

Original Research Article

Connectivity in Early Childhood and Primary Education

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Abstract: The connection between early childhood education and primary education is a crucial condition for preparing children for school and providing essential support for the content, methods, and organization of the educational process within schools. The connectivity between early childhood and primary education relates to establishing relationships to address consistent issues in childcare and education. This includes the relationship between educational content and the methods of its implementation. Essentially, connectivity represents the relationship between preceding educational stages and the subsequent stage, inheriting specific characteristics from prior experiences into the future. According to experts, the key to connectivity lies in resolving the conflicts between the care and education of children in early childhood and primary school. This article analyzes the theoretical basis of connectivity from early childhood to primary education. Additionally, it identifies the necessary conditions and provides some recommendations for implementing connectivity to ensure the optimal development of children.

Keywords: Connectivity, early childhood education, primary education, teachers, relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Connectivity in educational programs and teaching methods is a critical factor related to the effectiveness of early childhood education in transitioning to primary education, along with adjustments in structure and society. Research on the transition from early childhood to primary education emphasizes the need for flexibility in the educational curriculum to foster learners' development. Conversely, poor transitions can result from a "mismatched system" where two operating systems lack synchronization, leading to disadvantages in learners' experiences.

The issue of connectivity is always raised between early childhood education and primary education levels. This transitional period confronts children with numerous changes, including changes in their psychological and physiological aspects, shifts in the learning environment and methods, as well as the roles and expectations from both families and schools. These changes can make it challenging for children to transition from early childhood to primary education. Social adaptation in new conditions and the necessary development of imaginative and creative thinking, along with the formation of specific communication skills, play significant roles during this period. Connectivity is demonstrated through preparing

children for primary school, ensuring their proficiency in essential knowledge and skills. Considering the transition as a connectivity factor involves addressing educational content, methods, and activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The connectivity between early childhood education and primary education in the current stage is considered a crucial factor in lifelong learning, involving the integration, coherence, and consensus of all components (objectives, content, methods, resources, and organizational forms) at each educational stage to ensure the continuous development of children.

Connectivity in education, in a broad sense, refers to the uninterrupted connection between different stages in the historical development of educational theory and practice. It is based on preserving and enriching the positive experiences of individuals while continuously innovating and considering changes in the social context and the need for new educational content.

The essence of connectivity in education between different educational levels or age groups is the organic connection in the educational process to support a successful transition from one stage to the next. Therefore, connectivity in the education of preschool

and primary school-age children can be understood as "the organic connection in the overall physical and mental development at the boundary between preschool and primary school ages, preparing internally for the transition from one stage of development to another" (L.A. Paramonova, A.G. Arushanova). From this perspective, many researchers believe that the main component of connectivity between these two age groups lies in the organic relationship within the content of the educational process (N.V. Nizhegorodtseva, V.D. Shadrikov), in the forms and methods of play-based teaching (P. M. Yakobson, E. D. Margulis, A. V. Dolgoplova, etc.). Connectivity can be comprehensively examined in all elements of the educational process, including objectives, content, forms, and methods, and is implemented through the interaction of all professional levels, including the work of early childhood and primary school teachers, psychologists, etc.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the factors influencing connectivity between these two educational levels, such as: (1) School admission policies, including entrance exams; (2) Ability grouping; (3) Number of school years or retention; (4) Educational curriculum, evaluation, and recognition; (5) School autonomy; (6) The relationship between public and private education.

According to L.X. Vugostski, all children have different "zones of proximal development," meaning that learning opportunities for children are not the same. This reflects the differences between children, and that's why each child needs an individualized approach.

