everyone is comfortable with drawing as a skill (Hirsch and Philbin, 2016). Each child was given an opportunity to discuss their drawing during the interviews to allow me to understand the children's intentions behind their drawings. This was particularly useful for children such as Katie, who had limited English skills and was subsequently quiet during the interview. Discussing the drawings enabled me to talk to the children about an aspect of transition that they had chosen to document.

The data analysis techniques used here were fundamental in ensuring that the findings reported were an accurate portrayal of the participants' experiences of transition. As well as deciding how to analyse the data, decisions also had to be made regarding presentation of the findings. I chose to use thematic analysis to present the findings since it is 'a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights' (Nowell et al, 2017:2). Use of this approach enabled me to compare the experiences of the participants alongside the discourse analysis of the school documents. This led to a more comprehensive understanding of the data and its key findings than other techniques, such as the use of vignettes. An alternative to this approach would have been to present families' responses, or group the responses into age, gender or nationality. However, by grouping the participants together, I was able to consider their responses as a whole, reporting critically on what had been said, considering parallels and contrasts between each of the data sets (Clarke and Braun, 2017). The main disadvantages of this method however lie in rigor, particularly regarding 'consistency and cohesion' (Nowell et al, 2017:2) and subjectivity (Joffe, 2011). There is a risk that researchers only report on the aspects of the findings that correlate to the main themes, omitting potentially crucial pieces of

information. The coding stage was particularly important in trying to limit this potential difficulty and so in order to establish what Nowell et al (2017:3) describe as 'trustworthiness', a complete list of codes is supplied in **Appendix 7**, thus creating an 'audit trail' of the data analysis process (Nowell et al, 2017:3) and subsequent transparency (Joffe, 2011). When regarding all the codes, 'A good TA (Thematic Analysis) must describe the *bulk of the data*' (Joffe, 2011:219). I did this in order to avoid subjectivity and maintain reliability. In addition, I built a valid argument by relating my themes back to the literature, interweaving the findings with what others have previously presented (Nowell et al, 2017). Other steps taken to ensure that data was as robust as possible are examined in Section 3.10 below.

3.10   Validity and reliability

The first stage in ensuring validity and reliability of the data was to maintain a reflective approach towards data collection. During all interviews, while I referred to the interview schedule to ensure that I had covered all areas of interest and questions planned, I did not read from the paper for the duration of the interviews and instead wished to maintain a more fluid and natural style of interviewing as recommended by Silverman (2010). I hoped that by avoiding forced questions, I would also avoid forced answers and instead create a rapport with everyone I interviewed. At times this meant that interviews went off topic, as with Steven's interview when he spoke for an extended period of time about sports. However, by allowing for such deviations from the subject to arise, I gained a sense of trust and a good relationship within the interview; I cared what each person had to say.

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the data, I followed Newby's advice that 'data collection, analysis and interpretation should be rigorous, systematic and transparent' (Newby, 2010:456). As described in the ethical considerations section above (Section 3.8), I hired two English-speaking people experienced in transcribing qualitative interviews to transcribe the interviews for me. I was then able to read through the transcripts while listening to the interviews and

make small changes as appropriate, which ensured that the transcripts were accurate. Newby (2010) also recommends reading transcripts repeatedly before attempting coding, noting down any thoughts and initial reactions each time, as these responses will change with each reading. As described above, I went through the process of coding several times. I was mindful of what Neuman (2010) describes as the 'three errors to avoid when coding', which are 'staying at a descriptive level only (not being analytic), treating coding as a purely mechanical process, and keeping codes fixed and inflexible' (Neuman, 2010:461). Returning to the coding helped to ensure that codes remained flexible and developed with increased understanding and awareness of the data.

Interview responses from both the parents and children were grouped in tables once the themes of the findings had been established. While there were initially many different codes, some were abandoned because they were either only referenced a few times or they did not answer the research questions. Examples of these codes include 'first international move after being born' and 'preparing for the move'. The relevant components of these codes were covered more appropriately and specifically in three key themes. These key themes provided the most accurate portrayal of opinions, and were peer relationships, managing emotional experiences and changes in academic expectations during transition. This organisation of data enabled me to become more familiar with it and helped to see links between experiences more clearly and the language that had been used to describe them. Once links and themes had been established, I was then able to write the findings in a more coherent manner. This process helped bring clarity and enabled me to then apply a theoretical framework to the interview responses. I was able to view the raw data and put it into the context of an ecological and sociocultural framework to analyse the findings; namely the interpersonal, intrapersonal and community/institutional factors that had been expressed by the research participants. Weaving this together was essential in creating an account that is believable and consistency throughout the writing of the thesis.

3.11   A reflection on the methods used

This was a qualitative and interpretive study that took place in a British international primary school in Vietnam. A sample of thirty-four children was interviewed in groups of between three and five, making a total of nine interviews. Eight parents were also interviewed either individually or with their partner. There were a total of six parent interviews. Discourse analysis was then applied to key policies and school documents surrounding transition. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled me to explore the viewpoints of both the children and their parents in an effort to better understand their experiences. They were effective in achieving what Wellington (2000) describes as 'their version of situations, which they have lived through: his- or her- story' (Wellington, 2000:71). In using a semi-structured interview style, the participants were able to provide anecdotes and talk in detail about the things that were important to them, rather than be restricted by a set of closed questions. When working with the children, I engaged them in a drawing activity and their pictures helped to contribute to my understanding of their experiences, adding another dimension to the research data. While these approaches were effective in gaining an insight into children's experiences, the main disadvantage was that they generated lots of data, which lengthened the process of data analysis. Inclusion of the drawing activity was a positive element of the research design since it enabled all children to express themselves regardless of their levels of confidence or English language skills. Furthermore, it helped to reinforce what they had said during the interviews (Perry and Dockett, 2011; Einarsdottir, 2011; O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014). I avoided applying my own interpretations to the drawings since this could affect the reliability of the data, and is a problematic aspect regarding the data analysis of drawings (McLaughlin and Gauvain, 2016). Using the children's own explanations therefore helped to support what they had said during interview while avoiding this pitfall.

Another important aspect to consider when reflecting on the success of the project was my role as an insider-researcher. While I had the benefit of understanding the school culture (Kim, 2012), it could be argued that my position led to bias. I worked hard to counteract this by looking objectively at

the transcripts, however I remain a part of the school community. Acknowledging Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system means understanding that my relationship both with the school and the participants involved could have affected what the participants disclosed during their interviews. I ensured that I began each interview by explaining that it was important that people spoke honestly about their experiences. I interviewed three of the parents outside of school, which I believe helped deal with this role conflict. In these contexts, I was very much a researcher rather than a teacher. The use of discourse analysis of policies and school documents was a useful addition to the study, which enabled me to analyse the experiences of the children through a different lens, thus providing an understanding of the myriad of factors influencing transition.

When considering any research findings it is important to think critically about the methods and instruments in relation to their reliability and validity. Working with individuals external to my study to help transcribe the interviews was a key element of ensuring reliability since I was able to check the accuracy of the transcripts once they were complete. I worked consistently through the interview data several times to identify codes (see interview transcript example in **Appendix 6**). Responses were then collated into tables where it became easier to establish links between interviews. Once this process was complete, three key themes emerged as the most significant. Rather than reporting everything that was said by all participants, the use of themes helped to provide focus and a narrative to the findings. Using these key themes, I then looked at all the children's drawings where again, links were made to strengthen the key argument. The drawings provide an additional insight into the experiences of the children during their first year of transition since they were asked specifically to reflect on the year as a whole, from leaving their old school, to the point of the interview at the end of the academic year.

3.12   Some limitations of the study

As described in Section 3.2, the study focused on transition primarily from the children and parents' perspectives. The absence of teachers form the study is a limitation but it also highlighted the complex ethical dilemmas that were implicit in the social and personal relationships that I was a part of in the school in my role as senior leader, teacher, friend and researcher. In addition, a key focus of the study is also on school governance level where discourse analysis was used to analyse school policies and documents in order to show how the unique context of the school influences individual experiences of transition.

This study is an account of the experiences of thirty-four primary school pupils and eight parents, and as such it does not aim to be generalisable. While I hope that the findings generated may help to form an insight into the experiences of children as they change schools internationally, it is not intended to provide a complete picture of this experience for all children worldwide. In comparison to the number of children interviewed, the number of parents generated a particularly small sample. This was largely due to the number of parents willing to participate. Unfortunately, others had expressed an interest but those interviews did not materialise. In order to make up for this, the interviews that took place were in-depth and I was able to spend more time with each parent.

An additional limitation of the study is that, in conducting the research, I acted as a lone insider-researcher. While I worked hard to minimise bias and ensure validity and reliability, this would have been better had I been able to work alongside an external researcher too. There is a danger that I oversaw aspects of the interview transcripts and dismissed them as irrelevant due to my insider role, or neglected to ask things to both parents and children. I held a senior leadership role within the school and so there is also a risk that both children and parents responded in a way they thought would be pleasing to me, thus potentially affecting the power dynamics in the interviews. While I worked to build relationships in the interviews, it would have been impossible to ignore my role altogether. It worked best when I interviewed parents outside of school where it was easier to assert my role primarily as a researcher.

Another perceived limitation of the study could be that it is wholly qualitative. While it could have incorporated quantitative aspects such as a survey to ascertain the views of more parents, I was more interested in the qualitative aspect of recording children and parents' perspectives, which is an aspect that I found lacking in existing literature. Also, while I adopted a methodical data analysis strategy, the codes generated represent my interpretation of the interview responses and another person may have found additional themes.

3.13   Chapter summary

The methodology was planned in order to answer the three research questions outlined based on the experiences of children during their first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. Eight parents and thirty-four children were consulted during a process of nine video recorded group interviews and six audio recorded individual or paired interviews with parents. All of the interviews were semi-structured. The interview schedule was planned to help encourage detailed responses and to create a 'chatty' style (Carr, 2000). Discourse analysis was used to engage with school policies and documents so that the school would also be represented in the study. Ethical considerations were made both in planning the research and while collecting and analysing the data, to protect the identity of the school and the research participants. The data analysis stage was carefully managed so that the findings would be a valid and reliable account of the participants' experience. These findings are presented in the following chapter.

4.0   Findings

This chapter presents the findings on the study of children's experiences of transition during the first year of joining a British international primary school in Vietnam. As outlined in the methodology, the sample consisted of thirty-four pupils aged between five and eleven; and eight parents. Table 3 in section 3.4 of the methodology highlights the many different schools that the children had attended previously, and the age range of the children involved in the study, which shows a wide range of transition contexts that children in this study have experienced. The findings are drawn from the use of nine semi-structured group interviews with children and eight semi-structured interviews with parents either individually or with their partner. Discourse analysis was also applied to the school's policies and internal documentations, to complement the interview findings. When analysing the findings, three key themes emerged from the parents and children's responses, which are: 1) The role of peer relationships; 2) Managing emotional experiences; and 3) Changes to academic expectations during transition. The international context of this research led to added complexities for those involved. Since transition into a new school involved a complete change in each child's life, this led to a more complicated period of transition than simply moving schools within the same country.

In order to address the research questions, the findings are presented as themes. Each theme begins with the children's responses, followed by the parents' in order to build a composite picture of what both sets of participants expressed about their experiences of transition into a British international primary school. The children's drawings are included as part of the findings to contribute towards the themes that have been introduced. Direct quotations from school policies and documents have also been incorporated in the dataset.

4.1   Theme 1: The role of peer relationships

The importance of friendships was paramount and a key theme that was discussed in all of the group interviews. All the children and the parents

interviewed discussed the significance of leaving friends, and the need to make new friends, regardless of their age or personal backgrounds. The school demonstrated an understanding of this in their 'Settling In Workshop' (British School, 2014). The school's counselor, head teacher and deputy head teacher presented this PowerPoint to new parents of the school. It was used to help support new families, explaining to parents some of the things that children might experience in their transition. The counselor explained that 'Of course making friends is a big issue and will help them to settle more quickly' (British School, 2014:20). The formation of new friendship groups was therefore a key priority when transitioning to a new school. Discussions emerged around two key elements, which were making new friends and talking about old friends. Nine of the children in the study spoke about feeling sad when they left their previous school, and this was primarily connected to anxiety about leaving friends behind. Isabella in year one recalled 'I feel kind of sad when I left my old school ... because I didn't get to see all of my friends anymore'. This was reinforced by Michael in year three who elaborated, saying 'I needed to leave the only friends I had in Hong Kong. (I feel) sad because I can't stay with my same friends. I always have to make new friends and it's really hard'. Michael further explained, 'I changed schools a lot' and this particular aspect of moving was the most difficult for him, even though he recognised that making new friends was also positive. This is similar to Mia in year four who was Australian and had also lived in New Zealand, Thailand and Hong Kong. While she recognised that moving houses was fun, changing schools was difficult because she missed her friends. Mia's drawing emphasised the importance of friends (figure 4 below):

Figure 4: Mia's drawing

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Mia explained:

> I like moving houses, but not schools … because I miss my friends.
> I really like (this school) and I like all my friends, but I still think I like
> Australia because I don't really like moving to different places;
> I would like to stay in my own country.

By contrast, Luke in year five acknowledged that saying goodbye to his friends was difficult, but also that this was a temporary feeling in an otherwise exciting, new adventure:

> I felt really sad when I was going to leave all of my best friends
> that I pretty much ever made. My brother, on the other hand, was
> a whole different story. He was so sad that he started crying! But,
> I guess it turned out okay because I made a lot of new friends and
> —here I am!

Both Mia and Luke's comments suggest that the key to overcoming feelings of sadness at saying goodbye to old friends was to make new friends instead.

Twelve of the children in the study made detailed comments about the importance of making new friends. These comments are divided between those who spoke positively about their new friendships and others who have struggled to form bonds. The majority of the children were excited about the friends they had made, even when they were initially anxious like Jason in year four:

> I remember the day when I was going to school, I said to my mum,
> "Oh, no, no! I don't want to go to the school. It's too scary!" (Researcher:
> What part was scary?) Going into the school. Just going in with no
> friends.

For Jason, the most difficult part was in facing the unexpected and walking into a new school without friends. Similarly to Luke and Michael, Jason soon made new friends and was excited about this. In the interview, Jason named lots of his new friends and said 'I feel happy'. Katie and Ji Su in year six, and Alfonso in year five all said that they now had more friends than before. Talia in year three also

commented that she was happy because she had made lots of friends. While Katie in year six was quiet in the interview due to her newly acquired English, her drawing in figure 5 shows the importance of her new friendship group and how this has made her happy:

Figure 5: Katie's drawing

Katie's picture shows that she feels like she belongs in this school, as demonstrated by the references not only to friendships, but also to her height. For Katie, being accepted into a new friendship group made her happy at school. Her picture also demonstrates both her concerns and the positive aspects of school life. She compares her old school to her new school by saying 'I only had one friend' in Korea, 'but now I have many friend'. Katie had only been in the school for two months at the time of interview and so her feelings regarding changing schools were very recent. Katie's comments also reflected her drawing. When asked about her first day at her new school, she remarked, 'I couldn't do English very well, so I'm worried about that. And in my old school, I don't have many friends, so I think I don't have—I didn't have any friends, but I got many friends'. Similarly to Jason in year five, Katie said that she felt 'afraid' on her first day and was concerned that she would not make friends and would be 'lonely'.

By contrast, two of the children had been much more emotionally affected by their lack of friends, and described how although they had been looking forward to making new friends, this did not happen. For Madison in year one, children's

'meanness' resulted in her not liking her new school at all. Madison's emotions had changed over time since she was initially feeling 'happy' on her first day. She said, 'I was excited to meet my new teachers' but then later remarked that she was 'sad' at school and missed her old school which she 'loved' and where her old friends 'liked' her. Similarly, Candy in year five remarked, 'I wanted to make friends with people but like they doesn't want that and I need to try again for making friendships'. She added that she had felt 'scared about friendship' on her first day. Like Madison, Candy's feelings had changed from the beginning. She told me that when the move was announced, she was 'quite excited about a new adventure to another country' however this experience of not making friends on her first day affected her feelings. She later remarked that her favourite thing about the new school was the school holidays when she went back to South Korea.

Similar to Madison and Candy, figure 6 demonstrates how Che in year five also showed through his drawing that making new friends had been difficult:

Figure 6: Che's drawing

Che had travelled from Australia and had started school at the beginning of the academic year. He told me, 'before I came to Vietnam, I was in Australia with

friends at school, and the first time I heard that I was going to Vietnam, I started crying ... I was going to leave my friends behind. I didn't want to move. But here, I've made more friends'. His picture is perhaps a reflection of the anxiety he felt at the beginning of the school year at not having friends to play with.

Similarly, figure 7 shows that Jiovanni's picture in year six shares similarities with Che's:

Figure 7: Jiovanni's drawing

On his picture, Jiovanni wrote 'I was confident and had lots of friends' when writing about his old school. When writing about the new school, he commented 'Here I am not as confident (and) I have less friends'. Jiovanni's brothers were also interviewed (Alfonso in year five and Lorenzo in year two). Alfonso, as explained above, felt very differently to Jiovanni and was overwhelmingly positive about this new experience. Lorenzo did not discuss friendships although he admitted to feeling 'shy' on his first day. This range of emotions will be discussed further in Section 4.2.

When talking to the parents, there was also an acknowledgement in all of the interviews that friendships were significant to their children when experiencing

transition into a new international school. As Amanda explained when discussing both of her children, 'their main concern was the friends that they were very, very happy with at (their) school, which was quite a small school. And they had great friendships and great sporting opportunities and a great life outside of school'. In order to support the children, Paul and Amanda looked into ways of helping them find new friends as quickly as possible:

> Both of them are sporty, so as soon as we got here we just involved them straight away in the school sports programme and then from day one . . . Ava went home, calling me, saying "Mum, I'm just going home with my friend Carla…" (Amanda)

Paul's comments echoed Amanda's. He added, 'there were a whole lot of positives that we tried, to maybe take (her) mind away from the friendship groups (she'd) lose'. Sports clubs were specifically mentioned as a distraction, as well as the holidays that they could plan to go on from Vietnam. This was recommended by the school as well in the 'Settling In Workshop', which encouraged parents to 'help them to make friends' and to 'encourage them to join clubs and activities' which the school had a wide selection of (British School, 2014:15).

By contrast, although Steven also used sports as a method of supporting his son Jason in making new friendships in school, Jason experienced a less complicated transition to the school since he was already living in Vietnam. As Steven explained, 'we knew some boys already. Some guys from (Jason's old school) came the year before and they just fit straight in'. While Jason already had friends in the country, Steven recognised that friendships were important to his son and so made sure that these links were in place before he started. This correlates to what Jason said himself about feeling scared about going into school on his first day without any friends, and that this was his main source of concern.

When discussing her two children, Sarah explained that they 'were sorry to not see their friends again' but that this was temporary. Similarly to Amanda's description, Sarah remarked that her children made new friends easily:

> In the school I think they've felt quite quickly quite comfortable because they moved, they changed year groups every year, so they change classes within the year group every year. That was the way the school had done it and so they were used to making new friends. So that was alright from the school aspect that was fine I mean just changing routines but you know from the moment, I think after a week they were alright. You know they were happy.

While Sarah understood that her children would be sad not to see their friends again, she knew that they would be able to make new friends easily and so this was not overly concerning to her.

By contrast, Natalie was surprised at the level of importance her two daughters placed on friendships:

> The people that they miss are their friends, I think, more than their family. And that's quite interesting because I think you wouldn't— I don't think you realise the—you know—the importance of friends for children. I think you just think, "Oh, it's fine," because they're with their family and that's the most important thing. I thought that grandparents would be more of an issue, but actually, for them, it's friends.

Unlike the other parents described above, Natalie was unable to foresee that a transition into a new British international primary school would be so heavily affected by friendships. She added to this, saying that her daughter Madison 'even now talks about her friends in England and if you ask her about friends she's got here, she'll not really identify anybody. I think in her class she's found it really difficult at times'. This comment reinforces what Madison said herself about moving and not being able to make new friendships easily in her new school had meant that she still felt unsettled, even after almost a whole year of attending her new school.

The school itself acknowledged that friendships for children are important, and in particular the 'Settling In Workshop' provided to new parents, suggested that parents should 'help them (the children) to keep in touch with old friends' (British School, 2014:16). As opposed to Natalie, Sofia's approach was different and as illustrated by the guidance, she understood that her son Michael missed his old friends and so decided to support him through this by taking him back to Hong Kong where they had been living previously, during the initial period of transition. As Sofia described:

> He felt lost until I think after two weeks of school, one or two weeks of school I took him to Hong Kong because I thought he needed to make the connection well your friends are still there, your old friends. We went to the old house and he had play dates and when he came he was normal again.

Sofia's recollections are in line with what Michael described himself, as feeling sad about leaving the 'only friends' he had in Hong Kong. However, similarly to Paul, Amanda and Sarah's descriptions, Michael did not dwell on this. For him, support was given in helping him to understand that his friends were still there, just in a different place.

Katie's mother, Ji-Yeon, explained that friendships were important to her daughter as well, saying 'she has one difficulty. She is worried about friendship'. Ji-Yeon further explained that Katie's concern was primarily because they had moved from South Korea and that her English skills were limited. Katie initially made Korean-speaking friends who were able to translate for her and these friendships helped her to settle into her new school. As Ji-Yeon explained, 'my daughter feel happy'. Again, Ji-Yeon's comments reflect Katie's own words and picture (figure 5), when she described feeling initially worried about making friends but then feeling happy now that she has more friends than she had previously in her old school. Katie's experiences show how policy is put into practice in the school. The school uses a 'Whole School Language Policy' that explains how the school supports students through transition by providing

additional English language support, while also valuing mother tongue languages (British School, 2012). This document shows how the school has developed an understanding that English levels will affect friendships as well as the ability to participate in lessons. It states that 'Competence in English is clearly a factor which will influence the school experience… (and) students require English to communicate with their peers' (British School, 2012:2; **Appendix 9**, page 204). Once Katie's English levels had improved and she was able to communicate more easily, she felt happier in school.

