

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE TRANSITION DYNAMICS AND STUDENT
TRANSITION ADJUSTMENT FROM PRESCHOOL TO LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL
IN KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The process by which transition occurs for children to the primary school from pre-school is perceived as disparity and readjustment for many students. Transition is intended to cause immense excitement and enthusiasm; however, commonly children time and again get experiences of difficulties in addition to suffering in the period. Different perspectives can offer diverse explanations to the sorry trend of transition with cogency. The pre-schoolers may experience difficulties in adjusting to the new school environment, safe to the prior assessment tools indicating one is ready to join primary school. This paper sought to critically analyze the transition concept against a portrait of theories of child and transition with regard to the change of environment, parent teacher relationship, student teacher dynamics and treatment that meet the pre-schooler at transition stage. To this end, there is need for demand to end the ‘hostility’ meted out on the learners transitioning to primary school. The researchers’ submission is that, going by the many reported and un-reported experiences of de-certification during transition from pre-school to primary school, there is need for the development of programs that make transition easy for children from one academic level to another.

Key words

Pre-schooler, transition, adjustment, environment, parent, dynamics, student, catchment area

1.0. Introduction

Transitions entails changes in social cultures, increased academic demands and shifts in peer groups and at times can prove difficult for pre-schoolers to negotiate (Abadzi, 2006). Transition can be best conceptualized as a journey along a path across momentary gaps and shifts in schools. Transition pathways are diverse and can be successfully bridged by educators, parents, students and communities. Students transitioning can experience a normative life event and acquire different experiences of education in various dimensions (Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

The ECD (Early Childhood Development) program carried out in Kenya and its educational environs has been evolving during the recent three independence decades as a way of responding to changes that are socio-economic related. This program principally constitutes the experiences of development in children who are young. The system of education presently taking place in the country; Kenya is widely known as the system of 8-4-4, which implies that a child must spend the first eight educational years at the level of primary school, four educational years at the level of secondary, as well as four other years meant acquiring basic and essential education at the university level. Education in Kenya is normally coined with the vision of being competitive and aggressive by means of standard assessments, selection as well as ranking that takes place for pre-school students in terms of their ability, which is normally carried out for the purpose of placement (Mwai, 2012).

As asserted by Bronfenbrenner (1989), pre-school plays a fundamental role in the process of transition via curriculum as well as influence by a variety of critical factors for consideration, normally laid down by school administrators. The deficiency of vacancies for class ones in the level of primary school is considered as one of the good qualities by the majority of the communities, giving way to a selection that is unendorsed as well as procedures whose basis are on interviews of children in addition to unremitting utilization of tests that are academic (Abadzi, 2006). Whereby, such scenarios have the tendency of to illusionizing schools to become oriented academically so as to enhance meeting the demands brought on board by the tests, and a result, therefore despising the development that is meant to be holistic development in children. Even though attending pre-school normally is requirement for joining the level of primary school, the transitioning of students are anticipated to encompass some experiences of pre-school before a student joins the level of primary school, for this reason; the requirement to test for determining the appropriateness of candidature for class one.

At the transition stage, children come across novel social related difficulties and are needed to attain collective comprehension so that they meet the requirements to be an associate member in the new settings. In the collective context, educational learning has been conceptualized to be taking root, for this reason; the requirement for a student's ability so that there can be constructive and encouraging interaction as well as communication with new school joining peers in addition to adults, resulting in gains that are to cognitive, and without doubt, children end up facing a dissimilarity in ratios of adults as per the necessities surrounded by a twofold setting vary, and they may possibly encounter dissimilar languages from the educational practitioners which students may possibly have never come across. Students need to become acquainted to adults who come to their lives each different day as well as their way of doing things, nevertheless, their non-verbal signs and gestures.

Currently, there is an increase in education demand for every person, such that; pre-schools have merely become subject to tensions of transition sandwiched in the middle revolution and steadiness, as well as between the adjustments to upcoming hardships, in addition to the preservation of older trends and patterns. Discontinuity and stagnation preceding school as well as the settings of a school are deemed to be among various complicated noteworthy gap, which children need to get

acquainted with at the time of commencing formal and prescribed schooling process (Abadzi, 2006).

2.0 Statement of the problem

At transition from one level of school to another, particularly from preschool to lower primary levels, children encounter many social-related challenges. A smooth transition into class one and formal schooling helps set young children on a course for academic achievement and success. Transition in school refers to as the process by which children encounter changes in their surrounding environment in addition to sets of associations which are made by children from a phase or an educational setting to a different one as times go by (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Students' transition adjustment has the character of phases having intense dynamics of environment, development that is accelerated in the societal framework, without doubt, peer relationships' changes, making intense demands on students who are transitioning to primary school (Epstein, 2001).