The continuity between the early childhood education system and primary education is mainly manifested in inheriting the child's abilities, which, according to A.V. Zaporozhets, are primarily the imagination - the "golden stage of personality development," sensitivity to various pedagogical influences, responsiveness, and empathy. Developing these abilities during this stage leads to a new system of human relations in school, where educational activities and the formation of conceptual thinking play a dominant role. At each stage of development, children are provided with characteristic educational forms to master specific means and methods of cognition: for preschoolers - play is the leading activity; for school-age children - conscious learning (learning activities are the leading activities). Social norms are formed during specific periods with the help of specific means. Thus, the continuity between preschool and primary school aims at developing the child's abilities.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research is conducted based on the analysis of studies on child development, the evaluation of the content of preschool education programs, and primary education programs (the 2018 general

education program). At the same time, expert opinions on the field of educational science, preschool education, and the necessary requirements for preschool and primary school teachers to implement this continuity are surveyed to provide a basis for establishing conditions to effectively implement this continuity between the two educational levels.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The current preschool education program in Vietnam is issued along with the Joint Circular 01/VBHN-BGDĐT dated April 13, 2021, by the Ministry of Education and Training. The program is developed following a framework that includes various fundamental and core content areas, catering to the comprehensive development needs of children at different ages in the aspects of physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and aesthetic domains.

The statements of the preschool education program reflect its openness and high flexibility. The program's openness and flexibility allow educators to creatively adjust the content and utilize appropriate educational means and methods based on the children's abilities and the practical conditions of schools, classrooms, and localities. The program aims to meet the requirements for quality education for families and communities, adapting to the changing socio-economic landscape.

The National Preschool Education Program ensures that the educational process and learning of children are continuously enhanced and expanded across different ages, preparing them well for further stages of education and lifelong learning. Based on the National Preschool Education Program, each school and locality will design and specify the content to create a detailed program that suits their specific conditions, material facilities, resources, and the practical needs of their students. The detailed program will be organized and planned in an integrated manner, aligning with the development of young children. It will also supplement and develop content that is appropriate to the local context and meets the children's comprehensive development needs.

The preschool education program is designed to be both teacher-guided and child-centered, allowing teachers to follow their planned curriculum while also addressing the children's individual preferences and interests. The program embodies a comprehensive educational approach across five domains: Physical development, cognitive development, language development, socio-emotional development, and aesthetic development, with corresponding expected outcomes.

4.1. Requirements for continuity in the Education Program between Preschool and Primary School

Through theoretical research, it is evident that the continuity between the Education Program of these two levels should meet the following requirements:

Consistency in Goal Setting: The approach to defining objectives in the Education Program between Preschool and Primary School should be coherent. Additionally, the framework of educational objectives between these two levels should be well interconnected. This is achieved when the Education Program is built upon the concept that the learner's development is a continuous process throughout early childhood (from 0 to 8 years).

Differentiation of Educational Content: Ensuring continuity requires that the educational content within the Education Program between Preschool and Primary School is well-connected. While the preschool program often focuses on developmental areas with integrated content rather than dividing them into specific subjects, there should still be connectivity in certain fundamental teaching contents to prevent redundancy for Primary School students.

Early Primary School Characteristics: In the early stages of Primary School, students in grades 1, 2, and 3 still retain developmental characteristics in cognition, attitudes, and volitional behavior similar to the end of Preschool age. The dominant activity for young children in Preschool, which is play, significantly influences students at the beginning of Primary School. As learning activities are not yet the dominant focus, the educational methods and forms should consider the "learning through play" approach for these early Primary School classes.

Assessment Continuity: Attention should be given to the continuity in assessing the educational outcomes of children between the two levels. The Preschool Program sets expected outcomes for children and focuses on assessing the process to support children's development based on those expected results. Therefore, in the early stages of Primary School, specifically in grades 1, 2, and 3, it is essential to maintain a similar assessment approach to ensure continuity.

By meeting these requirements, the Education Program between Preschool and Primary School can be effectively linked, providing a smoother and more comprehensive educational journey for children.

4.2. Conditions for Implementing the Connection between the Educational Programs of the Two Educational Levels

The process of educational continuity is a two-way interaction. Education at the primary school is based on the knowledge, abilities, and skills that

children possess. The teaching process takes into account the developmental level of the learners, as well as the knowledge and skills they have acquired in preschool. From there, it aims to elevate the understanding and capabilities of primary school students to a higher level. Moreover, preschool institutions need to be guided by primary schools so that educators and specialists can focus on cultivating the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes for future first-grade students. Thus, educational continuity ensures gradual development in children, deepens their understanding of the requirements for mental activities, and shapes their individual and social behaviors.