Linked with discussions about friendships, another key theme that emerged was how the different children in the study managed their emotions during transition into the new school. Section 4.2 presents accounts from individual children and parents about their particular experiences.

4.2   Theme 2: Managing emotional experiences

As detailed in Table 3 on page 57, the children in the study had experienced a variety of schooling approaches around the world and as such, their emotional experiences were unique. The school's 'Settling In Workshop' prepares parents for this, explaining that 'children may not recognise what they are feeling' or 'maybe they do realise that they are feeling sad or angry or lonely but don't understand why' (British School, 2014:17). The interview findings showed that emotions ranged from positive feelings such as excitement and enjoyment, to anxiety, loneliness and confusion.

Louis in year five discussed how his emotions shifted throughout the year. He remarked, 'my emotions were like a rollercoaster. Sometimes happy; sometimes sad; sometimes excited; sometimes I didn't want to go'. Louis and his sister Adele are twins and had left their small French school in Jakarta to move to Vietnam. While Louis described this 'rollercoaster' of emotions, Adele simply said 'I felt sad because I had to leave my friends'. Their new school by contrast was much larger and they were no longer in the same class, which may have contributed to Adele's sadness about leaving her friends behind. Luke in year

five also expressed sadness at leaving his old school and moving to a place where everything was 'really new', but had now made lots of new friends and was confident in school.

Seventeen of the children in the study spoke about feeling initially shy, nervous or scared on their first day. As Anh Dung in year one explained, '(on my first day) I quite feel a bit nervous …because I think everyone just don't know my name'. Meanwhile Isabella in year one said she was 'really scared' and discussed feeling concerned about missing her friends and meeting the new teachers. Similarly, Ji Hee was worried about speaking English. She had moved from South Korea and had never experienced an English speaking school before. When reminiscing about her first day, she said 'I can remember. It feels like it was yesterday'. Lorenzo (year two), and twins Bai and Bo (year two) all initially felt very shy at speaking to the other children. Bo told me that they had been to three different schools both in Vietnam and Malaysia. Although he told me that he now feels 'good' about coming to school, he added later on in the interview that 'I miss my cousins and school friends in Malaysia'. Other children in the study echoed this expression of sadness as well. For example, Jasia (year one), Samaira (year two), Jason (year four) and Adele (year five) all said they felt 'sad' to be leaving their old schools.

However, while there was an expression of sadness, in particular about leaving friends behind, there were also comments about feeling more 'comfortable' (Jiovanni in year six) or more confident (Katie in year six) in the new school. There were six other children too who were also more confident and happy from the beginning, such as Jack (year one), Giang (year two), Hugo (year two), Prisha (year three), Candy (year five) and Chloe (year five) who all spoke highly positively regarding their excitement about their new adventure to a different country. Candy in year five exclaimed, 'I was quite excited about a new adventure to another country'. Her picture in figure 8 explains the things that she found new and exciting about moving, such as the weather, learning English and making new friends:

Figure 8: Candy's drawing

There were other children in the school who discussed learning English and this aspect of transition, along with other changes in academic expectations is discussed in Section 4.3.

When interviewing the parents, Amanda explained that her attitude towards the move impacted on how her children felt:

> From day one, we prepared them that they were going to be moving, so this was probably well before Christmas... and initially they weren't too happy about that. We tried to make some connections with places we might be going and I think so over that period of time, over that three or four months, they gradually came around to the idea of us both being positive about it, then they were eventually positive about it.

Amanda's husband, Paul's comments reinforced what she said, and a key method of dealing with their children's emotions was to lead by example. Paul and Amanda also said that they were sad to leave the last country they had lived in, but by being positive, this impacted on how their children felt as well.

Sarah's comments are similar to Paul and Amanda's:

> First I think we tried to make them a bit excited about the country. We showed them all the positives. ... Then of course maybe we exaggerated the positives too much but we thought that would help

them too. When we arrived of course there were also negatives
which we didn't really prepare them for but, then one of the things
we did is we showed them where we were gonna live, showed
them pictures of the school and so on.

The word 'positive' is used in both interviews as a way of making the children
feel excited about where they were going to move to. Central to this was
highlighting the positive aspects of the move. The school suggests that this is a
good idea and the 'Settling In Workshop' encouraged parents to 'Plan things for
them to look forward to in the future' (British School, 2014:16). Michael and
Sofia used this strategy too. As Michael explained when discussing their son:

We gave him something to look forward to, like a dog because we
couldn't have one in Hong Kong. The house is a bit small but when
we move here we will have a big house and we can have a dog and
it will be your dog, so he was looking forward to it and he
reminded us often.

By highlighting the positive aspects of the move, these parents felt they were
able to distract their children away from the sadness of losing friends. Natalie
talked about using this optimistic approach in more detail. Since this was the
family's first international move, it was an exciting time for them all:

We just thought it'd be positive and not consider the negatives …
We talked in about February last year and they were—just acted
so excited—and whenever we talked about it, they would just go,
"Eeee—yes!" you know, and jump up-and-down with excitement.

However, while Paul and Amanda's children began the transition by feeling sad
and moved towards excitement, Natalie's daughter's initial feelings were the
opposite. As explored in Section 4.1, Natalie's daughter Madison became very
sad once she moved and realised that she was without her friends.

There was an acknowledgement by Amanda, Paul and Sarah that their children
were sad at the start and missed their old lifestyles, but each of these parents

decided to try to limit their sympathy after some time had passed. As Amanda explained, she understood her children's sadness but did not want this feeling to overtake the whole experience:

> We also, maybe this comes across as sounding a bit tough, but of course we were sympathetic when we were leaving towards their needs, but we didn't really pamper them in any way, did we. We went: "This is it, this is the choice we've made as a family. You're just going to have to deal with it. You've got, you've got four or five months to deal with it and you can be sad every single day if that's what you're going to do or you can have the time of your life for the next four months and then in the last week at school, yes you know you can cry your eyes out as much as you want.

Amanda and Paul had made the decision to leave as a family and this was not something to be negotiated. They accepted that the children would be sad and respected that, but did not let this be the overall feeling. As described in Section 4.1, Amanda's children became happy and settled very quickly once they arrived and formed friends. This was combined with the excitement of living in a new country and having new experiences such as family motorbikes, holidays and sports.

Sarah's comments about her children, Aodhan and Charlotte, were similar to Amanda's in terms of building resilience in her children and limiting the amount of time in mourning over the life they were leaving:

> I think of course there need to be some systems in place but at the same time they need to move on with their routine and you know they cannot be considered as special for a very long time. They also need to know they have to (make it) work and a lot of kids move every so many years and they have to, that's why I said there was a point where that's it now, no more talking about where we were before, no more comparing.

Sarah recognised that her children were sad about leaving the familiarity of their friends and school, but they quickly settled into a new school routine and were happy there almost instantly. They had built up a level of resilience towards this

through their experiences of international schooling and were used to making new friends. Sarah also adopted the 'tough' stance of Amanda, and encouraged the children to 'move on' and stop 'comparing' their old life to the present one. By contrast, unlike the other families, Steven moved his son, Jason, from another local school and this was not an international move for them. As Steven explained, 'this is home … and when we moved from (the old school) across over here, it was an easy move'. He added 'I think we're pretty happy'. The move to a new school was not as complex as the other families because it was local, and arguably, this was less of an emotionally volatile time as a result.

When discussing the children's emotions, Ji-Yeon spoke about her daughter worrying about not speaking English fluently. This relates to changes in academic expectations when compared to her previous school in South Korea and is further discussed in Section 4.3, as well as other comments from both children and parents regarding this aspect of transition.

4.3   Theme 3: Changes in academic expectations and learning to adapt to a new school

A key factor that makes moving schools internationally distinct from moving schools within the same country is the potential to encounter a different education system, which some children and parents experienced during the transition. Five children spoke in detail about moving from an academic system that was more challenging. Aarush in year two had moved from India and explained, 'my old school is very, very different. And they didn't give us playtime. … They, they don't let us do anything. They just say "Do studies then do hard tests".' Instead, as highlighted in the 'New Pupil Orientation', the school community was encouraged to take a holistic approach in working towards the 'development of the whole child' (British School, 2014b:21). The 'New Pupil Orientation' was an obligatory meeting for all new parents to the school at the start of the academic year. It was used to explain the history and academic approach to the school, and build the expectation that parents and staff work

together to support the children in transition. While academic success was important and students achieved well in final exams at secondary level, the focus in the primary school was on 'children and learning' (British School, 2014b:21). The message from the principal in the school prospectus echoes this, stating that 'academic success is valued highly, but it is also our belief that the all-round development of each child is just as important' (British School, 2014d:7). Like Aarush, Ji Hee in year two was also surprised by the variety of her school day here. She had moved from a very formal and structured education system in South Korea, to Vietnam. Ji Hee described, 'when I went my Korean school and no play, no assembly, no PE. Just study. Math and Math'. Similarly, Ji Su in year six also moved from South Korea to Vietnam and described being very anxious about doing her Maths homework correctly in her old school because of the pressure to perform. Her drawing is shown in figure 9 where she describes herself as being 'extremely stupid' in her old school:

Figure 9: Ji Su's drawing

In her interview, Ji Su described enjoying Music lessons, making new friends and having a shared interest in unicorns. While she considered herself as 'stupid' and 'weird' in her Korean school, here she had learned to embrace her uniqueness in a different learning environment, learning that she was not stupid and instead had lots of friends.

In the same year six interview as Ji Su, Anaya also spoke in lots of detail about her previous experiences of school in Singapore, which she described as being 'much harder':

> If I struggle with something, that's basically just—the syllabus because in Singapore, we had to have much harder syllabus and way more homework. So basically I'm finding it hard (not) to go, "Why is there no homework?"

Ji Su agreed with this sentiment and the two girls had a shared understanding that the new school was fun and much easier compared to the schooling they had previously experienced, although this change seemed strange to them as expressed by Anaya's comments above. Anaya also found the social aspect of school different, and this was expressed in her drawing of the playgrounds, shown in figure 10:

Figure 10: Anaya's drawing

Anaya's picture of her old school shows a group of children playing basketball together. She is at the front, shooting the basketball into the hoop, while a friend

is cheering for her. Her caption below explains that this was a game she played with her friends everyday. In contrast, the picture of the new school shows a game of handball, which was new to her. In order to adapt and fit in, she has to practise everyday with her brother. Although she said that school was 'fun' here, her picture also suggests that she needed to work to fit in. She explained in the interview that 'sports was the hardest thing for me because there's so many totally different sports at my school'.

Molly in year five also discussed adapting to a new learning environment and learning to adjust to different expectations. The school's approach to education was based on an inquiry approach and expected children to be active participants in this process, which they were not all used to doing. Molly demonstrated this change through her drawing of the classrooms, shown here in figure 11:

Figure 11: Molly's drawing

Molly's picture shows a structured classroom environment in her previous school with rows of pupils behind desks, facing the board and the teacher. In her picture of the new school, the students appear to be working together at the front of the classroom with the teacher standing aside. This could indicate a change in academic approach; with the second picture providing an example of inquiry based collaborative learning. Molly had arrived in the school only recently, in the third term and so her experiences of transition were very recent. Molly explained that 'in Korea, in my old school, my teacher was strict and everyone like sat in desks'. When explaining her second picture, she said, 'you can sit on the carpet or you can sit on the chairs and you can choose'. She added that her last school was 'stricter' than this one. The school prospectus states that 'we select energetic and innovative teachers with a proven track record of successfully motivating and inspiring the children to make the best of their abilities in a caring and happy environment' (British School, 2014d:11). Creating a strict learning environment was therefore definitely not the intention of this school, and instead children were encouraged to collaborate. Not all the children who experienced a different education system previously, however, commented that this was an issue. For example, Adele in year five described the terms being organised differently and the buildings looking different, but not any differences in terms of academic expectation or strictness. Likewise, in the year six interview, although Ji Su and Anaya discussed their previous schools in South Korea and Singapore being more difficult, Katie said 'I don't worry about class' and did not comment on either school being more academically demanding.

However, Katie's mother, Ji-Yeon, in her interview, did describe the new school being easier. Ji-Yeon and Katie had moved from South Korea and Ji-Yeon explained:

> And new school life yes so she's life is changing. So she feel happy than in Korea. Korean student is not, not happy! Korean student have to study very hard. Yes, than in Vietnam. Yes so my daughter is happy than in Korean school.

Ji-Yeon further explained that Katie was happier now because she had more friends and had more time to socialise because she was not expected to study as hard as she had in South Korea. Although Katie herself said that she was happy and had friends, she did not attribute this to a change in academic demands when speaking in the interview. The change in academic standards was not a concern for Ji-Yeon, and Sofia expressed a similar attitude when talking about her son, Michael. Although they had moved from a British school, this was in Hong Kong and Sofia agreed that the British international primary school in Vietnam was not as academically challenging:

> We felt that the school in Hong Kong was more demanding academically and maybe even in terms of behaviours, manners, everything. So for him coming to this school maybe was a little bit easy. For on the one hand it was nice but maybe we lost a bit of challenge on the way but it's not a big deal. He's not that old so it doesn't matter that much.

However, Michael did not describe the new school as being easier. He explained some practical differences such as the old school not having a swimming pool, but did not reflect on his academic experience. Like Sofia, Natalie also felt that this school was not as academically challenging as the school that her daughters had previously attended in England. She explained, 'it does worry me when we go back to the UK that they'll drop behind a little bit'. Natalie felt that academic standards were higher in the UK, despite this being a British school. However, she also added that while her children were 'repeating' things they had already done, they were also being 'nurtured', which was a highly positive aspect of their new school life. Both Sofia and Natalie concluded that overall they were not concerned, and this was mainly due to the young age of the children. Sofia's husband concluded that they might consider sending their son to a boarding school in England when he is older, while Natalie's plan is to move back to England with her daughters where they will continue their education.

Contrastingly, school was not easier for all of the children in the study, and four of the children made detailed comments about school being more difficult than

they had previously experienced. Se Jun (year four) and Candy (year five) both explained that since they spoke English as a second language, school was initially difficult for them. Se Jun recalled 'everyone says I can't speak English properly, so I was very upset'. Se Jun and Prisha (year three) also spoke about the groupings for different ability children and the levels of English that they spoke affected this. For Prisha, this was 'hard' and for Se Jun, 'it doesn't make me feel very good'. Additional language support was provided to the children who were at the early stages of learning English. The school's 'Whole Language Policy' states that 'the English as an Additional Language programme aims to ensure that all students are able to access the school curriculum' (British School, 2012:2; **Appendix 9**, page 204). It explains that levels of support are dependent on individuals' needs, which are regularly assessed. Support is offered both in class and through withdrawal lessons, which are 'an integral part of the curriculum' (British School, 2012:2; **Appendix 9**, page 204). In contrast to Se Jun and Prisha, three other younger children in the study discussed their English language support positively. For instance, Minh and Theo in year one both talked about having small group classes with the language teacher. Minh recalled feeling 'not happy' on his first day. When asked how he feels now, he replied he was happy because 'I play with my friend and, and talking with my friend and go to Ms Emily'. For Minh, his English teacher was particularly important since she helped him to communicate, meaning that he was now better at communicating with others and playing with his friends. Similarly, Ji Hee in year two talked about feeling scared when she first arrived in school because she could not speak English, and she received help from the language teacher.

None of the parents discussed school being academically more difficult compared to the previous school. Ji-Yeon explained that while learning English was a source of anxiety for her daughter, Katie, overall, she felt 'happy' at school because she did not have to work so hard. Paul explained that they had chosen a British education system to send their children to in order to minimise academic disruption when moving internationally:

I think that's the beauty of being in the British system; we've chosen

our pathway, not just for ourselves, but for the children as well, simply because we could transfer between schools with a bit more ease and you know, we could move with the expectation that it would not be that far removed from where we'd left and we've certainly found that the whole way through.

With this aim of keeping school life similar with each move, Paul's intention was that their children could 'transfer' between schools more easily. There was a sense that although the children's lifestyles had changed, their schooling would enable some consistency. The school's Admissions Policy states that it offers a 'British style education' and follows the English National Curriculum, alongside the International Primary Curriculum (British School, 2013:1; **Appendix 9**, page 198). Sofia and Michael also opted for a British education in all countries, despite neither of them being British themselves:

In terms of schooling it was very simple because we decided to put our son also in Hong Kong in a British education system. So it was a fairly straightforward choice for us when we came here and when we had the interview with our son here in this room, all the terms were, you know, very familiar to him already. He already knew how things work and we have assembly and we have this and that so for him that so him that aspect was rather easy to change.

In addition to the academic approach to the school, part of the transition process also involved adapting to this particular school environment. While Sofia knew that her son understood the various terminology and what was expected of him academically, she was aware that she had to support him adapt in more subtle ways. Her son found navigating around the new school initially daunting and a source of stress. She described him feeling 'lost' both at home and at school. At school he got physically lost but also felt lost in the sense of not knowing how to fit in to established friendship networks. Understanding how the school worked, where he was meant to be and when was a source of anxiety. Michael's father discussed this again further on in the interview and the impact it had made on his son. As he explained:

> The other thing in the first weeks and months he wouldn't want
> us just to drop him off in the morning. We, I had to come back into
> the schoolyard with him. In the beginning by the hand and take
> him to some teacher who was on duty and take him and say, 'this is
> my son Michael. He's new here. Can you please take care of him'.
> And then he knew oh, this person is new. He wouldn't stick to the teacher.
> He just wanted to know, you know, who's a reference point
> and who can I ask for help. I think it is because on that one day
> he got lost and he didn't know who to, who to ask for help.

He explained that this was only needed during the initial weeks when he first arrived, while Michael got used to the school, however this source of support was essential to help him feel at ease at the start of the school day. In addition to feeling physically lost, Sofia explained 'we are kind of lost as well, as parents'. They were initially confused, and still were to some extent, about the expectations of the school on both the child and the parents. For instance, they remarked that it took some time before they realised that many of the other parents hired tutors for their children, but that this was not a system they were accustomed to. They were unsure whether they should employ a tutor as well in order to be more like the other families. As Sofia explained, certain aspects of school life were 'a challenge for us as parents'. On a practical level as well, they experienced early difficulties in understanding the school routines and expectations. Sofia recalled:

> Some processes were not straightforward. For example, I didn't
> know that the days that Michael has PE he needed to pack his uniform
> for the rest of the day and he did not do it for, I don't know, two or
> three weeks until once he told me 'oh why you didn't pack?

From this perspective therefore, learning to adapt to a new school also meant learning the different routines and expectations of the new school. The policy documents provide a context to the curriculum and explain the provision offered to pupils, while the 'New Pupil Orientation' (British School, 2014b) and 'Settling In Workshop' (British School, 2014) explain certain aspects of school life and the emotional support offered by the school to both parents and children. However, Sofia and Michael's experience highlights the many subtle expectations and

practices about individual school culture that are undocumented and learnt through experience. Although they were given a timetable, they did not understand the nuances of it, such as bringing in a school uniform to change into after PE. Similarly, while the school did not explicitly ask parents to hire tutors, as Sofia commented, many parents did do this and she began to wonder whether this was an expectation.

Ji-Yeon also explained that her daughter, Katie found getting to know the routines of the school a source of worry. Like Michael, she relied on other people to help her to understand. However, because she did not speak English, Ji-Yeon explained that 'usually Korean friends told my daughter how to do in school'. Ji-Yeon acknowledged that her daughter needed to adapt, not only academically to a new school system, but also to the uniqueness of this particular environment, and that she needed the support of the Korean network at school to make this possible.

Meanwhile Steven had to support his son, Jason, in finding different interests. To him it was a 'disappointment' that the school did not offer piano lessons, which 'took music off the agenda'. This is despite the school prospectus stating that 'music plays a powerful part' in the school (British School, 2014d:3). Instead, Steven noticed that football was a more popular option and so enrolled his son in this; both as a way to fit in to the new school and also for help him form friendships. He also explained that he had chosen this particular school because it 'felt more strict and disciplinarian' than the other available schools and that he felt his son needed this level of discipline and also that this 'strict' approach would be more beneficial to his son making progress in Maths and English. This is in contrast to the way in which the school describes itself in the 'New Pupil Orientation', which states that this is a 'forward thinking' and 'happy' school (British School, 2014b:21). The school prospectus adds to this, describing the school as being a 'caring community' (British School, 2014d:5). Steven's description could, however link to the principal's statement in the prospectus that 'the traditional virtues of good manners, politeness and tolerance' are integral to the school (British School, 2014d:7).

4.4   Further reflections on the findings

The children in the study had their own unique experiences of transition and lives elsewhere before joining this particular school. As the school's 'Settling In Workshop' explains, there are children from forty-five different countries attending the school and each of these countries is represented in the international walkway; a space in the school with flags hanging from each of these countries (British School, 2014). For some of the children in the study, international movement has become a way of life for them. For example, Theo in year one explained that he has already lived in eight countries and is only six years old. Theo's mother is Russian and his father is French. He previously attended a French school in Singapore and explained that he will be moving again in just over a year's time, having spent two years in Vietnam. Theo appeared to have developed resilience towards moving. He said he felt 'really good' about moving again because 'you have new friends. I have thousands!' This is similar to Michael's description of moving schools frequently, as discussed in Section 4.1. Louis in year five also explained that although he had mixed feelings about leaving his previous school in Jakarta, he did not miss anything from there. Louis is French and it would appear that he accepted that living in Indonesia was an experience that he had, and that this phase of his life was now over. He said that he had not been back to Jakarta and was not planning to go back, but was looking forward to going to France for the holidays. By contrast, Molly in year five had previously moved from South Korea to Australia and, although she had experience of moving internationally and changing schools, her understanding of the enormity of this meant that she had realistic expectations. She explained, 'I was kind of excited, but I was like, there's no friends, no family, just me, and my dad, and my mum here'. When recalling her first day, she remembered it being 'so, so, so hot' and that she 'could not do so many things outside'. Hence, while she had understood what to expect in terms of leaving Australia, moving to a new country in a different climate was a source of added complexity, resulting in a change of lifestyle, not only in school but outside of school as well.

