

**ERD 2019**  
**Education, Reflection, Development, Seventh Edition**  
**PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONTINUITY BETWEEN PRESCHOOL  
AND PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION**

Ileana Constanța Dârlă (Ionescu)\*

\*Corresponding author

- (a) Grădinița “Scufița Roșie”, Calea Șerban Vodă, Nr. 170 , sector 4, București, România, ionescuile@gmail.com,  
(b) Universitatea din București, Facultatea de Psihologie și Științele Educației, Șos. Panduri, nr. 90, sector 5,  
București, secretariat@fpse.unibuc.ro

***Abstract***

Research has identified multiple points of view regarding continuity and discontinuity between preschool and primary school education, and starts considering the following: 1) Early education is the guiding principle of consciousness that education at younger age is the basis of personality; 2) Education is a continuous process in which active interaction with the adult is defining; 3) Early education respects valid principles and values: each child is unique, with its specific and particular needs. The new curriculum for preschool education is based on the concept of early education and is part of the pedagogical paradigm of the child-centered curriculum. The purpose of the research was to estimate the level of efficiency in the application of the curriculum and related instruments, and also to identify the pre-school competency assessment tools - prerequisites for further integration into school and also the sources of discontinuities and propose practical solutions to ensure / optimize continuity between the two stages of schooling. The main instruments used to prove the hypothesis were questionnaire survey, focus group, observation. The results indicate that the teachers from kindergarten and school should collaborate better and improve the learning methods in a way that will increase active participation, and school success.

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**Keywords:** Curriculumt, continuity, feedback, motivation, assessment.



## 1. Introduction

Pestalozzi said "Let the child see, hear, discover, fall, rise and be deceived. Do not use words when action, the fact is possible", considering this we need to teach the children to overcome difficulties through real interventions, to get that indispensable need for integration into school life, to put them in dialogue with the environment, or to teach them to exercise their ability to choose, decide. Reaching and achieving this goal can be done in the kindergarten. Education is the process of forming and developing human personality.

The research presents the necessity of the link between kindergarten curriculum and primary education, the need for early education as a primary objective in the child's preparation for school, and thus the general objectives pursued at the kindergarten must be in line with those of the school.

The curriculum presents a systemic approach and is distinguished by: extension, balance, relevance, differentiation, progression and continuity. In the school context, the meaning of the curriculum is: "Educational course of the student".

As we already know kindergarten builds support for future school activities through two specific forms: play and learning, the most important way the child receives learning is - the game.

The continuity of kindergarten-school involves attending the kindergarten, achieving a unit of the learning activities content, the didactic strategies, the mutual knowledge of the program, the concern for the content and the forms of education of the children.

### 1.1. Theoretical references on the continuity between pre-school and primary education

The pedagogical perspective of continuity through new theoretical visions with the needs of the school is part of modern debates about the functional character of education. Preparing children for learning in school is especially present today, when there are common trends in the world for achieving continuity between pre-school and primary education. The pre-school institution, as an open system, has an important role to play in educating the child to fit smoothly and efficiently into learning in school. Although the psychic features that define the pupil's profile cannot be formed in pre-school, however, the constitution of the premises of these features is possible from the kindergarten as they are a sine qua non condition of the continuity between these two stages of education and an active beginning of systematic learning. Western researchers' concerns about the continuity between pre-school and early primary education focus on the characteristics of age groups (6-8 years) and taxonomy of objectives (J.Piaget, M.Debesse, H.Wallon, BS Bloom, RM Gagne, etc.). Some researchers advise talking continuity in the context of child training for school education (D.Evans, V.Ellis, D.Ausubel, R.Gagne, R.Brandt, etc.). In this respect, researcher states that Evans sometimes the child, reaching a certain age, is already considered ready for school (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Contrary to this view, Ausubel asserts that training for school is a function of behavior (as cited in Ausubel, Novak, & Hanesian, 1978). Children, according to the author, differ from each other at a certain age through maturing tempers and different social experiences. Other researchers are of the opinion that maturation is conditioned by the individual peculiarities of the spontaneous manifestation of the inborn predispositions to the child and are not dependent, to a minimum, on social and educational conditions. The authors advocate the development of diagnostic tests for school maturity and the level of development of differences between children. It

seems that researchers deny the directed organization of child maturity development and its preparation for school learning, which we do not agree with. Another concept on how to prepare children for school in the context of continuity, which has proved to be viable until today, is that developed by E. Bernart. Preparing for school involves, in the author's opinion, the formation and development of a biopsychosocial traits system. The only way to conceive school maturity, observes E. Bernart (as cited in Botiș & Mihalca, 2009), is the multidisciplinary, engaging the whole personality.

