Proceedings of ICEIPI 2025 Symposium: AI Am Ready: Artificial Intelligence as Pedagogical Scaffold
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.CB25520

A Review of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition

Luna Chen

College of Child Development and Education, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, China
luna_chen0112@163.com

Abstract. The Kindergarten-Primary School Transition has always been one of the hot topics that countries around the world generally attach importance to and study.As early as 1996,UNESCO used the report 'Learning: The Treasure Within' as a medium and clearly pointed out that 'the lack or lack of preschool education will seriously affect the smooth progress of lifelong education.' In recent years, domestic and foreign scholars have verified the importance and necessity of effective connection between early childhood education and primary school education through a large number of theoretical, practical tests, analysis and reasoning. This article reviews the policy background, research status and multiple perspectives in the field of transition from kindergarten to primary school in China. By sorting out and analyzing existing literature, it reveals the research dynamics and existing problems in the field of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition in China, and puts forward corresponding prospects.

Keywords: Kindergarten-Primary School Transition, Course and teaching connection, School Readiness, Home-school cooperation

1. Introduction

The Kindergarten-Primary School Transition is a process, which educators create supportive environments for preschool children, through a series of work, create and provide various excellent conditions for preschool children to help children achieve a smooth transition from early childhood education to primary school education and achieve good educational results. In recent years, the importance attached to the education of the transition from kindergarten to primary school at the national level has significantly increased. The issuance of a series of relevant policy documents has provided clear guidance and directions for the work of the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition. Therefore, this paper puts forward the policy background, research status and issues discussed from multiple perspectives in the field of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition in China, in order to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the in-depth development of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition work. In the following, Chapter 2 will sort out the policy background of the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition in china; Chapter 3 will analyze the current research status and hot topics; Chapter 4 will deeply explore the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition from multiple perspectives; finally summarize the full text in the conclusion section and look forward to the future research direction.

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2. Policy background

Driven by the high-quality development of education, the connection between kindergartens and primary schools has become a focus of reform and a difficult problem that needs to be solved urgently in the field of preschool education and basic education, and has attracted the attention of national and local education administrative agencies. In 1996, China first issued a policy document on the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition - 'Kindergarten Work Regulations (1996 Edition)' (hereinafter referred to as the 'Regulations') [1]. This regulation stipulates the close connection between primary schools and kindergartens and highlights the importance of connection between the two. Since then, the education policies issued by the Ministry of Education and its relevant departments have increasingly focused on the issue of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition. As shown in Table 1, from 2001 to 2012, many policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education emphasized that kindergartens and primary schools should make full use of various teaching resources to achieve mutual connection [2,3].

In April 2008, Shanghai Municipality promulgated a local guidance policy specifically addressing the transition from kindergarten to primary school education, titled the 'Guiding Opinions on Kindergarten Transition Activities to Primary School.' This policy document provides detailed requirements for regulating the educational practices related to the transition from kindergarten to primary school. Its introduction holds significant guiding importance for the scientific implementation of the transition from kindergarten to primary school education in China. After twenty years, the revised version of the 'Kindergarten Work Regulations' [4] in 2016 further clarifies that in addition to maintaining close ties between primary schools and kindergartens, they should also achieve the requirements of mutual cooperation and connection. In July 2018, the General Office of the Education Bureau issued a notice on carrying out special governance of kindergartens with 'primary school-style education' [5], which mentioned four requirements: First, it is strictly prohibited to teach primary school curriculum content; second, it is to correct the 'primary school-style education' education method; third, it is to rectify the 'primary school-style education' education environment; fourth, it is to solve the problem of unqualified teachers. These regulations and requirements further standardize the educational behavior of kindergartens in the transition from kindergarten to primary school. In November 2018, the 'Several Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Deepening Reform and Standardizing Development of Preschool Education' [6] proposed that relevant departments should increase efforts to prevent and correct the tendency of "primary school-style education" in kindergartens, and Kindergartens should adhere to the teaching method of integrating care and education, and combining education with entertainment. In 2021, the Ministry of Education specially issued the 'Guiding Opinions on Vigorously Promoting the Scientific Connection between Kindergartens and Primary Schools' [7] , establishing "two-way connection" as one of the basic principles of the work of transition from kindergarten to primary school. The reason why kindergartens and primary schools need to deepen cooperation and scientific connections is that the connection between kindergartens and primary schools has a foundational role in children's subsequent learning and lifelong development [8].