Jiovanni and Ji Su also mentioned the heat in Vietnam in the year six interview. As Ji Su explained, 'Vietnam has only summer, so I shouldn't buy winter clothes and summer clothes and fall clothes and spring clothes'. Jiovanni agreed, saying 'yeah, it's the same as England. It's funny to have it always be summer'. Jiovanni added this to his picture as well (figure 7). He chose to write some comparisons between England and Vietnam, and the weather was highlighted as a difference that he had found. He also wrote about differences in language. Even though he had moved to an English speaking school, he had found that 'they use American words, e.g. "pants" for trousers'. For these children, moving to Vietnam added further challenge to their transitions. As well as learning to adapt to the school environment, they also had to learn about life in Vietnam, which for some was very different to life in their previous country. The school recognises that part of the transition will also require an adaptation to Vietnam and so they offer a 'Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City Parents' Guide Book' (British School, 2014c), which was put together by a group of teachers and parents. It provides suggestions of items to bring that are difficult to locate in Vietnam, suggestions about things to do and where to shop, as well as advice about the climate, including sun protection advice and insect repellant. By doing this, the school has chosen to take an active role as a social and cultural bridge for parents and indirectly children to prepare their adjustment and transition to the country. They encourage newcomers to learn from their experiences, and the fact that it is written by teachers as well as parents, shows a collaborative approach to transition. Efforts such as these demonstrate the supportive nature of the school in helping the parents and the children in gaining social capital to enable them to develop the knowledge required to ensure a smooth transition to their new school environment, as well as to Vietnam. As they state in their welcome guide, the school 'is a friendly and welcoming environment and you will find everyone very supportive. When you arrive please do not hesitate to ask for any help, information or advice. We will do everything we can to make sure you settle in and feel comfortable as soon as possible' (British School, 2014c:2).

Isabella had moved from a British school in Indonesia and explained that she felt 'really scared' on her first day, primarily about meeting the teachers, although she explained that now she thinks the school is 'great'. However, her comments throughout the interview also highlighted that the transition that she was experiencing was not just into school, but that this was a whole life transition too. When I asked the children how they felt about being in our school now, at the end of the year, Isabella explained that 'I don't like the country but I do like the school'. These comments emphasise the complexity of international movement and while this study focuses on school life, all aspects of the children's lives were affected by their move. In essence, they not only had to adjust to a new school, but also had to learn to live in a new country. Similarly, Lorenzo in year two moved to Vietnam from his home country, England. When recalling his last day of school in London, he explained, 'I remember the assembly and everyone was all really sad that I was leaving. I didn't really feel that I was leaving them. When you're in the plane it just feels like you're going to a country for the holidays. Then when you stay there, it's not fun really'. Lorenzo's lack of experience at international movement meant that it was very difficult to prepare for the transition. He likened going on a plane to going on holiday, and then realised that he was not going home, and so had to learn to adapt. Lorenzo's comments reveal that international movement is a unique form of transition, adding to the complexity of emotions felt during this time.

From a parental perspective, experience of international movement was also discussed and this affected how parents prepared their children for the move. Paul and Amanda's children had experienced moving schools before, however Paul acknowledged that 'this was the first real time that they were old enough to understand that this was final'. Amanda explained that she felt it was important that the children had enough time to prepare for the move, explaining that 'from day one, we prepared them that they were going to be moving, so this was probably well before Christmas ... and initially they weren't too happy about that; (but) they didn't throw wobblers or anything like that'. Since the children had moved before, Paul and Amanda both understood that losing friendships would be of key importance and so worked to ease this, explaining, 'we also tried

to make some connections with people who were already here … So (Ava) was able to email a couple of kids before she came, and had built up a little bit of a relationship with them'. For Paul, Amanda and Ava, there was an element of predictability about what to expect from the move and so the preparation that they did for moving helped to ease this transition. Sofia and Michael also shared these views and have moved countries many times before. As Sofia explained, 'everything is going to be difficult so I'm more adaptable with it. I think I have lost some of the capacity of being surprised'.

In contrast to Sofia's expectation that the move would be challenging in all aspects of life, Natalie recalled that they all excited and did not expect it to be difficult. She described the experience by saying 'it's more of an extended holiday'. She recalled:

> We just thought this will all be very nice and our children will experience some different cultures and it will be great, but we haven't really thought actually it's quite a massive thing for them. We haven't thought about that. We hadn't considered it actually. We just thought it'd be positive and not consider the negatives.

Unlike Sofia and Michael whose jobs meant that they had to move countries every three years, Natalie and her husband chose to move in order to provide their children with a new experience. Their motivation to leave was based on desire rather than necessity, and this in turn affected their preparation and contributed to a challenging transition for the children. Unpredictability surrounding transition was a key factor for Sarah too, who was also less experienced at moving abroad with her family. As Sarah explained, despite her best efforts to prepare her children for the move, 'When we arrived of course there were also negatives which we didn't really prepare them for'. Although she herself was experienced at moving internationally, her children were not. Both children were born abroad and this was their first move. She spoke to other parents who gave their advice based on their experiences of international transition, highlighting that this is more complex than simply moving schools. Sarah had to explain when her daughter asked, 'is this forever?' that it was, and

that they were 'never going back'. For Sarah, moving her children from a country where they had always lived but were not technically 'from', caused added complexity:

> I think if they were moving from their home country the idea wouldn't be as permanent so they were born in a country which wasn't their own. So for them it really was kind of their country even though they weren't fully attached to it. They knew they were never going to live there again. I think that was something that they understood pretty quickly and they had a big cry about that because especially the nanny they had was a nanny that took care of them from when they were born.

Thus, even though Sarah added that the children 'got over it quite quickly', the preparation for the transition and explaining what was going to happen was one of the most difficult aspects of the move. Sarah discussed this again, further on in the interview as she explained, 'in terms of schools I think it's not so much the arriving school, it's the school where they leave from. I think that's where probably the biggest job has to be done; how you make kids leave'. As discussed in Section 4.3, Sarah specifically chose a British school for her children to minimise disruption to their schooling, and concluded 'I think it's been quite easy in terms of school. I think maybe the lifestyle, the accommodation, even though it's lovely where we are, I think it's just that it's a new country. I think that's sort of harder'. Sarah's comments resonate with Jiovanni and Ji Su's reflections about the weather and the move to Vietnam itself as being a difficult aspect of transition when viewed as a whole. The children and parents' experiences of transition were variable and therefore the multidimensional aspects of transition manifested in different ways. The school's 'Settling In Workshop' alerts parents that some children will struggle with the transition and that they may find it difficult to explain how they are feeling and that although 'international students often get told how lucky they are, it may not always seem that way to them' (British School, 2014:13-14). The school recommends parents listening to their children and ensuring that they take their worries seriously, even if they do not fully understand them.

4.5 Chapter summary

Three main themes emerged when interviewing the parents and children and analysing the children's drawings, school documents and policies, regarding the factors that influence children's experiences during the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. Friendships are incredibly important, and individual children spoke about this. Comments ranged from coping with losing friends and potentially not seeing old friends once they move, to making new friends, which for some was a highlight of moving. Linked to this is the notion of managing emotional experiences. Individual parents and children expressed a wide range of emotions during the first year of transition. Coping with academic expectations and learning the routines and expectations of the new school was also a feature of moving schools and a factor that influences transition. For all children and their parents, they had to learn how to adapt to this particular learning environment. Underpinning these three main themes is the unique context of international transition and the complexity that this brings. Moving internationally was different for all children, and experience at doing this before affected preparation. Furthermore, the responses highlight the enormity of moving not just schools, but countries as well. This chapter is followed by the discussion chapter, which analyses these findings in further detail.

5.0   Discussion

The findings from my research explain how a group of thirty-four children experienced transition during their first year of moving to a British international primary school in Vietnam. Using sociocultural and ecological theory, this chapter analyses the perspectives of both parents and children in order to gain a fuller picture of the complex factors that affected transition. This is supported by the use of school documents and policies to explore the role of the school in supporting transition, and how this has an impact on the children's experiences. The findings are linked to the existing literature to answer the research questions:

1. What are children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?
2. What are parents' perspectives of supporting children in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?
3. What factors influence children's experiences in their first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

This chapter draws together the themes that emerged in the findings alongside previous research in the field. Sociocultural and ecological theory provides a useful theoretical framework in the analysis as the theory acknowledges the varied influences that affect people as they journey through life. Within this theoretical model, individuals are perceived as part of a myriad of relationships and social contexts that shape both their identity and experience. The interview responses from the children clearly show that each experience was unique, as each child has their own ecological capital that they bring to the school. They each had their own individual experiences prior to joining this school in a range of school settings and were supported in varying ways by their families during their transition. When discussing the findings in this chapter, I explore how individuals perceive and articulate their experiences of transition, and how the overall findings relate to school existing policies and documents as well as previous research in the field of transition.

5.1 Research question 1: What are children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

The use of semi-structured interviews with thirty-four children organised into nine groups helped to gain an understanding of their experiences during the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. This particular context led to complex and personal factors influencing transition due to the contrast of prior experiences and cultural backgrounds of the children involved. A key finding was that friendships were important to individual children and there were discussions about the range of emotions that were experienced throughout the transition process. There was also talk about the academic side of starting a new school for particular pupils who had not experienced this curriculum before or who were learning English. The children's experiences are analysed using sociocultural and ecological theory alongside Mayfield's (2003) concept of continuity.

5.1.1 The importance of friendship groups

In addressing the research question of children's experiences in their first year of transition, the findings showed peer relationships and the importance of friendship groups as a key dimension, which is a prominent feature in existing literature (Cantin and Boivin, 2004; Evangelou et al, 2008; Brown, 2012; Hacochen, 2012; Messiou and Jones, 2015; and Adams, 2016). This is reflective of Rogoff's (1995) interpersonal plane of development that highlights interactions with others as an influencing factor on human development. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) presentation of mesosystems and microsystems in his ecological framework model effectively argues that people do not exist in isolation, but rather their interactions with people around them influence their lives and personal growth. In my study, the interpersonal plane and talk of social interaction by individual children was best shown through their discussion of friendships. Every child in the study spoke about friendships in some way, and the school itself acknowledged that this is an important

element to starting a new school during the 'Settling In Workshop' (British School, 2014).

Cantin and Boivin's (2004) research into children's experiences of moving from elementary school to Junior High School (JHS) in Canada primarily discussed the importance of children's peer networks. The challenge for these two hundred students was in learning to adapt and make friends in a much larger environment while also dealing with the loss of friendships from the old school. It was found that while there were significant changes to the friendship groups of the children involved, they were 'as satisfied' with their new social networks by the end of the first year of JHS as they were with those at the end of elementary school. Such experiences are reflected in this study as well. For example, Luke in year five recalled feeling sad at leaving his 'best friends' when changing schools and leaving his British school in Malaysia. However he then added 'but I guess it turned out okay because I made a lot of new friends and – here I am!' In the same interview, Che expressed similar sentiments as he recalled crying when he was told he was going to leave Australia, but then remarked 'but here, I've made more friends!' Other children in this study also shared the view that making new friends was exciting and that they have now formed good friendships during this period of change (Theo in year one; Michael, Prisha and Talia in year three; Alfonso in year five and Ji Su and Katie in year six). It could be argued that for these children, the successful interactions with others had made a direct impact on their happiness levels and acclimatisation into the new school. The interpersonal aspect of their transition was working effectively, and had a positive impact on the intrapersonal plane (Rogoff, 1995). This could also be described using the microsystems of school and peers as highlighted by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which directly influence and affect the individual.

Nine of the thirty-four children in my study spoke about feeling sad or anxious about leaving their old friends and having to make new ones. Prior research by O'Farrelly and Hennessy (2014) in Dublin followed seven pre-school children as they moved rooms within their preschool settings. Their findings from interviews with the children, ranked friends as the most important 'people who

matter' (O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014: 339) and separation from these friends led to anxiety. O'Farrelly and Hennessy (2014) refer to this as 'an attachment perspective, which frames children's responses to transitions as separation stress' (O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014:342). In my study, Michael also experienced what could be described as separation stress when explaining his sadness at leaving his friends and continually making new ones during his multiple moves around the world. Similarly to the children in O'Farelly and Hennessy's (2014) study, Michael felt anxious and sad because he was unable to stay with the friends he knew and had bonded with. The added complexity in Michael's situation was that, unlike those in O'Farrelly and Hennessy's (2014) research, Michael was leaving the country as well and therefore would not see these friends again without a trip back to Hong Kong. The use of sociocultural and ecological theory can be used to better understand Michael's experiences. As demonstrated by Rogoff's (1995) interpersonal plane of development, an important aspect of human development lies in the interactions we have with others. In this instance, a lack of peer social relationships for Michael manifested negatively into anxiety. The importance of social interaction is also shown in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework. Peer networks and interactions with other people are a part of the microsystems and mesosyetems that individuals experience and are influenced by.

However, unlike Michael and the findings of O'Farelly and Hennessy's (2014) research, six of the children recalled their initial excitement at arriving at the new school, and did not display any signs of separation stress due to leaving old friends behind. Jack (year one), Giang (year two), Hugo (year two), Prisha (year three), Candy (year five) and Chloe (year five) all had positive things to say. For example, Jack in year one had previously attended a British school in Japan and explained that he was 'really happy because I wanted to play football for a long time... and now I can play football'. Meanwhile, Hugo in year two had already experienced moving from France to Indonesia, and explained that he was excited to move to another country. Unlike Michael, who found moving countries daunting, Hugo enjoyed this experience and he did not mention that leaving his previous friends and moving was a stressful or sad experience. These findings

resonate with Cantin and Boivin's (2004) observation from their research in Canada that some new students found that starting Junior High School provided new opportunities for them, and a positive new beginning.

Messiou and Jones (2015) engaged pupil researchers in their qualitative study based on listening to pupils' voices around the topic of transition. They used semi-structured interviews in pairs with twelve students aged from twelve to fifteen. Messiou and Jones (2015) found that students' anxiety was built around starting a new school at a non-normative time and trying to break into existing friendship groups. Jason in year four was also anxious about starting a new school and thought the prospect of walking into a new classroom with no friends was 'too scary'. Jason had already attended an international school in Vietnam, meaning that his transition was a local one, however he shared similar anxieties to other children who had just moved to Vietnam and did not know anyone in the country. Meanwhile Candy in year five and Madison in year one, both found that being accepted by children who already had good friendship groups was challenging. Che in year five expressed in his drawing that he had friends in his old school in Australia but did not immediately make friends in the new school (figure 6). When considering Messiou and Jones' (2015) research alongside my findings, the time of joining school is potentially significant when considering how the children felt at that time with regards to forming new social networks. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlights through his presentation of microsystems, peers have a direct influence on individual development. Jason, Candy, Madison and Jiovanni's comments when analysed using ecological theory suggest that the lack of solid friendship groups had affected individual experiences in a negative way. A key microsystem was not working as effectively as it should have been, thus impacting emotionally on the individual. It is important to note, however, that joining the school at an unconventional time, such as midway through the year, does not necessarily result in anxiety and concern about finding a friendship group to become a part of. Rather, it is dependent on the child and how easily they are able to make connections with others. Each child has their own individual ecology and so will adjust and respond to their distinct transition experiences in their own unique way. For example, while Candy, Madison, Che

and Jiovanni found this difficult, Luke in year five enjoyed the experience of leaving his school in Malaysia and making new friends. He compared himself to his brother, expressing surprise that he was 'so sad that he started crying!' While Luke felt secure in his ability to start again in a new school, his brother displayed some anxiety towards this aspect of the unknown.

The findings here resonate with the key tenants of sociocultural and ecological theory, which provides a useful framework for analysing the impact and importance of friendship groups on children as they adapt to a new school environment. Using Rogoff's (2003) sociocultural theory model, certain children's responses show that when the interpersonal plane of development was working effectively and they had positive encounters with new friends, this in turn impacted on the interpersonal plane. Children such as Luke, Che, Theo, Prisha, Talia, Alfonso, Ji Su and Katie were happier when they had formed good friendships with others. However, this impacted negatively on Michael, Madison and Candy, for whom making friends was difficult, causing them to feel sad or anxious. The relationships that people have with others influence their experience, as demonstrated by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory model. Mesosystems are used to explain how relationships between different groups including family, school and peers help to form individual experiences. In the context of this research, the role of friends was hugely influential on individual experiences, as demonstrated by the comments that have been presented here.

5.1.2 Children's perspectives on how they coped emotionally

The children's perspectives in the first year of transition were also reflected through how they managed their emotions. On an individual level, Eodanable and Lauchlan (2011), Li et al (2012), and Messiou and Jones (2015) have all highlighted that children's emotional experiences during periods of transition have been overlooked in prior research. My study has attempted to address this, and demonstrates the importance of considering children's emotions in conversations about transition, and in turn empowering them through

discussions. When using sociocultural theory, the intrapersonal plane of development can be used to help understand how individuals are influenced by the world around them (Rogoff, 1995). The interpersonal and community planes effectively show, in this context, how children may internalise transition personally through their interactions with others and their understanding of the school environment. Emotions were further complicated by the international context of the move. Moving to a new country provided some initial excitement for Jack (year one), Giang (year two), Hugo (year two), Prisha (year three), Candy (year five) and Chloe (year five), and the move was regarded as a new adventure. By contrast, Samaira in year two explained that she was sad to leave her old friends in Australia and still missed her best friends now, even at the end of the academic year. Individual circumstances therefore affected the children's emotional responses to international transition. As demonstrated in Table 3 on page 57 of the methodology, the children had previously attended a wide variety of schools in various countries around the world. They also had varying degrees of experience with international transition, which could have affected how they emotionally prepared and adapted.

Louis in year five commented that his emotions were 'like a rollercoaster', which demonstrate the emotional confusion that he experienced during his transition in an international context. This same expression was used in Hacohen's (2012) research by one of the teachers interviewed. She accepted that the students would experience a range of emotions and considered her pastoral role as highly important. Similarly, in my study, Jiovanni in year six described himself as feeling 'more comfortable' after being initially sad at moving schools, thus suggesting that despite the continuing changes of emotion, this did settle down. This was Jiovanni's first experience of international schooling, having previously only lived in England. These comments highlight the additional challenges that can be experienced during international transition in comparison to more traditional movement between schools at standard times such as starting primary or secondary school within one country. As highlighted by Mayfield (2003), these children experienced discontinuity in their transition, which led to a complex range of emotions. However, not all children experienced such a wide

range of emotions. Unlike Louis, his twin sister Adele simply stated that she was initially sad at being told that she was going to leave her old school. She said that she missed her friends still sometimes, but her comments were not overly emotional and she did discuss having experienced any conflicting emotions.

Prisha in year three meanwhile appeared to be very emotionally aware of how transition had affected her personally, having moved from a different British school in Vietnam. Her emotions appeared to be directly related to both her interactions with other people and her struggle to become acquainted with new school systems, thus highlighting how the interpersonal and community planes of development can impact the intrapersonal plane (Rogoff, 1995). Prisha explained that when she was told that she was going to leave her old school she felt 'sad' because 'I miss my friends'. When recalling her first day at the new school, she again used emotive language:

> I came to my class and I didn't feel so shy and it was break time and I had no one to play with. But Ms Laura at lunchtime when it was almost lunchtime, she asked if someone wants to take care of me and show me the school and play with me.

Using the language of ecological theory, it could be said that her nerves partially derived out of not knowing or understanding the exosystem of her new school. She did not know where to go or what to do. However, partnering her up with someone to show her eased this. Some of her other comments also show how not understanding the exosystem of the new school can cause confusion. For instance, she said that 'the classroom was totally different because (in my old school) there's like two bins. One's called the recycling bin and the other is just a normal bin'. The systems in place in the new school were different and for her, part of transition involved understanding how to behave in this new environment. Prisha explained this more later on in the interview when she spoke about her experience of the first Maths lesson:

> The first Maths lesson it was hard to join in because it was year two. It was, like we didn't have, in my class we had three

groups and it's more different than my class because last year
they just used to have one group and the whole class used to
do the same thing. And then at the first day they had three
different groups and it was hard.

For Prisha, it was important to know what her role was in the context of the new
classroom and not understanding the organisation of the Maths lessons led to
anxiety and finding it 'difficult to join in'. She experienced what Mayfield (2003)
describes as curricular and philosophical discontinuity. The approach to Maths
in this school was different to what she had previously experienced, even though
she had already attended a different British school in Vietnam, thus emphasising
the individual nature of schools. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concept of
mesosystems is also relevant. In this context, understanding the mesosystems
involves knowing how to interact within the school environment; the structures
that are in place there and the role that individuals play. The mesosystems have
a direct influence on the individual and in this instance; the mesosystems caused
a degree of stress because Prisha did not understand them, due to curricular and
philosophical discontinuity (Mayfield, 2003). It was difficult for her to
participate until she learned her role in this new learning environment. Prisha
referred to Maths once again towards the end of the interview. She repeated that
she finds Maths 'hard' but this time she added that she felt 'happy'. When asked
what was making her feel happy, she explained, 'I'm here and my friends are
here'. She then concluded by adding, 'I'm a lot less nervous and it's more
comfortable (now)'. In answer to the first research question, from Prisha's
perspective, her experiences in the first year of transition into a new school were
varied. Her transition proved to be an emotionally charged time. The school
itself explains to parents during the 'Settling in Workshop' presentation that
children may experience different emotions and may be confused by this (British
school, 2014). When applying ecological theory, it can be argued that such
turbulence arises from trying to ascertain what the new microsystems,
mesosystems and exosystems are within the new school environment
(Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and working through discontinuities in approaches in
the new school compared to previous experiences elsewhere (Mayfield, 2003).