When selecting educational facilities, educational programs, and primary school teachers, it is essential to consider the psychological characteristics and physical conditions of the children, their nearby development areas, specific characteristics of the programs, and personal qualities of the teachers, etc. The interaction of educational psychologists (at preschool and primary school levels) meeting with parents and children along with future primary school teachers, acquainting them with the primary school's educational programs before the children enter the first grade, can help determine school choices and prevent potential negative consequences.

Additionally, the educational continuity between preschool and primary schools should be demonstrated through preparing pre-academic skills, such as writing, reading, and basic arithmetic, which should receive more attention than the cognitive processes in preschool children. The transition from play-based activities in preschool to more academic-oriented activities can increase the burden, cause fatigue and health issues in children, reduce their learning motivation, and stimulate nervousness and other undesirable phenomena during the transition to primary school.

Teachers in preschool and primary schools often encounter various difficulties. Firstly, there are challenges related to the physical and mental health of the children, varying levels of knowledge, learning skills, and academic motivation among students. To make learning more engaging for children, educational activities should be organized in a way that creates opportunities for active participation, independent exploration, and discovery of new knowledge. Children should be encouraged to act independently and solve problem-oriented tasks.

Educational activities should be fun and diverse, with children understanding the importance of the knowledge they are acquiring and its application in their daily lives. The knowledge provided should be relevant to what the children have learned before, and tasks should be appropriate for their abilities to stimulate positive cognitive activities. To avoid issues

with educational continuity, educators and teachers need to have a unified perspective on the care and education process. There should be interactions involving all parties, including parents and educators, working together to define objectives and methods of implementation.

Coordination between preschool and primary school institutions is essential, and a well-structured plan should be developed to ensure continuity between the two levels. Events such as "Welcome to School Day," "Knowledge Day," field trips to primary schools, libraries, and joint educational activities, games, and exhibitions can help prepare children for the transition. Teachers can envision and adapt the child's development to ensure readiness for future learning in primary school and plan shared activities to help children adjust to the new environment.

Research on educational continuity can assist primary school teachers in designing specific activities that cater to the developmental characteristics of children at particular ages. Monitoring the students' development as they transition from play-based activities to educational activities allows for a reflection on the children's progress. This evaluation helps assess the quality of preschool education services and the motivation of students in the primary school education program.

Close collaboration between primary and preschool teachers should consider specific details in organizing their activities, ensuring the involvement of parents (legal representatives) and seeking input from the children.

4.3. To ensure the Effective Implementation of this Educational Continuity, Teachers at Each Level Should

A) For Preschool Teachers:

Familiarize themselves with the curriculum and teaching content in the early grades of primary school (grades 1 and 2) to understand what the children will be learning and how they will be learning it. Identify the overlapping content that children have also learned in preschool to integrate it into preschool teaching, helping children become familiar with it. For example, if Grade 1 students are learning numbers within 10, preschool teachers can design activities for 5-year-old children to count animals in comics or recognize letters through interactive activities.

Design purposeful learning activities and learning corners to promote the independence and creativity of children, helping them become acquainted with the methods and approaches to learning in primary school.

Occasionally introduce activities that are slightly more challenging than the children's age level.

For example, have them find the letters they have learned in words or combine phonemes to form syllables.

Focus on fostering communication skills and group learning when children engage in group activities.

Allocate time each day for children to work independently or in small groups.

Encourage children to self-identify learning tasks, starting with simple assignments.

Familiarize children with using some school supplies from Grade 1 (pens, rulers, erasers, scissors, etc.).

Help children recognize the connection between speaking and writing (letters).

B) For Primary School Teachers:

Familiarize themselves with the curriculum and teaching content in preschool (especially for 5-year-olds) to know what the children have learned, how they learned it, and which content overlaps. Based on this, plan and design developmental learning tasks that build upon the foundation from preschool.