In 2022, the "Guidelines for the Quality Assessment of Kindergarten Education" [9] and the 'Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan and Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)' [10] respectively put forward specific requirements for the connection between primary schools and kindergartens: on the one hand, kindergartens need to pay attention to the sustainable development of children and adopt diversified educational forms to help them prepare for primary school transition in various aspects such as to support their physical, psychological, social-emotional, and

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academic readiness for primary school; on the other hand, primary schools should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the development level of the five major preschool areas for new students, and design gamified, active and life-oriented curriculum content based on this to help children transition to primary school learning and life smoothly. In August 2023, the Ministry of Education, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance issued the "Opinions on Implementing the Action Plan for Expanding Excellence and Improving Basic Education in the New Era", emphasizing the need to promote in-depth connection between kindergartens and primary schools, and improve the effectiveness of admission preparation and admission adaptation [11]. In addition, the national preschool education publicity months in 2016, 2019 and 2022 are all themed on the theme of the transition from kindergarten to primary school, and have carried out more in-depth publicity and refinement of relevant policies.

3. Research status

At the current research status level, keywords as the essence of the research topic of academic papers, highly summarize the core direction of research. The author uses Citespace software to summarize and refine the keywords in 175 literature about ‘Kindergarten-Primary School Transition’ found on CNKI, and clearly depicts the distribution map of research topics in the field of "Kindergarten-Primary School Transition", so as to facilitate researchers to more accurately grasp the research dynamics and context of this field. Based on this map, the author sorted out the following research status:

3.1. Home-school cooperation and parental participation

Home-school cooperation is an important link in the transition from kindergarten to primary school. It is concluded through the map that ‘Home-school cooperation’ is closely connected with ‘kindergarten’, which shows that researchers generally believe that close cooperation between families and kindergartens is crucial to the transition from kindergarten to primary school. Parental participation is another research hotspot, with parents' roles in Kindergarten-Primary School Transition garnering widespread attention. How to guide parents to actively participate in the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition and promote effective communication between families and kindergartens has become an important issue discussed by researchers. Duan Huidong, Mo Lijuan, and Wang Yizhe [12] Three scholars analyzed the connection vacuum zone of the education system itself from the perspective of kindergarten and primary school transition. This is an important factor causing parental education anxiety. In order to alleviate parental education anxiety, we should not place the success and failure of reform on parental changes. It is necessary to promote the transformation of the school itself with an overall thinking approach, and on the premise of clarifying the reference of ‘primary school-style education of kindergartens’, promote the kindergartenization of teaching methods in the lower grades of primary schools. Through research, Wang Qing [13] found that the interpretation views of the ‘Double Reduction’ policy on both the kindergarten and primary school sides were inconsistent and lacked consensus, which led to different implementation methods and focus points in the process of transition from kindergarten to primary school, and ultimately failed to form a synergy. Yuan Jiacheng [14] also believes that there are problems such as blurred boundaries of home-school responsibilities, teachers lack skills in family education guidance, single content and forms of home-school cooperation, and lack of evaluation systems. It is necessary to clarify the role positioning in home-school co-education,

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improve teachers' guidance ability in family education, enrich the content and forms of home-school interaction, and establish a scientific and effective home-school co-education evaluation system.

3.2. School readiness

‘School Readiness’ is another research hotspot. How to help children better prepare for admission through the training of the transition stage of kindergarten and primary school, laying a solid foundation for learning in primary school is the focus of researchers. Chen Guomei [15] pointed out that school readiness include general preparations and special preparations. General preparation means that children must reach the level of comprehensive physical and mental development that should be achieved before school; special preparation means that children prepare for primary school study and life before school, that is, adapt to learning and social adaptation. Yang Lingyu [16] put forward six suggestions in ‘How to prepare for children to enter school’: understand primary school, establish a concept of time, improve self-discipline, strengthen self-service ability, attach importance to the cultivation of a sense of responsibility and Home-school co-education. Shi Jin and Ye Pingzhi [17] pointed out in their paper that admission preparation is of great significance to children adapt to the environment, improve their academic performance, and narrow the development level between various classes. Yu Jing and Huang Lihua [18] proposed in "Preparation for Children's Schooling from the Perspective of Two-way Connection" that the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition should be achieved based on three goals: learning is interested in, activities are sociable, and life is organized. In ‘Based on Children: Value Pursuit of Children's Admission Preparation’, Jiang Liqin [19] proposed that it is necessary to enrich emotional experience, improve children's learning quality, improve self-care ability, enhance their time concepts, and be mentally prepared to help children prepare for admission. Wang Yuan [20] pointed out in his paper that admission preparation is of great significance to preschool children, and the physical and mental development of preschool children is very correlated with the classroom performance of children after school.