In order to feel a part of the school, Prisha needed to know what her role was within this new environment and to build relationships with other people.

Nine of the children in the study revealed how, for them, feelings of happiness were heavily linked to making new friends (Theo, Minh and Isabella in year one; Michael, Prisha and Talia in year three; Luke in year five and Ji Su and Katie in year six). This was reflected in Dockett and Perry's (2004) study where they found that 'several children seemed to measure their success and happiness at school by whether or not they had friends' (Dockett & Perry, 2004:180). In my study, Jiovanni's (year six) drawing in figure 7 demonstrates how feeling settled, happy and comfortable in school relies heavily on forming friends and having something in common with the people in their new peer group. His picture of his old school in England shows him with his friends playing football. The picture of his new school in Vietnam is a group of children playing handball. He wrote 'Here, I am not as confident because I have not been here for long ... They play handball, so I'm not as good as the others'. For Jiovanni, it was important to access the games that the children in his new school play so that they could form friendships. For him, the 'success' that Dockett and Perry (2004:180) describe meant learning and becoming good at handball. This also links with Fabian and Dunlop's (2005) assertion that, when changing schools, children need to understand the social context of the new school environment in order to be successful there. The new social environment was further complicated in this study due to the international context and movement into a British international primary school in Vietnam.

From a sociocultural and ecological perspective, considering the children's emotions during the first year of transition demonstrates how they are individuals acting within a web of social interactions. While they are influenced by their interactions with others and the ways in which they and others operate within a social setting such as school, the ways in which they respond to this are unique. Rogoff (1995) describes this as the intrapersonal plane of development, while Bronfenbrenner (1979) places the 'You' component at the centre of his ecological theory model. Therefore when considering children's perspectives on

their transition and questioning what factors have been influential, it is important to consider those interviewed as individuals. While this study aims to provide some insight into a field where there is limited research, it does not aim to be generalisable. This discussion surrounding children's feelings demonstrates some of these intrapersonal factors. Research on transitions when starting school, such as Griebel and Niesel's (2009) project demonstrate the shift in personal growth as they describe 'developmental tasks at the individual level' (Griebel and Niesel, 2009:61) in their presentation of sociocultural theory. Griebel and Niesel (2009) worked with six year olds in Germany as they transitioned from kindergarten to school, interviewing both the children and their parents as well. Similarly to my study, Griebel and Niesel (2009) discuss the range of emotions that children experience through their transition into school as well as the shift in identity that children face, as individual factors. As they explain, learning to deal with strong emotions is an individual task for each child involved. Furthermore, 'strong emotions like anticipation, curiosity and pride, as well as insecurity and fear, must be mastered by every child' (Griebel and Niesel, 2009:61). In sociocultural terms, the children's accounts of how they experienced different emotions in my study, shows one of the ways in which they responded to transition at an individual level.

5.1.3   Children's explanations of changing academic expectations and understanding the new school environment

Another theme that emerged when interviewing the children about their experience of transition was the role of academic expectations and how this varied depending on the children's prior experiences of schooling elsewhere (see Table 3 on page 57). Due to the international nature of the school, the children in this research had many different experiences of school prior to starting here, and this added to further complexities for the children involved. While some children had attended British international primary schools elsewhere, for others, this was a new experience. Children's comments in the interviews ranged from perceptions that the new school was less challenging, to those who found it more difficult, and those that did not discuss any differences. In addition

to this, all children, regardless of their previous experiences of education, had to understand the new school environment. Since all schools are unique, part of the children's transitions involved learning the rules, routines and expectations of this particular school. As highlighted by Mayfield (2003), some children experienced curricular discontinuity in their transition because the new school's approach to teaching and curriculum did not match with their previous experiences and expectations. The school describes itself as providing a 'British style education' (British school, 2013) since, while it draws on the approach used in Britain, it also uses the International Primary Curriculum as well, which could be a new experience for some of the children. Both understanding the rules and routines, and adapting academically can be considered as aspects of Rogoff's (1995) community/institutional plane of development. The multidimensional aspect of sociocultural theory shows how children are active participants helping to shape the community of their school. As such, they become involved from the very beginning of their journey and are a part of the school environment. While this will impact on them as individuals, both the school and the child develop and grow simultaneously. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory highlights how the child sits at the centre of the microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems that they are a part of. Learning how to interact in this new environment is therefore an essential aspect of transition.

Similarly to Yeo and Clarke (2007) and Loizou (2011), four children in my study explained that part of their transition involved adapting to new academic expectations. Prisha in year three recalled that 'the first Maths lesson was hard to join in' and demonstrated some anxiety because 'it's more different to my class'. Candy in year five had moved from a local school in South Korea and also pinpointed Maths as being particularly difficult and explained 'I don't know such stuff—many vocabularies in Math—so I'm finding it hard with Math'. For Prisha and Candy, the academic demands of learning Maths in this school proved more difficult than what they had previously experienced. In order to make a successful transition, they had to learn to adapt, which included learning specific mathematical vocabulary. As the school's 'Whole School Language Policy' explains, competency in English is essential in order to access the whole

curriculum, and great emphasis is placed on learning English well enough to participate in lessons and be successful learners (British school, 2012, **Appendix 9**). Language was a particular barrier to success to Katie in year six and Se Jun in year four as well. Se Jun explained, 'I went to the very highest class, but I have to go like to level four class and everyone says I can't speak English properly, so I was very upset'. The frustration that Se Jun experienced was highly apparent, having gone from being a high performing student in South Korea to struggling with learning in his new school. As Se Jun described, 'it doesn't make me feel very good'. These views are echoed by Choi's (2017) research into educational transition and learner identity. The three students in Choi's study wrote autobiographies about their experiences of transition into English speaking secondary schools. Two students in particular wrote about feeling anxious and 'alien' to the other children because they could not understand the language and therefore did not know what was expected of them (Choi, 2017:173). Similarly, the Korean student in Nguyen and Yang's (2015) case study also spoke about herself negatively for not being able to speak English correctly in front of her peers and for making mistakes. Children's prior experiences and expectations therefore further complicated the transitions that they experienced. Not only did these children have to make new friendships, they also needed to adapt to a different style of education. While ethnicity and language ability was not a key focus of the analysis in my study, it was interesting to note that Prisha, Candy, Katie and Se Jun all experienced a degree of anxiety linked to limited English language skills.

Comments regarding experiences of trying to join in with lessons demonstrate how, for some children, the cultural context of education was significant in their expectations of what they believed school should be like. This view is supported by Brooker's (2003) research into parent ethnotheories and young children's preparation for school. In my study, Anaya in year six expressed her surprise at not receiving as much homework as she did in Singapore and found the work in her new school easier. Yeo and Clarke's (2007) research on starting school in Singapore highlighted this as being a highly structured and high-pressured school system for students. It could therefore be argued then that children's

perspectives in their first year of transition into a new school are also shaped by their cultural expectations and experiences of schooling elsewhere and parental beliefs that have been passed on. Ji Hee in year two moved from South Korea to Vietnam and she explained that working rather than playing heavily dominated her Korean school. Bai and Aarush agreed with Ji Hee and likened her experiences to their own. Aarush had previously attended a school in India and said, 'Mine was the same. They don't let us do anything. They just say "Do studies then do hard tests". Molly in year five, meanwhile, compared differences in expectations through her drawings of the classrooms, explaining that the Korean system was much more formal (figure 11). For these students, a key part of adapting to the new school was in learning what type of pupils they were expected to be, and a lack of continuity between the old school and the new school regarding expectations of pupils, added further complexity to their transitions (Mayfield, 2003). The notion of freedom implied by Aarush demonstrates his understanding of moving from a structured system to one that welcomes and invites pupil opinion.

The children in my study had widely varying prior experiences of schooling worldwide and the conversations that I had with them demonstrated an individual response to how they adapted to living in a new country and starting at this particular school. The school's parents' guide to Ho Chi Minh City warns parents to expect for children to experience some culture shock, but that they will gradually adapt, not only to the school, but to living in Vietnam (British School, 2014c). Molly in year five described the weather being incredibly hot when compared to South Korea and having to adjust to it. Jiovanni and Ji Su also described the weather as a factor in learning to live in Vietnam, as it affected their whole lifestyles. Candy meanwhile explored this in her drawing (figure 8). As Theo in year one commented, 'it was really, really different' when compared to his prior school in France. For Michael in year three, these differences were on a much more individual level than the other general comments that were said. As Michael explained, 'I was very different. I'm the only one that's Spanish in my class. Probably in the whole school'. On an individual level, Michael found it initially difficult to identify with the school. These comments further highlight

transition as being a process of gradual adaptation to a new learning environment, as described by Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Tayler (2005). Learning to live in a new country and adapt to the social groups that exist in the new school takes time, and these issues cannot be oversimplified by regarding transition as a singular event. Given the importance of building friendships when experiencing transition, feeling different was a potential barrier to Michael's success in school. As highlighted by Messiou and Jones (2015:258), within their sample of research participants, 'at the top of the list of students' list of worries was the issue of friendship and peer acceptance'. This was certainly echoed by Michael who also commented that 'I always have to make new friends and it's really hard'. Michael's comments showed how he struggled to identify with his new peers and this was a source of worry for him when starting school. He later went on to say that his new friends made him 'happy'. On an individual level, he found his place in the school despite feeling different and proved resilient in the face of change.

Using sociocultural theory, Rogoff's (1995) third plane of development helps to understand the impact of community and institutional factors on personal growth within an academic context. The comments made above by Ji Hee and Aarush in year two, Prisha in year three, Molly and Candy in year five, and Katie, Se Jun and Anaya in year six, have shown how these children learned to adapt to a new school environment over time, and were personally influenced by the academic demands of the new school. This included understanding the expectations of the new school environment, which was raised by both O'Kane and Hayes' (2007) and Dockett and Perry's (2004) research into children's perspectives on their transitions into school. In my study, these children had to learn how to become pupils in their new school environment in order to experience a successful transition. Katie in year six explained that she felt 'alone' and 'afraid' on her first day. Her initial response was to seek out those children with whom she could identify with, in order to provide her with some form of continuity and familiarity (Mayfield, 2003; Tanu 2016) and when this was not possible, she was unsure what to do. Feeling isolated from peers and worries about loneliness during transition were also found in Messiou and Jones' (2015) research. Katie's comments show how she tried to engage as an active

participant in facilitating her own transition by seeking out like-minded friends, which she was then able to do (see figure 5). In order to be successful, she needed to understand the new school community and how to access it. Furthermore, she needed to understand her role and identity in this new situation (Fabian and Dunlop, 2005). Other children in my study discussed understanding what to do and how to behave as well. For example, Aarush in year two explained 'I didn't know what the Golden Rules (were). My old school is very, very different'. Anaya in year six also discussed the school rules, remarking 'I also really hate some of the rules here'. Like Katie, she also found it initially difficult to know what to do in the playground. Anaya explained 'Sports was the hardest thing for me because it's so many totally different sports at my school'. Her drawing also reflects this feeling (figure 10). Griebel and Niesel (2009) explain how 'developmental tasks at the contextual level' teach children how to integrate into their new school environment, including adhering to the rules and routines that are present there (Griebel and Niesel, 2009:63). While some rules are explicit, such as the Golden Rules mentioned by Aarush, other aspects are more implied, including the games that others play in the playground, as described by Katie and Anaya. Learning to adapt, be successful and form friends is dependent on understanding the community and institutional expectations that are in place in the new school environment. Scherrer (2013) refers to this as developing 'school connectedness' which he states is key to children undergoing transition (Scherrer, 2013:2). Scherrer (2013) claims that children who learn to 'connect' with their teachers, peers and the school will perform better academically and 'exhibit more socially competent behavior' (Scherrer, 2013:2). When considering this specific context as an international school, Hacohen (2012) explains:

> 'When children move, they lose their sense of belonging as well as
> valued relationships and activities. They are faced with a general
> situation of uncertainty … about how to adjust to the new
> surroundings, and whether they will regain a feeling of belonging
> and develop new friendships and engage in meaningful activities.'
> (Hacohen, 2012:113)

Both Katie and Anaya's comments reflect this level of uncertainty that Hacohen (2012) describes and learning to adjust to the new school environment was essential in feeling a sense of belonging.

5.2 Research question 2: What are parents' perspectives of supporting children in the first year of their transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

I sought to gain the insight of eight parents through a series of six in-depth semi-structured interviews to complement the children's perspectives about their experiences of transition. Similar themes occurred, which were the importance of friendships for children, supporting them through an emotionally turbulent time and a recognition that that the academic approach of the school would have an impact. Furthermore, the parents' comments show how they supported their children through the transition in varying ways, and this started before the actual move, thus highlighting that transition is a gradual process, and one which has added complexities in an international context. This section weaves the parents' comments with findings in existing literature in order to better understand their perspectives through a sociocultural and ecological theoretical framework.

5.2.1 Understanding the impact of friendships for children during transition

All eight parents spoke about the importance of friendships for their children when leaving a school and starting a new one, and they acknowledged that forming new friendships was essential in feeling settled at school. As Amanda explained when discussing her children, 'their main concern was the friends that they were very, very happy with at (their) school, which was quite a small school. And they had great friendships and great sporting opportunities and a great life outside of school'. This sentiment was echoed by her husband, Paul and they both looked at ways they could best support their children in forming new friendships. For these parents, supporting their child through transition meant understanding that friendships were important and working to try and help their

children make new friends. Amanda explained that they enrolled their children in the school's sports clubs. Similarly, Steven made sure that his son had secured friendships at school prior to starting. They knew some families who had already started at the school and Steven was keen to establish links between the families before school had started. The ways in which these parents supported their children in transition are described by Griebel and Niesel (2009:64) as 'coping strategies' and are a part of successful transition. Griebel and Niesel refer to some such strategies as 'searching for information' and 'striving for continuity' (Griebel and Niesel, 2009:64), which links to Mayfield's (2003) work on continuity. Amanda demonstrated this by enrolling her children in sports clubs similar to those they were used to in their previous school, and Steven through continuity in friendships and building these before school started, linking to Mayfield's (2003) work on the importance of continuity. The school itself encouraged these strategies during the 'Settling In Workshop' presentation to parents, where it suggested that joining sports clubs and promoting friendships and play dates were beneficial to the children in helping them to feel a part of their new community (British School, 2014).

When analysed using ecological theory, the parents themselves are part of the ecological network of relationships when starting a new school. They needed to build links with the school in order to support their children to build successful relationships, both within the school environment and in this instance, through securing new friendships. Griebel and Niesel (2009:64) describe this as building a 'partnership approach', which 'is characterised by a belief in shared responsibility for education and socialising children'. It became apparent when interviewing the children and their parents that socialisation into school was the overall main concern for all parties and a key indicator for successful transition, thus emphasising once again the sociocultural nature of changing schools. This is not something that is done to the children and no one is passive. The children, parents and the school are active participants in this process. While all the parents in my study acknowledged the importance of this, there were variations in how they supported their children based on their own experiences. For instance Natalie found this difficult as she said that the school they were used to

in England was more multicultural and that they, as a family, found it difficult to adapt to a new school environment. As she explained, 'I think it's not just necessarily ethnically (and) culturally different, it's just a lot of those children live very different lifestyles'. Subsequently, her daughter, Madison found it difficult to identify with the other children and form good friendships. By contrast, Paul and Amanda immediately identified with the new school environment and saw lots of parallels with the previous British school that their daughter, Ava had attended in Taiwan. They already knew somebody in Vietnam before arriving, and as such, had worked on building friendships via email before arriving. As Amanda explained, 'we got involved straightaway'. In this context, building links with the school also meant becoming members of a new community in a different country, and as Tanu (2016) describes, the international school is the hub of the expatriate community abroad. It could therefore be argued that there is added pressure to become an accepted member of the international school community than there is when children are starting or changing schools within an established community that they already belong to.

O'Farrelly and Hennessy's (2014) study into transitions within early childhood settings also acknowledged the impact of friendships for children from a parental perspective. As they explained, 'parents framed transitions as bringing both challenges and opportunities for children. At the heart of these challenges was the difficulty in leaving friends behind, particularly when close bonds had formed' (O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014:336). During the 'Settling In Workshop' for parents, the deputy head teacher used a Bill Bryson quote, 'When you move from one country to another you have to accept that there are some things that are better and some things that are worse and there is nothing you can do about it' (British School, 2014:29). While the school presented some benefits of moving internationally, such as 'learning to think from a global perspective', it also realised that some children and families would also struggle at times (British School, 2014:23). Natalie, who explained her surprise that her children missed their friends more than their family, echoed this sentiment that leaving good friends behind was a major challenge. For Natalie's daughter, Madison, forming close friendships was a key barrier to her successful transition into the

new school. O'Farrelly and Hennessy (2014:336) go on to explain that parents recognised that not only do their children need to form new friendships when experiencing transition, but that they also need to 'fit in to a new peer group'. As Sofia explained in her interview, her son initially felt 'lost' in the new school and missed the comfort of his old peer network in the old school. Sofia supported this aspect by taking her son back to visit the old country to reassure him that those friends still existed. Similarly, Ji-Yeon recognised that her daughter, Katie, also struggled to fit in to the new peer group that was presented to her. Ji-Yeon recognised that for her daughter, language was a key barrier to fitting in to the new school. However, Ji-Yeon had supported her daughter as well as she could, explaining that Katie herself had chosen to come here. From Ji-Yeon's perspective, they chose a school where her daughter would feel like she could fit in and despite the challenges surrounding communication on arrival, her daughter was indeed now happy. This again matches O'Farrelly and Hennessy's (2014) claim that parents acknowledged that transition brings both challenges and opportunities, particularly with regards to friendships.

When discussing the role of friendships in transition with the parents, it became clear that similar to existing research, this was a key aspect of transition (Griebel and Niesel, 2009 and O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014). However, the unique nature of my research is also apparent. As O'Farrelly and Hennessy (2014) acknowledge, existing research on transition focuses primarily on traditional milestones such as starting school and there appears to be very little from a family perspective about transition outside of these times. This research therefore aims to help contribute to this field. Furthermore, transition, particularly with regards to the formation of new friendship groups was further amplified by the international context of this research. The children in this study had lost their friendship networks not only at school but also at home as well and everything in their lives had changed, highlighting Mayfield's (2003) notion of the importance of continuity during transition. Furthermore, O'Farrelly and Hennessy (2014) in their study found that major changes in the home environment further complicated transition. If multiple changes in a child's life are regarded as problematic, then this was amplified in my study. From an

ecological perspective, for parents, part of supporting their children through successful transition meant re-establishing links with a new community, primarily through friendship groups.

5.2.2 Supporting children emotionally through the first year of transition

Parents' views regarding their children's transitions were included since, as Dockett and Perry (2004) state, failing to include their views would result in 'an incomplete picture of what happens and why it is important' (Dockett & Perry, 2004:186). Griebel and Niesel (2009) further emphasise the importance of including parents in their work on establishing parents as partners in transition. Understanding the children's experiences through their own comments as well as through their parents' accounts is a key feature of this study. As Amanda explained, her daughter's main concern was around friendships and not wanting to leave the happy life that they had in their existing country. However, emotions evolved from anxiety to excitement when Ava made a new friend on her first day of school. Both Amanda and Sarah explained that, while they understood that their children missed their old friends, they also needed to limit this period of mourning. Amanda said that she had to be 'tough' and told the children 'You're just going to have to deal with it'. Similarly, Sarah spoke about telling her children that they 'need to move on'. Neither parents were unsympathetic to their children's feelings, but instead worked to build resilience in them, which is of particular importance in the international school community due to high levels of pupil movement between schools and countries. By contrast, Natalie had a much softer approach to dealing with her daughter Madison's emotions. She praised the school for its 'nurturing' environment and, since they had left England and were planning to return to England, maintaining relationships was of key importance. Unlike Sarah who spoke about needing to 'move on', Natalie encouraged regular communication with friends and family at home.

Using an ecological perspective, when discussing the impact of people on transition, the parents themselves also influenced their children's experiences. The findings demonstrated how parents supported their children in different ways during this period. In four out of the six interviews with parents, it was discussed how being 'positive' was essential in preparing their children for the move. There was a sense that they were doing something exciting as a family. Paul explained that an international move was difficult for them as parents as well as for the children:

> The big thing for us was being positive ourselves about it. You know, we didn't necessarily look forward to moving, or it wasn't a decision that we'd taken lightly. To be positive ourselves, to say this would be good for the family, and I think we made it quite clear why we were leaving.

The role of Paul and his wife Amanda in this process of transition began before the actual move. They built this up to be a positive experience for the family as a whole, and then together they worked to make it a success. They acknowledged that this was a difficult thing for them to do as adults and understood that it would not be easy. Sarah, Michael and Natalie said similar things, about giving the children something to look forward to and become excited about their move. In hindsight, Natalie said that as parents, 'we underestimated how it would be'. This was their first international family move and none of the family really knew what to expect. Thus the prior experiences of the parents affected how they handled the transition, meaning that children had variable preparation for the move, which is another complex factor surrounding their transitions.