Begin with primary school learning objectives but use preschool methods and materials to create a familiar and accessible learning environment. For example, use interactive activities like jumping into letter boxes to combine phonemes and create words, or use play-doh to shape letters and form syllables or words.

Enhance organizing learning activities through games, particularly traditional folk games.

Incorporate some comfortable and familiar preschool learning approaches into the primary school setting. For example, during storytelling sessions, teachers can use preschool-style storytelling methods, with students sitting around and listening, storytelling based on pictures, and interactive engagement with the teacher.

Reinforce learning activities through various learning corners. For instance, group learning from preschool can be applied in art activities in primary school, or the study of plants and trees can be incorporated into natural exploration corners in and around the school premises.

4.4. Some Recommendations on Implementing the Connection between Preschool and Primary School to Ensure the Best Development for Children

➤ **Communication and Collaboration:** Facilitate regular communication between preschool and

primary school teachers, administrators, and parents. This can be achieved through meetings, emails, or shared online platforms. Discuss the child's strengths, challenges, and individual needs to create a seamless transition plan.

- **Joint Professional Development:** Organize joint workshops and training sessions for preschool and primary school educators. This will help align teaching strategies, curriculum, and assessment methods, ensuring continuity in the child's learning journey.
- **Shared Curriculum:** Align the preschool curriculum with the early years of primary school. This includes promoting similar learning objectives, themes, and teaching approaches. This consistency will help children adapt more easily to the new environment.
- **Visits and Familiarization:** Organize visits for preschoolers to the primary school they will attend. Familiarizing them with the new surroundings, teachers, and routines can alleviate anxiety and build excitement about starting primary school.
- **Buddy System:** Implement a buddy system, where older primary school students are paired with incoming preschoolers. The older students can help the younger ones adapt, answer questions, and provide support during the initial days.
- **Transition Events:** Organize transition events or programs that bring together preschool and primary school children and parents. This can include joint picnics, playdates, or orientation sessions to create a sense of community.
- **Parent Involvement:** Encourage parents to actively participate in the transition process. This can involve attending information sessions, parent workshops, and school events. Engaged parents can better support their child's adaptation to primary school.
- **Data Sharing:** Facilitate the sharing of relevant information between preschool and primary school, such as assessment results, learning profiles, and individual needs. This ensures that primary school teachers are well-informed about each child's progress and can provide appropriate support.
- **Consistent Policies:** Ensure that discipline and behavioral policies are consistent between preschool and primary school. A uniform approach helps children understand the expectations and rules regardless of the setting.
- **Smooth Administrative Processes:** Simplify administrative processes, such as enrollment and paperwork, to make the transition as seamless as possible for parents and guardians.
- **Social Skills and Emotional Development:** Emphasize social and emotional learning in both preschool and primary school. This focus helps children develop interpersonal skills and emotional resilience, enabling them to adapt to new environments more effectively.

By implementing these solutions, preschool and primary schools can work together to create a coherent and supportive learning environment for young students, ensuring a successful transition and a strong foundation for their future education.

5. CONCLUSION

Ensuring connectivity between the Preschool Education Program (GDMN) and primary education helps preschool and primary school teachers understand the similarities and differences between these two levels of education. This understanding is crucial for maintaining, inheriting, or adjusting educational objectives, content, and methods to suit the psychological and physiological characteristics of 5-year-old preschool children and first-grade students. It also helps families and communities identify factors that influence children during the implementation of educational content related to GDMN and primary education. This, in turn, equips parents with skills to seek information and knowledge to support children in their educational journey at home, ensuring the quality of their education both at home and in schools during the transition from preschool to primary education.

By implementing the proposed solutions, preschools and primary schools can collaborate to create a cohesive and supportive learning environment for young students, ensuring a successful transition and a solid foundation for their future learning endeavors. This close relationship between teachers, families, and communities fosters a strong bond and shared responsibility in implementing appropriate educational content and methods tailored to the needs of the children.

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