



# A Study of Theoretical Perspective on Strategies for the Transition Between Preschool and Primary Education

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**Abstract.** This paper uses interviews to address issues in recent preschool-to-primary transitions, such as one-way transitions and oversimplified approaches, and analyzes causes related to neglecting children's roles in transitions, weak teacher resources, severe primary education tendencies, fragmented stake holder connections, and unequal distribution of educational resource. The paper proposes strategies to establish correct educational concepts for transitions, build high-quality teaching teams, promote multi-party collaboration, develop a scientific and reasonable model for viewing children's transitions, and ensure goals with vertical developmental characteristics to support smooth transitions from preschool to primary school.

**Keywords:** Preschool education, elementary education, transition strategies, educational transition work

## 1 Introduction

With the development of early childhood education, the transition between preschool and primary education has become a significant research focus in recent years.<sup>[1]</sup> Scholars generally agree that this transition is crucial for children's learning and development. While existing research has made progress in some aspects such as environmental adaptation, curriculum transformation, and teacher collaboration during the transition, it has not noticed the impact of this transition on learning interest, psychosocial adjustment, and academic performance. Furthermore, strategies for improving this transition have not been thoroughly discussed.

Although some scholars have noted issues in curriculum transformation, textbook continuity, and family involvement, these have not been deeply explored. This study's innovation lies in its in-depth examination of transition strategies and attempts to propose a comprehensive and effective set of strategies. Methodologically, it will use both qualitative method to obtain comprehensive and accurate results. The study's contribution is to provide a thorough and effective transition strategy, aimed at facilitating smooth transitions and comprehensive development for children, offering feasible research directions for addressing preschool and primary education transitions.

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## 2 Existing Problems and Cause Analysis of Preschool-to-Primary Transition

### 2.1 Problems in the Preschool-to-Primary Transition

**One-Way Transition.** During the transition process, the relationship between preschool and elementary education is often unidirectional, with each institution being dependent on the other rather than mutually influencing each other. Many preschools focus more on continuity and actively prepare children for elementary school from their senior year<sup>[10]</sup>. For example, they might alter educational themes, adjust curriculum settings, and work on areas such as auditory skills, self-protection, and attentiveness. However, when observing students, it is noted that their responses are often passive; they do not proactively seek information about their future school or employ positive methods to address potential adjustment issues. For instance, Xijie Primary School usually provides new students with an introduction to their curriculum on the first or second day of the semester. They prioritize deepening the understanding and grasp of students' existing knowledge, followed by tours of the school's facilities, such as restrooms, sports fields, and cafeterias, and detailed explanations of course order, learning methods, and behavioral norms. It is essential to prevent their initial enthusiasm and excitement from turning into stress, anxiety, or aversion.

**Oversimplified Transition.** In current preschool-to-elementary transitions, many preschools overly focus on surface-level aspects, emphasizing changes in the external environment and conditions.<sup>[12]</sup> For example, they might rearrange classroom layouts from traditional circular seating to more row-like arrangements, increase the frequency of classes, reduce playtime, and introduce daily writing tasks. In the latter half of the senior year, children may be taken to visit nearby elementary schools to experience school life. While these external efforts can create some anticipation for elementary school, they often neglect important aspects such as adaptation, self-management, resilience, long-term focus, perseverance, and the development of daily habits. Consequently, children may quickly face challenges upon entering elementary school and feel disheartened, nostalgic for their preschool days, and resistant to their new school environment. For instance, in June of this year, 108 children from three senior classes at Dongyi Preschool were guided by teachers to visit a nearby elementary school for observation and practice. Upon arrival, they were excited and exclaimed, "Wow, this school is so big!" and "The campus is really beautiful! It would be great to study here." During a stroll, a young boy proudly told me, "I'll have the chance to study here in September." I smiled and replied, "That's great! I'll be waiting for you here. My name is Liu Qi." "It's wonderful! I'm looking forward to our reunion on September 1st." On the first day of school, Liu Qi and his father arrived at the school, and we discussed some school-related topics as usual. However, Liu Qi's father appeared anxious and asked for help with Liu Qi's withdrawal from school on Monday morning of the second week. I was puzzled and wanted to understand the situation. It turned out that Liu Qi had accidentally knocked down a classmate while queuing on the second afternoon of