However, research has shown that the majority of the schools lack programs and facilities that enable children to have an easy time when it comes to transitioning from one level of school to another (Epstein, 2001). Additionally, most teachers lack the understanding that; for a child to be able to transition successfully there must be immense provision of both emotional and psychosocial support from them, however, the majority are rough, hence; causing more problems to the already distressed children. Despite the willingness of teachers and professionals in schools, sometimes the transition from preschool to the lower primary is affected by lack of programs and practices that give room for children to adapt to new environments. At the same time, parents, especially in the current times do not have enough time to check on the progress of their children both in school and at home, hence; children are mostly left on their own to cope with conditions within their environment (Fabian & Dunlop, 2010). Most importantly, children themselves need to be taught and advised on the best ways to live with other people, systems and whatever surrounds them so that they can have the ability of managing their self esteem.

To enable the transition of children from pre-school levels to the level of lower primary to be smooth in the education system of Kenya, it is needful to establish the extent to which parent teacher relationship, peer student dynamics and teacher student change dynamics with regards to student transition adjustment are related. Addressing the issues of transition is fundamental for it will enable children to attain a collective understanding and perception which can lead them to becoming social members in new community settings.

3.0 Purpose of the study

This study has the purpose of carrying out a critical analysis on the transition dynamics and student transition adjustment from preschool to lower primary school to lower primary school in Kenya, to critically analyze the parent teacher dynamics and student transition adjustment. Student teacher dynamics and student transition adjustment, peer student dynamics and student transition

adjustment and finally to critic the environmental dynamic in relation to student transition adjustment from preschool to lower primary school

4.0 Objectives

1. To critically analyze the parent teacher dynamics and student transition adjustment from preschool to primary schools.
2. To critically analyze the student teacher dynamics and student adjustment from preschool to primary school
3. To critically analyze the peer student dynamics and student transition adjustment from preschool to primary school.
4. To critically analyze the student catchment and student transition adjustment from preschool to primary school.
5. To critically analyze the environment dynamics and student transition dynamic from preschool to primary school.

5.0 Research Methodology

The researchers used a qualitative study based on critical method. Through this method, researchers expand critique as a positive evaluation of a variety of school transitional dynamics as a healthy judge and student transition adjustment issues as a healthy judgment but rapidly offer therapeutic measures perpetual as transitional adjustment recommendations. The critical method facilitates the resolutions of dynamic challenges against a conflicting student adjustment dynamics. The researchers attempt to seek justification of educational traditional adjustment approaches, practices and related issues with a view to broaden the scope of understanding and provide reasonable remedial suggestions.

Critique Literature

6.1 Parent teacher dynamics and student transition adjustment

Parents and teachers are stakeholders in the process of transition and are expected to play a great role during transition. Parent and teacher relationship should be cultivated in order for the child to have the ability of developing collective social proficiency and competence, skills for solving problems, independence as well as an intellectual based principle, however, this sometimes is not cultivated well, subjecting student to have difficulties in adjusting in a school environment (Whitebread, 2010).

It's the obligation of the parents to provide for the basic needs to their children which necessitates the school adjustment (Whitebread, 2010). Children whose basic needs are not met suffer from psychological problems which hinder their transition adjustment to schools. In most cases the parents tend to ignore these needs tendering pragmatically and speaking. Teachers should invite

parents to school to discuss the issues affecting students. It's difficult for teachers to demonstrate efficiently and effectively in the duties and responsibilities within the contemporary competitive world of quality performance when the parent teacher relation is not healthy (Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews & Kienhuis, 2010).

6.2 Peer student dynamics and student transition adjustment

Many students worry about making new friends and it become intimidating for them to enter a new environment without anyone to familiarize with. The practitioners should ensure that children making the transition are put in a class with familiar face with whom the form playmates ending up more sociable with a quicker progress to adjusting to primary school (Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

Social adjustment is important and leads to ability to negotiate and work alongside peers. Transition adjustment is a time of considerable disparity and readjustment for many students and this entail changes in social cultures and shifts in peer groups which can be difficult to negotiate. Students should be encouraged to form relationship with the peers and more so to respect each other's opinions and rights (Giallo et al., 2010). The student expectations are thwarted in the sense that the experience a time of considerable disparity and readjustment as they try to negotiate the qualities of adjusting accommodating their peers.

During transition between five and six years is a stage of important development (Fabian & Dunlop, 2010). There is a poor teacher relationship in most of the public schools. Most teachers underestimate parents views and this had a discourse in parents teacher relation. Parents should be enlightened on various ways of parental roles such as diet, cleanliness and etiquettes by teachers. Teachers should invite parents to schools and update them on the development needs of learners as they cascade through various development stages according to psychologists such as Piaget and Sigmund Freud (as cited in Fabian & Dunlop, 2010). These will lead to parents adjusting to the developmental phases of their children and providing for each developmental phase needs leading to a great milestone of student transition adjusting to primary schools.

