

Exploring the Integration of Kindergarten-Primary Transition Curriculum Focusing on Adaptability from a Character Education Perspective

——A Case Study of the JinJiang Foreign Language Primary School

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Abstract: Since its establishment in 2013, JinJiang Foreign Language Primary School has faced challenges including a large student population, high teacher turnover, and difficulties in implementing kindergarten-primary transition initiatives. Guided by national policies and practical considerations, the Character Education Research Group, adhering to the educational philosophy of "Kuan Ling Zhuo He" (meaning broad-mindedness, agility, excellence, and harmony) and the integration of five educations (moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor), and upholding the principle of nurturing both virtue and mind to enrich life, focused on children's adaptation in four key areas: physical and psychological adaptation, life adaptation, social adaptation, and learning adaptation. Based on theoretical foundations including human-centeredness, socio-cultural adaptation theory, the principle of appropriateness, and the principle of integrated evaluation, the group explored the development of an integrated kindergarten-primary transition curriculum from a character education perspective. This exploration centered on four aspects: Suitable (appropriate activities), Adaptive (cultivating an adaptive culture), Appropriate (appropriate home-school collaboration), and Adaptable (evaluation adaptable to individual children). Through two rounds of action research spanning two years, the curriculum was implemented via four pathways: educating through activities, educating through culture, educating through collaboration, and educating through evaluation. This process established a distinctive kindergarten-primary transition curriculum system characteristic of our school.

Keywords: Character Education; Adaptability; Kindergarten-Primary Transition; Curriculum Integration

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background – National Policy

This research stems from the guidance of national policy. In 2021, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guidance on Vigorously Promoting the Scientific Transition between Kindergarten and Primary School" (hereinafter referred to as the "Guidance"). It emphasized the goal of "building a high-quality education system" and called for the establishment of a long-term mechanism for a scientific kindergarten-primary transition.

1.2 Research Foundation – Regional Collaboration

The advancement of this research also benefited from regional collaboration. In May 2024, the national project on the "Design and Implementation of Integrated Kindergarten-Primary Transition Curriculum" was launched in Jinjiang District, Chengdu. As a school within the district, we embarked on corresponding explorations. While our initial transition efforts showed some effectiveness, deeper issues persisted, such as inconsistent curriculum implementation and insufficient transition capacity.

1.3 Research Context – Problem Identification

Our school was established in 2013. In 2018, due to a surge in new student enrollment, we adopted a model of operating across two campuses (one school, two campuses) with segmented teaching. Faced with an increasing number of teaching classes, the establishment of a structured kindergarten-primary transition curriculum became urgent. That same year, our school joined the "Character Education" alliance and became a demonstration school for the Chengdu "Character Education" Alliance. In the process of building an integrated transition curriculum, based on the core competencies of character education and moral education, and integrating the five educations, we pioneered

the exploration of a kindergarten-primary transition curriculum from a character education perspective. Using the "Daily Routine" as a foundation, we structured the transition around "Six Firsts". However, during implementation, we encountered numerous problems and challenges:

① Student's Maladaptation

Significant differences exist between primary school and kindergarten. Upon entering school, new students need to adapt to school life quickly, requiring scientific guidance and activities in physical and psychological adaptation, life adaptation, social adaptation, and learning adaptation. However, as our Grade 1 and 2 students are young, they often lack established learning awareness, exhibit low cognitive levels, and possess low self-efficacy.

② Teacher's Maladaptation

Teachers are crucial to curriculum development. Due to our segmented teaching model across two campuses, the teaching staff for Grades One and Two primarily consists of novice teachers with limited experience and young teachers who, while having few teaching experience, are unfamiliar with managing lower primary grades. In an adaptability survey conducted during new teacher training for Grade One, we found that 61% of teachers felt "anxious about the upcoming new teaching life", 75% believed "Grade one teaching management is challenging", and only 29% felt confident about the upcoming teaching life. Just as students face new classrooms, classes, and campuses, teachers also experience maladaptation regarding the school's teaching philosophy, home-school relationships, and teaching management.

③ Home-School Collaboration's Maladaptation

Distinct from kindergarten education, primary education differs significantly in educational goals, teaching philosophies, living habits, and more. Parents of students entering Grade One often experience high levels of anxiety. In surveys related to home-school collaboration during the transition, 90% of parents expressed anxiety about their child's adaptation to primary school life, and 75% of families had limited understanding of the changes in primary school curriculum content. Home-school collaboration forms an essential closed loop in education; bridging the gap between kindergarten and primary education requires significant family adaptation.

④ Immaturity of the Transition Curriculum System

As a relatively new school, our various teaching and educational systems are still under exploration. The kindergarten-primary transition curriculum represented uncharted territory. We lacked a theoretically sound, practically implementable transition curriculum system, necessitating focused development.

