

Trends and Developments in Research on the Transition from Preschool to Primary School: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

The transition from preschool to primary school is a critical time for students, as they must adjust from the play-based learning approach in preschool to the more structured and curriculum-focused education of primary school. However, bibliometric analysis in this topic is scarce. Therefore, the current bibliometric analysis investigates the evolution of research on the school transition from preschool to primary school, focussing on significant findings on author contributions, country-based production, and institutional engagement. According to the study, Petriwskyj has the most publications in the field, and author collaboration networks are organised into various groups. Research output varies over time, with some authors making constant contributions and achieving higher citation impact, while others have intermittent or limited scholarly effect. The United States leads in research output, followed by Finland, Turkey, and Australia, with rising contributors such as China and Greece gaining traction. Citation impact is particularly high in the United States and Finland, indicating differences in research contributions between countries. According to affiliation analysis, the University of Jyväskylä is the highest-rated institution, followed by Queensland University of Technology and the University of North Carolina. The production trends show that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will increase its research activities significantly beginning in 2021, while other leading universities such as the University of Jyväskylä and the University of Kentucky continue to increase their research output. This study gives a comprehensive overview of the changing landscape of research on preschool-to-primary school transition, emphasising the academic field's dynamic and collaborative nature.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, School Transition, Author Contributions, Collaboration Networks, Country-Based Research, Affiliation Analysis

How to cite: Trends and Developments in Research on the Transition from Preschool to Primary School: A Bibliometric Analysis. (2026). *International Journal of Pedagogy and Learning Community (IJPLC)*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.24036/ijplc.v3i2.41>



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INTRODUCTION

The transition phase from the preschool to primary school is a crucial period for students. In this period, they should adapt from play-based learning in preschool to more structure and curriculum centered of education in primary school. Seabra-Santos et al. (2021) stated that, in the transition period, students must adapt to a less flexible environment that prioritises cognitive learning and

academic success over the caring in preschool settings. This transition can be difficult for youngsters because they must adjust to new social roles and expectations, which can cause worry and tension (Eapen et al., 2017; Urbina-Garcia & Kyriacou, 2018), particularly for students who have not learnt the essential self-regulation abilities (Pears et al., 2014; Zainil et al., 2023). Their adjustment to primary school may be made more difficult by the anxiety brought on by these changes, which can show up in a variety of ways, such as behavioural problems and trouble interacting with others (Hacıbrahimoglu & Kargin, 2017; Handrianto, 2019).

On the crucial of the transition phase, current literature has discussed several aspect of the students transition from preschool to primary school. For example, the emotional adjustment that the students should navigate. according to Bagnall et al. (2021) students in this phase sometime face the emotional challenges caused by the fear of separated from caregiver, concerns about making new friends, and apprehension regarding academic performance. Other than that, the new environment setting and pedagogical approach that different from preschool became the major caused of students emotional challenges (Nuroniah et al, 2024; Nengsih et al., 2022). According to Liu (2024) the shift from preschool, which often emphasises play-based and social learning, to primary school, characterised by more regimented academic demands, can cause anxiety and confusion in children. Furthermore, The abrupt change in instructional approaches can be daunting, especially for youngsters who thrive in less regimented environments (Travar, 2019; Solfema et al., 2024). In this case, students should learn to manage their emotion as it is crucial for successful adjustment, children with higher emotional self-efficacy tend to report better feelings of belonging and lower levels of loneliness in the school environment (Nowland & Qualter, 2019).

Another main concerned in the literature is the children social adaptation. This adaptability is influenced by a number of factors, including the child's emotional intelligence and prior social experiences. Research shows that children's social competence greatly predicts their social and academic results, including school readiness and favourable attitudes towards school (McCabe & Altamura, 2011). As children enter primary school, they must learn to engage with peers and teachers in a more structured setting (Oberle et al 2021; Arwin et al., 2022). This can be tough, especially for those who may have previously relied on play-based interactions in preschool (Somadayo et al., 2022). In this case, Children learn to navigate social situations through guided experiences and modelling, therefore supportive interactions with parents and educators are critical in developing these abilities (Blewitt et al., 2018). As a result, the transition phase is not just a time for academic adjustment, but also a critical era for building the social abilities that will support children's long-term success in school and elsewhere.

Another significant aspect discussed in the literature on the topic of students transition is the role of teachers. Teachers' involvement is extensive, including emotional support, academic coaching, and fostering a healthy school environment. According to research, teachers who cultivate supportive relationships with their students can considerably reduce anxiety and increase emotional well-being during this key transition period (Fullarton & Duquette, 2015). In this case, teachers can establish planned transition programs that involve orientation activities and collaborative projects, helping children to become acquainted with the new setting and improve social skills (Keiler, 2018). These programs not only alleviate the emotional strain of transitioning but also foster peer relationships, which are critical for social adaption (Keiler, 2018). Furthermore, teachers stated to serve as advocates for students, particularly those with special needs, by helping them develop self-advocacy skills and ensuring that their unique needs are met during the transition (McPherson, 2021).