However, the school, we think, needs to adapt its structure and school organization to the needs of the child. In other words, the school must be adjusted to the psychophysiological features of the child and to his / her school debut purchases. To make the process of acquiring knowledge and training the skills and competences started in the kindergarten at the age of 3, there is a need for a very close link between the kindergarten and the school. As these skills do not form randomly, but gradually, systematically, the educator has the task of preparing the children to acquire the skills and abilities necessary for the type of school activity.

Kindergarten should be a fundamental stage in the development of the child not only through the scientific content of the educational process, but also by the freedom of action offered to the preschool, which stimulates his / her interests of knowledge and contributes to the widening of the social relations field.

In a coherent approach of centring educational approaches on the child, the new curriculum highlights the content-method relationship and places a special emphasis on the role of the educator in the process of activating the constructive and creative mental functions of the children, on the realization of a pedagogical dialectic (Curriculum pentru învățământul preșcolar, 2008, pp. 7-8) - in which children and educators are in a reciprocal, subtle and continuous interaction and accommodation.

In the perspective of a good collaboration between kindergarten and school it is necessary to create in the kindergarten favourable conditions for new acquisitions and advances in the cognitive, affective and psychomotricity of pre-schoolers, because pre-school age is considered by specialists to be one of the most important psychogenetic periods, due to remarkable progress in all its plans and especially in the sphere of the child's feelings and personality.

Both the "school intelligentsia", which is largely dependent on success in teaching and which, in the view of Piaget (2012), designates the dynamic balance between assimilation of school requirements and accommodation therein, cannot be structured as such before the child's entrance.

We began to present this research through a story of concrete facts as a result of the attitude of practitioner and researcher (Johnson & Christen, 2008) that we had both during and after the learning activities we used the teaching assistant. We want this research to be so in the category of action, participatory research, as our goal is to find solutions to the problem in question and to bring about a change. In the end, action research refers to that "self-reflective approach by social participants (including educators) to improve: the rationality and fairness of their own social or educational practices, the understanding of these practices and the situations in which those practices are conducted.

## **2. Problem Statement**

It is estimated that pre-school teachers have effective practice of applying and evaluating the curriculum from the point of view of continuity between the two levels of schooling, thereby improving possible discontinuities.

It is assumed that if the evaluation competencies of the teachers are developed, the evaluative approach will generate the school performance of the pupils.

The approach of didactic activities in the experiment will be realized from the perspective of checking the specific hypotheses in a derivation report with the general hypothesis, as follows:

- 2.1. Use of effective curriculum practices from the perspective of continuity of the two levels of schooling**
- 2.2. Using the game as an alternative method can influence the efficiency of management in the first primary classes**
- 2.3. Using the tools for assessing school preparation.**

## **3. Research Questions**

In line with the methodological problem statement and the purpose of the study, we have formulated the following questions:

- 3.1. Why is continuity important in early education?**
- 3.2. What does continuity of learning and transitions mean?**
- 3.3. What is transition from preschool to primary school?**

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research is to estimate, in the opinion of the teachers the efficiency of the application of the curriculum, as well as the related assessment instruments, from the perspective of continuity between kindergarten and school and also to identify the discontinuity points in order to find new strategies.

- 4.1. One purpose of the research is highlighting the teachers' opinion about the role and efficiency of the curriculum applied to the group from the perspective of continuity of kindergarten-school Primary school teachers have different views on the use of grades and rewards as a way of reflecting school outcomes.**
- 4.2. A second purpose is identifying the pre-school competency assessment tools as an indicator of subsequent school integration.**
- 4.3. A third purpose is to identify sources of discontinuities and propose practical solutions to ensure / optimize continuity between the two stages of schooling.**

## 5. Research Methods

Research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative perspectives that consist in collecting data.

These methods aim at investigating the specific aspects of the kindergarten and primary school teachers' perspective on the continuity and discontinuity between the two levels of school.

The main instrument used to test the hypotheses was questionnaire survey, curricular document research, focus group, reflection journal. These methods investigated the points of continuity and discontinuity between those two levels of school.

### 5.1. Quantitative methods

The questionnaire has a standardized character. I will elaborate three questionnaires, one targeting teachers in primary education one to parents, the other addressed to pre-school teachers. The set of questionnaires is one of the basic tools for carrying out the synthesis study along with other qualitative research methods (focus group, reflection journal, progress sheet, students' product analysis).

The questionnaire addressed to teachers in primary education will be built to know the level of awareness of the teachers, the necessity and usefulness of the development of the evaluative competences, as well as their formative valences, aiming to obtain the teachers' adhesion to the proposed model, as well as the opinions, their solutions in order to make the evaluation activity more efficient, its correlation with the new curriculum and the continuity of the school kindergarten.

