

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND GROWTH MINDSET DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

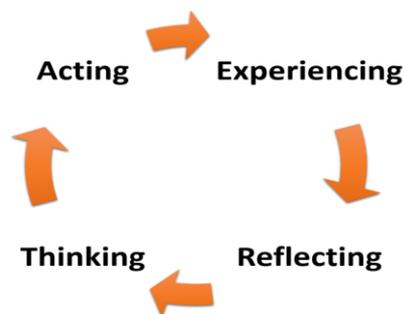
The curriculum for pre-school education promotes the concept of global development of the child, considered to be central in early childhood. The perspective of global development of the child emphasizes the important areas of child development, considering that, in today's society, the training of children for school and for life should take into account not only academic skills, but equally, abilities, skills, attitudes related to socio-emotional development (living and working together or with others, to manage emotions, to accept diversity, tolerance etc.), cognitive development (addressing some problematic situations, divergent thinking, establishment of causal interactions, etc. associations, correlations, etc.) physical development (motricity, health, healthy food, etc).

Keywords: continuity, feedback, motivation, assessment

1. Theoretical references on the experiential learning in early childhood education and growth mindset development

Growth mindset refers to a learning theory developed by Dr Carol Dweck. It revolves around the belief that you can improve intelligence, ability and performance. This means that by helping students to develop a **growth mindset**, we can help them to learning more effective and efficient.

Experiential learning is a powerful way to help people identify changes required to their skills, attitudes and behaviors, then implement those changes for better performance (ELT—Kolb 2015, Kolb & Kolb 2017):



What is the definition of experiential learning?

Experiential learning is, quite simply, learning by doing. We have all learned to walk or talk, not by being shown or told, but by practising and refining our technique. Consequently, trainers and facilitators can implement this method in all sorts of situations with people from all walks of life. There are no barriers due to age, education, experience, ability, background or culture. Within the field of Talent Development, experiential learning can best be defined as:

"developing personal understanding, knowledge, skills and attitudes through the analysis of, and reflection on, activity".

In this definition 'Activity' can include anything from an individual explaining an idea or completing a simple task to highly complex group interactions involving a wide range of mental attributes and behaviours.

This definition emphasizes two important points:

- Experiential learning is an active process which engages the learner, not a passive process that happens to the learner.
- In experiential learning the experience provides the platform for learning, whilst the careful analysis and reflection of the experience develops the learning.

What makes experiential learning special?

Experiential learning is an active process which engages the learner, not a passive process that happens to the learner. In 'experiential learning' the experience provides the platform for learning, whilst the careful analysis and reflection of the experience develops the learning. Individuals are encouraged to work things out for themselves, they are guided to and through their learning rather than being taught. The learning individuals develop is appropriate for them: it is implicit in the approach that there are no 'right ways of thinking', 'set rules, or 'perfect behaviours' that anyone has to learn and apply. The commitment developed by the learner to make best use of their learning: they are central to the learning process, it is their learning.

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In the opinion of Psychologist Carol Dweck, Stanford University Specialist: 'Everyone is a work in progress', considering this I started my research from my these theme 'Strategies of optimizing the continuity between kindergarten and school', which is a very actual theme.

The world has changed, the kids are changed, how do we prepare them for future? Which are the most important abilities, capacities, competencies which we have to develop for educate succesful adults?

Experiential learning is "In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning through practice. Experimental education first immerses students in an experience and then encourages reflection on the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes or new ways of thinking."

Another definition of experiential learning consider this as "*developing personal understanding, knowledge, skills and attitudes through the analysis of, and reflection on, activity*".

2. Problem Statement

It is estimated that pre-school teachers have an effective practice of applying and evaluating the curriculum for continuity between the two levels of schooling, thereby improving possible discontinuities throught experiential learning.

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: Use of effective curriculum practices from the perspective of continuity of the two levels of schooling by experiential learning;

Using the game as an alternative method can influence the efficiency of management in the first primary classes and developing growth mindsets/

3. Research Questions

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

- a. Why is experiential learning is important in early education?
- b. What does continuity of learning and transitions mean throught experiential learning?
- c. What is the transition from preschool to primary school from the point of developing growth mindset?

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 throught experiential learning , as well as the related assessment instruments, from the perspective of continuity between kindergarten and school and also to identify the discontinuity points to find new strategies.

- a. One purpose of the research is to highlight the teachers' opinion about the role and efficiency of the curriculum applied to the group from the perspective of experiential learning and developing growth mindset and rewards as a way of reflecting school outcomes.
- b. A second purpose is identifying the pre-school competency assessment tools as an indicator of subsequent school integration.
- c. 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

The research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative perspectives that consist of collecting data.

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

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

a. 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 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 of the questionnaire analysis.

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

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

b. Qualitative methods

The most common form of qualitative research is the focus group, there is the intersection of the interview focused on the group interview, also called an 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 of 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 to collect the information necessary for the research;

- the focus groups.

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

a. Qualitative research

At this point, we organized a focus group of teachers in pre-school education with a teaching degree I and a 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 the long trench at school dropout.

This Focus group aimed to make a series of observations that would improve the application of curriculum through experiential learning and developing growth mindsets

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's 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 by experiential learning.

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 of experiential learning 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 an 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. 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; behavioral 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 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 the talk of overlapping content in the two programs, without specifying what content

7. Conclusions

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 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 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 how 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-centered future is a necessity, and the continuity between kindergarten and school is a certainty of the success of the future adult.

The curricular cycle of the fundamental acquisitions is indeed 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 to identify 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 is 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.

My research has identified multiple points of view regarding the importance of experiential learning from the point of continuity and discontinuity between preschool and primary school education, and starts considering the following:

- Early education is the guiding principle of consciousness that education at a younger age is the basis of personality and the experiential learning is the base of developing the future successful adult;
- Education is a continuous process in which active interaction with the adult is defining;
- 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 based on experiential learning.

The purpose of the research was to estimate the level of efficiency in the application of the experiential learning by new 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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