Since research on the students transition phase from preschool to primary school has become prevalent, there is a need to summarize the extant literature and reveal the domain's intellectual structure. It can identify key themes, influential authors, and the evolution of research topics over time (Li & Wong, 2021). To date, no specific systematic review particularly in term of bibliometric analysis of the research on school transition from preschool to primary school. It was only about Global Trends in Preschool Literacy (PL) focused on the progress and prospect (Xiao et al., 2023), bibliometric analysis on the STEM in early childhood education (Su & Yang, 2024). A bibliometric

analysis of anxiety and depression among primary school students (Fu et al, 2024). In this case, to the best of our knowledge, no specific research on bibliometric analysis of school transition from preschool to primary school. Therefore, the current research aim to fill this gap by conducting a thorough bibliometric analysis to map the current body of knowledge on the preschool-to-primary school transition, identifying major topics, trends, and influential works in this field. This study will provide vital insights into the evolution of this research domain, highlighting its intellectual structure and guiding future research efforts to improve comprehension of this critical transition period for young learners. Specific research question of this research are as follow;

1. To examine the author contributions and identify the leading contributors in the field.
2. To analyze the collaboration networks among authors and the formation of distinct research groups.
3. To evaluate the country-based research output and citation impact, highlighting disparities in contributions across countries.
4. To analyze institutional involvement, identifying the highest-rated institutions and their research activity in the field.

METHODS

The fundamental goal of bibliometric analysis is to quantitatively summarise the current literature, detect relevant trends, and highlight influential publications and authors in a certain research area (Yilmaz & Tuzlukaya, 2023). This analytical approach uses mathematical and statistical tools to evaluate bibliographic data, allowing academics to visualise and analyse massive amounts of information created across multiple disciplines of knowledge (Castañeda et al, 2022). Few attempts have been made at structuring the literature review to ensure the strong and reliable data used in the bibliometric analysis. One of these frameworks is Garza-Reyes's (2015). The framework covers question preparation, investigation locations, study selection, analysis and synthesis, and presentation of results reports. This approach was used in a number of bibliometric analysis research investigations across different contexts. Waqas et al. (2024) performed bibliometric analysis in quality control charts in three stages: determining keywords, retrieving data from the database, doing statistical analysis on the metadata, and utilising bibliometrics. Yazdi et al. (2023) also conduct a bibliometric analysis on fault tree analysis improvement using the Garza-Reyes framework, which includes defining relevant keywords, collecting data, and assessing the literature. The framework's application in the article selection process of bibliometric analysis research can be described as robust and current.

As a result, the current bibliometric analysis will adhere to the Garza-Reyes paradigm. Figure 1 shows that the current research framework is divided into three critical stages, which are: (i) Defining acceptable keywords when the Scopus database was used to gather relevant literature. Because we are focussing on the school transition from preschool to primary school, the keywords were focused to retrieve article to the topic. We also focus on content written in English. (ii) gathering data. In terms of data collecting, we ensure that relevant literature is reported. As a result, we examine each piece of literature by reading both the abstract and the complete text. Articles that were not relevant to the issue were omitted from the analysis. Aside from that, we search for duplication and similarity to ensure the presence of relevant literature. (iii) The third stage is reporting, during which we analyse metadata, authors, affiliations, co-citations, and keywords. This will be reported in the results section.

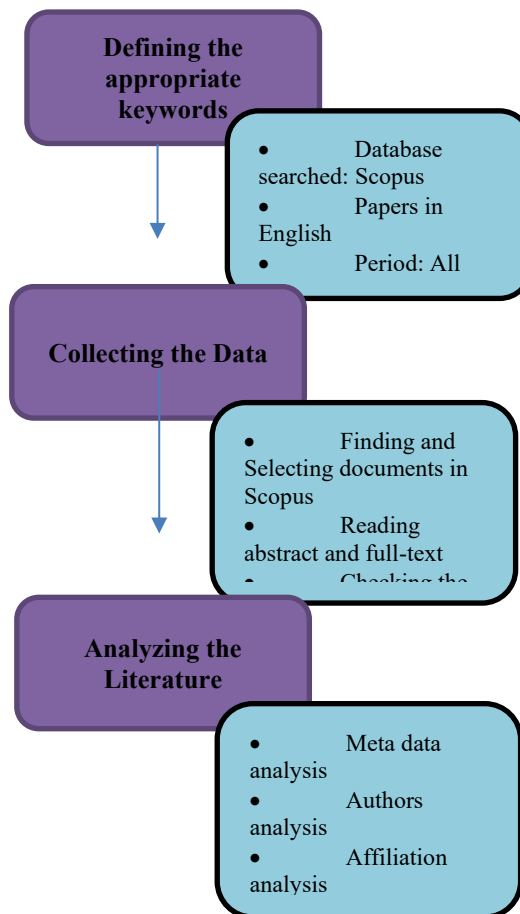


Figure 1. Garza- Reyes Framework

Defining the Appropriate Keywords

In searching publication related to the transition of preschool to primary school, researcher utilized several keywords as displayed in table 1. The keywords used to search relevant publication in the scopus database considering several aspect namely the search was range in the document title, the publication is all time publication and the articles were English written only. Through the search procedure, the initial publication search yielded 50 articles.

Table 1. Keywords

Database	Search keywords
Scopus	"preschool to primary school transition" OR "early childhood education transition" OR "kindergarten to first grade transition" OR "pre-primary to primary education" AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

Secondly, the publication collected were screened for it title and abstract to make sure the selected articles is relevant to the topic being discussed. In this case, researcher make sure that the publication was related to the preschool transition to primary school. Publication out of the topic were eliminated. Thus, after the screening process, only 28 articles were foud to be relevant to the topic. Therefore, in the current research, the 28 articles were only eligible publication to be further analyzed and reported.

