

**A Study on
the Continuity of Curriculum
and
Teaching Practices
between
the Kindergarten and Primary
School Levels
of Education**

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Abstract

In response to the recommendation of the Education Commission Report No. 1, a study was carried out with the following objectives, namely, to identify the differences in curriculum and teaching practices between kindergarten and primary one schooling; to identify the difficulties encountered by pupils in their transition from the kindergarten to the primary one level of education; and to suggest ways and means of facilitating the transition.

This two-year study concerns the same population of pupils. In 1990/91, a sample of upper kindergarten (UKG) pupils became the target of the study. Hence, a sample of primary one (P1) pupils was selected from the same pupil population that was in UKG in the previous year.

In anticipation of difficulties in tracing pupils when they were promoted to P1 in 1991/92, a cohort design was preferred when conducting the investigation. In the study, 60 kindergartens and 60 primary schools were randomly selected with respect to their financial types, geographical locations, sessions of operation and teaching approaches being adopted. As the pupils chosen for the study were too young to give their views in writing, their parents were invited to participate on their behalf. Also included in the study were the people who interacted with pupils such as teachers and school heads. The responses of these parties in UKG were compared with those collected at the beginning and near the end of P1, i.e. P1A and P1B.

Because of school closure, there were 56 kindergartens in the school sample for the first year. Towards the end of the second year, only 56 primary schools took part as four primary schools withdrew from the study due to their impending closure in the next year. At the UKG level, the study included 2069 parents, 512 teachers and 56 school heads. Towards the end of P1 level, the parent sample was reduced from 2007 to 1943, teachers sample from 487 to 452 and school head sample from 60 to 56.

The study on the continuity of curriculum between the kindergarten and primary one levels of education was carried out by means of paper analysis. The analysis compared the kindergarten and primary one curricula prepared by the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) and recommended for use in schools by the Education Department with respect to the aims, designs and contents of the curricula. As regards the teaching practices of the two educational levels, information was collected, first through questionnaires administered three times to parents, teachers and school heads; and second, through classroom observations by the inspectors of the Advisory Inspectorate Division.

The paper analysis of the kindergarten and primary one curricula revealed that both curricula were compatible and there was no problem in curriculum continuity between the two educational levels.

Findings of the questionnaires and classroom observations revealed that there was no significant difference in the teaching practices used in the kindergarten and primary one levels of education. Both kindergarten and primary school teachers used positive and constructive practices to help pupils to learn. They regulated the amount of pupil's school work and assignments and preferred to use Chinese as the medium of instruction. But kindergarten teachers adopted a more flexible and less formal teaching approach than primary school teachers. They also did not enter into primary school teachers' view that kindergartens should prepare their pupils for primary education by teaching them some primary one curriculum content.

Upon the transfer from the kindergarten to primary one education, there was a significant increase in learning difficulties encountered by pupils. But the extent of the pupils' learning difficulties was found not alarming because of pupils' good parental support. Some areas of the learning difficulties identified included pupils' ability to express themselves clearly and their way of holding a pencil properly in writing.

The following suggestions were recommended to facilitate pupils' transition from kindergarten to primary one education:

- a. Kindergartens and primary schools in the neighbourhood area should jointly run introductory programmes about primary education for parents of upper kindergarten pupils. Visits to primary schools for the parents should also be arranged.
- b. To reduce unnecessary written work, primary schools should provide primary one pupils with printed time-tables and help them paste these time-tables onto their handbooks.
- c. If possible, primary schools should arrange teachers with child-care experience to teach primary one classes.

- d. If possible, primary schools should arrange senior pupils to assist in the caring of primary one pupils in schools in order to acclimatize them into the new schooling environment.
- e. When teaching P1 pupils, primary schools are advised to place emphasis on the proper way of holding a pencil in writing, the correct sequence of strokes in writing Chinese characters and the way of expressing ideas clearly during lessons. Appeals should be made to parents for their co-operation and support in such training.
- f. Primary schools should advise their teachers at the initial stage of primary one education not to expect too much of their pupils in learning of the curriculum, especially in the formal training of the academic subjects.
- g. Schools should pay attention to the pace of conducting lessons in order to help primary one pupils learn efficiently and effectively.
- h. Meetings and seminars should be arranged for kindergarten and primary one teachers to discuss and to exchange views on teaching and learning matters with a view to helping pupils in the transition from UKG to P1.
- i. Primary schools should organize specially designed extra-curricular activities for their primary one pupils to promote better peer group relationship.
- j. Scolding or any form of punishment which destroys pupils' self-esteem should be avoided. Parents and teachers should all the time give their children concern and support.