3.3. Course and teaching connection

‘Course’ and ‘teaching’ are important components in the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition. Researchers explore how to achieve a smooth Kindergarten-Primary School Transition, ensuring that children can adapt to the new learning environment smoothly after entering primary school.

Yang Xiaoping and Yang Liya [21] believe that the choice of children's course content should be considered from four aspects: First, it is conducive to guiding children to discover problems from life and explore their own lives; second, it is in line with the children's interests and personal development needs; third, it is necessary to reflect the culture of the community and the kindergarten, establish a positive family connection, and make education more meaningful; fourth, it is necessary to reflect the characteristics of different cultures and be more diversified. Zuo Ruiyong and Yang Xiaoping [22] proposed that the core concept of kindergarten curriculum content selection is to promote children first, pay attention to individual children, and provide different courses for children's development; the basic requirement for the selection of course content is complete and harmonious, covering all aspects of children's development; the path of course content selection should return to children's specific and realistic life.

In addition, some researchers conducted research from the perspective of problems with the course content. Sun Weiwei [23] found in his research that there are several problems with the selection of kindergarten curriculum content: the selection of course content is separated from the

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.CB25520

actual life experience of children, and the course content is limited to special teaching activities carefully prepared by teachers; the course content lacks integration; the course content is overloaded; some course content pays too much attention to the immediate effect and some educational content deviates from the value orientation of truth, goodness and beauty. At the same time, through investigation, Fei and Jin Meiling [24] found that the following problems exist in kindergarten curriculum content: Currently, thematic courses dominate kindergarten theme courses, but the "theme" has a weak role in the dominant field; personalized curriculum settings tend to be courses with obvious results; the course capacity is large, and there is a lack of connection between various courses; the course content has a serious tendency to teach primary knowledge.

4. Discussion from multiple perspectives

4.1. Research from a one-way perspective

4.1.1. From the perspective of kindergarten

In the early domestic research on Kindergarten-Primary School Transition, most of the research focuses on the perspective of kindergartens and explores how to assist children in transitioning smoothly to primary school. Liu Shude [25] emphasizes that ages 3–6 constitute a golden period for intellectual development, noting that deficits in this stage are difficult to remedy in primary school. Therefore, he advocates that ‘advanced education" should be implemented at this stage and prepare for it starting from kindergarten to ensure the smooth Kindergarten-Primary School Transition’. Wang Hui [26] pointed out that helping children to steadily cross the ‘slope’ from kindergarten to primary school is the core task of kindergarten and the key to the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition. However, Sha Yan [27] investigated the phenomenon of primary school-style education within kindergarten education from the perspective of kindergartens. Her finding revealed that this trend significantly undermines the inherent characteristics of children's physical and mental development, as well as contravening the fundamental principles of early education. Such violations may adversely affect not only the healthy development of early childhood education but also have broader implications for the entire educational system.

4.1.2. From the perspective of primary school

From the perspective of primary school, Bian Shuwen [28] believes that the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition is a key link in the educational process. Its success or failure will profoundly affect the future development of young children, and it urgently needs to be paid great attention to by primary schools. She pointed out that the root cause of the problem of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition is its one-way nature, that is, only kindergartens pay attention to it, while primary schools lack sufficient attention. She advocates that primary schools also have the responsibility and ability to reduce students' aversion to learning and help children make a smooth transition. Zhang Lingyu [29] adds that Kindergarten-Primary School Transition research should shift to a primary school focus, enhancing teachers’ transition awareness to facilitate children’s adaptation to primary school. Gong Li [30] examines the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition from the perspective of primary school, aiming to help primary school freshmen quickly adapt to learning rules, provide effective strategies for kindergarten enrollment education, and build a new model of collaborative education between kindergartens, primary schools and families, which is crucial to the healthy growth of young children.