Analyzing the Metadata Statistically, and Using Bibliometric

The overall publication related to school transition from preschool to primary school were presented in figure 2. As can be seen that, the all-time publication on this topic were stable with the average

publication were two documents. The first research was founded to be published at 1990, and no publication was found until 2000 with two publication at the year. One publication was found in 2002, 2003 and 2005, the publication was increased in 2007, no publication was found in the following year, and two publication were found in 2009 and 2010. After that the publication in this topic was come to its peak in the 2011 and 2016 with three publication. Furthermore, two publication was found in 2014 and 2021, and one publication was found in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2024.

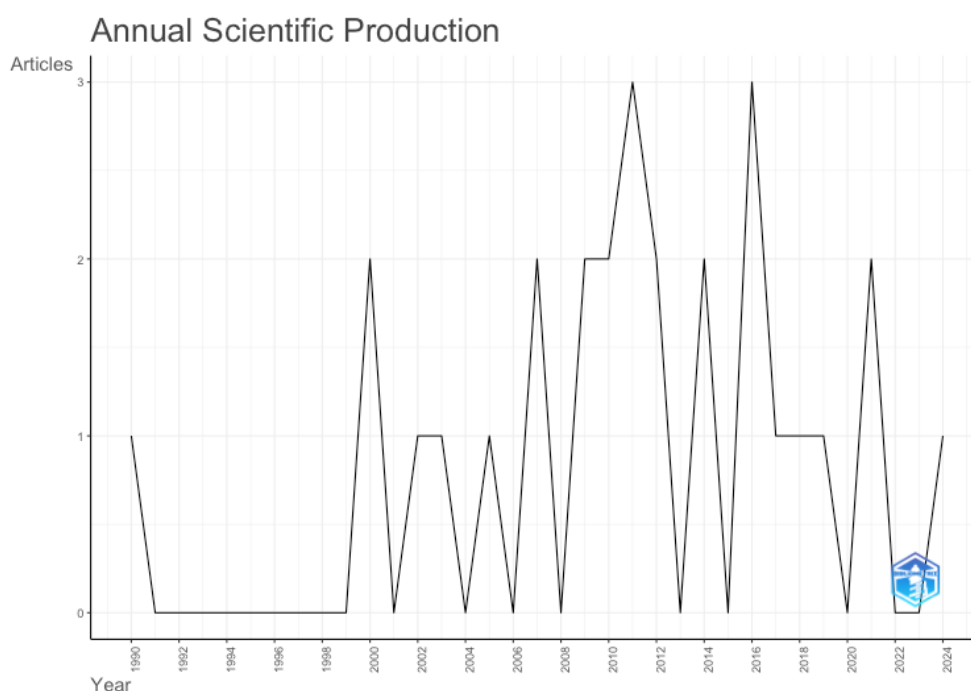


Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

This study will give four types of bibliometric analyses. First, the authors with the most contributions and their collaboration networks are investigated. Second, the progress of research in various countries is examined. Third, the affiliation analysis is investigated. Finally, the effect and trends of research papers over time are examined, providing information about how academic output evolves and which fields are gaining traction. These analyses will provide a thorough picture of the patterns and dynamics of intellectual contributions in the relevant subject area.

Author Contribution Analysis

In assessing the author contribution, the most relevant authors, authors collaboration, and authors production over time were reported. In terms of the authors contribution, one author namely Petriwskyj (2010;2009;2005) has the most articles in this topic with three publications. Other authors namely Ahtola (2016;2011), Cox, M (2000;2010), Hallam (2010;2007), Kontoniemi (2016, 2011), La parko (2000; 2000), McCormick (2010;2007), Nurmi (2016;2011), Poikonen (2011;2016) and Rous (2010;2007) each has two publications. This information is completely displayed in figure 3.