5.2.3   Understanding the influence of academic expectations and changes in the school environment

Five of the parents interviewed had sent their children to a British international primary school in the previous country they had lived in. For these parents, there appeared to be a consensus of opinion that this would help to ease transition for their children from an academic standpoint since the expectations would be similar. These parents aimed to maintain some continuity regarding

schooling as much as possible (Mayfield, 2003). When discussing this with Michael's parents, they explained that they had chosen a British education system for their son and that this helped to eliminate some potential anxieties. Sofia elaborated that 'all the terms were very familiar to him already. He already knew how things work and we have assembly and we have this and that so for him that so him that aspect was rather easy to change'. Similarly, Paul when discussing his children's transition and the choice of schooling explained that as parents, they had chosen their 'pathway' for the children. He explained that they had moved countries before and 'we could transfer between schools with a bit more ease and you know, we could move with the expectation that it would not be that far removed from where we'd left and we've certainly found that the whole way through'. Sarah highlighted the same reasoning when discussing her children's international moves and explained that when following a British education system, 'academic expectations I think are quite similar.' In understanding that international movement provides many challenges to children, these parents chose to limit the changes as much as possible in the approach to education and maintain some continuity between the children's experiences of school worldwide (Mayfield, 2003).

However, for Natalie who had temporarily moved to Vietnam with her family from England, the British system here did not reflect schooling in England and this was a source of concern for her. She said that 'maybe we should have thought about it a little more carefully', explaining:

> It does worry me when we go back to the UK that they'll drop behind
> a little bit. Like Liza—her level—she's come on with her reading,
> but actually I've found a lot of stuff she's done here—she's just repeated
> things she's already done at home.

While the move to Vietnam was considered overall as a good experience, it came as a surprise to Natalie that the system here was less structured than in England and that she worried about the potential 'effect on their education'. Natalie's concerns link to prior research on pupil transition at unconventional times. Quantitative studies both in New Zealand by Hattie (2009) and in the United

States of America by Scherrer (2013) claim that changing schools during one phase of education, such as primary schooling or secondary schooling, can have a negative effect on academic outcomes. While my research did not consider the academic impact on schooling, this is still a consideration when discussing pupil experiences of transition. Comments from certain children about their new school being less demanding academically, also add to this concern that changing schools midway through a phase of education may have an impact on performance.

Regardless of the schools and education systems that the parents had previously chosen for their children, one aspect of supporting their children through transition meant acclimatising to this particular school. Sofia, Ji-Yeon and Steven all spoke about the ways in which the new school was different and their role in supporting their children in learning to understand the rules and routines. In accordance with sociocultural theory, the children and their parents needed to learn about the community/institutional elements involved in the transition and the role in which they played in this (Rogoff, 1995). Learning to adapt meant becoming a part of this new environment, learning the routines as well as the rules and expectations here. As found by Ahtola et al (2016), parents can better support children if they understand the school environment and the expectations that are in place. In particular, for Sofia and Michael who were supporting their son, Michael through transition, they themselves remarked on three different occasions during the interview that, at times, they did not know what was expected of them as parents and also of their son, which became a source of anxiety. As Sofia explained, 'some processes are not straightforward' and 'we are kind of lost'. Despite being familiar with the academic expectations of the school curriculum, transition for them also meant knowing what their role was in this particular environment. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of ecosystems, they needed to establish their family-school relationship mesosystem in order to fully integrate and become a part of the school environment. Sofia and Michael's experiences are in contrast to how the school portrays itself in written documentation. The 'New Pupil Orientation' presentation introduced key terminology and dates, and referred parents to the

parent handbook for more information. Furthermore, it stressed that 'trust and support' were fundamental, and encouraged parents to approach the school directly with any questions (British School, 2014b:25). Thus, despite good intentions by the school, for some parents such as Sofia and Michael, changes in school routines and procedures can become overwhelming and may lead to barriers in developing the relationship between home and school.

In summary, when establishing what are the parents' perspectives of supporting their children's transitions, three main aspects can be included. Firstly, all the parents in this study spoke about the importance of friendships for their children. Secondly, the comments made by Amanda, Natalie, Paul and Sarah, quoted above, demonstrated how they played a key role in supporting their children cope emotionally with the changes that occurred during transition. Thirdly, the comments parents made showed how they supported their children academically and worked together to understand the rules, routines and expectations of the new school. The ways in which parents prepared and supported their children through transition varied depending on their prior experiences, thus highlighting the complex nature of international transition. The three elements introduced here work in accordance with Rogoff's (1995) account of sociocultural theory as parents worked to support their children through the three planes of development. The interview responses here demonstrate how, through the intrapersonal plane, they sought to strengthen relationships; acknowledgement of the interpersonal plane meant supporting children cope emotionally and in their own individual ways, while the community/institutional plane is reflected in the parents' attempts to understand the various new school systems that, as a family, they all had to grow accustomed to.

5.3 Research question 3: What factors influence children's experiences in their first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?

Discussion of the children's perspectives has highlighted some of the factors that were influential during the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. This has been further added to by listening to the parents' comments on how they supported their children during this time. This section summarises the children and parents' accounts and analyses the key elements that were important in order to answer the final research question. The use of discourse analysis of school documents and served to complement what the children and parents said, adding another dimension to the types of school factors that influenced children's experiences of transition. In so doing, this acknowledges that the international context of transition in this study adds further challenge and complexity than more widely recognised periods of transition such as starting school.

As discussed by both the children and their parents, a key factor shaping the transition process was the ability to make new friends, which is evident in existing literature on transition (Cantin and Boivin, 2004; Evangelou et al, 2008; Brown, 2012; Hacochen, 2012; Messiou and Jones, 2015; and Adams, 2016). As shown in sociocultural and ecological theory, people's relationships with others help to shape experiences and children are no exception to this. For many of the children involved, successful transition depended on them generating new friendship groups. This is reflected in previous research by Cantin and Boivin (2004), O'Farrelly and Hennessy (2014) and Messiou and Jones (2015) who all concluded that the formation of new friendship groups was a key factor leading to happiness through transition into a new school. In my study, the school was shown to help support this aspect of transition by the use of a buddy system for newcomers. For example, Adele in year five explained that her buddy 'showed me different ways to play'. Similarly, Prisha in year three reflected, 'Ms Laura at lunch time asked if someone wants to take care of me and show me the school

and play with me'. Prisha later described this child as her friend. When interviewing the parents, Steven recalled his son's first friend was also his buddy. Steven explained, the buddy 'was really a good friend in the beginning'. In addition, the school highlighted the importance of friendships for children in the 'Settling In Workshop' (British School, 2014) and encouraged the parents to support their children in helping them to form new friendships. Hacohen's (2012) research highlighted the importance of the pastoral role of schools when supporting students transitioning at different points during the school year. Peer support, such as use of the buddy system, helps children to access important spaces like the playground. Research undertaken by Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000); Demie, Lewis and Taplin (2005) and Scherrer (2013) all demonstrate how buddy systems can be used effectively by schools to support new arrivals and welcome them into the school. While these studies did not consult the children directly, conversations with teachers and head teachers showed how the buddy system could be a method of helping children settle into a new school when the system has been well considered. Prisha's experiences in this study echo those found by Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000). Here, the researchers spoke to teachers and found that the buddy system was successful because children were considered carefully and matched according to interests and home languages. Prisha's buddy was also Indian, and since Prisha mentioned this during her interview, which indicated that this was a significant factor for her. As highlighted in Tanu's (2016) research, formation of friendship groups based on language and culture are common in international transition as children seek out those whom they can connect and identify with.

The children's comments also revealed a number of emotional factors that were influential during the first year of transition. At the centre of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, is the child as an individual. This model demonstrates how children react in their own ways to the various microsystems, mesosystems and ecological systems that they experience. The internalisation of these relationships and, in this context, academic structures, is reflected in this study by the different emotions the children experienced at various stages of transition. My research aims to contribute to existing research in the field of

transition by acknowledging emotions as a key factor shaping this experience. Previous research by Eodanable and Lauchlan (2011), Li et al (2012), and Messiou and Jones (2015) has encouraged others to include discussions on children's emotions when researching how children experience transition. By defining transition as an on-going process that takes time to complete, my research has been able to address some of the feelings that children experience and recognises this as an important aspect of transition. When looking at the role of the school in supporting the emotional aspects of transition, the school's counsellor addressed all new parents in the 'Settling In Workshop', explaining that their children may experience an emotionally turbulent time and may not be able to explain or understand their emotions (British School, 2014). Furthermore, the 'School Prospectus' states that 'we place great value on building trusted relationships between students, parents and teachers' (British School, 2014d:11). While aiming to offer a supportive environment, the school acknowledges that a shifting pupil intake may be challenging, but views itself as having an important role in supporting both children and parents through this.

The final factor that emerged, as affecting children's transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam, was their previous experiences of school and learning to adapt to this particular school environment. The children and parents' comments in this chapter have shown how children's prior schooling had an impact on how they expected their new school to be, and their role within this. While for some children the transition was smooth, for others there was a degree of discontinuity regarding curriculum and philosophy (Mayfield, 2003). For parents, choosing the type of school they sent their child to was an active decision. Paul, Amanda, Sarah, Michael and Sofia were all experienced at moving schools internationally and chose a British style of schooling in each country to minimise disruption. For children moving from different types of schools, the process of academic change was another variable when negotiating a smooth transition. Five of the South Korean, Indian and Singaporean students however, explained that their previous schools were more academically demanding. These children experienced philosophical discontinuity between the previous school and the current one (Mayfield, 2003),

which made the move more complicated and difficult to negotiate since they had to learn what it meant to be a pupil in the new school. However, all children, regardless of their previous experiences of school, had to learn the rules and routines of this particular school, which was, at times, confusing to them. Understanding that different options were available to them as clubs and what to do at different points during the school day were some sources of anxiety. The children's adaptation to their new learning environment is reflective of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion of ecosystems. This model demonstrates how, in schools, relationships and personal growth are shaped by the educational approach of the school and the academic structures that exist. In order to function fully in the school, the pupils needed to adapt. The school aimed to support both the children and their parents in adapting to their new school by providing a 'New Pupil Orientation' (British School, 2014b) and 'Settling In Workshop' (British School, 2014). Added to this, they organised tours of the school in different languages and provided all parents with a 'School Prospectus' (British School, 2014d) and a 'Welcome Guide to Ho Chi Minh City' (British School, 2014c). However, despite this, Sofia and Michael were still confused by the rules and routines and adaptation for them as a family, took some time. As they Sofia explained, they themselves found the transition 'challenging' and felt 'lost' in terms of understanding certain practical aspects of school such as expectations around hiring tutors and the routines regarding uniforms. Similarly, Natalie explained that she had 'no idea' about the curriculum but did express some concern that since the school was also following the International Primary Curriculum and providing the children with Vietnamese culture lessons, that there will be gaps in her children's knowledge when the family returns home to England in two or three years time.

Existing research in the subject area of transition has traditionally explored the shifts between phases of schooling, such as starting preschool or moving into primary or secondary school. Research that addresses children's experiences at other points in a child's school life in an international context is more limited. Where similar research has been conducted, it has worked to form a deficit model, linking changes in children's schooling with academic underperformance.

For example, a report made by Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000) on behalf of the Nuffield Foundation focused on a large-scale research project conducted in six Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England. The children identified in these schools were armed forces families, refugees or asylum seekers and low-income families who were in temporary accommodation. In this context, transition was regarded as having 'adverse effects on schools' since 'high mobility can take up huge amounts of staff time and other resources, cause classes to be unsettled, necessitate the reorganization of teaching groups and affect the learning of all pupils' (Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas, 2000:116). These research findings paint a bleak picture of transition at non-normative times, however the children in this sample were not representative of the high-income families who typically attend international schools abroad. Furthermore, I was interested in what the children and parents themselves had to say about their experiences, which was a feature lacking in the Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000) report. While I did not analyse children's progress or attainment during transition, no child or parent discussed failing at school, and instead, the discussions were largely qualitative and related to how children coped emotionally and practically with the move. Throughout the interviews, parents and children spoke about experiences that were somewhat unique to international transition and highlighted the complexity involved in moving abroad and changing schools. The children all had different prior experiences and were therefore prepared for the transition in varying ways.

5.4   Chapter summary

When discussing the first year of transition into a British international primary school with children and their parents, and analysing key school documents and policies, the study showed how transition into a new school is a process and not an event (Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Taylor, 2005; Howieson, Croxford and Howat, 2008). Each family had their own individual experiences and while parallels and themes can be drawn, there are both similarities and differences between the children's experiences and how they adapted over time to the new school environment. The three key themes that emerged for discussion were peer

relationships, managing emotional experiences and changes in academic expectations and routines. Using a sociocultural and ecological theoretical framework helps to understand the many influences that affect children as they develop and adapt within the context of a new learning environment. The children's experiences were shaped firstly by the British international educational context they were in; and also by the relationships they formed here. Finally, at the centre of this picture, is the child as an individual, and the internalisation of these experiences over time, as reflected by their emotions and individual shifts in learner identity.

6.0   Conclusion

This study aimed to explore children's experiences of transition in the first year of starting a British international primary school in Vietnam. In adopting a sociocultural and ecological theoretical framework, I planned three research questions, which were:

1. What are children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?
2. What are parents' perspectives of supporting children in the first year of their transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam?
3. What factors influence children's experiences in their first year of transition into a new British international primary school in Vietnam?

In this concluding chapter, the study is reviewed and summarised, with some reflections of the methods and also suggestions for possibilities for future study in this area.

6.1   Summary of the key findings

The approach taken in my study draws on the work of sociocultural and ecological theory. The argument throughout this piece of research is that children's experiences of transition are shaped by the interactions they have with others, the academic approach of the school and the internalisation of these experiences combined. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model places the child at the centre of such interactions and demonstrates how a person develops within a context of different relationships and societal values and beliefs. Rogoff's (1995) three planes of development help to conceptualise this further. Each plane of development demonstrates how interpersonal factors (relationships with others), intrapersonal factors (individual factors) and community or institutional factors (such as school) work to form experiences and shape how we function in society.

In defining transition, and from analysis of the data, it is evident that transition is a continual process of adaptation to a new school environment (Petriwskyj, Thorpe and Tayler, 2005) and is not limited or confined to children's experiences

in starting school, but can also include any change or move at different ages from one school to another. Furthermore, transition when viewed from an ecological viewpoint, is a highly individualised experience. While there were some common themes, such as friendships, managing emotions and adapting to academic demands, each child dealt with these aspects in their own way. Furthermore, while there were similarities between some of the accounts of transition, there were also differences, highlighting that each child has their own ecology, which they bring to the new school, and how they adjust and adapt is unique.

The first research question aimed to report the children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam. In all the interviews with the children, the topic of friendship emerged as a key element of changing schools, albeit in different ways. While some children were sad at leaving their established friendship networks in their previous schools, the formation of new friendships was the source of much excitement and happiness. Each child had to adjust emotionally to the changes involved during transition, and as such, the children discussed a wide variety of emotional experiences. The final aspect of transition involved adapting to the academic expectations of the new school, which for some children involved adjusting their learner identity in order to fully access the new school environment.

The second research question considered parents' perspectives of how they supported their children through the first year of their transition. All the parents demonstrated an understanding that friendships were of significant importance to their children. Their comments also revealed the wide variety of emotions experienced by their children. The parents who had experienced international moves before with their children were able to support them by providing distractions. For example, Michael and Sofia promised their son a dog, and Sarah provided excitement in her family home with talk about trying new foods and going on train journeys. The parents who had moved their children before tried to minimise academic disruption by choosing to send their children to British

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schools in each country they had moved to. This worked to combat some of the anxieties that other children in the study had discussed when adapting to a British school environment.

Using the children and parents' perspectives combined with school documents and policies, enabled me to answer the final research question and consider what factors influence children's experiences in their first year of transition into a new international primary school. There were strong links in the children's comments to forming new friendships and subsequent happiness in school. Another influential factor is learning how to cope in an emotionally charged time. Emotional factors and the internalisation of experiences as outlined in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, affected how each child operated within their new school environment. Finally, the academic context of the school is a factor when considering transition. While some children had previously experienced a similar type of schooling elsewhere, which enabled greater levels of continuity, others had to readjust their learner identities in order to fully access the new school's curriculum and become a happy and successful pupil (Mayfield, 2003).

6.2   Originality of the research and addressing the gaps

Existing research in the subject area of transition has traditionally explored the shifts between common phases of schooling milestones, such as starting preschool or moving into primary or secondary school (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000; Brooker, 2003; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Shields, 2009; Einarsdottir, 2011 and O'Farrelly and Hennessy, 2014). Such research projects have also been dominated by working within one particular country. Adams (2016) when researching young expatriate children's experiences of forming friendships in Malaysia identified that children's experiences in international schools is an under-researched area. My research has aimed to add to this existing body of literature by using an ecological and sociocultural approach to provide an insight into the experiences of children and their parents as they change schools midway through primary school, within a global context. My study is distinct because it explores transition outside of traditional schooling

milestones within an international school context. Using a sociocultural and ecological framework has highlighted the complex nature of such transitions for children. This approach has enabled me to conceptualise the participants as distinct individuals rather than a homogenous group who, based on their own unique set of circumstances, have internalised their experiences in a variety of ways. Understanding the effect of relationships, school values and policies on individuals suggests the complicated nature of international transition. The specific context of the international school setting in my study, and the sampling with the use of multi-dimensional methods helps to make this distinct, and therefore contributes a valuable insight into the field of research on transition. Other projects, such as by Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000) and Hattie (2009) have focused on non-normative transition for pupils as having a negative effect on pupil attainment. While this may be true, my study aimed to provide a more qualitative dimension to these children's experiences. By speaking to them directly and to their parents, I was able to explore some of the aspects that are of importance when changing both school and country. The international school context offers a distinct research setting to examine transition, which adds to the existing knowledge base. Transition occurs on a big scale in all international schools as families move globally and take on new work contracts and this provides a challenge to the schools themselves. My research aims to add to the body of scholarship on understanding the experiences that children have when moving internationally and joining a new school. Use of a sociocultural and ecological framework helps to understand the impact of others on individual experiences, and how individuals respond to transition.

6.3   Implications for future research

The findings presented here have helped to provide some examples of the experiences of primary school children as they change schools and move internationally. Given that this is an apparently overlooked area in the field of research based on transition, I recommend further projects being undertaken worldwide, with a focus on listening to children and parents' experiences, as well as including the perspectives of teachers. Use of a sociocultural and ecological

theoretical framework acknowledges the importance of relationships, community and the internalisation of experiences for children undergoing transition. More similar research could potentially help schools to better understand how to support their newcomers. I believe it is important for schools to understand that transition takes time and is an on-going process of change and adaptation for the pupils involved. With this understanding, schools and families could work together to strengthen their ecological relationships and ease transition for pupils. From a sociocultural perspective, parents could support each other during the first year of transition and learn from each other about how they can help their children through. What became apparent from talking to the parents was that, no matter how many prior moves they had already experienced, each school is unique and their children need to be sensitively supported through this period of change. Furthermore, how children respond to the changes involved in transition will vary. It is therefore important to provide opportunities for children to explore this and reflect on their experiences throughout the process of transition. This, in turn, could then feed into school policies and documents that are designed to help support both children and parents in settling into a new school.

6.4 Final Remarks

This study has provided an account of a group of children's experiences of transition in the first year of starting a British international primary school in Vietnam. Nine children's accounts were reinforced and strengthened by including the viewpoints of eight parents as well as analysing school documents and policies. Viewing transition as an on-going process of adaptation for pupils helps to understand the complexities that are involved in this process. As opposed to attempting to make generalisations, this research has instead offered an insight into the unique experiences of children as they experience international transition, highlighting that no single experience is the same as another. More work could be done in researching children's experiences of transition as they move countries and join different international schools worldwide. Moving internationally and changing schools at unconventional

times makes transition more complex, and more studies in this area could support teachers' and parents' understanding of how best to support these children through this period of change.

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Appendix 1: Ethics Form

Appendix 1 - Ethics Form
Ethics Application Form:
Student Research

All research activity conducted under the auspices of the Institute by staff, students or visitors, where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants are required to gain ethical approval before starting. *This includes preliminary and pilot studies.* Please answer all relevant questions responses in terms that can be understood by a lay person and note your form may be returned if incomplete.

For further support and guidance please see accompanying guidelines and the Ethics Review Procedures for Student Research http://www.ioe.ac.uk/studentethics/ or contact your supervisor or researchethics@ioe.ac.uk.

Before completing this form you will need to discuss your proposal fully with your Supervisor/s.
Please attach all supporting documents and letters.

For all Psychology students, this form should be completed with reference to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics and Code of Ethics and Conduct.

Section 1 Project details					
a.	Project title		An exploration of children's experiences of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam: Perspectives of children and parents in the first year.		
b.	Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678)		Clair Naomi Draper, DRA04013239		
c.	Supervisor/Personal Tutor		Lynn Ang & Sue Rogers		
d.	Department		Early Childhood		
e.	Course category (Tick one)	PhD/MPhil	☐	EdD	☒
		MRes	☐	DEdPsy	☐
		MTeach	☐	MA/MSc	☐
		ITE	☐		
		Diploma (state which)	☐		
		Other (state which)	☐		
f.	Course/module title		Thesis		
g.	**If applicable,** state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.		N/A		
h.	Intended research start date		May 2015		
i.	Intended research end date		August 2016		

j.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in *If research to be conducted abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If the FCO advice is against travel this will be **required** before ethical approval can be granted: http://ioe-net.inst.ioe.ac.uk/about/profservices/international/Pages/default.aspx*	Vietnam (Please note that this is my country of residence and research will be conducted in my workplace.)
k.	Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?	
	Yes ☐	External Committee Name:
	No ☒ ⇨ *go to Section 2*	Date of Approval:

If yes:
   − Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application.
   − Proceed to Section 10 Attachments**.**

Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service](#) (NRES) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee](#) (SCREC). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.

Section 2 Project summary

Research methods (tick all that apply)

Please attach questionnaires, visual methods and schedules for interviews (even in draft form).