2. Research Objectives and Content

Based on the above background and theoretical support, and following the cycle of "Problem Identification – Problem Analysis – Problem Solving", we analyzed the existing issues in our school's integrated transition curriculum. The research group conducted in-depth discussions and, in accordance with policy requirements, established the following research objectives based on our "Kuan Ling Zhuo He" educational philosophy and the implementation pathway of "Character Education":

2.1 Curriculum Exploration

Explore an integrated kindergarten-primary transition curriculum system focusing on adaptability principles from a character education perspective, aiming to minimize children's unfamiliarity and maladaptation and promote their engagement in primary school life with positive and joyful emotions.

2.2 Environment Creation

Design and develop campus environments and engaging classrooms from a child's perspective, creating classroom environments that bridge the gap with kindergarten settings. Moderately adjust schedules to help children gradually adapt to the shift from play-based activities to classroom-based learning.

2.3 Home-School Collaboration

Reduce parental anxiety while enhancing children's adaptability. Through collaborative education involving the school, families, and community, strengthen the school as a child-centered, inquiry-based, and experiential learning environment, working together to build adaptive growth steps and a supportive social environment for each child.

3. Research Methodology and Participants

This research primarily employed action research methodology, conducted over two iterative rounds of research and reflection. The first round spanned from September 2022 to June 2023 (one year), focusing on exploring the establishment of an adaptability-focused transition curriculum from a character education perspective. Participants included the school's students, all faculty and staff, and parents. The second round, from September 2023 to June 2024, focused on the implementation status after curriculum construction, with the same participants: students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community.

Additional research methods utilized within the action research cycles included classroom observation, retrospective interviews, literature review, field research, and interviews.

4. Implementation Steps

After identifying the existing problems, we named this curriculum framework research the "Together Start Curriculum (Yi-Qi Curriculum, 壹启课程)". "Yi" signifies Grade One as the starting grade of compulsory education, "Qi" means "to begin" or "to start" one's life chapter, and "Yi-Qi" phonetically resembles "together" (一起 yī qǐ), symbolizing collaborative education involving students, teachers, the school, parents, and society. Based on the research objectives and content, we developed the following research plan:

4.1 Stage 1: Research Initiation

Prior to commencing formal research, we conducted an in-depth study of national policies. Combining insights from the 2021 "Guidance", we identified prevalent issues in existing transition curriculum construction: widespread unidirectional transition (kindergarten to primary school), where curricula often focus on "primary-ization," teaching primary content prematurely without addressing students' holistic adaptation, leading to short-term gains but potentially harming long-term development; standardized training causing school-entry anxiety, where activities like sitting still for ten minutes or practicing calligraphy in non-authentic contexts often induce anxiety and aversion to learning, addressing symptoms rather than root causes.

After analyzing the current situation, we formulated this research plan, confirmed the research objectives, content, participants, and methodology. We designed an integrated kindergarten-primary transition curriculum based on child adaptability from a character education perspective, aiming to summarize reflections through action research and explore a suitable curriculum framework for our school.

4.2 Stage 2: Action Research

4.2.1 Round 1 Action Research: Exploring the Construction of an Adaptability-Focused K-P Transition Curriculum from a Character Education Perspective

① Problem Identification

Since its founding in 2013, our school's student population has surged annually. In 2018, the Xishu Campus was established, marking the beginning of a "one school, two campuses" model with segmented teaching. New campuses, new students, new teachers, and new parents mean Xishu Campus welcomes new faces every year, bringing challenges: students need to adapt quickly from kindergarten to primary school; teachers transitioning from higher grades or university need to adapt quickly to the teaching rhythm of Grade 1; parents shifting from caregiving to academic companionship need to adapt to primary school life and reduce anxiety...

② Problem Analysis

These issues prompted the research group to analyze their causes. Synthesizing our school's context, we

identified the following primary sources:

Lack of effective top-level design. Teachers arriving at the new campus faced numerous questions and difficulties regarding new classes, new grade levels, and new philosophies. However, due to the school's relative youth, there was insufficient guiding pedagogical and educational management support, nor a distinctive school-based curriculum framework.

Student and parent anxiety about the unknown aspects of primary school life. For students, primary school represented unknowns and challenges; for parents, uncertainty about their child's adaptation caused significant anxiety.

③ Problem Solving

Based on this, the research aimed to anchor itself in our school's "Kuan Ling Zhuo He" philosophy and the infusion of character education, focusing on the challenge of adaptability. Guided by the national policy of integrating the five educations, we sought to construct a distinctive integrated kindergarten-primary transition curriculum for our school. After a year of literature review, field research, surveys, and discussions, we constructed an integrated transition curriculum based on our school's characteristics, character education, and focused on cultivating children's adaptability.

The curriculum's keywords are Character Education, Child Adaptability, and Curriculum Integration. Therefore, grounded in theoretical foundations of human-centeredness, socio-cultural adaptation theory, the principle of appropriateness, and the principle of integrated evaluation, we designed the curriculum around four pillars: Suitable (appropriate activities), Adaptive (cultivating an adaptive culture), Appropriate (appropriate home-school collaboration), and Adaptable (evaluation adaptable to individual children). Implementation was structured through four pathways: educating through activities, educating through culture, educating through collaboration, and educating through evaluation.