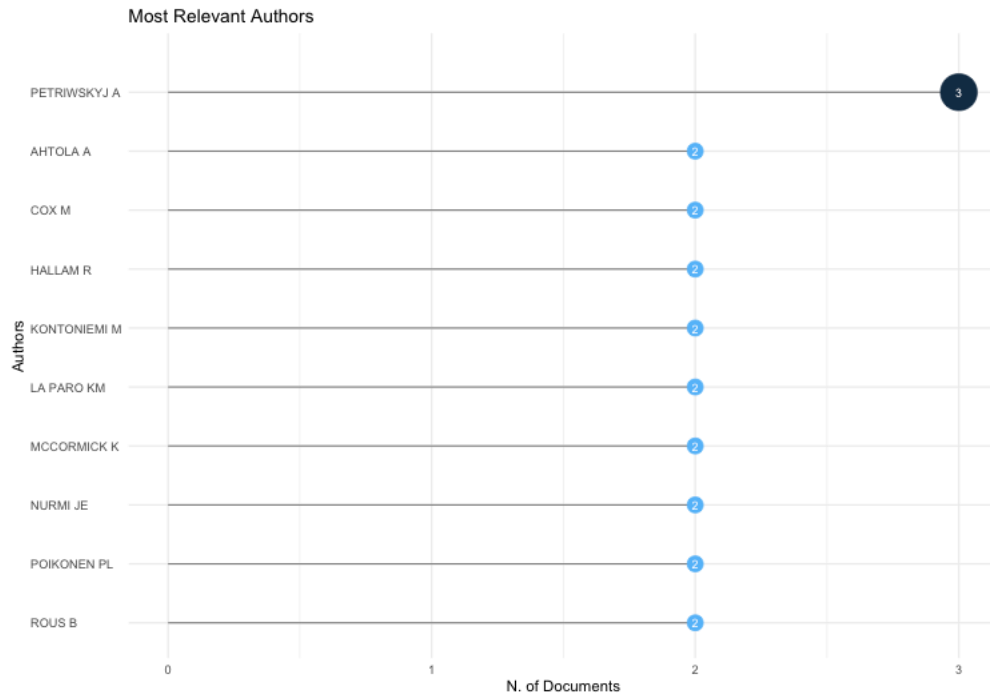


Figure 3. Most Relevant Authors

Interestingly, Petriwskyj who found to have most articles in this topic found to did not collaborate with others authors that conducted research in this topic. As displayed in figure 4, the authors collaboration divided into several cluster. The green cluster at the bottom left centers around "Ahtola A," indicating a group of connected individuals such as "Terkkanen MK" and "Niemi P." The blue cluster on the top-left, which includes "Hallam R" and "Rous B," shows other individuals like "Harbin G" and "Cox M" connected within that group. The red cluster on the top right represents a connection with "La Paro KM," with further connections to "Cox MJ" and "Pianta R." The light pink cluster has individuals like "Burkam DL," "Michaels DL," and others forming a connected group. The light orange nodes in the top-center and lower right include individuals such as "File N," "Powell DR," "Sak T," and "Sak R," which may represent another subgroup. The gray nodes at the top right, with individuals like "Buyse" and "Bossart G," are part of another smaller network.

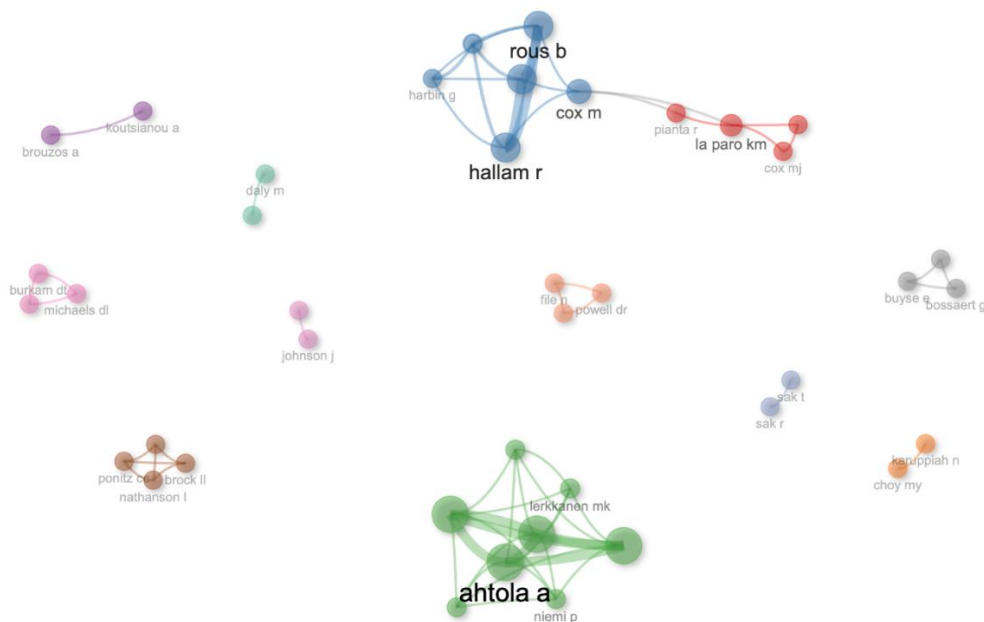


Figure 4. Authors Collaboration

In term of the authors production, there are several aspect can be reported. Firsts, in term of author research output, the authors have varying levels of scholarly productivity over time, with some demonstrating consistent publication patterns while others have sporadic contributions. Cox M, Poikonen PL, and Kontoniemi M appear to have longer spans of research activity, indicating sustained academic engagement. La Paro KM has the largest circle size in the early 2000s, indicating a relatively higher number of publications compared to others. Second, in term of citation impact, the intensity of the blue circles represents citation impact per year. Darker circles indicate a higher number of citations. Authors such as Poikonen PL, Kontoniemi M, and Hallam R show notable citation influence, particularly in later years. Some authors have minimal citation impact despite having multiple publications. Third, in term of overall temporal trend, most authors have their first publications around the early 2000s, with research activity spanning into the mid-2010s. Some authors exhibit a pattern of intermittent publishing rather than consistent annual contributions. Other than that, certain authors have continued publishing into the most recent years displayed, while others ceased activity earlier. overall, based on the authors publication over time, it reveals varied degrees of research activity and influence. Some authors make constant contributions with high citation influence, whilst others have shorter research periods or lesser citation effect.