☐ Interviews	☐ Controlled trial/other intervention study
☒ Focus groups	☐ Use of personal records
☐ Questionnaires	☐ Systematic review ⇨ ***if only method used go to Section 5.***
☐ Action research	☐ Secondary data analysis ⇨ ***if secondary analysis used go to Section 6.***
☐ Observation	☐ Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups
☐ Literature review	☐ Other, give details:

Please provide an overview of your research. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, your method of data collection (e.g., observations, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) and kind of questions that will be asked, reporting and dissemination (typically 300-500 words).

- Purpose and Aims of the Research: In my research, I aim to explore the experiences of families and children who are starting a new school in all year groups from Year One to Year Six. In focusing on these children and their parents, I wish to explore what these children's experiences are and how they cope with the transition into their new school. To be more specific, I am concerned with what factors influence children's experiences in their first year of transition into a new international school, and understand parental and child perspectives.

- Main Working Research Questions:

  1. What are the children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a new international school?
  2. What are parents' perspectives of children's experiences in the first year of transition into a new international school?

3. What factors influence children's experiences in the first year of transition into a new international school?

- Research Design: This is a qualitative research design, using focus group interviews. It is a small-scale exploratory study on parents and children's perspectives of transition during the first year of starting a new international primary school.

- Participants: The setting for the research is the international primary school in Vietnam where I work as Assistant Head Teacher. The participants will be pupils from Year One to Year Six, and their parents.

- Sampling: The sample will be drawn from new pupils entering the school in August 2014 and their parents. The details of this sample size are given in the table below. Parents will be contacted using the school's emailing system and invited to participate in focus group interviews. The entire population of new pupils' parents will be contacted, resulting in a maximum number of 93 participants. For the second phase of the research, the sample of children will be dependent on parental consent. Parents who participated in the focus group interviews will be invited to have one-to-one follow-up interviews.

Year group	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of new pupils	17	18	20	16	13	11	95
Number of new parents	17	18	18	16	13	11	93

- Methods of Data Collection: Data will be collected in three phases as detailed below.

Phase	Sample	Date
Phase 1 – video recorded focus group interviews with parents	All new pupils' parents in the school invited to participate (*n*=93).	May 2015
Phase 2 – video recorded focus group interviews with pupils	Children who have agreed to participate and whose parents have consented to their participation and completed Phase 1.	May 2015
Phase 3 – audio recorded follow up individual interviews with parents	Parents who agree to be interviewed after Phase 1 and whose children completed Phase 2.	June 2015

- Reporting and Dissemination: A summary of findings will be written on completion of the project and emailed to the participants of the study. Findings will also be presented to the school during a Leadership Team meeting and whole school meeting. A written summary will also be shared with the staff team.

Section 3 Participants

Please answer the following questions giving full details where necessary. Text boxes will expand for your

responses.

a.	Will your research involve human participants?	Yes ☒	No ☐ ⇨ *go to Section 4*

b. Who are the participants (i.e. what sorts of people will be involved)? Tick all that apply.

The participants are pupils of the primary school where I work and their parents.

☐ Early years/pre-school	☐ Unknown – specify below
☒ Ages 5-11	☒ Adults *please specify below*
☐ Ages 12-16	☐ Other – specify below
☐ Young people aged 17-18	

NB: Ensure that you check the **guidelines** (Section 1) carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES).

c. If participants are under the responsibility of others (such as parents, teachers or medical staff) how do you intend to obtain permission to approach the participants to take part in the study?

(Please attach approach letters or details of permission procedures – see Section 9 Attachments.)

Parental permission will be sought to approach pupils to participate in the research. The first round of data collection is parental focus group interviews. Parents will be given an information leaflet explaining the study. This will include boxes to tick to give permission to interview their children, and to participate in follow up interviews themselves.

d. How will participants be recruited (identified and approached)?

All parents who were new to the school in August 2014 will be approached via the school's emailing system and invited to participate in focus group interviews.

e. Describe the process you will use to inform participants about what you are doing.

Parents will be emailed using the school's emailing system. This email will inform the parents about the study, including the aims and methods used, as well as ethical guidelines followed to protect participants' identities. The children whose parents have agreed can participate will be approached in small groups during an agreed time with the class teacher. They will be invited to join a focus group interview in a group of 4 children. They will be given the opportunity to opt out of the research.

f. How will you obtain the consent of participants? Will this be written? How will it be made clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any time?

See the guidelines for information on opt-in and opt-out procedures. Please note that the method of consent should be appropriate to the research and fully explained.

Phase 1: Parental consent will be an opt-in process. Once parents read the email, they can choose to participate, or they can ignore it. Parents will be emailed an information leaflet prior to the study which will include a space to sign their consent. A space will be included to request permission for their child to also participate in the study. Copies of these leaflets will be available at the interviews for parents to sign if they have not already done so. Permission to video record the interview will be sought before filming commences. Parents can choose to opt out of have their back towards the camera. They can choose to opt out at any point during the interview.

Phase 2: Written consent will be sought from the pupils. I will initially approach the children verbally, and then provide them with an infomration leaflet to discuss both with me and their parents. Children will be required to sign their names. Even once they have agreed, children can choose to end the interview at any point. Permission will be sought to video record the interviews.

	Phase 3: The parent information leaflets will include a section to ask if parents would be willing to be interviewed individually. It will be explained that the interviews will be audio recorded and that all recordings will be permanently destroyed at the end of the research project.
g.	**Studies involving questionnaires:** Will participants be given the option of omitting questions they do not wish to answer? Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
	If **NO** please explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8.
h.	**Studies involving observation:** Confirm whether participants will be asked for their informed consent to be observed. Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
	If **NO** read the guidelines (Ethical Issues section) and explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8.
i.	Might participants experience anxiety, discomfort or embarrassment as a result of your study? Yes ☒ No ☐
	If **yes** what steps will you take to explain and minimise this? I acknowledge that in asking about transition, I will be dealing with personal and perhaps sensitive information. I am also aware that bnoh parents and pupils may sense a power imbalance and feel obliged to participate. I will therefore include a section in the information leaflet that explains they do not have to take part and that there will be no future or further consequences should this be the case. I will explain at the start of the focus group interviews for both adults and children, that they do not have to talk if they do not wish to. I will also reassure all participants that there are no right or wrong answers. The important thing is to hear about their experiences, whether these have been positive or negative. Information leaflets will be provided to explain the study further and to also emphasise this. If **not**, explain how you can be sure that no discomfort or embarrassment will arise?
j.	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants (deception) in any way? Yes ☐ No ☒
	If **YES** please provide further details below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8.
k.	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)? Yes ☒ No ☐
	If **NO** please explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8.
l.	Will participants be given information about the findings of your study? (This could be a brief summary of your findings in general; it is not the same as an individual debriefing.) Yes ☒ No ☐

	If **no**, why not?	

Section 4 Security-sensitive material
Only complete if applicable

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

a.	Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?	Yes ☐ * No ☒
b.	Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?	Yes ☐ * No ☒
c.	Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?	Yes ☐ * No ☒

***** *Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

Section 5 Systematic review of research
Only complete if applicable

a.	Will you be collecting any new data from participants?	Yes ☐ *	No ☐
b.	Will you be analysing any secondary data?	Yes ☐ *	No ☐

***** *Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) ***and*** *if you have answered* **No** *to both questions, please go to* **Section 10 Attachments.**

Section 6 Secondary data analysis Complete for all secondary analysis

a.	Name of dataset/s	
b.	Owner of dataset/s	
c.	Are the data in the public domain?	Yes ☐ No ☐ **If no,** *do you have the owner's permission/license?* Yes ☐ No* ☐
d.	Are the data anonymised?	Yes ☐ No ☐ *Do you plan to anonymise the data?* Yes ☐ No* ☐ *Do you plan to use individual level data?* Yes* ☐ No ☐ *Will you be linking data to individuals?* Yes* ☐ No ☐
e.	Are the data sensitive ([DPA 1998 definition](#))?	Yes* ☐ No ☐
f.	Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?	Yes ☐ No* ☐
g.	**If no,** was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?	Yes ☐ No* ☐
h.	**If no,** was data collected prior to ethics approval process?	Yes ☐ No* ☐

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** Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

*If secondary analysis is only method used **and** no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to **Section 9 Attachments.***

Section 7 Data Storage and Security			
Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.			
a.	Confirm that all personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA 1998). *(See the Guidelines and the Institute's Data Protection & Records Management Policy for more detail.)*	Yes ☒	
b.	Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area?	Yes ☐ *	No ☐
	* If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with the DPA 1998 and state what these arrangements are below.		
c.	Who will have access to the data and personal information, including advisory/consultation groups and during transcription? I will have access to the data and personal information. Data may be shared with my supervisors if appropriate, but no personal information will be provided.		
During the research			
d.	Where will the data be stored? Data will be stored on my USB device, laptop and storage space on the IOE server.		
e.	Will mobile devices such as USB storage and laptops be used? Yes X☐ * No ☐ ***If yes,** state what mobile devices: Laptop, USB ***If yes,** will they be encrypted?:		
After the research			
f.	Where will the data be stored? All recordings will be deleted. Transcripts will be kept on my USB device, but names will be anonymised.		
g.	How long will the data and records by kept for and in what format? All recordings will be deleted at the end of the study (August 2016). Anonymised transcripts will be kept indefinitely.		
h.	Will data be archived for use by other researchers? Yes ☐ * No ☒ ***If yes,** please provide details.		

Section 8 Ethical issues
Are there particular features of the proposed work which may raise ethical concerns or add to the complexity of ethical decision making? If so, please outline how you will deal with these.

It is important that you demonstrate your awareness of potential risks or harm that may arise as a result of your research. You should then demonstrate that you have considered ways to minimise the likelihood and impact of each potential harm that you have identified. Please be as specific as possible in describing the ethical issues you will have to address. Please consider / address ALL issues that may apply.
Ethical concerns may include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

− Methods	− International research

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− Sampling	− Risks to participants and/or researchers
− Recruitment	− Confidentiality/Anonymity
− Gatekeepers	− Disclosures/limits to confidentiality
− Informed consent	− Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection)
− Potentially vulnerable participants	
− Safeguarding/child protection	− Reporting
− Sensitive topics	− Dissemination and use of findings

- Methods: Group interviews can sometimes raise ethical issues for participants who are reserved and are not comfortable in sharing their views in a group. Adult participants will be invited to follow up indvidual interviews which will help to alleviate this difficulty. I will also explain to the children that they are welcome to meet with me again if there is anything that they wish to add regarding the questions asked. I will avoid asking direct questions towards individuals in order to avoid placing any one person in the spotlight. However, I will also check at the end if there is anything that anyone else wishes to add, to ensure that everyone has had an opportunity to speak.

- Sampling: Unfortunately, although this study is open to all parents and children who are new to the school, it may be limited to those who can speak English. This will affect the study and will be acknowledged when reporting the findings. Transition for families who do not speak English could be markedly different to those who are able to communicate effectively with the school in English. I will try to overcome this by asking other participants to translate in the interviews if necessary. However, since it is a British school, the majority of the parents and children should be able to speak enough English to participate.

- Recruitment: The sample is being taken from a diverse school population. I will be sensitive and respectful of the wishes of those parents and children who may not wish to participate. I will take the time to explain the purpose of the study and will invite potential participants to contact me with any queries that they may have, or if they would like further information regarding the study.

- Gatekeepers: The initial gatekeeper will be the headteacher of the school whose permission will be sought first. Copies of the information leaflets as well as the focus group schedules will be provided and verbal permission sought. Parents will be asked if their children are allowed to participate and they will be asked to sign an information leaflet.

- Potentially vulnerable participants: All children are potentially vulnerable and this will be acknowledged in the study. By working with the children in groups, I hope that they will feel more comfortable than if they were interviewed individually. If any child protection issues are disclosed in the interviews, the school's child protection policy will be followed. Under no circumstances will I promise to keep secrets.

- Safeguarding/ child protection: The school has recently updated and reviewed its child protection policy and I was involved in this process. The school's child protection policy will be followed at all times. The interviews with the children will be video recorded and no children will be interviewed individually. While I will assure anonymity in the writing up of findings, I will also tell the children at the start that if I feel it is necessary, I may have to speak to other adults about our discussion.

- Sensitive topics: In discussing transition, I am asking participants about personal experiences. Therefore, this could be sensitive to anyone who has had a difficult experience. I will assure the participants that they are not required to answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable with. If I

feel that a participant is not coping, the interview will be stopped.

- International Research: This research is being conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in a multicultural school. I acknowledge the need to be respectful of different cultures and understand that cultural norms in Vietnam can be different to England. For example, teachers are regarded as people with power and people to be pleased. I will reiterate to all participants that I am interested in their views and experiences and that there are no correct answers. I will particularly reassure the children that I am seeking their views for my own research and in this context I am a researcher rather than a teacher. This will hopefully help to mitigate the hierachical relationship teachers have in Vietnamese culture.

- Risks to participants: There are no perceived physical risks involved in this research. The interviews will be conducted in school, in an environment which is familiar to all the participants. I acknowledge that there is a risk due to the potentially sensitive nature of talking about personal experiences. I will try to limit this by explaining to the participants that they can stop the interviews at any time, and also that they are under no obligation to answer all of the questions.

- Confidentiality/anonymity: I will assure anonymity and confidentiality to the best of my ability, using psedonyms for the school and participants. However, as explained above, I will break this confidentiality if a child protection issue emerges and this will be explained at the start of the interviews in a friendly manner, as well as in the leaflets. Absolute anoymity can not be guaranteed since I am an insider researcher and a simple Google search will reveal the school that I work in. Individual participants, however, will not be recognisable, even within the school.

- Disclosures/ limits to confidentiality: As noted above, if at any point I am concerned that a child is at risk of harm, the recorded interview will have to be shared with the school's designated child protection officer (the deputy headteacher). Confidentiality will not be assured if a child discloses information which puts them at risk. This will be explained in the information leaflets and reiterated at the start of the interviews.

- Data storage and security: Unless a child protection issue emerges, I will be the only person who will have access to the video recorded interviews. These interviews will be stored on a USB device which will be kept in a locked drawer. Once the videos have been transferred after interviews, they will be deleted from the recording equipment. All videos will be deleted once the research is complete.

- Reporting: Psedonyms will be used when reporting the findings both in the thesis and to the school. The school will be provided with an information leaflet at the end of the study to share with staff members and the parents involved in the study. A child friendly leaflet will be written to share with the child participants. The school will have the option to send this information to the whole school community.

- Dissemination and use of findings: I intend to publish these findings in a journal article once the study has been completed. This intention will be made explicit to the participants from the beginning. I will inform all potential participants of this in my initial letter to the parents, and also reiterate this in the information leaflets. I will explain that the reason for this is because there is a lack of research in this area and that these findings may help other international schools reflect on their transition arrangements for new pupils. Depending on the findings, improvements will be made in the research school.

Section 9 Further information

Outline any other information you feel relevant to this submission, using a separate sheet or attachments if necessary.

Section 10 Attachments Please attach the following items to this form, or explain if not attached

a.	Information sheets and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research, including approach letters	Yes ☒	No ☐
b.	Consent form	Yes ☐	No ☐
	If applicable:		
c.	The proposal for the project	Yes ☒	No ☐
d.	Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee	Yes ☐	No ☐
e.	Full risk assessment	Yes ☐	No ☐

Section 11 Declaration

	Yes	No
	Yes	**No**
I have read, understood and will abide by the following set of guidelines.	☒	☐

BPS ☐   BERA ☒   BSA ☐   Other (please state) ☐

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.	☒	☐
I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.	☒	☐

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name	Clair Draper
Date	6th May 2015

Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor.

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Notes and references

Carr (2000): 'Seeking children's perspectives about their learning' in Smith, Taylor & Gollop (Eds): Children's Voices: Research, Policy and Practice. Pearson Education, Auckland, New Zealand

Clark, A., McQuail, S., & Moss, P. (2003). Exploring the Field of Listening to and Consulting with Young Children. Research Report RR445. Thomas Coram Research Unit. London, Department for Education and Skills.

Creswell, J. W. (2009): Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (3rd Edition), London: Sage Publications

Farrell, A. (2005). Ethics and research with children. Ethical Research with Children A. Farrell. Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Kim, H. W. (2012). "Research with children: challenges and dilemmas as an insider researcher." Early Child Development and Care **182**(2): 263-276.

Langston, A., *et al* (2004). Early Childhood. Doing Research with Children and Young People. S. Fraser, et al. London, Sage Publications Ltd.

MacNaughton, G., & Smith, K. (2005). Transforming research ethics: The choices and challenges of researching with children. Ethical Research with Children. A. Farrell. Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Malone, S. (2003). "Ethics at home: informed consent in your own backyard." Qualitative Studies in Education **16**(6): 797 - 815.

Professional code of ethics
You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:
British Psychological Society (2009) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and (2014) *Code of Human Research Ethics*
or
British Educational Research Association (2011) *Ethical Guidelines*
or
British Sociological Association (2002) *Statement of Ethical Practice*
Please see the respective websites for these or later versions; direct links to the latest versions are available on the Institute of Education http://www.ioe.ac.uk/ethics/.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks
If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)). If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through at IOE. Further information can be found at http://www.ioe.ac.uk/studentInformation/documents/DBS_Guidance_1415.pdf

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references
The www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk website is very useful for assisting you to think through the ethical issues arising from your project.

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.
This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook.* London: Sage.
This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) What are Qualitative Research Ethics? Bloomsbury.
A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental use

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If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, you **must** refer the application to the Research Ethics and Governance Coordinator (via researchethics@ioe.ac.uk) so that it can be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A Research Ethics Committee Chair, ethics department representative and the Research Ethics and Governance Coordinator can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the REC. *Also see 'when to pass a student ethics review up to the Research Ethics Committee':* *http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/policiesProcedures/42253.html*	
Student name	Clair Naomi Draper
Student department	Early Childhood
Course	Doctorate in Education (EdD)
Project title	An exploration of children's experiences of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam: Perspectives of children and parents in the first year.

Reviewer 1

Supervisor/first reviewer name	
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?	
Supervisor/first reviewer signature	
Date	

Reviewer 2

Second reviewer name	
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?	
Supervisor/second reviewer signature	
Date	

Decision on behalf of reviews

Decision	Approved	☐
	Approved subject to the following additional measures	☐
	Not approved for the reasons given below	☐
	Referred to REC for review	☐
Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC		
Comments from reviewers for the applicant		

Recording – supervisors/reviewers should submit all approved ethics forms to the relevant course administrator		
Recorded in the student information system		☐

If the proposal is not authorised the applicant should seek a meeting with their supervisor or ethics reviewer.

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Appendix 2: Information leaflet for parents

Information Leaflet

An exploration of a group of children's experiences of transition into a British international primary school in Vietnam: Perspectives of children and parents in the first year.

Dear Parents,

You are kindly invited to participate in a research project that aims to explore children's experiences of transition into a British International primary school. An important part of this project is finding out perspectives of children and parents in the first year of starting a new school. There appears to be a lack of research in this area and so this project could help our school to gain a deeper understanding of how international mobility affects children. This in turn may help to further support newcomers to school. I hope that you kindly agree to participate in the study, however if you would prefer not to, there will be no future or further consequences. Participation is entirely voluntary.

This information leaflet provides details of the research and what is involved. Please take some time to read the following information carefully. Your contribution to the research is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to

withdraw from the research at any point without providing a reason. Should you decide to participate in the study, please complete and return the enclosed consent form either to the school office or to me at clairdraper@xxxxxxx.com. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions about the research.

Yours faithfully,

Clair Draper

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to find out more about children's experiences when starting at a new international school to help us think about how to improve this. The project hopes to support children and their parents in reflecting on their first year in a new school and share their experiences with others who are also new to the school.

Participants

Approximately 93 children have joined the school this academic year and all parents are being offered an opportunity to take part in the study through participation in focus group interviews. This will be followed up with similar focus group interviews with children, with up to 95 children taking part. A smaller group of willing parents will be invited to participate in follow up individual interviews.

Focus group interviews for parents

This will entail a group interview of approximately 30 to 45 minutes at an agreed date and time that is mutually convenient to you and me. The discussion will entail sharing your experiences of starting a new British international school in Vietnam.

Focus group interviews for children

These interviews will take place in school time at an agreed time with the class teachers, ensuring that children do not miss any important or special lessons. During the interviews, children will be invited to draw pictures of their old school and their new school and share their experiences within the group.

Individual Interviews for parents

These will last for approximately 30 minutes and will entail talking in more detail about individual experiences. There will be an opportunity to discuss the themes mentioned in the focus groups in greater depth.

Recording the interviews

To facilitate note taking, all interviews will be recorded digitally. However, all recorded data and transcripts will be securely saved in a password-encrypted

file and known only to me. All transcripts used in the report will be entirely anonymous. Only pseudonyms will be used.

Benefits
Your participation will provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences of starting a new school and will provide you with an opportunity to talk to others who are in a similar position. Your participation will also help the school to evaluate their provision for newcomers and help us to improve these experiences.

Rights to withdraw
Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent at any time during the research without obligation to provide a reason.

Confidentiality
All information collected throughout the project will be strictly confidential. All data collected will be used solely for academic purposes and school consideration. All findings emerging from the research will remain anonymous.

Findings
The findings of this study will be used to complete my doctoral thesis at the Institute of Education, London. The findings will also be presented to the school in order for us to reflect on children's experiences when starting the school. A summary report will be sent to parents, and a child friendly version made available to children.

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet.

Consent Form

Please tick

I confirm that I have read and understood the
information leaflet explaining about the research. ☐

I understand that my participation is entirely ☐
voluntary and there are no consequences for not joining in.

Should I choose to participate, I understand that I ☐
have the right to withdraw from the research at any
point without providing a reason.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly ☐
anonymous.