④ Round 1 Reflection

The core concerns remained: How to effectively implement character education? How to address the four adaptations (physical/psychological, life, social, learning) through authentic, contextualized activities? How to gamify the curriculum to ensure it is engaging and fun from a child's perspective? How to successfully implement curriculum integration? These questions drove the focus of the second round.

4.2.2 Round 2 Action Research: Focusing on Implementation Status Post-Curriculum Construction

① Problem Identification and Analysis

While structuring the curriculum framework, we realized the initial system was broad but lacked engaging, authentic activities, specific learning objectives, and detailed, effective evaluation mechanisms during implementation. Therefore, during Round 2, we refined the curriculum framework and developed more concrete activities (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Refined Character Education Perspective Adaptability-Focused K-P Transition Curriculum (Round 2 Action Research)

② Problem Solving

Based on the above analysis, the research group refined the existing curriculum, focusing on goal permeability, generative learning, and integrated development. Supported by theories of sustainable child development, a child-centered view of respect and trust, and the concept of children as the main agents in the teaching-learning process, we designed, implemented, and optimized our school's transition curriculum.

The integration of five educations (德智体美劳) is central to the national educational policy and moral education. Therefore, we integrated the four adaptations with the five educations:

Physical & Psychological Adaptation (Physical Education): Promoted growth through sports activities, focusing on physical fitness and psychological well-being (e.g., Morning Exercise Breaks, Brain-Integrated PE Courses,

Youth Sports Training Department, Class Football League, Autumn/Spring Sports Meets).

Life Adaptation (Moral & Labor Education): Aimed to help students adapt to primary school life. "Educating through Activities" was key. Based on the Grade 1 character traits from the "24 Steps of Character" (Focus, Orderliness, Friendliness, Gratitude, Punctuality, Honesty, Patriotism, Responsibility), we implemented the "Six Firsts" routine curriculum to infuse character into rule formation: Character Perception ("First Lesson"); Character Immersion ("First Day"); Routine Practice ("First Week"); Habit Formation ("First Month"); Growth Showcase ("100th Day"); Bountiful Harvest ("First Year"). To foster class/school belonging and labor consciousness, activities like "Jinjiang Foreign Language Little Master," "Class Little Master," and "Little Nursery Garden" cultivated character and labor skills, aiming for good living habits, self-care abilities, safety awareness, and a love for labor.



Figure 4: School-based Reader: "The First Lesson of School"

Social Adaptation (Moral & Aesthetic Education): Integrated moral and aesthetic education through pathways like group integration, interpersonal skills, character development, and rule awareness (e.g., Monthly Themed Activities, "Every Class Sings," "Three-Character Classic of Character").

Learning Adaptation (Intellectual Education): Focused on intellectual education, helping students adapt to primary classrooms in terms of learning readiness, interest, and ability. Classrooms were designed as gamified learning environments. We integrated national curriculum standards to design brain-based gamified courses and assessed learning abilities through "Subject Carnival" activities.

Activities are the cornerstone of education, while culture internalizes character. We fostered a sense of belonging through explicit cultural constructions like "Most Beautiful Classroom" competitions and the "Yi-Qi Museum," and implicit cultural activities like the "Yi-Qi Exploration: School Adaptation Project-Based Course," allowing students to explore the campus inside and outside the classroom within an aesthetically pleasing environment.

Collaborative education is essential. The best way to reduce anxiety and fear of the unknown is to address challenges directly. Through the "Hand-in-Hand" series (Family Guidance Strategies, Home-School-Community Ecosystem, Home-School Co-Education Committee, New Student "100th Day" Celebration), we guided parents in home-school collaboration, building a harmonious, symbiotic relationship.

Evaluation is fundamental to growth. Curriculum integration must be reflected not only in unified goals but also in content, implementation, and evaluation. Focusing on children's linear development, we established a diverse and comprehensive evaluation model and assessment system. In Round 2, evaluation targeted students, teachers, class collectives, and the curriculum itself.

Students: Emphasizing individual strengths through multi-dimensional evaluations at semester-end: "Colorful Jin Stars," "Outstanding Jin Wai Little Master," "Eaglet Badge Challenge," "Golden Collection Folder," recognizing achievements across the five educations.

Teachers: Providing scaffolding for growth through the "Four Feedbacks": daily, weekly, monthly, and semester-end comprehensive evaluations. Teacher workshops, project-based learning showcases, and personalized growth plans were established.

Class Collectives: Evaluated through daily routine feedback, leading to awards like "Panda Class" or "Starlight Class."

4.3 Stage 3: Research Consolidation

Upon concluding the research, we interviewed selected students, teachers, and parents using classroom observation, retrospective interviews, and interviews. Data analysis revealed that through the two rounds of research, the group had preliminarily established an effective integrated kindergarten-primary transition curriculum framework, designed and practiced curriculum activities, and received positive feedback.

5.Limitations and Future Prospects

Through reflection, we acknowledge limitations of this research, including the relatively short duration of action research, insufficient focus within the research process, and a limited sample size. In future research, we will undertake more specific studies, primarily focusing on student adaptability activity design, problem feedback mechanisms, and home-school collaborative support, aiming to make further contributions to the field of integrated kindergarten-primary transition curriculum from a character education perspective.

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