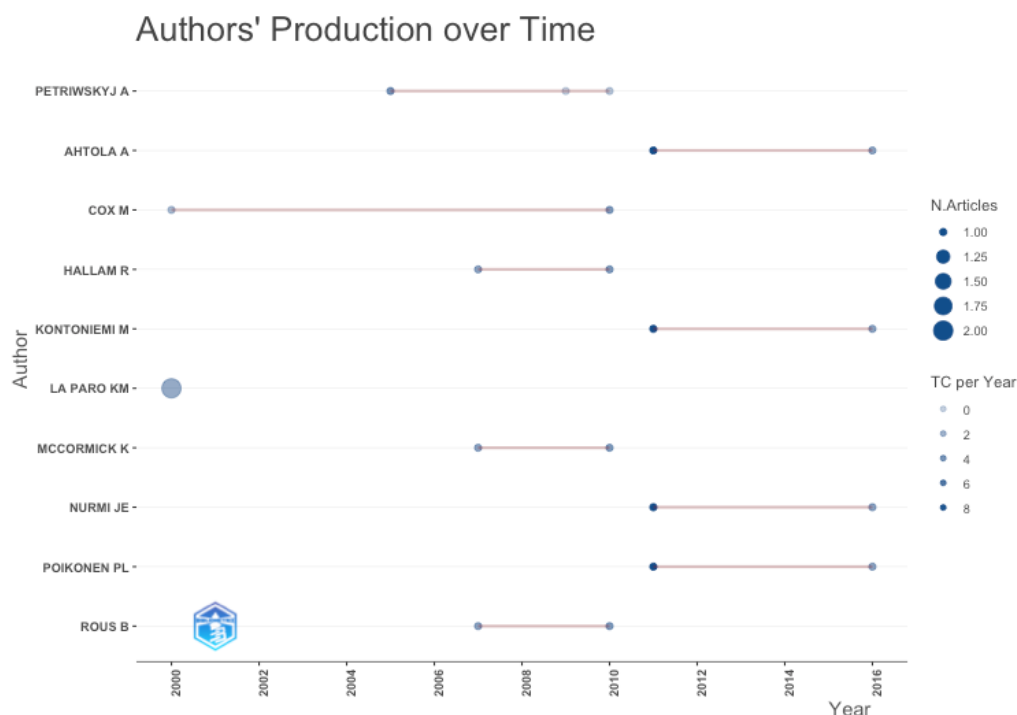


Figure 5. Authors production over time

Furthermore, in term of global cited documents, the most Cited Document Ahtola is A., 2011, *Early Child Res Q* has the highest number of citations (126), making it the most influential document in this dataset. Other Highly Cited Documents are Pontiz CC, 2009, *Elem School J* (86 citations), Powell DR, 2012, *Elem School J* (80 citations), and Petrikwsjy A, 2005, *Int J Phytorem* (84 citations). In this case, Ahtola A.'s paper (2011) is a clear outlier with 126 citations and most other papers fall within the 30-90 citation range. This suggests a high but varied impact across different papers. Other than that, in term of author contribution, Rous B. appears multiple times, showing a significant impact in this research area. The variety of authors suggests a collaborative and interdisciplinary research landscape.

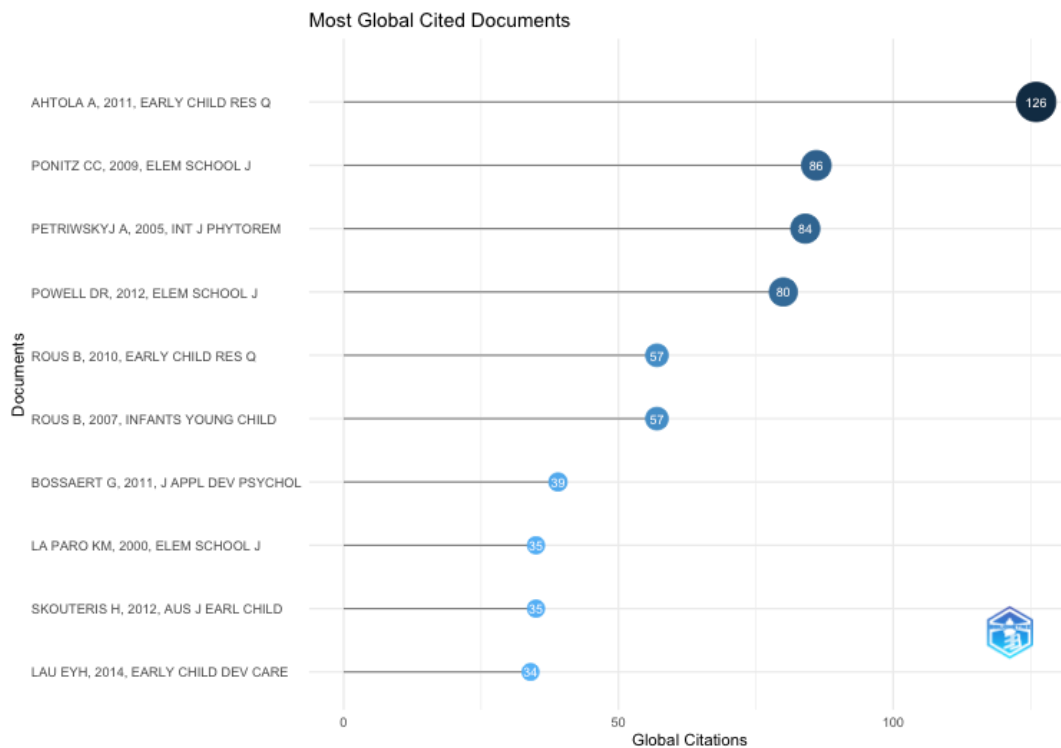


Figure 6. Most Global Cited Documents

The Growth of the Research Topic in Country

In term of the country-based production in this topic, figure 7 display the country production over time. It visualization reported the number of research articles produced over time with dominated by five countries namely Australia, Finland, Greece, Turkey, and the USA. The x-axis represents the years (from 2000 to 2018), while the y-axis represents the cumulative number of articles published. It can be concluded that USA as the Leading Contributor. The USA (pink line) has the highest research output, showing a steep increase between 2007 and 2012 before stabilizing at over 10 articles. Secondly, this research currently showing Emerging Growth in Turkey and Finland. Turkey (blue line) and Finland (green line) show a noticeable increase in research production after 2012. Turkey experiences a sharp rise in articles post-2012, eventually stabilizing around 5 articles and Finland follows a similar pattern but with a slightly earlier growth phase. Thirdly, this topic is showing gradual growth in Australia and Greece. Australia (red line) and Greece (yellow line) display steady, moderate increases in research production. Greece, in particular, has a notable growth phase post-2012, reaching around 6 articles. Overall, Research output across all countries shows gradual growth, with peaks in the mid-2010s. The USA leads in total publications, while other countries exhibit increasing contributions over time.