I understand that data collected for this research is ☐
used for academic purposes. I also understand that findings will be shared with
the school but that no names will be mentioned.

I hereby give my consent to take part in the research. ☐

I also give consent for my child to participate in the ☐
research.

Name

Signature _____ Date

_____   _____

Appendix 3: Information leaflet for children

UCL

Institute of Education
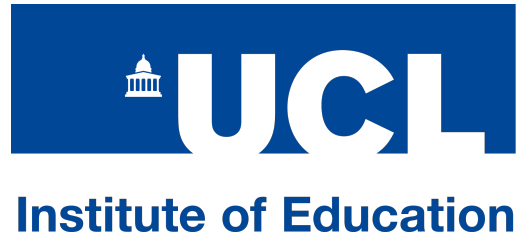
Information Leaflet

A study about starting a new British International primary school in Vietnam: What parents and children think.

Dear Children,

You are kindly invited to join in with a project that aims to find out more about how it feels for children when they start a new British international primary school. An important part of this project is finding out the thoughts of children and parents in the first year of starting a new school. There is not much information about this and so this project could help to find out more about children's experiences. This might help our school to think about what they can do to help other new children when they start school.

This information leaflet explains the research and what is involved. Please take some time to read the following information carefully. It is completely your choice if you would like to take part. If you decide not to join in, there will be no consequences. You can choose to leave the project at any point and do not need to explain why. If you would like to join in, please complete and return the attached form to me. You can also come and talk to me if you would like to find out more.

Yours faithfully,

Clair Draper

Purpose
- To find out more about children's experiences when starting at a new international school.
- To think about how to improve how we help children starting a new school.
- To help children to talk about their experiences.

Who is taking part?
- 93 new parents have been invited to join in with group discussions. This means up to 95 children may also take part.
- If given permission, there will be group discussions with children too.
- I will then talk to parents again separately.

Discussions with parents
- 30 to 45 minutes.
- Talking about experiences of starting a new school.

Discussions with children
- At an agreed time.
- Drawing pictures.
- Talking about experiences of starting a new school

Individual Interviews for parents
- Talking in more detail about experiences.

Recording the interviews
- Interviews will be recorded using an iPad.
- All videos will be secured by a password.
- All names will be changed in the report.

Benefits
- This will help you talk about your experiences of starting a new school.

- You will be able to talk to other new children.
- You will help the school to improve how it helps new children.

Rights to leave the project
- It is completely your choice if you would like to join in and you do not have to explain if you do not want to.
- You can choose to leave the project at any point and do not need to explain why.

Looking after you
- All information collected throughout the project will be private to me.
- Information will only be used for the project.
- All names of people and places will be changed.

Findings
- Findings will be used to help me become a Doctor of Education.
- Findings will be given to the school so that they can think about how to improve how they help new children settle into school.
- Findings will be sent to children and parents.

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet.

Consent Form

Please tick

I have read and understood the information
leaflet explaining about the research.   ☐

I understand that joining in is my choice and there
are no consequences for not participating.   ☐

If I choose to take part, I can leave the project   ☐
at any point and do not need to explain why.

I understand that what I talk about will be kept   ☐
private.

I understand that information collected is being   ☐
used for studying only, including publishing. I also understand that
findings will be shared with the
school but that my name will not be mentioned.

I agree to take part in the research.   ☐

Name

Date _____

_____

Appendix 4: Participants

- Semi Structured Group Interviews with Children

Year 1 18/06/15; 10am Madison Jasia Jack Isabella	**Year 1** 11/06/15; 2pm Binh Anh Dung Minh Theo	**Year 2** 15/06/15; 2pm Edmond Aarush Bai Giang Ji Hee
Year 2 24/06/15; 10am Lorenzo Bo Samaira Hugo	**Year 3** 11/06/15; 1.30pm Riya Prisha Michael	**Year 4** 12/06/15; 1.15pm Mia Se Jun Jason
Year 5 24/06/15; 8.15am Alfonso Molly Che Luke	**Year 5** 22/06/15; 1.00pm Louis Candy Adele	**Year 6** 25/06/15; 10.15am Anaya Katie Jiovanni Ji Su

- Semi Structured Interviews with Parents

Ji-Yeon (Parent of Katie)
Sarah (Parent of Aodhan and Charlotte)
Sofia and Michael (Parents of Michael)
Natalie (Parent of Madison and Liza)
Paul and Amanda (Parents of Ava)
Steven (Parent of Jason)

Appendix 5: Interview Schedules

Semi-structured interviews with parents

Eight parents agreed to be interviewed regarding their children's experiences of transition. Interviews were digitally recorded and took place in areas that were convenient to the parents. The first phase of the research worked towards answering two of the research questions, which are:

1. What factors influence children's experiences in the first year of transition into a new international school?
3. What are parents' perspectives of their children's experiences in the first year of transition into a new international school?

Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was planned using Gillham's (2000) four stages and aimed to avoid over-probing, which can lead to forced answers (Wellington, 2000).

The Introductory Phase
- Welcome: Introduce myself, make the parents feel comfortable and thank them for agreeing to help with the project.
- Provide an explanation of the research, e.g. 'I know that you have children who have started at the school this year and I want to find out about their experiences so far and throughout your first year here.'
- Permission to digitally record.

The Opening Development
- Provide an explanation as to why I am conducting this research, e.g. 'I have found when reading that although lots of research exists into children's experiences when starting primary school, there is not as much information available regarding international mobility at different ages. I would really like to

find out more about your children's experiences and understand your perspectives of this process.'

The Central Core

Develop questions in order to facilitate conversations between the parents in order for them to talk as naturally as possible to each other. Begin simply with 'Can you talk a little about your children's experiences during their first year of starting this school?' Probe where necessary when things are mentioned from the literature review, for example:

- Coping with more challenging learning
- Academic expectations
- Changes in rules and routines
- Friendships
- Academic attainment
- Coping strategies
- Feelings
- Learning a new language
- Differences in curriculum
- Communication between home and school

Talk freely for as long as possible and if necessary bring the following questions in:

- How did your child cope with academic expectations here?
- Did your child notice any changes regarding expectations about learning?
- How has your child adapted to the rules and routines of their new school?
- How has your child been dealing with making new friends?
- Have you noticed any differences throughout the year regarding your child's academic attainment?
- Describe your child's coping strategies. Have they altered throughout the year?
- Overall, how has your child felt about this whole experience?
- Has your child had to learn a new language? How has that been going?
- How has communication been between home and school throughout this period of transition?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

The Closure Section

- Summarise the interview and check for understanding of the responses.
- Thank the parents for their time.
- See if they have any further questions about the project.

Semi-structured interviews with children

Focus group interviews will take place during a mutually agreed time with the class teacher, ensuring that children do not miss out on special events or favourite activities. Children will be interviewed in groups of four in a quiet, yet familiar space, such as in a classroom or the library. It is impossible to state at this point the number of interviews that will take place. This is reliant upon consent. This second phase of the research will work towards answering two of the research questions, which are:

2. What are the children's perspectives of their experiences in the first year of transition into a new international school?
3. What factors influence children's experiences of their first year of transition into a new international school?

Interview Schedule
The interview schedule has been planned using Gillham's (2000) four stages.

The Introductory Phase
- Welcome: Introduce myself, make the children feel comfortable and thank them for agreeing to help with the project.
- Provide an explanation of the research, e.g. 'I know that you have all started at the school this year and I want to find out about your experiences so far and throughout your first year here.'
- Permission to video record: Children will be given the opportunity to opt out or sit with their back to the video recording equipment.

The Opening Development
Provide an outline of the activity, e.g. 'I would like you to draw two pictures for me; one of you in your old school and one of you in this school. You can choose to include any features that are important to you both from your old school and here. After that, we will talk about your pictures and I have a few questions to ask you too, if that's okay.'

The Central Core

Invite the children to draw a picture on a template such as the one outlined below. Give the children space to reflect on their drawings, and talk to them once they have finished.

Me in my old school	Me in my new school

The children will be encouraged to talk freely among themselves as a group while they are drawing. Once they have finished, they will be invited to share their picture with the group and describe what they have drawn. To aid discussions, the following questions may be asked:

- Describe your pictures to the group.
- Can you talk about what it was like in your old school?
- Talk to each other about what it has been like this year, moving into a new school.

Probe where necessary when things are mentioned from the literature review, for example:

- Coping with more challenging learning
- Academic expectations
- Changes in rules and routines
- Friendships
- Academic attainment
- Coping strategies
- Feelings
- Learning a new language
- Differences in curriculum

The Closure Section

- Summarise the interview and check for understanding of the children's responses.
- Thank the children for their time.

Appendix 6: Example of an interview transcript

Parent of Aodhan and Charlotte – Sarah

Time	Person	Transcript
0.06	Researcher	So when you moved here, was it their first international experience?
0.11	Sarah	Erm, not their first international experience but it was the first move because they were born abroad both of them. They were born in Brunei. (Researcher – mm hmm). So they've never been living in their own country (Researcher – yeah) anyway. (Pause)
0.28	Researcher	And obviously up until this point they've only gone to school in one place as well.
0.30	Sarah	In one place. They've lived in one house. They've had one nanny. Erm, they've had everything there. But they have two countries. They have Ireland and Belgium. They were born in Brunei.
0.45	Researcher	Yeah. Interesting, interesting dynamic to it. So Charlotte went into year four? (An – Exactly, yes). And then Aodhan was year one. (An – yes). So how did you go about preparing them to, to live in a different place?
1.00	Sarah	What did we do? Well first I think we tried to make them a bit excited about the country. We showed them all the positives. For example, Aodhan's into trains so we showed him a train in Vietnam, which we didn't have in Brunei (Researcher – mm hmm). Charlotte's into food so we showed her a picture of the food. Erm, then of course maybe we exaggerated the positives too much (Researcher – right) but we thought that would help them too (small laugh). When we arrived of course there were also negatives which we didn't really prepare them for but, erm and then one of the things erm we did is we showed them where we were gonna live, showed them pictures of the school and so on. Erm, I talked to other parents who'd done the move before erm and asked them how they, how they went about it. I got some tips through them as well because of course there's all sorts of practicalities of selling toys and not bringing everything, all the memories with you (Researcher – mm hmm). Erm so some parents for example gave me advice. If you sell old toys then set some money aside and say this cash will now go to buy new toys when we arrive because when we arrive they won't have much while we're waiting for a shipment, that kind of thing (Researcher – mm hmm). So a lot of it was practical really, material things as well
2.23	Researcher	Yeah, and how, do you think they could comprehend what they were about to go through?
2.27	Sarah	Erm, yes, especially the older ones. How old was she? Charlotte

		was seven or eight when she moved. No, she was seven when she found out. Erm, she very quickly, the question was 'Is it forever?' (Researcher – mm) In the sense that 'Are we never going to be going back to Brunei?' Because of course they didn't move from their home country. (Researcher – yeah) and we were never really going to live back in Brunei. I think if they were moving from their home country the idea wouldn't be as permanent so they were born in a country which wasn't their own (Researcher – mm). So for them it really was kind of their country (Researcher – mm) even though they weren't fully attached to it. They knew they were never going to live there again. I think that was something that they understood pretty quickly and they had a big cry about that because especially the nanny they had was a nanny that took care of them from when they were born. So that was 8 or 7 years which was a long, long time. So, but then they get over it pretty quickly because they know you are moving as a family and so on so I think they understood it quite quickly. They understood the negative parts quite quickly but then they get over it quite quickly as well (Researcher – yeah) because they're kids
3.51	Researcher	That's it. We place all this anxiety (An – yeah, yeah) and
3.56	Sarah	It's more temporary. Of course the emotions are intense but it's a temporary expression I think.
4.03	Researcher	What sort of things were they anxious about? Were they able to express?
4.05	Sarah	They weren't anxious about anything really (Researcher – yeah). I think that's something more adults experience (Researcher – Sure). I think they, they were sorry to, to not see their friends again (Researcher – yeah). Sorry to not be in their house again, you know their own home. Erm they felt sad about you know missing their friends, teachers, school, these kind of things (Researcher – mm). Er, yes I think that was more of the concern. Not really, they weren't really worried (Researcher – yeah, yeah) I think, not as much as adults worry about you know healthcare and these kinds of… Not really, they don't comprehend that so they don't worry about that.
4.52	Researcher	So when they arrived and then started at the school, how was that for them?
4.57	Sarah	Erm, I think, how was it? They had a day there, I think a few hours to meet the teachers here. I think one of the things that made it perhaps easier for them, I mean my kids came from an international environment so they did quite a lot as a school as well to prepare and move. So I did some things there, leaving parties and that kind of thing (Researcher – mm) er but they're used to it so they've seen other kids go (Researcher – yeah) a lot. They have leavers' assemblies and they get a little teddy bear so they were looking forward to getting the teddy bear (Researcher – laugh, yeah) with a little ribbon, school logo. Erm, so they've said goodbye to quite a few friends before so I think that helps to make their transition easier. When they arrived I think they were, erm,

		are you interested in the school or life in general?
5.55	Researcher	Both, yeah, everything.
5.57	Sarah	Cause I think one of the big things for them was to actually arrive and live in an apartment rather than in a house (Researcher – mm hmm) so that was a big change for them. Er, we had a car before and we didn't have a car when we got here. Erm we didn't have a garden, the bedrooms were smaller, so these kind of things even though they were living really well here for them they were sort of quite big changes (Researcher – mm) to get used to. They were comparing a little bit. Er, also when we arrived it took us forever to get our shipment. It took us until October, the end of October so they've really had about four or five months living out of a suitcase and I think that got to kids because kids need stuff (Researcher – yeah). If they don't, it's not space it's stuff, that's just the way it goes. Erm and they get attached to some items. I think especially at a certain age so we decided not to sell everything (Researcher – mm). To really bring things they were attached to and I suppose when the shipment came (Researcher – mm) it was like Christmas. That was a really positive, it cost a lot of money but it's a big thing, er so the material things initially I think were, you know they had an empty bedroom and so on so it was kind of difficult. Er in the school I think they've felt quite quickly quite comfortable because they moved, they changed year groups every year, so they change classes within the year group every year (Researcher – yeah). That was the way the school had done it and so they, erm they were used to making new friends. Erm so that was quite, that was alright from the school aspect that was fine I mean just changing routines but you know from the moment, I think after a week they were alright (Researcher – yeah). You know they were happy.
7.46	Researcher	Were there any things that were put in place at school to help them in those early days?
7.51	Sarah	I think there were some days where they came to visit the teachers. (Researcher – mm). Erm, but that was maybe just an hour or something. An hour or two. Erm, I think what my last school probably did better was that erm, but us as teachers when you arrive you have these induction days (Researcher – mm) and there was no sort of childcare and nothing provided. In the last school there was a care club they could go to (Researcher – yeah) and I think if they would have had that it would have made them and myself a lot happier. The hardest thing for us really was about the move with the kids was finding a nanny on very, very short notice (Researcher – mm). We arrived and we needed someone two days later to leave the kids behind. So I think that was hard (Researcher – hmm) and we couldn't really do that before and we weren't really given so much support and help to find someone (Researcher – hmm). So I think that for them that was the hardest as well, to be left with a complete stranger in a rather empty flat from the beginning so I think that maybe there is something, but that's more for staff so that's not necessarily relevant to all people

		who move schools so
9.08	Researcher	But I mean chances are people work so if it's not here it's somewhere else so
9.13	Sarah	So there were those pre- school days but that was sort of, but you know of course you always get that but just finding someone to take care of your children when you've just arrived is I think very difficult. I think that maybe quite a few parents would be willing to pay for a service between when you're arriving and starting school
9.33	Researcher	You're about to put complete trust in someone.
9.35	Sarah	So yes it is, that's just the hard part. Erm, but besides that I'm not sure that there was a lot put in place for kids who arrive (hmm). I think the buddies within the classrooms, the buddy systems, erm, I can't really remember there's much, erm, the couple of hours where they met the teacher and walked around the school, something like that. Erm, Aodhan arrived in the class group that was mixed completely or quite a lot so I think that helped things. I think for Charlotte she was in Year 4 so she arrived in a class group that was quite established already so I think at the time they were only mixing every two years which I think didn't help (Researcher – mm) because you're coming in as an outsider. So I think for me as an international parent, not every parent agrees with that but I think it's good to mix classes every year. I think that makes a big difference to the kids who arrive.
10.36	Researcher	And you said having that experience already for her has helped her to get used to that already.
10.40	Sarah	Yeah she's used to being… Also if you are in an international school she'll see friends leave and you cannot, and it sounds awful to say, but you cannot get too attached to one particular friend in the expat scene. You can't do it. Unless they're maybe locals and even then you don't know so I think it's a good thing. It might feel a bit tough to mix them up all the time but I think in the long run it is better.
11.06	Researcher	So how are they feeling about being mixed again going into the next year? Have they mentioned anything? No?
11.11	Sarah	No they haven't even noticed. No because they've done it every year so they're absolutely fine with that. So my kids wouldn't even think about that. It's made them I think a little bit more resilient in terms of friendships. They still have good friendships you know, they definitely have friends who they've had for years but I think the idea of mixing them definitely makes it a lot better (Researcher –mm). Yes, so there might be some resistance towards it but I think it's the best thing.
11.39	Researcher	Yeah it's interesting. It seems to definitely kind of just get them used to just being with different groups of people each year.
11.46	Sarah	Plus it stops the clique-iness especially when you're arriving as a new person. My daughter's very tough so I wasn't worried about that (Researcher – yeah) but I think if you're more of a shy person to arrive into a group of friends who know each other I don't think

		that's such a good idea.
12.03	Researcher	Even as an adult that's tough.
12.04	Sarah	Yeah, yeah, exactly. (Both laugh)
12.09	Researcher	So did they talk much about, throughout the year about school and how things were going?
12.16	Sarah	They did. They would often talk about erm school and their home, their nanny, and I think there was a point initially where I felt okay you can express yourself, let it all out and we'll talk about it and every time we were saying something sort of slightly more positive about where we were before or more negative about where we were now I think you try to compensate a little bit and say, ah right let's go out somewhere. But I think there was a point when, okay, this is enough now. So I think there's a point where you have to you know, you have to give them a period of mourning and then you have to tell them to move on because they cannot keep going back and back and back. I think there was a conscious point after Christmas when we said that's it now. You've had your time. I literally said you've had your time to talk about it and now we don't want to hear too much about Brunei any more. We have to move on. And of course now things can come back and they know it's not something you can bring up to get something from us.
13.28	Researcher	Yeah, there's a difference about mentioning it because you've remembered and then using it tactfully.
13.35	Sarah	Yeah, they are clever. They know what they are doing. (Pause)
13.41	Researcher	And, was there any kind of, did they feel any difference in terms of academic expectations here or..?
13.47	Sarah	Erm (Pause) Erm, no not really. Erm, I think they felt the behavior of the kids was different (Researcher – okay). Erm (Pause) Brunei is a country where people are very gentle, very calm and my kids felt that the children here erm, were to them more rude. I think that perhaps that sounds really strange if you are used to European schools where it's the opposite but for them, because they came from such a calm, calm country they were sometimes shocked about the language that some kids were using and sort of, not big swear words but even the 'what the?' They use that quite a lot here. (Researcher – yeah they do). And our kids they know it's maybe rude or something but they came home and they were so shocked that the kids were saying 'What the?' But then maybe sometimes kids use these expressions not knowing that it comes across as a bit rude because it's not their first language or I'm not sure. Maybe there's also I think there's more people in more compact spaces so I think maybe that causes a little bit more vibrant wild dynamic so maybe they have had to get used to that. It's just because they came from a place where there's a lot of space so, but, I'm not sure if that's something to do with when you come to Vietnam it's probably a little bit like everyone together, a lot of energy and a lot of sort of erm, pushing and shoving maybe. And maybe they have to get used to that just in general. But then

		again it might also be because the campus is a bit small and so, but yes, I think it's more… Academic expectations I think are quite similar. I think kids here are probably a bit better at Maths and maybe they would have felt that a little bit. Erm, I think that because it's an international school I think the care's probably quite similar. There are differences of course but I think they like the pastoral care here a lot. I think that's a positive development. They love the assemblies and so, yeah… (Pause).
16.09	Researcher	Good. And did you see them kind of employing any coping strategies throughout the year in terms of the move or…?
16.18	Sarah	Erm, (pause) not, not really. I think, I'm not sure if it's a coping strategy maybe, my youngest son is more somebody who will try and please the teacher and not get into trouble. Maybe that's a coping strategy (Researcher – yeah). Trying to be, not to be teacher's pet but trying, making necklaces for the teacher, that kind of thing (both laugh). Maybe that's a way of showing he's accepted or something. Erm, my daughter (pause), she's one of those, she'll be fine wherever she goes. She's quite a fun loving person so from the moment I saw her standing around a group and having a giggle I knew she'd be fine, that kind of… So it's her, I think she really likes to be sociable and make friends and maybe that will help her. I'm not sure it's a coping strategy or, it's just the way she is you know. (Pause). But erm, I can't really think of anything else they've consciously done. (Researcher – no, no that's fine, there might not be). They settled quite quickly. They're not kids who usually have pastoral issues so they've never had friendship issues or they've never come home and they've never fallen out with anybody or at least they've never told me 'Mum, this person did that to me. I'm upset about that'. So I think maybe they're not typical in that way.
17.53	Researcher	Well it shows they must be quite happy.
17.56	Sarah	They're quite resilient (Researcher – yes). They're quite resilient in a different way.
18.02	Researcher	So overall how do you think this whole experience has been for them throughout this first year?
18.07	Sarah	I think they've had a really good year. They settled in well. I think maybe if we were to move not to an international school, a local school somewhere I think it would have been a lot harder. Erm even if that would have been to my home country (Researcher – yeah). Erm, they're so used to international education that going from one school to the next school wise is quite, it feels quite similar (Researcher – mm). Again, yes, kids pick up things anyway. I mean I think they forget sort of the previous years quite quickly so the new year's a new start and so on so I think it's been, it's been quite easy in terms of school. I think maybe the lifestyle, the accommodation (Researcher – yeah), even though it's lovely where we are I think it's just that it's a new country. I think that's sort of harder. Erm in terms of schools I think it's not so much the arriving school, it's the school where they leave from. (Researcher