the new term, resulting in a fall and injury. The teacher had severely reprimanded him and informed both parents. When Liu Qi's parents found him injured at school, they scolded him as well. Liu Qi, usually praised by preschool and family, experienced a significant blow to his self-esteem. Since then, he has cried loudly every day, firmly refusing to go to school, and even wanted to return to preschool. His parents, feeling helpless, eventually agreed to his request. This example illustrates that merely allowing children to experience elementary school life is insufficient. It is necessary to assist them in adapting to elementary school life on a skills and foundational level and to complete the role transition as early as possible.

**Serious Trend Toward Primary School Education.** What is "primary schoolization" in early childhood education? How does it differ from traditional infant education methods? Some mistakenly believe that any education related to reading, writing, and arithmetic constitutes a move towards primary schoolization. <sup>[15]</sup> However, this is not the case. *The 3-6 Years Old Children's Learning and Development Guidelines* emphasize preparing children for basic reading comprehension and writing skills in language, and understanding the practical applications of mathematics in daily life. Appropriate language and math education in preschool, aligned with children's developmental patterns and adaptability, is a scientific approach. Conversely, if educational methods, strategies, and assessment standards in preschool are identical to those in primary education but fail to focus on improving academic abilities and monitoring progress, it amounts to a form of "simplified" preschool education. Factors such as strong parental expectations, the exam-oriented education environment, and intense preschool competition contribute to the prevalence of primary schoolization in early childhood education.

## 2.2 Causes of Problems in the Preschool-to-Elementary Transition

**Lack of Effective Communication Between Primary Schools and Preschools.** The advancement of preschool education is closely linked to primary education, but there are differences. Communication and coordination between preschools and primary schools are often problematic, with insufficient understanding of each other's responsibilities and viewing transition tasks as mere stage shifts. <sup>[8]</sup> This leads to children feeling discomfort in a completely unfamiliar environment, hindering their physical and mental development. Due to educational system and habitual thinking, primary schools do not pay enough attention to the transition from preschool. Lack of cooperation with preschool transitions results in new students facing many adaptation challenges, negatively impacting the educational process. Historically, our education system has focused more on transitions between primary, middle, and high schools, with less emphasis on preschool transitions, leading to misunderstandings about its significance. <sup>[4]</sup> Primary schools often do not prepare thoroughly for new students and lack understanding and practical experience with children's psychological transitions, resulting in inadequate handling of some children's overreactions. Schools fail to adjust management and teaching according to the age and psychological state of first graders and standardize

transition work, increasing educational imbalance and creating a "steep slope" situation.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Absence of Parental Involvement in the Transition.** Educators agree on the crucial role of parents during children's growth stages. While many parents try to help their children transition smoothly into school,<sup>[8]</sup> their actions often deviate from the ideal. Most parents claim ignorance on how to guide their children and rely on teachers for effective guidance. Parents' deep trust in preschool life, combined with outdated educational concepts and simplistic teaching methods, results in shortcomings in family education.

**Lack of Effective Guidance and Supervision in the Transition.** Exploration of transition from preschool to primary school relies on opinions and suggestions from some authorities and grassroots teachers in specific areas, which are often one-sided and lack practical, effective solutions. Despite widespread discussion on this transition issue, a lack of dedicated guidance and a comprehensive framework for implementing effective solutions means that the transition process often lacks thorough consideration and planning.<sup>[7]</sup> *The Kindergarten Education Guidance Outline (Trial)* issued by the Ministry of Education in 2001 was intended to bridge preschool and primary education. However, the educational concepts in the outline have not been fully implemented or executed, often remaining superficial.