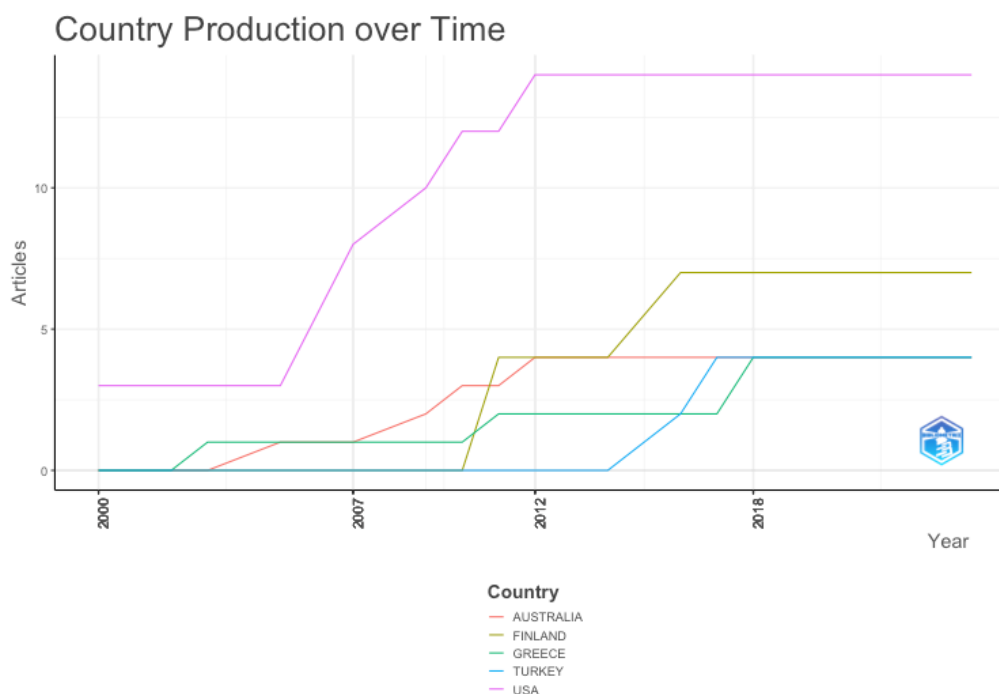


Figure 7. Country Production Over Time

Furthermore, in term of most cited countries, figure 8 represents research article production across various countries, including the USA, Finland, Australia, Belgium, China, Greece, Singapore, the UK, Turkey, and Korea. The x-axis represents the number of articles produced, while the size of the bubbles indicates the volume of research contributions. Firstly, it can be concluded that USA (194 articles) has the highest research output, significantly ahead of other countries. Finland as the Second-Largest Contributor with 156 articles, making it a major research hub. The gap between Finland and the USA is noticeable, but Finland's output remains strong. Other than that the Australia and Belgium is the Mid-Level Contributors. Australia (84 articles) and Belgium (39 articles) exhibit a moderate level of research production. Their contributions are significant but much lower compared to Finland and the USA. Furthermore, China and Greece Show Emerging Growth. China (34 articles) and Greece (20 articles) demonstrate growing research activity. These countries may represent expanding research hubs in the field. There is also lower research contributor countries namely Singapore (13), the UK (8), Turkey (6), and Korea (0) which have relatively lower research production. Overall, there is a significant disparity in research contributions, with the USA and Finland leading while other countries contribute at varying levels. The presence of mid-tier contributors (Australia, Belgium) and emerging players (China, Greece) suggests a dynamic research landscape.