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4.1.3. From the perspective of parents

From the perspective of parents, Dai Yaohong [31] proposed that guidance on parents' family education should be strengthened, and they should be guided to establish scientific educational concepts, cultivate children through scientific methods, and improve the effect of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition. Wang Dan [32] emphasized that early childhood language education has an important impact on admission preparation, and families need to assume important responsibilities for language education. Ji Yifan [33] believes that parents should participate in the process of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition by cultivating children's learning qualities. This can not only promote the smooth connection between kindergarten and primary school, but also lay the foundation for the lifelong development of children. It is an inherent need for children's individual growth. Lai Xiuting [34] studied the educational anxiety of parents in the transition from a family perspective in kindergarten and primary school, and provided specific suggestions to parents from the aspects of family education expectations and time and energy investment, aiming to help them establish scientific education concepts, reasonably set educational expectations, improve family education competence and participation, thereby alleviating educational anxiety in the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition.

4.2. Research from a mutually coordinated perspective

With the continuous deepening of academic research, the ecological perspective has gradually been adopted by scholars, forming a research trend of collaborative solutions to the problem of kindergarten and primary school transition. Wang Huihui [35] and Li Li [36] advocate an ecological transition philosophy in Kindergarten-Primary School Transition practice, enabling children, families, schools, teachers, and society to actively engage and interact, and a comprehensive cooperative connection system should be built to help children adapt to primary school life smoothly. Su Xiaobo [37] analyzed the current situation and problems of the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition from multiple dimensions such as education subject, object, content and methods. And specific strategies aimed at enhancing the transition from kindergarten to primary school have been proposed for primary schools, kindergartens, educators, and administrative management. Bao Lili [38] emphasized that home and school cooperation plays a key role in the Kindergarten-Primary School Transition, and its effectiveness can help children develop correct learning habits, good living behaviors and strong self-care abilities, thereby significantly improving the quality of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition and ensuring that children can transition to this stage smoothly. Through home and school cooperation, kindergartens and family education can be closely integrated, complement and continue each other, reach a consensus on educational goals and behaviors, and achieve mutual reference and continuation in content and methods, and jointly provide support for children's primary school admission preparation in psychology, habits, cognition and skills. At the same time, the teaching and research departments should provide solid teaching and research support for the connection between kindergartens and primary schools.

5. Conclusion

In the field of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition, the existing research literature presents diversified research perspectives and rich practical exploration. However, there are also some shortcomings in the existing research. First, some studies still focus on a one-way perspective, that is, only from the perspective of kindergartens, primary schools or parents to explore the

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Kindergarten-Primary School Transition problem, lacking a comprehensive perspective and in-depth discussion. Secondly, some studies are relatively single in method, lack of empirical research and case analysis, resulting in a certain impact on the reliability and validity of the research results. In addition, the existing research still needs to be further deepened and improved in the specific implementation strategies and practice models of Kindergarten-Primary School Transition. The author believes that future research can be explored from the following aspects.

First, strengthen interdisciplinary research. Kindergarten-Primary School Transition involves multiple disciplines such as education, psychology, and sociology. Future research can strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation, comprehensively apply multidisciplinary theories and methods, and conduct in-depth analysis and discussion on Kindergarten-Primary School Transition issues. Secondly, explore diverse implementation strategies and practice models. In view of the actual situation in different regions, different schools, and different family backgrounds, future research can explore diverse implementation strategies and practice models for Kindergarten-Primary School Transition, and provide more specific and feasible guidance for Kindergarten-Primary School Transition work. At the same time, we should strengthen international exchanges and cooperation and pay attention to the long-term effects of kindergarten-primary school transition. Future research can strengthen exchanges and cooperation with the international community, learn from the experience and practices of kindergarten-primary school transition in other countries and regions, and provide a broader vision and ideas for china’s kindergarten-primary school transition work. In addition to paying attention to the short-term effects of kindergarten-primary school transition, future research should also focus on its long-term effects, that is, the impact of kindergarten-primary school transition on children's subsequent learning and lifelong development, and provide a scientific basis for the continuous improvement and optimization of kindergarten-primary school transition work.

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