The questionnaire addressed to parents is operationalizing their perceptions and attitudes towards child assessment and the existence of kindergarten-school continuity.

By applying the questionnaires, we built a collection of responses regarding the phenomena, situations and manifestations investigated related to the existence or non-existence of continuity between the large group curriculum and the preparatory class curriculum. The questionnaire used in this research contains fifteen questions.

The first step consisted in the questionnaire analysis.

The questionnaire parents applied comprises 10 closed-ended questions with a single answer or multiple choices

Teachers' Questionnaire includes 10 single-choice or multiple-choice questions.

### 5.2. Qualitative methods

The most common form of a qualitative research is the focus group, there is the intersection of the interview focused on the group interview, also called in-depth group interview. Morgan defines the focus group as a data gathering technique through interaction between group members about a problem set by the researcher.

In the present situation, the focus group was made on a group of 8 educators it had as theme continuity and discontinuity the curriculum of the large group / preparatory class, aiming to know the "good practices" in the field. The focus group will focus on making evaluation more efficient and identifying the needs of teachers in curriculum application and continuity / discontinuity with the putative

group as well as improving pedagogical methodology and practice on assessing children's competences by addressing the complementarity of alternative methods to traditional ones.

Another method reflection journal aims to investigate the opinion of primary school teachers on the importance and necessity of improving the teaching staff in the field of evaluation, on pupils' school outcomes.

## 6. Findings

The research implied:

- the study of the official curriculum documents (Pre-primary education framework curriculum, Preschool Education Curriculum - 2008, Guides, Methodological Guides etc.), but also the correct drawing of the school documents found in the teacher's portfolio (annual, weekly, daily activities, projects teaching materials, work records, psycho-pedagogical observation sheets on children, references, conspiracies, plans, etc.);

- conducting the survey based on a questionnaire in order to collect the information necessary for the research;

- The focus groups.

The questionnaire used is a questionnaire adapted to the PNM Questionnaire.

### 6.1. Qualitative research

At this point we organized a focus group of teachers in pre-school education with a teaching degree I and duration of 30-40 years of activity. The subject of the discussion was "Continuity and discontinuity between the large group curriculum and the preparatory class" and here we considered some aspects of the continuity of the kindergarten school and the easy adaptation of the preschool to the next stage of learning and thus preventing the school and obviously on long trench at school dropout.

The aim of this Focus group was to make a series of observations that would improve the curriculum for the continuity of the kindergarten and the sharing of "good practice" in the field.

### Quantitative research results

In the following, I will present the analysis of the answers obtained from the questionnaire distribution:

Concerning the opinion that the current large group curriculum provides for the preparation of the school future, the respondents responded positively by marking 52% and 34%, respectively, to a large extent the item formulated. Knowing the individual potential of the preschool by the teacher is one of the main factors influencing the application of the curriculum and the transition to the new schooling stage.

Regarding the understanding of the role of competence as a nodal point in the analysis and assessment of children also in the design of the pre-school and school curriculum, 87% consider that it has a clear, precise "picture" considering the nature of the competence in the educational process.

60% of the respondents have the opinion on the definition of the competences of the school future, at which the didactic participates, is the result of cooperation between kindergarten and school.

Ask how the curriculum is applied in some particular directions:

- 8% consider that it has effects in the evaluation of the professional quality of the kindergarten teachers;

- 48% assert that curriculum implementation contributes to improving the learning of children (formative feedback);

- 40% of the respondents consider that the application of the curriculum leads to certification of pre-school education for the school;

- 8% consider that it has effects in improving the professional activity of teachers;

- the decision-making freedom of the teaching staff makes the most of their creative and aptitude potential in designing and carrying out activities, which leads to the appreciation of pre-university education within hierarchies, 8% of respondents appreciate this.

Presenting the objectives of the subjects taught to children at the beginning of the didactic activity is a significant moment for the capture of euthanasia and the goal orientation of learning. 87% of respondents use this way, unlike 13% who do not have this practice yet. The research highlighted the fact that in working with children there is almost constant preoccupation of teachers to capitalize on the knowledge acquired by children, the presentation at the beginning of the didactic activity of the objectives and the attention to the transfer of this knowledge in the current learning process. In the situation when the didactic framework stimulates the transfer of information, it is done mainly within the same field of knowledge or constantly appealing to the life and learning experience of children.