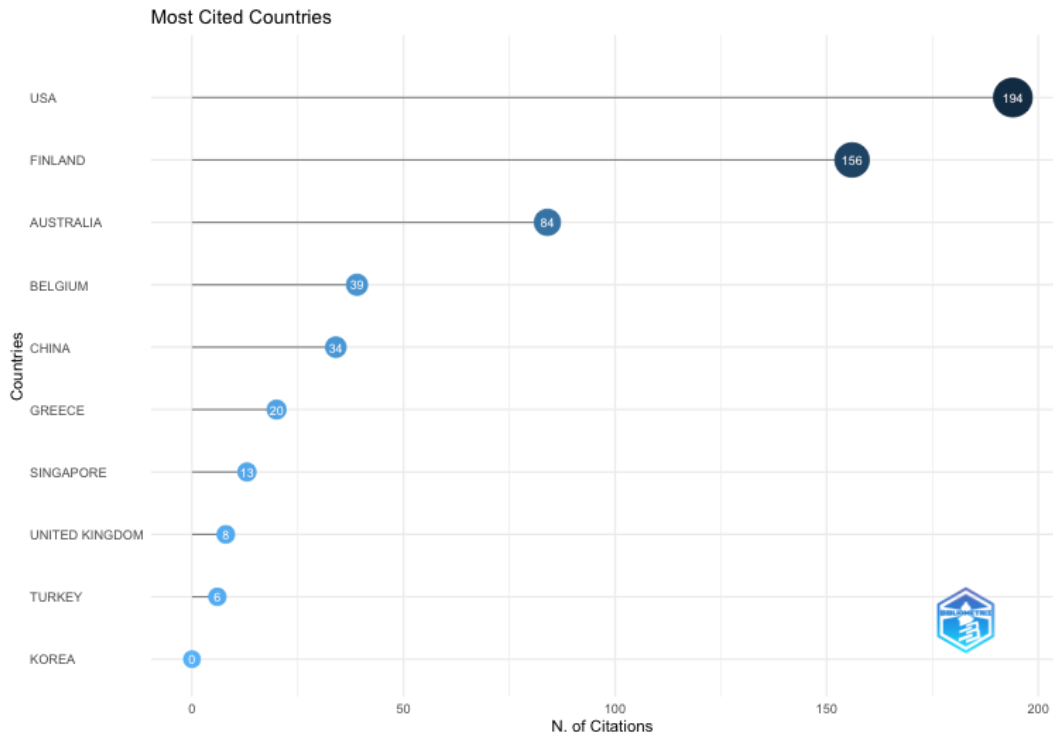


Figure 8. Most Cited Countries

Affiliation Analysis

The third aspect reported is the affiliation analysis. The affiliation analysis seeks to visualise the ties and connections that exist among individuals within a given network, highlighting the collaborative groupings or affiliations that form as a result of these interactions. This study sheds light on the dynamics of collaboration and group formation in the setting of common interests or professional engagements by examining the network's structure and clusters.

Figure 9 display the most relevant affiliation in this topic. The figure presents a grid with university names listed in the left column, each associated with numerical ratings represented by blue circles. The ratings range from 1 to 4, where the highest rating, 4, is assigned to the "University of Jyväskylä," indicating it is considered the most highly rated institution in the dataset. Several other universities, such as "Queensland University of Technology" and "University of North Carolina," received ratings of 3, suggesting they are highly rated but not as much as the top-ranked university. A larger number of institutions, including "University of Virginia," "Bishop Grosseteste University," and "Ankara University," received ratings of 2, indicating a moderate level of assessment. "National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)" and a few other institutions received the lowest rating of 1, reflecting a lower evaluation. This distribution suggests that there is a general concentration of higher ratings in the top half of the grid, with lower ratings clustered towards the bottom.