### 3 Effective Strategies for Preschool-to-Elementary Transition

#### 3.1 View Children Scientifically During the Transition

Children are growing, and their growth can be divided into horizontal and vertical development. These intertwined progressions shape their life goals.<sup>[5]</sup> Horizontal growth reflects physical traits, understanding, autonomy, and social skills, all closely interconnected, balancing each other to create a lasting, organic whole. Vertical growth shows the stages and levels of development, with children displaying unique attributes at each age and a coherent, long-term progression. Growth stages are qualitative, while coherence involves numerical differences. A child's growth evolves from small changes to larger transformations, driving further changes. For example, a toddler might mimic soothing behaviors seen from their mother, starting from intuitive responses and growing through imagination and language development. This leads to deeper abstract reasoning. Additionally, children's growth combines collective traits and unique qualities. Consistency means all children have similar foundational attributes, while personal traits reflect individual differences in growth rates, cognitive abilities, and talents. Transition strategies should account for universal physiological and psychological laws while also addressing age-specific and individual characteristics to achieve ideal outcomes.

### 3.2 Emphasize Children's Agency During the Transition

Children's development is a continuous process influenced by various factors such as school, family, and society. It is crucial to understand and highlight how different environmental elements affect their growth, promoting positive influences and avoiding negative ones. <sup>[13]</sup> During the transition, children's thoughts and emotions should be respected. Although young, children have unique thinking styles and experiences different from adults. They should not be seen as passive participants but encouraged to actively engage in the transition process. Research shows that children understand the differences between preschool and elementary school, feeling anxious about the change but eager to adapt with adult support. <sup>[11]</sup> Therefore, children should play a key role in the transition, given opportunities to express themselves and adapt to new environments. When preschools, educational institutions, and parents fully understand and respect children, providing adequate care and leveraging their potential, the transition period is likely to be more successful.

### 3.3 Decomposing Transition Goals According to Children's Vertical Development Characteristics

The ultimate goal is for children to rapidly adapt to their new roles in primary school for a smoother transition. Given the general patterns of child development, attributes such as physical characteristics, cognitive frameworks, self-care, and social skills are not acquired instantaneously. <sup>[3]</sup> Skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic are also developed over time. Therefore, in facilitating the transition from preschool to elementary school, it is important to avoid a "short, steep, and fast" approach. "Short" implies that the duration of the transition is too brief; "steep" refers to a significant gap between the two educational stages; and "fast" indicates that the pace of the transition is too quick for children to adjust effectively. <sup>[7]</sup> The transition should be a continuous and in-depth process, extending throughout the preschool period.

Transition goals should be broken down into short-term, mid-term, and long-term objectives based on the developmental characteristics of children at different stages. <sup>[14]</sup> Short-term goals can be set to be achieved daily, weekly, or monthly. Mid-term goals should aim to accomplish cohesive objectives within a semester. Long-term goals should cover the entire academic year, providing both a broad vision and detailed planning, ensuring feasibility and systematic implementation.

## 4 Conclusion

Research into transition strategies between preschool and primary school focuses on exploring effective methods to enhance children's adaptation and development in elementary education. <sup>[2]</sup> Our review of existing literature highlights that one of the key factors in this transition is the "continuity of educational content." Previous studies have shown significant differences between preschool and primary school curricula, creating challenges for children moving into elementary education. We argue that there should be a stronger alignment of educational content between preschool and primary

school to ensure that children can smoothly transition and build upon the knowledge and skills acquired in preschool.

However, this view is not without controversy. Some argue that emphasizing continuity in educational content may limit the diversity and personalization of primary education. They believe that focusing too much on aligning curricula between preschool and primary school could neglect the importance of children's self-directed learning and interest development. For instance, research by Smith found that excessive emphasis on continuity could restrict opportunities for children's autonomous exploration, hindering creativity and innovation.

Despite these differing opinions, we maintain our stance. We believe that continuity in educational content is crucial for the transition between preschool and primary school. Establishing this continuity allows children to better apply, consolidate, and expand upon the knowledge and skills learned in preschool within the primary school setting. It also helps children gradually adjust to the demands of elementary education, reducing adaptation stress.

To address these differing perspectives, we recommend a flexible approach to continuity in educational content. This involves ensuring a solid foundation of basic knowledge and skills while also respecting and promoting children's interests and self-directed learning.<sup>[9]</sup> For example, providing diverse learning resources and activities can cater to individual learning needs and encourage exploration and questioning.

In summary, continuity in educational content should be a focus during the preschool-to-primary school transition. However, it must be considered flexibly to support children's diverse and personalized development. This approach will enable children to better adapt to primary education, realize their potential, and achieve comprehensive development.

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