The practice of peer evaluation (inter-evaluation) or self-assessment is 96% good practice, according to the surveyed respondents. In order to assess the knowledge, skills or competencies of learners, the performance they demonstrate must be observable and measurable

To certify children's education for the school should be mentioned / introduced in the progress sheet: specific evidence of child-education assessment for school; Standard Sheets; single probe on experimental domains; psychological tests; behavioural observation sheets.

Regarding the use of the reflection card in completing the evaluation work, the respondents responded 87% affirmatively and 12% negative.

In an important proportion (more than 60%), the teachers consider that we can speak of the harmonization of the curriculum in the kindergarten with the one in the first two primary classes, which means that it is felt in fact not only in the educational policy, consistency within the core procurement cycle.

However, a significant number of teachers (more than 38%) consider that there may be some discontinuities between the two levels of the first curriculum. In order of frequency of teachers' arguments, the following discontinuities were stated:

- at the level of didactic methodology (school does not pay attention to the game 3.2%;

- the pace of development in primary education is inappropriate for the individual peculiarities of children 1.1%);

- at the level of the educational curriculum of the preparatory class that does not use the activities carried out in the kindergarten;

- the logical-mathematical games are missing in the preparatory class of 0.8%;

There are also singular opinions (2%) who consider that there can be talk of overlapping content in the two programs, without specifying what content.

## 7. Conclusion

This study investigates the transition from kindergarten to primary school through the experiences of the teachers involved. Emphasis is placed on the transition activities of stakeholders and on the efficiency of these activities. These transition experiences of children at school will inform further research into the development of effective transition programs in the local context.

Many educators believe that the whole activity in the kindergarten is designed and facilitates the transition to primary education, emphasizing the basic knowledge of different curricular areas and adapting to the school environment.

The investigative tools in this study include questionnaires, interviews and semi-structured observations. The results show that teachers feel that the transition to school activity can easily be done by respecting the educational policies and age and individual peculiarities of children by using "child-centered learning".

The applied questionnaire contains 10 structured questions with the main objective to identify the continuity and discontinuity between the curriculum for the large and the preparatory class in order to improve the curriculum and ensure the continuity of education between the two levels of education.

The findings from questionnaires and interviews show that most respondents agreed that links between kindergarten, primary school and parents could facilitate an easier transition to school. However, in reality both kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers have shown the ignorance of teaching practices and the curriculum of others.

More than 80% of surveyed professors claim that first years of life and those spent in kindergarten are called by specialists as "golden age", "age of grace" or "incredible years" - that is, the years of the greatest opportunities in raising and developing children. This is the time when the child's mind and emotions form the matrix on which the rest of the vivid experiences are captured, a mother in which school success lies and their ability to find a way in life.

In 95%, those surveyed attest that at least until the end of the second grade they see the net differences between children who went to kindergarten and those who missed early training.

At the age of the preparatory group and up to the second grade, the game is in full swing. The pleasure of taking roles, missions, challenges is one of the key features of intellectual development. One of the professors participating in the study states: "It is in our education to believe that learning is a solemn matter, and the game is unerring. Play, but it's one of the most creative forms of learning. You have to be a great master to make the game a real cognitive opportunity".

Piaget (2012) said, "When a child is playing, he moves all his ability to master and influence reality".

Continuing with the curriculum continuity analysis between these two basic levels studied in this paper and the school curriculum, 87% of respondents said that regardless of school curriculum and type of application, from the most traditional up to the revolutionary, beyond the way in which learning is staged, it remains certain that these first six years should not be missed. Therefore, a curriculum adapted

to the requirements of the school-based and child-centred future is a necessity, and the continuity between kindergarten and school is a certainty of the success of the future adult.

It is true that the curricular cycle of the fundamental acquisitions is the large group of kindergarten followed by the preparatory class, which has as main objective the adaptation to the requirements of the school system and the initial literacy, and continues in the second and third grades.

All these arguments and findings come to confirm the assumed working hypothesis, namely that if education is organized from the perspective of competence training for preschoolers, this will lead to situations in which they will no longer be overwhelmed by the assimilation of punctual information, but will be initiated into those foundations, concepts, themes, ideas designed to structure a discipline, a field of knowledge, improving skills involving a wider use of formative evaluation with a view to identifying and timely management of problems, as well as the development of more sophisticated summative assessment techniques based on common standards on learning outcomes.

A very great emphasis is placed on communication, which is why in the morning meeting the development of communication skills is being practiced.

In conclusion, we need to keep in mind that learning is holistic and that the new cognitive architecture pleads for a new vision of the curriculum and a new approach to it.

Preschool education being the first step of our school subsystem, implicitly preparing the preschool for the preparatory class, is one of the major objectives of the preschool education taxonomy.

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