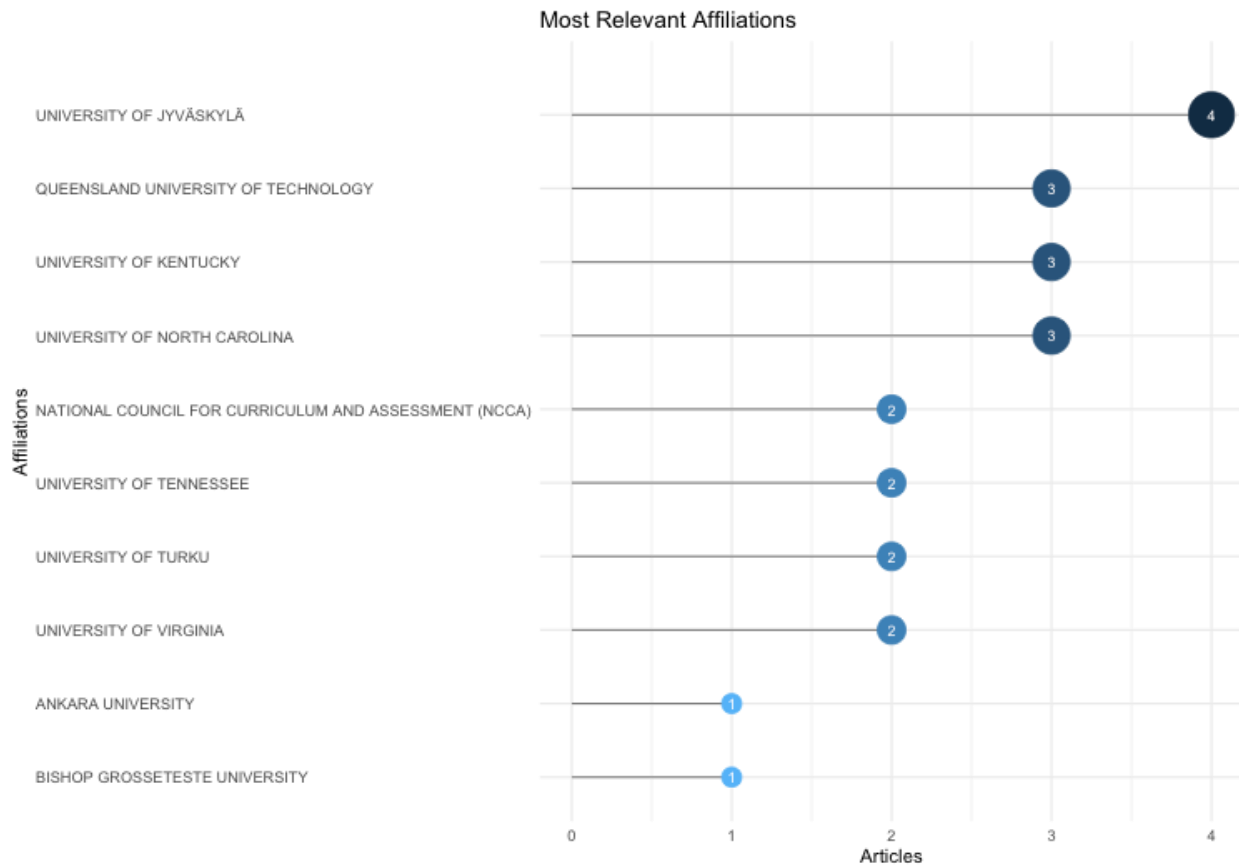


Figure 9. Most relevant Affiliation

Furthermore, figure 10 report the affiliation production over time. The figure illustrates the number of articles produced by various institutions from 2000 to 2021. The data shows that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) experienced a significant surge in article production starting in 2021, making it the leading institution in recent years. Queensland University of Technology had consistent production from 2000 to 2011 but saw a sharp decline afterward. Other institutions like the University of Jyväskylä, University of Kentucky, and University of North Carolina displayed steady growth in article production, especially around 2010 and 2011. University of Tennessee and University of Turku also showed gradual increases from 2011 onward. University of Virginia maintained a relatively stable output with a moderate increase starting around 2011. Overall, the trend highlights a steady rise in research output across institutions, particularly in the last decade, with NCCA standing out for its significant growth in recent years.

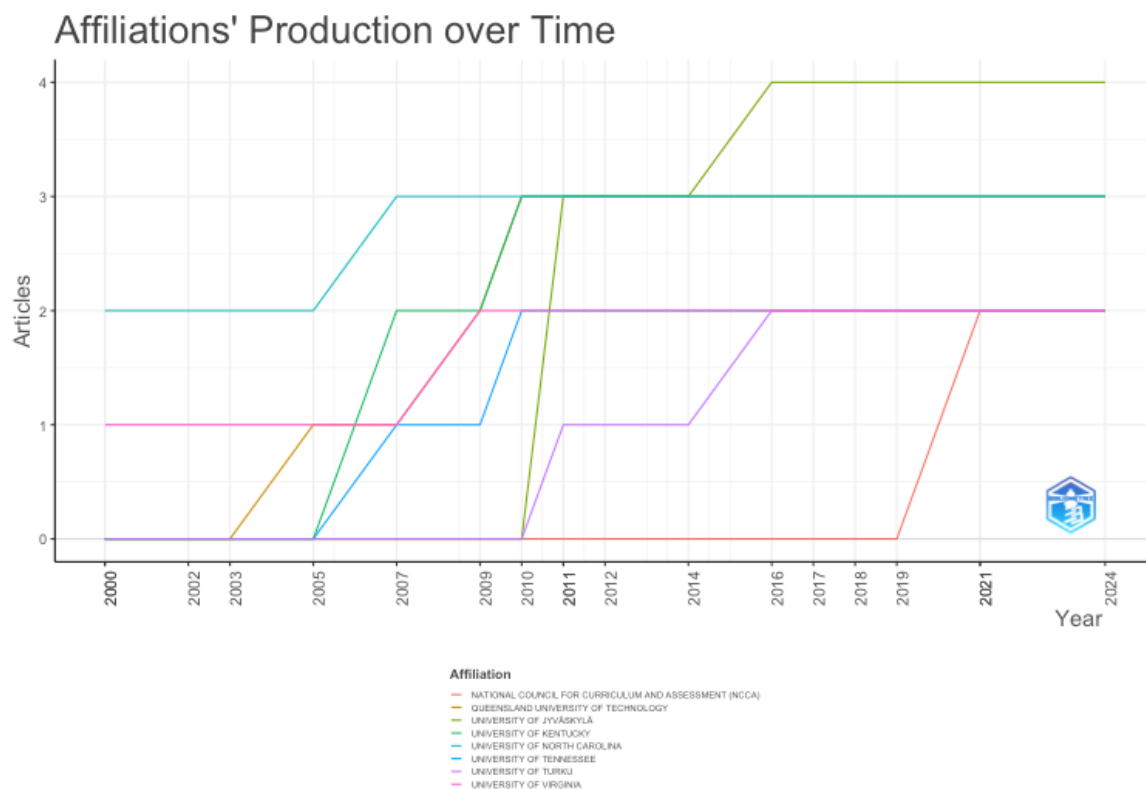


Figure 10. Affiliation Production Over Time

CONCLUSION

Based on the current bibliometric analysis, the development of research in the school transition from preschool to primary school can be conceptualized as follow. Based on the authors analysis, the major findings indicate that Petriwskyj has the most publications in the subject, whereas collaboration networks show distinct groups of writers. Furthermore, the writers' research productivity varies over time, with some making continuous contributions and achieving higher citation impacts and others having occasional or limited scholarly influence. In term of the research in countries, the current research reveal that the United States leads in research output, with Finland, Turkey, and Australia exhibiting consistent rise in research production, while new contributors such as China and Greece are boosting activity. The citation effect is highest for the United States and Finland, indicating a variance in research contributions, with numerous countries demonstrating varying levels of interest in the subject. In term of the affiliation analysis, the University of Jyväskylä is the highest-rated institution, while several others like Queensland University of Technology and University of North Carolina received high ratings. The production trends show a significant surge in output from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) starting in 2021, with steady growth in research activity from other institutions such as the University of Jyväskylä and University of Kentucky over the years.

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