6.3 Environmental Dynamics and students transition adjustment

Environmental dynamics affects the transition adjustment of students from one level of school to another, in this case, from preschool to the lower primary. Most importantly, separation from home is the greatest source of stress for children, especially when they have to completely adapt to the school environment (Giallo et al., 2010). The best for schools to have in order to help in the process of adjustment is to develop a social surrounding that is to a large extent, very complete. There are greater children numbers when brought in comparison with those numbers of children in the preschools, and as well, there exists physical discontinuities are experienced when the physical environment changes (Fabian & Dunlop, 2010).

Social discontinuities are also identified in terms of changes in children identity, the social networks and the adults with whom they interact with regards to shift in student who are able to cope with transition change are successfully develop collective competency, flexibility as well as organization,

which makes them to be able to deal with new environment. The school environment should be friendly to student. The play materials should be related both to the school and home environment (Epstein, 2001). This will aid the child in conceptualizing the dream of transition with ease. For the school programme which are to be effective and be part of a broader coherent framework unfortunately this is not the case. Some school programmes are not environmental friendly to learner as they have not created a positive link to the initiatives of the development in early childhood, particularly to the homes where children come from as well as to their primary schools. Student transitioning to primary school do not go through a process of change from their nature cultural environment to the culture of the school. The student should go through an orientation process through the environment to enhance their skills and attitudes towards cultural diversities which can lead to making use o environment to enhance their study and actualize the national goals of education (Epstein, 2001).

6.4 Teacher student dynamics and students transition adjustment

In cognizance of the fact that teachers should be equipped with information on how young children learn and develop, there has been distressful cases of some teachers having a meager knowledge of developmental growth of children and their needs in order to ease transitional dilemma (Abadzi, 2006). Most teachers lack background understanding of learners thus misinterpreting their feelings and needs. There is urgent need in an investment in primary teacher education with an emphasis on early childhood developmental appropriate practices in school (Abadzi, 2006).

Teachers in schools are always very concerned in regard to children that are undergoing transition and their wellbeing in school. This kind of concern is evidenced by the fact that the majority of schools usually put in place programs for transition, and they also embrace practices and principles constructed all the way through the central schooling years. Programs for transition need to be established in schools, and also, practices and principles of developing through school's middle years should be embraced to facilitate smooth transition. When students come to school, they expect the teachers to understand them and more so help them to realize their maneuvers in transition (Mwai, 2012).

6.5 Student catchment dynamics and student transition adjustment

The dynamics of children catchment have tremendous effects on the adjustment of student transition. Particularly, those children believed to have social and emotional readiness to attend and be in school are normally in a better position for meeting challenges that are cognitive which accompany the process of transition from one school level to another. This proposition has its basis on the underlying principle that; preschool learning that is of high excellence accords many benefits to a large number of children, predominantly those coming background that are disadvantaged due to low income situations, because the majority are usually at a danger of failing in their examinations, and also, they are probably the last ones to be offered early education benefits within Kenyan educational scenario amidst the completing of modern changing lifestyles (Mwai, 2012). Contemporary social demands on student catchment dynamics and varying parenting styles modern

schools face a disciplinary turbulence with worrying packages of challenges in the face of limited and unclear remedies for catchment dynamics.

Teachers should endeavor to understand the background of their students in relation to their catchment dynamics to catapult smooth transition from preschool to primary schools student (Fabian, 2007). From diverse background converge in schools with mixed anxieties and uncertain expectations envisioned in defining whom they are and where they are and where they are heading to without forgetting the diverse cultural set up of the students (Fabian, 2007). Teachers should endeavour to conceptualize and familiarize with diverse culture of the learners so as to enhance the student self esteem and advocate sharing cultural news in order to accommodate each student. On contrary, some schools discriminate against students pegging their argument on the cultural background of students which lead to things such as bullying and sidelining and eventual low self esteem of learners.

7.0 Recommendations

1. There should be a training for teachers about transitions
2. Formal transition adjustment process should be established in all preschools and primary schools.
3. Agreed framework on transition should be formulated
4. Families need to take into account effective transition approaches
5. Transition activities should be implemented
6. Parent and teachers should cultivate a good relationship to ease the dilemma related to transition
7. Cultural diversities of learners should be merged in school for a healthy interaction among students.

8.0 Conclusion

At transition from one level of school to another, particularly from preschool to lower primary levels, children encounter many social-related challenges, hence; there is a need for them to attain a collective understanding and perception which can lead them to becoming social members in new community settings. Professionals that work and manage school settings have the challenge of valuing and building on the understanding and experiences which children gain before reaching the stage of transitioning from their previous preschool to the primary school level.

Research mostly presents the period of transitioning from preschool to the primary school as a point in time when families and particularly children face numerous challenges as well as stress. We therefore strongly advocate for extra chiseling of teacher parent relations dynamics to shape up in line with contemporary transition adjustment dynamics demands guided by a passion driven endeavour to pursue the key tenets for smooth transition by student to primary schools.

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