		– Sure). I think that's where probably the biggest job has to be done (Researcher – hmm), how you make kids leave. Erm, don't just drop them off the bus and say bye. I think erm leavers' assemblies where people say a few words about them, a party that parents throw, that kind of prepares them. The rest you have to sort of make it happen when you arrive. The move was, this year was pretty easy but maybe that was partly cause the year before we had time to prepare them.
19.52	Researcher	Yeah, it sounds like their school life has kind of carried on as normal if you like but just in a different building.
19.57	Sarah	Exactly, yeah.
	Researcher	But it's all the social stuff all the kind of personal things that happen outside of school that makes the move different.
	Sarah	Exactly, yeah.
20:10	Researcher	Oh yeah, and how about communication between home and school before you arrived and I'm talking now just as a parent and a researcher forgetting the fact that we work here.
20:24	Sarah	Before I arrived. Erm, No there was a lot of communication because we got this pack. I had a feeling I already knew quite a bit about the kids and about the school before I arrived. Just for example the day that we went to get the uniform (Researcher – mm). Actually we were already in Vietnam and we did a uniform fitting beforehand, erm, the website of course helps you know showing them where they are going to be, what they're going to have, the canteen, you know the small, because kids lives sometimes revolve around things like what am I going to eat? (Researcher – yeah) So the fact that they could see some pictures, that kind of thing, that really helped. Communication has been good. I don't feel there has been any lack of communication at all. Knowing which clubs we could choose. These things help you to talk about their daily life (Researcher – yeah). So to see what clubs they're having. I think a lot of information is available on the website as well so, erm. Just thinking if we knew which teachers they were going to get. I think we did because we were on the website checking out the profiles of the new teachers (Researcher – yeah, yeah). I think we did. I think that helps to get the photo of your teacher and kids from that country, that type of thing.
22:01	Researcher	Yeah, yeah. So thinking back to the start and throughout, is there any recommendations that you would have in terms of starting school and helping new arrivals?
22:10	Sarah	Erm, well yes, but that's just for teaching parents in the beginning so it's not necessarily relevant to the majority. The nanny issue. But it's something that's perhaps not to be underestimated when parents are working but then very often people move when there's only one parent working.
22:38	Researcher	I would say that the majority of the kids in my class, they have a nanny. Definitely.
22:43	Sarah	Yeah, yeah, so in Europe it wouldn't be relevant again so I don't know but that was the thing that was quite difficult for us. I think

		for new teaching staff, a recommendation to have some kind of care club where kids can go or a holiday club, something on the site where they can just familarise themselves and have some time rather than being with a complete stranger. (Researcher – yes). Schools can have a summer school type thing but really advertise it to newcomers (Researcher – yeah). And have, have something in place maybe just before they start because we usually have some newcomers in July the first weeks but not necessarily the week before they start.
23:23	Researcher	Yeah that's a really good point.
23:24	Sarah	So maybe something there that could help because then they would be quite comfortable with where the toilets are, these type of small things (Researcher – yeah) and it would, again paying would be perfectly reasonable and parents would be happy to pay a bit of extra cash and then you could cater to the wider community and not just the teaching kids. (Pause). Erm, anything else. I think of course there need to be some systems in place but at the same time they need to move on with their routine and you know they cannot be considered as special for a very long time. They also need to know they have to work and a lot of kids move every so many years and they have to, that's why I said there was a point where that's it now, no more talking about where we were before, no more comparing. Maybe teachers also have the right to say that at some point. Now you are here, I expect this type of behaviour from you and so on. Maybe some parents would like to talk to teachers a little bit more but because obviously I was here it's very hard for me to make a recommendation because I've been here (Researcher – of course), they've seen me on site so that obviously helped them settle in as well so I'm not sure (Researcher – yeah). I was able to have a chat with the teachers but I'm not sure how accessible they would have been to other parents. So just having a chat with the teachers to see how they are getting on, that helps a lot and I think for me that was something that happened informally. I think I would certainly recommend the school to keep doing that (Researcher – yeah) maybe on a more formal basis for parents who are not on site.
25:30	Researcher	Yeah and not everyone is that kind of forthcoming themselves. They might, you know, I'm sure they would appreciate that.
25:36	Sarah	Yeah, exactly, exactly that. (Pause)
25:40	Researcher	Okay, that's great. I think that's it. It's been really really useful. Thank you so much.

Appendix 7: A complete list of codes

The table below provides a list of the codes, the number of interviews these codes were found in and the number of times. Please note that this is a complete list used to help me to know and understand the data. Not all codes were seen as relevant when writing the findings.

Code	Number of interviews	Total number of references
Academic expectations	12	34
Achievement	5	13
Adapting to a new lifestyle	11	41
Anxiety	12	46
Attachment to a country	9	30
Belonging to diferent countries	4	11
Born abroad	5	11
Buddies	7	12
Confusion	6	9
Culture	3	5
Differences between schools	10	56
Distance	3	6
Enjoyment	12	40
Excitement	11	30
Family	3	3
Feeling 'normal'	2	2
Feeling different	2	5
Friends from another country or language	7	14
International experience	14	51

Is this forever	5	13
Keeping in touch	3	5
Learning English	6	17
Loneliness	2	2
Looking for acceptance	1	1
Missing friends	13	47
Mixing classes	2	5
New friends	14	61
New house	4	8
Pastoral care	5	10
Positive preparation	9	53
Reluctance to move	6	12
Resilience	5	17
Sadness	10	16
Shyness	6	10
Similarities between schools	2	5
Stress	3	4
Teachers	12	33
Temporary negativity	10	19
The old school	14	63
Unexpected negatives	4	10
Visiting the old home	8	21

Appendix 8: Admissions Policy

Introduction

The school is a selective, independent, co-educational day school. It provides a British style education for an international student body aged between 2 and 18 years old from more than 50 countries. The school welcomes applications from students of all nationalities and does not discriminate on the basis of nationality, country of origin, religion or race. Prospective students must demonstrate that they have the ability, skills and knowledge to follow the curriculum successfully. English is the language of communication throughout the school and in all lessons. Consequently, all prospective students must demonstrate that they are sufficiently fluent in the English language to be able to communicate effectively. The school is able to provide some help for children who may initially need support with their English or children with minor specific learning difficulties at an additional fee.

New Student Enrolment

. The school strives to achieve a balance of nationalities in order to maintain an international mix of children.

. Placement of a student in a specific year group is determined by the Head of Campus after a consideration of the pupil's birth date as indicated on the Schedule of Fees and the school's assessment of the pupil's academic level, maturity and English language ability at the time of application. Any placement outside of this year group is unlikely.

. Early enrolment into a pre-nursery class may be considered, but will result in a second year at pre- nursery before progressing to a nursery class.

. When selecting a Foundation Stage programme parents need to be aware that the school will only allow one change of programme per academic year.

. Applications are processed by the relevant campus and we request that siblings on different campuses are clearly identified on the Application Form. Application Forms are available to download from the school web site

. Applicants who are not currently attending an English National Curriculum school may be required to sit an entrance test to establish academic potential. If the applicant is unable to visit the school to take an entrance test parents must provide the school with the means of assessing the child's academic potential (this could be examination certificates, school reports, recommendations or a transcript). If the Head of Campus requires further clarification the applicant will be required to take an entrance test at a later stage.

. If a child has specific learning difficulties, additional relevant assessment documentation will be required and an interview with the Learning Support Coordinator and Head of Campus will occur before a place can be offered.

8. To facilitate a high standard of teaching and learning, the ideal class size is maintained at around 20 pupils throughout the school.

9. Progression through the school from one year group to the next is usually automatic. The progress of each child is assessed on a continuous basis and a placement for the following year will depend on whether the school is able to continue to meet the particular needs of the child. In exceptional circumstances the school may be unable to do this in which case it reserves the right not to offer a place in the next year group. In the British education system children do not normally repeat a year.

10. If a family already has one or more siblings studying at the school, priority will be given to a new sibling, but a place is not guaranteed.

11. Movement between the two Primary campuses is possible, but the opportunities are limited. Each request is considered individually by the Head of Campus of the receiving school.

12. A place will only be offered for a child when all of the required documents are submitted to the Admissions department and the Application Fee has been paid.

13. List of required documents for application:
    - Application Fee
    - Most recent school records translated in to English where applicable
    - Recent test scores in English, Mathematics and Science
    - 2 current passport photographs of the student
    - Medical/Physical Record signed by a Doctor
    - Copy of student's passport or birth certificate
    - EAL Testing results attached (if applicable)
    - Learning Support assessment documentation attached (if applicable)

14. The final decision on all applications is made by each Head of Campus.

15. Each offer of a school place must be accepted within two weeks after which it is automatically withdrawn and may be offered to another family. To formally accept an offer the parent should:
    - Write a formal acceptance email or letter to the Admissions Department
    - Sign and return the Admissions Agreement to the Admissions Department
    - Pay the non-refundable Registration Fee to the Accounts Department

16. Each offer of a school place will include a date for the child to start school. Places cannot be held beyond this date without the payment of the relevant tuition fees.

17. A re-application for a school place more than 12 months after a child has withdrawn from the school is treated as a new application including the payment of appropriate fees.

May 2013

Appendix 9: Whole School Language Policy

Introduction and Philosophy

The school believes language and learning are inextricably linked. Language in all its aspects plays an integral role in fulfilling our mission to develop our students into internationally-minded individuals, supported and facilitated in their ability to become inquiring and knowledgeable, as well as effective communicators and reflective thinkers. Language is not merely a means by which we demonstrate what we know, it is also one of the most important means by which we learn and refine our understanding of concepts. Success in learning is therefore tied to language development.

English is the language of instruction at the school and the language in which all students communicate with one another, regardless of other languages they may speak. Consequently, all prospective students must demonstrate that they are sufficiently fluent in English to be able to access the curriculum or demonstrate the potential to acquire English within a reasonable timeframe. The school is able to provide some assistance for children who may initially need support with their English.

British English is the standard variety of English used in lessons because of the need to prepare students for formal examinations. However, the students are encouraged to understand, recognise and respect the usage and spelling of words commonly found in other varieties of English.

Our Aims:

- Develop our students' ability to communicate and comprehend in English.
- Equip our students with language skills required for academic success.
- Where possible, give our students the opportunity to continue studying their own language, guided by a teacher and enriched by parental contribution, and to take appropriate qualifications in their language.
- Value all languages and their cultural context, and encourage our students to achieve additive bilingualism or even

multilingualism.
- Ensure that all teachers of additional languages are fluent speakers with a degree level qualification in the language, if they are not mother tongue.
- Ensure that all subject teachers see themselves as language teachers for which we provide necessary training.
- To provide English as an Additional Language and English as a Second Language teaching for all students who need extra support.

Our Practice

Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. Therefore the focus here is not only on language for its own sake, but also on its application across the subject areas and throughout the trans- disciplinary programme of inquiry.

English

Oral skills and oracy are a central tenet of English planning and teaching across the primary stage. The UK Literacy Framework is used as a basis for our planning as well as The school's Primary Literacy Policy and planning guidance documents. Speaking and listening skills are taught across all areas of the curriculum and are not just confined to English lessons.

Teachers and teaching assistants in the primary school are aware of their responsibilities as teachers of language. English is used in all lessons and teaching staff have a responsibility to encourage their pupils to use correct English when speaking. Support and administration staff throughout the school are encouraged to develop their own English language skills.

All teachers have a crucial role in modeling and teaching a high standard of grammatically correct spoken and written English. There is a recognised need for comprehensive, structured grammar teaching in primary which is not made explicit by the Literacy Framework, but nevertheless is taught on a needs basis by individual year groups. The Primary School teaches grammar from a set syllabus supported by relevant materials. Spoken grammar is also taught and monitored throughout the school, especially as this has a direct impact on the students' writing.

The main focus for the English department in the secondary school is to raise the level of students' competence in English Language and Literature. The outlines of work are designed to give students clear objectives and a sense of progression through a series of increasingly challenging tasks. English teachers have different aims for different pupils and do not expect them all to have reached the same stage by the end of the year. The primary goal is to increase students' confidence and skills in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.

We want students to see reading and writing as a pleasure, as well as a vital means of communication with others. We aim to equip our students to become independent, critical and perceptive readers of the multiplicity of texts from different cultural viewpoints that they will encounter in an ever-changing world.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) and English as a Second Language (ESL)

Competence in English is clearly a factor which will influence the school experience and learning outcomes of students whose first language is not English. These students not only require English to communicate with their peers and teachers, but also to continue the process of conceptual development begun either in a language other than English or in another variety of English.

In the primary campuses the English as an Additional Language programme aims to ensure that all students are able to access the school curriculum. We are committed to ensuring the appropriate provision of teaching students with English as an Additional Language needs. The additional language support provided by the EAL department is an integral part of the curriculum and a crucial aid to class teachers who have EAL students in their class.

Any new applicants that may need EAL support are assessed using a formal placement test. If they are accepted but are deemed to need EAL support, they will be taught and observed in a one month assessment window, after which their place on the EAL register will be confirmed. The amount of support that each EAL student requires dictates which 'Tier' they are on (1 being the highest level of support, 3 being the lowest). These Tiers are closely aligned to the

UK Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency descriptors for EAL assessment.

EAL support consists of a combination of both withdrawal sessions and in-class support. Parents are updated on their child's EAL progress and status at the end of each term. Profiles are maintained for each EAL student and are accessible to all teachers. The EAL department works closely with the class teachers on planning and delivering the curriculum. It also provides training and resources to assist class teachers to differentiate work for their EAL students.

The secondary school offers an Extra English course in Years 7 – 11. Students requiring additional language support are identified through a process which involves reviewing their attainment according to the English National Curriculum levels as well as a specifically-designed ESL Stage Test. Students identified through this process are then encouraged to take Extra English, which is timetabled instead of an MFL course (at KS3) or an option choice subject (at IGCSE 10 – 11). Thus in addition to support classes, and based on teacher recommendation, IGCSE English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered as an alternative to IGCSE First Language.

The Extra English course content supports students in their written production in all curriculum subjects in English. It provides an explicit approach towards learning in English by teaching through text types and interactive activities, with a specific focus on developing students" awareness of accurate grammar and expanding their vocabulary to meet the demands of specialist subjects.

Mother Tongue Development

The school recognises that one of its strengths lies in the cultural diversity of the student population and the subsequently wide-ranging number of languages that are spoken within the school community. The school also maintains a strong belief that a student's competency in English is related the level of competence that they demonstrate in their mother tongue.

A student's mother tongue competence, along with the level of their literacy skills, is dependent on a number of factors. These factors are complex and varied and include:

- The extent to which the mother tongue language is used
- The level of support for language development the parents and caregivers are able to provide
- The extent to which their mother tongue language is maintained and developed For many students English is their first language and not their mother tongue. The school encourages mother tongue development in a number of ways:
- The school provides the opportunity for First Language IGCSE examinations to be sat at the end of Year 10 for any language offered by the examination board – in recent years this has included Dutch, Danish, German, French, Russian, Mandarin and Korean.
- Vietnamese, Korean and Mandarin literature courses are offered at IBDP level in addition to English as part of the school's Group 1 subject selection
- The school makes classroom facilities available at no cost for after school classes in Dutch, Danish and German. These classes are organised and taught by teachers paid for by parents in those communities, often with government grants Whilst it is not possible for the school to actively provide all students with development courses in their mother tongue (due to the sheer diversity of languages spoken), parents are encouraged to promote a healthy balance between maintaining their child's mother tongue development and immersing themselves in English as much as possible.

Host Country Language

1. Vietnamese Nationals

- The school is required under Vietnamese Law to provide Vietnamese language tuition to Vietnamese nationals until they reach the age of 16
- At primary age this is organized by the Head of Primary Vietnamese who organizes the Vietnamese language lessons after school using Vietnamese Teaching Assistants to deliver the lessons
- The study of Vietnamese language at KS3 and KS4 is through scheduled timetabled lessons using external language teachers organised by the Head of Secondary Vietnamese
- There is currently no IGCSE offered in Vietnamese first

language
- At the end of Year 11, students sit a for a "Certificate in Vietnamese" at either the Intermediate or Advanced level awarded by a local university (The Vietnam National University - HCMC, Faculty of Vietnamese Studies)
- Vietnamese nationals are encouraged to study Vietnamese literature as their Group 1 subject and English as their Group 2 subject

2. Non-Vietnamese Nationals

- All primary students are taught Vietnamese language and culture as a part of the curriculum
- At KS3 all students are taught Vietnamese language as a part of the curriculum
- At the end of Year 9, students who are successful in an internal Vietnamese assessment are selected to sit a for a "Starter Level Certificate in Vietnamese" awarded by a local university (The Vietnam National University - HCMC, Faculty of Vietnamese Studies)
- The study of Vietnamese language beyond KS3 is not practical due to a lack of formal recognized qualifications (IGCSE examinations in Vietnamese are not currently available)

Modern Foreign Languages

The study of Modern Foreign Languages prepares pupils to participate in a rapidly changing world in which work and other activities are increasingly carried out in languages other than English. Pupils learn how to employ languages to enable rapid access to ideas and experiences from a wide range of people, communities and cultures. Increased capability in the use of languages promotes initiative and independent learning, and encourages diversity within society. The Standard BIS MFL Framework for Students From Early Years to Year 2 students have taster lessons in a number of modern foreign languages In Years 3 and 4 the students experience larger blocks of time studying French, Spanish and Mandarin lessons in order for them to determine the most appropriate modern foreign language to continue with at school. The chosen MFL cannot be their mother tongue. From year 5 onwards the students study French, Spanish or Mandarin through to

IGCSE and IBDP level. The department's schemes of work in the Primary School are based mainly on the KS2 framework for Languages. In KS3, the National Curriculum for England provides the base for the programmes of study.

At KS4 the curriculum is focused on the syllabus for IGCSE. The study of the chosen MFL is then normally continued as the Group 2 choice in the IBDP.

MFL Framework Variations

Although the school has a standard framework for MFL throughout the school, it is an international school where there is constant enrolment of new students into all year groups who come from a number of educational systems and have a huge variety of language backgrounds. This means that the school has to be flexible in the way that it implements the framework in order to support students in their language acquisition.

1. New students enrolled with previous MFL experience

- Where possible the student would continue with their previous MFL
- If the school does not offer that language then a new MFL from French, Spanish and Mandarin has to be chosen at a beginner level
- For older students a careful consideration of IGCSE and IB choices would need to occur
- Students requiring EAL Support or Learning Support would not be required to study a MFL initially

2. Students receiving EAL Support

Within the primary school children are taught MFL lessons alongside their additional EAL support lessons At KS3 students receiving EAL support do so in Extra English lessons instead of MFL lessons. Once students are sufficiently proficient in English they will join a beginner MFL class and start to study either French or Spanish (Mandarin is considered too difficult for late starters)

If students have not reached a proficient level of English by the start

of Year 9 it is likely that they will study the English as a Second Language IGCSE instead of a MFL IGCSE

3.   Students who join the school late without MFL experience

- Students joining year groups up to and including Year 4 would study MFL along with everyone else
- Students joining year groups between Year 5 and Year 9 will chose a MFL and join a beginner group
- A student joining KS4 without previous experience of a MFL would be allowed to choose another subject and be made exempt from the school requirement to study a MFL subject at IGCSE
- A student joining the IBDP without previous experience of a MFL would be required to take an Ab Initio MFL as a Group 2 choice.

4.   IBDP Variations

The standard MFL Framework would lead most students to take English as their Group 1 subject choice and their chosen MFL as their Group 2 subject choice. However, for a variety of reasons, the school takes a flexible approach to this part of the framework and a number of variations can occur:

- Students who study ESL at IGCSE level will normally take their mother tongue language in Group 1 and English in Group 2
- In order to maximise points some students chose their mother tongue in Group 1 and either English or their chosen MFL in Group 2, despite having studied both English Language and Literature at IGCSE. The school is able to support Korean, Mandarin and Vietnamese in Group 1. The IBO does provide self-study modules for other languages, but the school does not encourage their use.
- The school has many Korean students. If a Korean student wishes to apply to a Korean university then they would be expected to study Korean Literature in Group 1
- Truly bilingual students are encouraged to take a bilingual diploma where they can study two Group 1 literature subjects from Vietnamese, Korean, Mandarin and English IB Diploma

Programme

Students will choose to study their Group 1 subject (Studies in Language and Literature) in a language in which they are academically competent. In studying the Group 1 courses, students are able to develop:

- a personal appreciation of language and literature
- skills in literary criticism
- an understanding of the formal, stylistic and aesthetic qualities of texts
- strong powers of expression, both written and oral
- an appreciation of cultural differences in perspective

The range of texts studied in language A courses is broad, and students grow to appreciate a language's complexity, wealth and subtleties in a variety of contexts. A specific aim is to engender a lifelong interest in literature and a love for the elegance and richness of human expression.

In studying Group 2 courses (Language Acquisition), the main emphasis of the modern language courses is on the acquisition and use of language in a range of contexts and for different purposes, while at the same time, promoting an understanding of another culture through the study of its language.

Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Successful implementation of the Language Policy requires co-operation of all stakeholders of the school community including parents. All stakeholders are encouraged to have a positive attitude towards both English and the mother tongue languages but, wherever possible, the whole school community uses English as the primary language of communication.

February 2012